

DESIGNING SYSTEMS OF COLLABORATIVE VIDEO ESSAY COMPOSITION IN
CLASSROOMS

By

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To my best friend, Neal, for never giving up on me

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Four years ago, the National Council of Teachers of English published a report on writing, recognizing that “our current models of composing are located largely in print” and highlighting the need for new models of writing that account for new forms of composition (Yancey, 2009, p. 7). Raising questions related to publishing, resources, and social interactions, Yancey (2009) encouraged the field “to pursue, to document, and to share” issues related to new models of composition (p. 7). This study takes up this call and offers a way into this discussion by exploring how a teacher designs a system of multimedia composition in a high school classroom and how students participate in the system in response to the teacher’s design.

Background

Multimedia composition is relatively new to classrooms, and our understanding of how students compose in multimedia is still in its beginning stages. As so often happens with novel media, researchers and theorists have approached investigations of it by importing models that were developed for more familiar kinds of media—in this case, the process of composing in print (Merchant, 2007, 2008). However, the fundamental differences between composing in print and composing in multimedia (MacArthur, 2006; Reinking, Labbo, & McKenna, 1997; Unsworth, 2008), including different kinds of tools, skills, and social practices (Merchant, 2008), necessitate changes in this model for multimedia composition. As pieces of the process and environment are changing, larger

shifts are likely happening as well. As we encounter new ways of producing and distributing texts, new possibilities emerge for constructing and operating in the classroom environment (Merchant, 2007), particularly in terms of *social organization* (the roles and relationships of participants in the system) and *participation structures* (the opportunities and rules for participating in the activity). At the same time, differences between the systems of print composition and multimedia composition have implications for how composition is taught, including “instructional practices and curricular objectives” (Merchant, 2008, p.769).

It is important for us to develop a better understanding of multimedia composition in classrooms, particularly as this becomes a more prevalent practice. There are multiple ways to approach doing so: we could study students engaging in multimedia composition in classrooms and describe their composition processes; we could explore classrooms in which students are composing in multimedia and create complete portrayals of the systems; or we could examine students composing in both print and multimedia and compare their processes of composing in each to determine similarities and differences. This study takes a somewhat different approach. Rather than focusing primarily on students’ processes, this study instead focuses on teacher design of the system and how students participate and compose within that design. While students’ processes are hugely important and deserve our attention, teacher design is a less studied area of multimedia composition, and one that merits consideration. As more interest in multimedia composition is generated and teachers contemplate incorporating it into their classrooms, it is important for our field to explore the design considerations of teachers who are engaging in this activity and the ways in which students are responding. This kind of

work will help the field to better understand the ways that multimedia composition systems are operating in classrooms and will help other teachers to make informed decisions regarding their own designs of similar systems. In this study, I use an activity theory lens to explore how a teacher designs a system of classroom multimedia composition, specifically composition of collaborative video essays, and how students respond to the teacher's design.

Definitions

Before moving into a discussion of the purposes and research questions driving this study, it is important to define a couple of terms that are key to this study: *multimedia composition* and *video essay*.

In thinking about composition processes, I draw on Smagorinsky's (2002) definition of composition, which views composing as a sociocultural activity that involves the following: using an appropriate set of tools; understanding conventions and genres, as well as the effects of breaking conventions; engaging in a process that involves planning, drafting, feedback, reflection, and revising; using prior knowledge to construct new ideas and a new text; and learning through the process of composing.

Media are the channels or tools (e.g., visual image and print text) used to deliver information. Multimedia refers to the use of two or more media simultaneously to convey information (e.g., visual image and print text together) and generally connotes a digital environment. *Multimedia composition*, then, refers to a writing or composition process in a digital environment that involves the arrangement of two or more media simultaneously to produce a message. Some common examples of multimedia composition in classrooms are digital stories, book trailers, and PowerPoint presentations.

The type of multimedia composition studied here is the video essay. Any form of multimedia composition presents difficulties in defining it, as these are all relatively new forms of composition and different people use these terms to refer to slightly different products. However, some general statements can be made regarding the definition of a video essay. A video essay involves a writer attempting to make a point or argument on screen. “If the essay has been, for thousands of years, a means for writers to figure something out on the page, the video essay is that, too, on the screen” (Bresland, 2010). Bresland (2010) further explains that this genre is “half-essay, half-film” and “places equal literary emphasis on language and image and sound.” So, this is a composition that does the same work as a print essay (creating and defending an argument), but in video form.

Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to tell a pedagogical story – how a teacher creates a classroom system of multimedia composition, specifically composition of collaborative video essays in response to literature. I use the concept of design in order to frame this pedagogical story, discussing how this teacher designed this particular instructional experience for his students. An important part of any pedagogical story is not only the teacher’s design, but also how students respond to the design. Students can respond to a teacher’s design by offering evaluations of it, but more importantly, they respond to a design by the ways they choose to participate in the activities, processes, or experiences that the teacher has designed, whether that means adhering to the teacher’s design or pushing back against it to redesign the system in some ways. These student responses are evidence of students’ needs, preferences, and processes within the system, and thus contribute to implications

for classroom practice. Therefore, in addition to studying the teacher's design of this system, I explore students' responses to the design and their participation within the system.

In seeking to build a conceptual understanding of classroom multimedia composition and specifically how a teacher designs such a system, this study addresses a gap in the field. Research has looked at multimedia composition as a way to engage and motivate students (e.g. Dimitriadi, 2001), to connect to their out of school literacies (e.g. Moje, 2007; Vincent, 2006; Walsh, 2007), and to improve their abilities in print literacy activities (e.g. Carlin Menter & Shuell, 2003; Dimitriadi, 2001; Halio, 1996; Peng, Fitzgerald, & Park, 2006). Some research focusing on students' processes of composing in multimedia has been done in online environments (e.g. Chandler Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Ito, 2008; Lange, 2007) and in classrooms (e.g. Bruce, 2008a; Kajder, 2006; Mahiri, 2006; Ranker, 2008;). However, this classroom research has focused mostly on describing students' processes and products and discussing outcomes for student learning. This study offers a unique contribution by focusing on the teacher's design of the system and how students respond to and participate within that design.

Research Questions

I developed this study to expand our understanding of multimedia composition in classrooms, particularly of teacher design of these systems of classroom composition.

Three overarching questions guided this study:

1. How does the teacher design a classroom system of collaborative video essay composition?

2. How does the teacher make adjustments to his design, across iterations and over time?
3. How do students respond to the system the teacher has created?

The first two research questions are focused on the teacher's design, both how he designed the system initially and how he altered his design across classes and across time. These two questions together are aimed at developing a rich, thorough understanding of the teacher's design. The third question is focused on students' responses to the teacher's design and is aimed at understanding how students evaluated and participated within the teacher-designed system. This question also leads to considering implications for classroom practice.

Theoretical Framework

Thinking about composition as a sociocultural activity, it is useful to think about composition processes in these communities as systems. This lens allows us to consider the elements contributing to and participating in the systems and to tease apart each of these elements. Systems have been conceptualized in multiple ways: for example, art worlds (Becker, 1984) looks at systems of art production as activity, and situated learning looks at systems of learning that occur in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning and production are so connected in composition processes (Smagorinsky, 2002), making systems of learning and systems of production relevant to this discussion.

I used theory in a grounded way, to explore a limited set of categories that are particularly compelling within classroom multimedia composition. Rather than attempting to account for every element of a standard activity system model, I focused

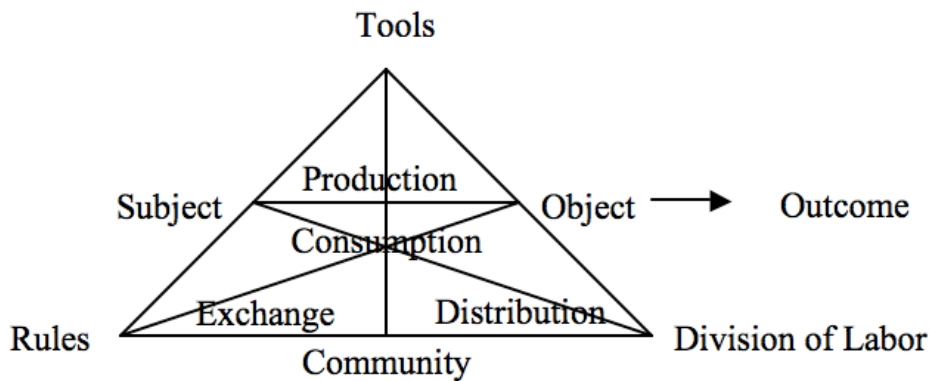
here on categories that were salient, based on my reading in the field and my own experience with multimedia composition. I pulled from three theories in developing this set of categories: art worlds (Becker, 1984), activity systems (Engestrom, 1987; Cole & Engestrom, 1993; Prior, 1998), and participation frameworks (Goffman, 1981). Each of these theories approaches activity and interaction at a different level. Moving from participation frameworks to activity systems to art worlds, the focus on activity moves from local to global, widening the lens to look at the system of activity more broadly.

Participation frameworks can be considered a way of zooming in on part of the activity system, considering only how people participate in the system and their statuses relative to the activity and to the other participants. Goffman's (1981) theory of participation frameworks encourages us to focus specifically on participation within systems of activity. Because students' participation in classroom multimedia composition is a significant part of understanding how these classrooms operate, and particularly how students respond to the teacher's design of the system, this zooming in is key.

Activity theory (Engestrom, 1987) looks at the system of activity as a whole. The basic tenet of activity theory is that activity does not occur in isolation, but rather is mediated by tools, structures, and groups of people (mediational means). "Sociocultural theory argues that activity is situated in concrete interactions that are simultaneously *improvised* locally and *mediated* by prefabricated, historically provided tools and practices" (Prior, 2006, italics in original). In other words, every individual action is created in the moment (for individual purposes and with particular people), but is also mediated by elements that are broader than the moment (established practices and expectations of certain communities, for example). Figure 2 portrays Engestrom's (1987)

model of activity systems, which is among the most prominent models of activity theory. This model demonstrates the belief that activity within the system can be mediated by a variety of mediational means, and so in order to understand the system of activity, we must look not only at the actions within the system, but at all of the mediating factors.

Figure 1. Model of Activity Systems (Engestrom, 1987)



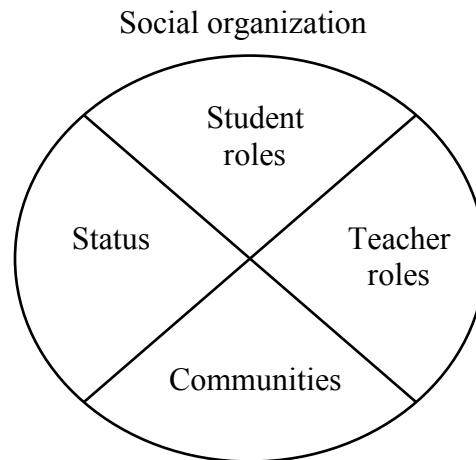
Art worlds (Becker, 1984) zooms out from the activity systems triangle, identifying five types of activity that surround the production of artistic work: conception, execution, manufacturing, support, and response. Each activity type in art worlds involves its own system(s) of activity, each containing its own set of rules, tools, communities, etc. While all of these systems of activity are working toward the same larger object (production of the artistic work), they are also working toward their own individual objects. Each of the three theories identified here focuses on a different level of analysis, each offering unique considerations for examining activity; therefore, I have considered each of these levels in approaching systems of writing production.

The three broad categories discussed below (social organization, participation structures, and conceptions of the activity) together provided the lens through which I approached this study.

Social Organization

Social organization refers to the people that exist in the system and how they exist in relation to one another. This set of categories shows up in activity theory (as community and division of labor) and participation frameworks (in the way that participant statuses are created in relation to one another). This focuses on who is involved in the systems of classroom multimedia composition and how the primary participants (students and teachers) perform and gain status in the system.

Figure 2. Social Organization within Systems of Writing Production



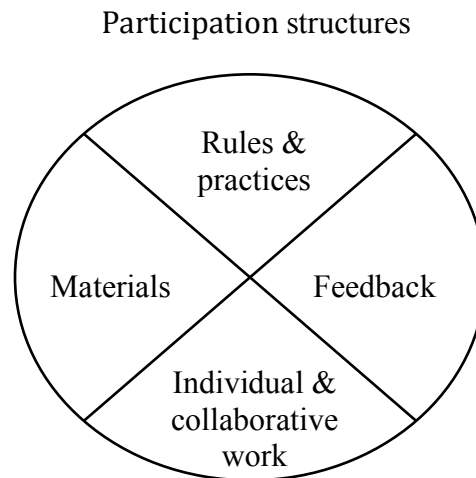
The social aspect of these classroom systems is particularly compelling in thinking about how systems of multimedia composition classrooms operate. Social organization includes four subcategories. The first two subcategories are student and teacher *roles*, particularly the tasks and behaviors associated with each of these roles. Student and teacher identities are related to these roles and play an important part in how they participate in the activity. The third subcategory is *communities*, or groups of people, that are involved in the system. These communities can range from local, specific communities to larger, global communities. It is possible for multiple communities to be

involved in each system. The fourth subcategory is the *status* of members of the system, including how status is gained and what counts for status.

Participation Structures

Participation structures refer to elements of the system that determine how people participate within the system. This set of categories appears in activity theory (as rules, division of labor, and exchange) and participation frameworks (as the focus of this lens, thinking about how individuals' participation statuses exist within larger systems). This focuses on the established structures that shape the opportunities that people (students and teachers, in particular) have to participate in the system.

Figure 3. Participation Structures within Systems of Writing Production



How students and teachers participate in these multimedia composition systems is key. Elements of these systems that are important considerations for participation include use of materials, rules and practices, individual and collaborative work, and feedback. These categories make up the participation structures of the system; together, they build structures that determine the possibilities for participating in the system. Materials refer

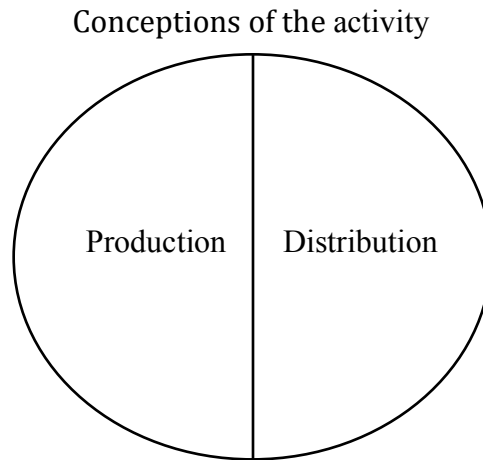
to objects, texts, and resources that participants make use of. An important consideration connected to materials, beyond simply identifying the materials themselves, is how they are shared and used. Rules refer to guidelines and structures that direct what is possible or acceptable to do in the system. Practices refer to the norms or the procedures that have been set in place for how activity should exist. Rules and practices, while perhaps distinct, are certainly related, and together they regulate the ways that participants act and interact within the system. Rules and practices are both also tied up with the communities involved in the system, because different communities are frequently associated with certain ways of acting. Individual and collaborative work refers to the ways that students work individually (on one's own) or collaboratively (with others). Feedback refers to a particular kind of interaction or support that is common in composition classrooms, both between teacher and student and among students.

Conceptions of the Activity

Conceptions of the activity refers to how participants in the system understand the activity itself. While this set of categories does not appear explicitly in any of the three lenses, it is an important element in any system of activity. How participants think about or understand the activity impacts how they engage in the activity. Another important consideration is how participants in the system understand or conceive of the activity itself. Certainly, this is embedded in other categories in particular ways, but in trying to understand classroom systems of multimedia composition, this area deserves specific attention. How the teacher and students understand the composition process affects the ways in which they perform or participate in the activity. These categories (how

production and distribution of texts are understood) make up the conceptions of the activity.

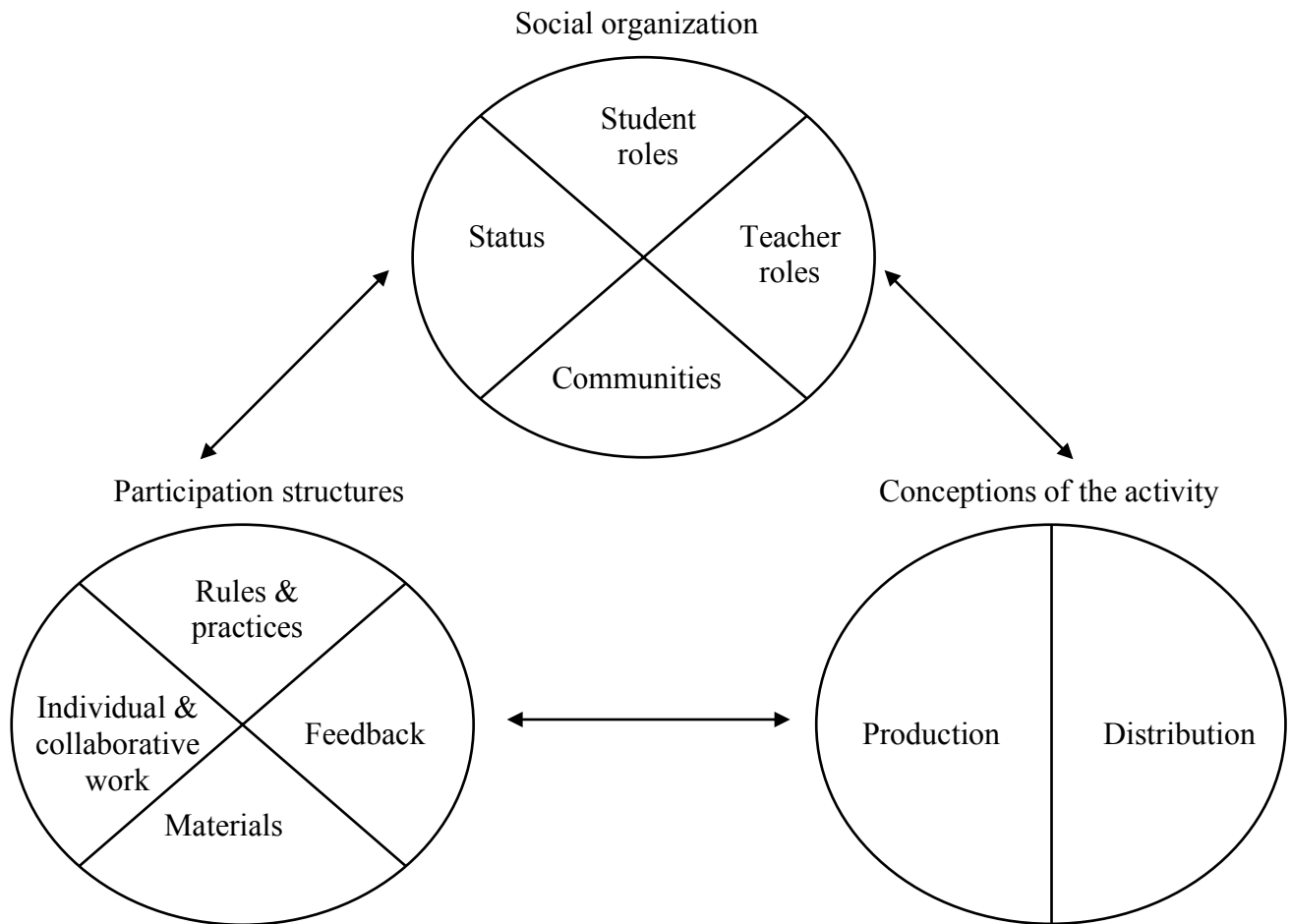
Figure 4. Conceptions of the Activity within Systems of Writing Production



Systems of Writing Production

Figure 5 offers a heuristic of systems of writing production, displaying how these categories work together to create these systems. While this heuristic allows us to think about different pieces of systems of writing production, I am not attempting to prove or disprove its existence as a model. As Figure 1 shows, each category affects and is affected by each of the other categories. For example, participants' conceptions of the activity influence and are influenced by the social organization of the system. The three categories are mutually dependent, and a change in one category creates changes in other categories. This interconnectedness of elements of the system makes it difficult to separate them or to consider them in isolation. However, in order to examine a system of activity, it is important to look at each area of the system. We must not lose sight, though, of this interconnectedness.

Figure 5. Heuristic of Systems of Writing Production



I used this model of systems of writing production to guide my exploration of the teacher's design of this system. These categories informed my thinking about the system as a whole and provided areas in which to examine the teacher's design.

Overview of the Dissertation

Having discussed the purpose, research questions, and theoretical framework of this study, I will now provide an overview of the chapters of this dissertation. Chapter I provided an introduction to the study. In Chapter II, I review the literature in the area of multimedia composition, using an activity theory lens. Chapter III describes the design

and methodology of the study and provides a description of the particular context being studied. The discussion of data from this study is divided between Chapters IV and V. In Chapter IV, I examine specific elements of the teacher's design and how students responded to each of those elements. In Chapter V, I examine the teacher's expectations of the activity, as well as how students responded to his expectations and developed their own expectations of the activity. In Chapter VI, I discuss conclusions from data analysis and implications of the findings for systems of classroom multimedia composition. I also address limitations of the study and directions for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I review the existing body of literature in the area of classroom multimedia composition. I begin by describing the landscape of literature, identifying the current areas of research and the gaps that exist. Next, I discuss systems of classroom multimedia composition as portrayed in the literature, focusing on particular elements of the systems. Finally, I identify three trends within systems of classroom multimedia composition across the literature.

In locating materials to include in the review of the literature, I used three methods. First, I began by searching electronic databases for published peer-reviewed research on the social practices and participation structures of multimedia composition in classrooms. In addition to research articles, I identified practitioner articles that described this type of composition in classrooms. Second, I reviewed the contents of four key journals: the primary research journals of the National Reading Conference (*Journal of Literacy Research*) and the International Reading Association (*Reading Research Quarterly*), as well as a research journal and professional journal of the National Council for Teachers of English (*Research in the Teaching of English* and *Language Arts*). I examined these journals going back to 1995 searching for any articles related to multimedia composition. Third, I mined the reference lists of the works I identified from my first two search methods to identify other relevant research pieces and key conceptual pieces.

This search process yielded research studies (e.g. Baker & Kinzer, 1998; Carlin Menter & Shuell, 2003; Dimitriadi, 2001) and practitioner work (e.g. Damico, 2006; Long, 2008; Mahiri, 2006) on classroom processes of multimedia composition. In addition, this search yielded conceptual and theoretical pieces (e.g. Bruce, 2008a; Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008; MacArthur, 2006; Merchant, 2007; Reinking, et al., 1997), which influenced this paper in direct and indirect ways.

An area of literature exists exploring multimedia composition in out-of-school settings, such as after-school organizations (e.g. Hull & Katz, 2006; Nelson & Hull, 2008; Hull & Zacher, 2004; Beilke & Stuve, 2004). However, while this literature can definitely offer insight regarding social practices and participation, the environment is sufficiently different from classrooms to warrant a separate analysis. Rather than mirroring the environments of school, these after-school programs sometimes complement and build on the experiences offered in school (Hull & Zacher, 2004). Attempting to make comparisons and claims across these settings and classrooms would pose difficulties, because of the differences in rules, practices, and overall environments of these settings. Therefore, I chose not to use those studies to characterize classroom multimedia composition.

Through my search, I found that there is a body of research literature focused on describing students' processes of composing in multimedia. Much of the practitioner work I located in this search involved teachers describing multimedia composition projects that they used in their classrooms and how students participated in them. A gap in the available literature exists in combining these two approaches: taking a research approach to describe a teacher's design of a multimedia composition project and to

explore how students participated within and responded to that design. It is this gap that my study seeks to address.

In the sections that follow, I discuss elements of systems of classroom multimedia composition, using the available literature to describe features and practices of these systems. I use the categories identified in my theoretical framework (chapter I) to organize my discussion of the literature.

Social Organization

Student Roles

Students tend to take on roles of writer, responder, editor, collaborator, and audience. Students spend significant amounts of time composing and offering feedback to peers on their compositions, making these roles particularly important ones for students to adopt. It is common for students to work together as collaborators on teams during composing to actually co-author pieces (Walsh, 2007; Damico, 2006; Mahiri, 2006; Kist, 2005; Sadik, 2008; Ranker, 2008). Students also serve as authentic audiences for their peers (Baker & Kinzer, 1998) in these systems. Students gain an increased awareness of their peers as their audience, consciously making decisions about content and design based on their peer audience (what they will enjoy and respond to).

Whether working individually or in teams, it is common for different students to become skilled at different things (Mahiri, 2006) and adopt roles based on those skills. For example, some students might develop expertise at finding and obtaining pictures from the Internet, while other students might become skilled at working with particular software. As students develop these skills, it becomes common for them to become experts in those areas (for example, the image locator or the iMovie expert) and to share

their expertise with their peers; teachers even begin to systematically refer students to other knowledgeable students when they need technical assistance (Reinking & Watkins, 2000). In this way, the community develops, and all students play important roles in the community through their participation.

Students also take on teacher-like roles, as they perform tasks like explaining and asking probing questions (Ware, 2006). These roles are especially evident when the technologies, or features of the technology, are unfamiliar. Regardless of the teacher's expertise with the technologies, this is an important role for students. If the teacher lacks technical expertise, students step into this role in place of the teacher. Even if the teacher does possess technical expertise, though, having students adopt these roles allows all students requiring assistance to get the help they need. It is also possible that gaps exist in the teacher's understanding, and students can help to fill those gaps. Therefore, this is a significant role for students in multimedia composition classrooms.

Other students play the role of community builders, by encouraging other students and praising their work (Ware, 2006). Students may offer general praise in passing ("Oh, that's cool!") or more specific praise in a response setting ("I like the way you transitioned between those two clips."). Students also offer encouragement in the form of assistance, being willing to help students develop their compositions. All of these forms of encouragement are important in helping students feel comfortable sharing their work and in developing students' identities as multimedia composers. Because this identity (multimedia composer) is new to many students, this role of community builder is crucial, to help students become more comfortable and begin to embrace this identity.

These student roles have implications for students' identities and for classroom communities. As the range of valued expertise expands, more students are offered opportunities to be an expert or to develop a specialized skill, which impacts students' developing identities.

Teacher Roles

Teachers commonly take on the role of facilitator in whole-class activities, small group interactions, and individual development. In whole-class activities, the teacher plans and structures activities. In small group activities, the teacher helps students negotiate roles and responsibilities (Damico, 2006). In terms of individual development, the teacher facilitates students' shaping of their own interests and their developing identities as composers (Mahiri, 2006).

Another teacher role is that of author or composer of multimedia texts. Halio (1996) argues that the role of writer is an important one for teachers to adopt in multimedia composition. Teachers must write along with their students, so that they can experience the same challenges and dilemmas that students encounter, challenges related both to composition and to the technologies. One way of understanding students' processes is to sit and talk with students as they write, but as Halio (1996) points out, teachers must go beyond this to become authors themselves. Teachers model their own writing and processes for students.

The process of multimedia composition is unique from many other instructional activities, in that it provides opportunities for teachers to naturally and willingly become learners; this is particularly true as students help teachers learn to work with the technology (Reinking & Watkins, 2000). Because the technology can be intimidating, the

role of learner is an important one for teachers to adopt, so that as they write and explore with the students, they can demonstrate in a nonthreatening way how to use the resources (Halio, 1996). Teachers develop different roles and stances toward the technologies: the technology expert, the emerging or marginal technology expert, the facilitator, and the passive participant (Reinking & Watkins, 2000). The technology expert is the teacher who shows interest in the technologies, who masters the technologies related to the classroom practices, and who shows commitment to working with the technologies beyond what is required for classroom practice; other teachers look to the technology expert for assistance and support. The emerging or marginal technology expert is the teacher who begins as a passive participant in the technologies but gradually becomes a more enthusiastic and more competent user of the technologies. The facilitator is the teacher who is not especially interested in the technologies but is interested in connecting classroom activities with the technologies, despite her own lack of knowledge in working with them. Finally, the passive participant is the teacher who relies on others for guidance and support; while she may be enthusiastic about the use of technology in her classroom, she looks to others to have the technical knowledge to facilitate this. The importance in recognizing these different stances teachers take toward technology in these classrooms is that each of these positions both the teacher and the students differently within the system. For instance, if the teacher is a passive participant, particular students may be more inclined to be the technology experts for the class. On the other hand, if the teacher is a technology expert, the amount of technical support the teacher provides to students may be different, which may also change the nature and frequency of student-teacher interaction.

A significant distinction needs to be made in terms of the teacher's role in providing support for students' composing. While it is important for the teacher to provide feedback to students on their compositions (Damico, 2006) and for her to know a great deal about composing, as a "composition specialist" (Halio, 1996, p.347), she is not expected to be a "technology specialist," or technology expert (Kajder, 2006). This is particularly important as we consider not only what roles the teacher plays, but also what roles the students *expect* the teacher to play.

Communities

The classroom community (including the teacher and the students) is an important part of this system. A great deal of the work of producing, sharing, and responding to compositions happens within the classroom, and the classroom community plays a big part in that process.

Another community commonly involved in the system is that of previous students, who become members of the community through the sharing of their work as examples (Long, 2008). This community is particularly important when students are composing in forms with which they are unfamiliar. Models of writing become very important in the case of multimedia composition, as students often lack familiarity with the forms, and the work of these former students connects them to this community of classroom composers.

Other communities are also involved in this system in significant ways. Communities of parents, friends, other teachers, and members of online environments (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003) may be involved in the system for a range of purposes. First, these communities, especially friends and family, frequently participate in the system by helping students locate resources (Ranker, 2008). This is especially common

when students need to locate resources from their personal lives or family histories. For example, if students are composing personal essays as digital stories, they may need old photographs or artifacts related to their topics. Family members often get involved in the process by helping students locate these materials. What was once a private act of collecting materials becomes a public act, with others (both inside and outside the classroom) sharing in the process. Second, these communities offer responses to students' compositions. Students may share their compositions with friends and family to get their reactions or response. They may also share their work with online communities to get feedback and suggestions (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003). Third, these other communities may also facilitate working with the technology. Because some features of the technology may be new to students, students' friends and online affiliations outside the classroom (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003) can help them learn and understand ways of using the technology.

It is also common for students across the school to become part of the community. Students not only carry their compositions outside the classroom for others to see, but they also bring people from outside the classroom community in to view their work. "During the various stages of completion of the video, they would regularly bring students who were not in our class into the studio to view their work" (Bruce, 2008b, p.279). Throughout the process, students have a sense of pride in their compositions, leading them to invite other communities of students into the system as audience members and responders.

Status

Students can gain status through their compositions (becoming known as skilled writers/composers) and through the feedback they offer to their peers on their compositions. Being an active, productive, and skilled participant in the composition process is valued in this system and earns students' value. There are other considerations to how participants are valued, though.

In out-of-school multimedia composition, methods for valuing members of the community are quite transparent. In many online environments, for instance, ways of ranking participants are built into the technology. This might involve ratings by other participants, length of membership in the community, or number of posts. In the case of YouTube, for example, posting comments, sharing videos, and linking to other participants' profiles are ways of building one's own value or status in the community (Lange, 2007).

In classroom multimedia composition, these methods are more difficult to determine. However, research in the field does suggest some factors that contribute to students' value or status. Technical expertise is a skill that is acknowledged and frequently sought out, both by students and by the teacher (Reinking & Watkins, 2000). For example, students might become skilled at working with particular software or using tools like digital cameras. Those students then become experts who share their knowledge with other members of the class. Students also become known for their abilities to locate materials (such as images, music, and sound effects) for use in compositions. These experts share their processes and materials with other members of the community.

It is important to note here the array of what “counts” for status. Students have a wide range of ways to contribute to the community and to develop their statuses as valued members. Even students who may often feel alienated from classroom communities are offered numerous opportunities for building their own statuses (Smythe & Neufeld, 2010). Reinking and Watkins (2000) note that lower achieving students interact differently with their peers during the multimedia composition process, as they too develop technical expertise that they then share with their peers. As we begin to build classrooms where all students have skills, knowledge, and expertise to offer, we have classroom environments in which all students are seen as valued, contributing members.

Participation Structures

Materials

The materials used during the composition process vary, as expected, based on the type of composition being done. Computers, scanners, and digital cameras (Baker & Kinzer, 1998; Ware, 2006) are fairly common. Other materials, such as computer software, are not as consistent. For instance, HyperCard software (Reinking & Watkins, 2000) is used in one of the studies to create multimedia book reviews, but this software would not be appropriate for some of the other forms of composition; so, software is something that varies frequently. In addition, technological materials are time-relevant and have certain life spans, causing some of these materials (such as computer software) to be constantly changing. As new computer programs are developed, older ones often fall into disuse; this is the nature of working in technologically rich environments.

Use of materials is not tightly or neatly structured. In many cases, part of using materials in multimedia composition is learning how to use the materials. For example,

students may also need assistance using the material (for example, the scanner), which slows down the process of accessing materials. In addition, while materials are available, there may be limited numbers of a particular tool. For example, there may only be one digital camera. Again, this makes the accessing of materials less fluid and cuts into composition time.

As students engage in the process of planning their compositions or visualizing their texts, they brainstorm the materials (for example, images and sounds) they will need for their compositions (Bruce, 2008b). Students then begin to search for materials that match what they need (Ranker, 2008), or they produce their own materials (for example, by taking a picture with a digital camera). Consistency of materials from planning to final product is typical (Bruce, 2008b); in other words, images used in final products usually bear strong resemblance to the images students planned to use. Students tend to stay true to their vision, whether that means creating their own materials or finding existing ones.

As students work to locate their own materials, it is common for students to share resources and features of the technology with one another (Reinking & Watkins, 2000). This sharing of materials occurs in a very open and active way. One factor that may contribute to this is that more materials are needed, and so it becomes a community in which students know what others are working on and are on the lookout for materials that might help them.

Perhaps a more important consideration, though, is that simply locating the materials is not the real work of composition; the real work is in how one uses the materials. Even if multiple students use some of the same materials (images, for example), they will not use them in the same way. Students take the materials and make them their

own by remixing and hybridizing them, using them in unique ways and combining them with different media. Therefore, in many cases, students do not feel compelled to hide materials or keep their resources a secret, because one student using a particular material takes nothing away from another student using the same material. This creates a community in which students share, borrow, and remix resources.

The way that materials and resources are learned and shared among students is particularly interesting. It is common for students to spontaneously share special effects and features of the technology with one another (Reinking & Watkins, 2000). Students move around the room during small-group time to share resources, not only sharing what they found, but also sharing how they found it (for example, the keywords they used to search) (Damico, 2006). Students help one another; they frequently stop in the middle of what they are doing to help their classmates (Mahiri, 2006). This is an important feature of the participation structures, as students become more open to collaborating with peers on their compositions throughout the process; they are not only collaborating by editing and offering response, but they are actually collaborating during composing, by helping them find and select materials to use in their compositions. As a result, this collaboration begins in the earliest stages of composing.

The materials themselves dictate in some ways the kinds of interaction that will occur during the writing process. For example, in the case of multimedia composition, much of the composition takes place on a computer. The “public nature of the computer monitor” causes students to participate with one another in particular ways and results in a lack of privacy for students during the composing process (Baker & Kinzer, 1998, p. 429). Students’ compositions are on display throughout the process, and students interact

with their peers' compositions at all stages. The entire process is public and open to participation of other students.

Rules and Practices

Students typically have significant amounts of in-class time to work on their compositions, and they control their own paces of composing. Students also have a great deal of agency over their own compositional choices (topics and forms, for example).

The rules and structures of this system are fairly undefined. Practices and structures in multimedia composition classrooms are organic; students move about the classroom and interact with others as needed (Damico, 2006; Mahiri, 2006, Smythe and Neufeld, 2010), making it difficult to define a clear sense of order. This is not to say that no order or rules exist. Rather, the rules and practices are more difficult to define. This could be due, in part, to the short history of multimedia composition; we have not yet developed sets of procedures or manuals for what multimedia composition classrooms should look like. However, this also seems to be a feature of the multimedia composition system; the spontaneous sharing of resources, assistance with technology, and offering of feedback (all of which are tied to the public nature of composing) create an environment that appears quite unstructured.

The rules of composition are also much less defined in this system; students are not confined by the rules of traditional composition. In fact, students have a chance to play and break the rules of traditional composition (Halio, 1996).

Individual and Collaborative Work

Frequent and varied collaboration occurs in multimedia composition classrooms. Response groups, in which students respond to peers' compositions, exist in this system,

in addition to unplanned moments of collaboration between students. Multimedia composition classrooms also see meetings between students and teachers, both scheduled and impromptu.

Studies indicate that collaboration occurs much more frequently during multimedia composition (Bailey & Carroll, 2010; Gilje, 2010; Kervin, 2009; Kist, 2005) than during other academic activities, “which is not surprising given that increased peer interaction is a common finding when instructional activities involve computers” (Reinking & Watkins, 2000, p. 400). Composing on computers tends to be much more social than composing with pencil and paper, involving more collaboration and sharing of work (Merchant, 2008), and this type of social collaboration is very important to fostering creative learning (Walsh, 2007). Students sit together as collaborators to discuss interests and questions, engaging in “collaborative talk” (Long, 2008). Baker and Kinzer (1998) say that this heightened social nature, due in part to the public nature of computer screens, meant that students “collaborated all day, every day” (p. 436).

In general, working with technology seems to build stronger relationships between students; this appears in the system as frequent instances of incidental sharing of information (Reinking & Watkins, 2000). Particularly as the technology presents challenges, students develop camaraderie and are genuinely interested in helping one another (Reinking & Watkins, 2000). All students in the class willingly help one another, even stopping in the middle of their own work to help a peer (Mahiri, 2006).

Collaborative work in these classrooms involves students sharing materials/resources or methods for finding such materials. It involves students helping one another with particular software or solving technical glitches in their compositions. It

involves sharing composition or design techniques, through demonstration or through sharing one's own work. It involves looking at a peer's composition and offering feedback or support. All forms of collaborative work occur quite fluidly in multimedia composition classrooms, as students work as interdependent learners (Goodman, 2003). Rather than having time set aside for collaborative work, students create opportunities to collaborate throughout class time (Damico, 2006; Mahiri, 2006).

Feedback

Students receive feedback on their compositions both from the teacher and from their peers. Teachers frequently respond to students' compositions (Damico, 2006) in individual conferences with students (Baker & Kinzer, 1998). Students also receive feedback from peers, both formally (through peer response groups) (Bailey, 2009; Long, 2008) and informally (through comments as students pass one another's computer screens) (Baker & Kinzer, 1998). It becomes increasingly common for students to provide feedback to their peers on their compositions (Bruce, 2008b; Mahiri, 2006; Smythe and Neufeld, 2010; Ware, 2006) in less structured ways, making this feedback a much more common occurrence. Because students' compositions are publicly visible on their computer screens, it is common for students to walk by and offer suggestions or comments, whether such feedback is solicited by the author or not (Baker & Kinzer, 1998).

Conceptions of the Activity

Production

The writing process in multimedia composition is non-linear (Ranker, 2008); in fact, the writing process may be very messy. It can be difficult to define when the writing

process begins and ends, because students are constantly brainstorming, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing (Baker & Kinzer, 1998). One study found that despite the sequential instruction on writing process that students received (viewing the writing process as steps), students did not compose sequentially; the writing process was dynamic despite sequential instruction (Baker & Kinzer, 1998).

A great deal of student-initiated revision occurs throughout the process. As students watch drafts of their compositions, they talk about video clips they need to get in order to make the whole text work (Bruce, 2008b). Although they may not explicitly mention revision (Bruce, 2008b), this is a process they engage in continually – watching a draft, deciding what else needs to be done or changed, making the necessary changes, watching the new draft, and so on. Rather than working in phases through the composition process and reaching the “revision phase,” revision occurs often and throughout the composition process. As students move among planning, drafting, and revising, they experience composition as a recursive process (Bruce, 2008b).

In addition, the degrees of openness and closure with regard to compositions are quite varied in multimedia composition. Studies indicate that students tend to make more revisions when using a computer (Merchant, 2008). Baker and Kinzer (1998) found that students rarely saw their compositions as finished and closed. "Months after a student had 'published' a composition, they would notice it as a file name on a hard drive or purposely look for it, open the file, and revise it again" (Baker & Kinzer, 1998, p.436).

Compositions feel more open, and thus, the writing process becomes much more recursive, as opposed to the sequential, linear conception of the writing process that is so ubiquitous.

Across many studies of multimedia composition, a reliance on traditional literacies, specifically print, exists as a way to support students through the processes of brainstorming, organizing, and planning (Bailey & Carroll, 2010; Gilje, 2010; Kervin, 2009; Mills, 2008; Ranker, 2008; Smythe and Neufeld, 2010). In some cases, the production process is seen as beginning with print texts, which students then converted into multimedia texts (Peng, Fitzgerald, & Park, 2006). In one study, students were given a print text (article) written by someone else, and they created nonlinear, multimedia representations of the article (Carlin Menter & Shuell, 2003).

Halio (1996) discusses a range of avenues into multimedia composition, suggesting that several options are available to students. Similarly, Jewitt (2005) states that multimedia composition offers “different points of entry into a text” (p. 329). Students might start with print text, they might start with images and sounds, or they might start with a memory exercise. In some studies, teachers had students create storyboards as a form of prewriting (Gilje, 2010; Mills, 2008) or had them write a script of the narration for their videos (Kervin, 2009; Ranker, 2007). Some roads into the process are better for certain students (Halio, 1996), though some research raised concerns that print scaffolds may be stifling for some students (Gilje, 2010). The process of production looked very different across studies, and in some cases, even within studies across students; thus, it is difficult to characterize the process as following a neat structure.

Distribution

Distribution in multimedia composition classrooms occurs both throughout the process, as students share in-progress work, and at the “end” of the writing process, when

students share their “final” compositions (which, in itself becomes a flexible term, as compositions are becoming increasingly open to revision and not seen as “final”).

Varied methods are used for distributing the end products. A class sharing of compositions is a common practice. In some cases, students receive a disc containing the projects of all students (Damico, 2006). In other cases, students participate in broader distribution practices as well, sharing their work with members and communities outside the classroom (Kist, 2005; Sadik, 2008), including peers and parents (Bailey, 2009; Mills, 2008; Smythe & Neufeld, 2010), community events (Mills, 2010; Oldaker, 2010), national contests (Gilje, 2010; Kervin, 2009), and online spaces (Walsh, 2007; Mahiri, 2006; Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003). One such distribution practice is a public viewing, in which families, friends, and other members of the wider school community come together to view the compositions. Posting work on websites (e.g. YouTube) is a common way of distributing compositions in online spaces. As students make their work public, the audience for the work extends beyond the teacher, the classroom, and in some cases, even the school (Walsh, 2007).

In addition to distribution of end products, students frequently share their in-progress work. This occurs, in part, through unintentional sharing of work, as students overhear or catch a glimpse of their peers’ work (see Feedback section). This sharing throughout the process also occurs in purposeful, intentional ways. Teachers may structure class time for students to share in-progress reports on their projects with the whole class (Damico, 2006; Ware, 2006). Students also share their work with individual students as they seek assistance from their peers; this assistance may come in the form of technical expertise, composition proficiency, or general affective response.

Trends Across the Review of the Literature

Three important trends within systems of multimedia composition appear across this review of the literature: the public nature of composition, the range of knowledge and opportunities for learning, and collaboration throughout the process.

Public Nature of Composition

The entire process of composing in multimedia is quite public, which is evident in the social organization (student roles and communities), participation structures (materials, individual and collaborative work, and feedback), and conceptions of the activity (both production and distribution). From the beginning, others are familiar with the topic or story of students' compositions, because of their participation in the process. Collecting materials becomes a very social and public act, as different communities (other students, friends, family, etc.) engage in this process along with the composer. We also see this heightened public nature during composing, as students' work is much more publicly visible on computer screens than on paper that lies flat on students' desks. Students are much more likely to see what their peers are working on, because the moment of composing is so visible. This results in students receiving frequent and ongoing feedback from their peers, as feedback is no longer confined to conferencing meetings but often occurs spontaneously in passing. This also means, though, that students no longer have a sense of privacy with regard to their work. They frequently receive unsolicited feedback and do not have as much control over when and how others read their work. Distribution practices, which have students frequently sharing their compositions with communities outside the classroom, further exemplify this increased public nature of composition.

Range of Knowledge and Opportunities for Learning

The process of multimedia composition involves a wide range skills and knowledge (writing/composition knowledge, technology knowledge, skills for locating materials, etc.). Therefore, a wide range of skills and knowledge are valued in the classroom. This range of knowledge is evident in the social organization (student roles, teacher roles, and status), participation structures (materials, feedback, and individual and collaborative work), and conceptions of the activity (production). Students have a variety of ways to contribute to the classroom and a range of possibilities for being valued in the community. At the same time, both students and the teacher have an array of opportunities for learning. Learning occurs not only around composition knowledge, but also around technical expertise and use of media.

Collaboration Throughout Process

Multimedia composition offers multiple opportunities for collaboration, which can be seen in the social organization (student roles and status), participation structures (materials, feedback, and individual and collaborative work), and conceptions of the activity (production and distribution). In several of the studies included in this literature review, students composed in teams, creating collaborative pieces of writing; this kind of writing is common in multimedia composition classrooms. The collecting and sharing of materials is also evidence of collaboration among students. By participating in this process to share and remix materials, students are actively engaged in helping their peers compose. Students also frequently engage in helping peers make decisions and figure out aspects of the technology, even pausing in the middle of their own work to do so.

Students really begin to embrace this social aspect of composing, and this collaboration becomes an important part of what it means to participate in these classrooms.

Conclusion

This review of the literature served two purposes. First, I used the available literature to understand the landscape of research in the area of classroom multimedia composition, so that I could identify gaps in the literature and design a study to address one of those gaps. Second, I established the field's current understandings about systems of classroom multimedia composition, which also serves to situate the design and findings of my study. Having built a case for this importance of this study, I now move to a discussion of the research methodology for this study in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to further the field's understanding of systems of multimedia composition in classrooms, through close analysis and rich descriptions of individual classroom systems of collaborative video essay composition. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How does the teacher design a classroom system of collaborative video essay composition?
2. How does the teacher make adjustments to his design, across classes and over time?
3. How do students respond to the system the teacher has created?

In this chapter, I first describe my rationale for the design of the study. Second, I discuss site and participant selection. Third, I describe data sources for the study and methods of data collection. Fourth, I explain the methods used for data analysis. Finally, I address issues of trustworthiness related to the study.

Design of the Study

Because this study sought to understand a teacher's design of a system of classroom multimedia composition, of which the context is particularly important, naturalistic inquiry was the most appropriate research paradigm. Naturalistic inquiry recognizes the importance of context in understanding any phenomenon, as well as the

notion that multiple realities exist within that context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, the design of this study came from this naturalistic paradigm.

While this study employed many methods and techniques from ethnographic research, such as personal experience with participants, narrative descriptions of the data, and methods including observation, interview, and artifact collection (Agar, 1996), this study is better identified as ethnographic participant observation (Spradley, 1980), the distinction being that participant observation studies are “not as lengthy in duration as ethnography, are less comprehensive in scope, and are conducted in relatively mundane locations” (Spradley, 1980, p. 76). The period of time over which this study occurs, while appropriate for the research questions, is too brief to be considered ethnography. Also, the questions posed limit the scope of research to the teacher’s design of the system and students’ responses, rather than trying to gain a broad understanding of the system as a whole. The participant observation approach involves “discovering through immersion and participation the hows and whys of human behavior in a particular context” (Spradley, 1980, p. 75). The particular context here was a classroom system of collaborative video essay composition, and the hows and whys of behavior were focused generally on participation in the system, but more specifically on the teacher’s design of that system and student response to the design.

The three key elements of participant observation are: “getting into the location of whatever aspect of the human experience you wish to study, building rapport with the participants, and spending enough time interacting to get the needed data” (Spradley, 1980, pp. 76-77). The design of the study was built around these three elements. First, because I wanted to study a system of multimedia composition in a classroom, I found a

location where this was occurring and where I would be welcome to conduct research. Second, I built rapport with both the teacher and student participants. My previous professional relationship with the teacher supported my rapport with him, while my daily interactions and interviews with students were used to build rapport with them. Third, I spent a significant amount of time in the classroom, both to build relationships with the participants and to gather sufficient data to address my research questions.

Finally, participant observation is extremely useful “at the exploratory stages of the research on a new topic, culture, venue, or behavior” (Spradley, 1980, p. 82). Because this was a relatively new educational practice and a fairly new area of study, I selected this approach. I believe that it allowed for me to explore system as a whole and specifically the questions regarding teacher design and student response to the design, in a more complete way.

Site and Participant Selection

Site selection and description. The site for this study was Riverside High School (all names, including those of the school and all participants, are pseudonyms), a public high school located in a suburban district near a major metropolitan city in the Midwestern United States. The district, which consisted of five schools (three elementary, one middle, and one high school), consistently ranked as the highest performing district in its state, based on test scores. With a total district enrollment of more than 2,600 students (approximately 800 of whom are enrolled in the high school), the district served a primarily Caucasian population (95%).

The three classes in which this study took place were Advanced Placement (AP) English Language and Composition classes, comprised of 11th grade students. The AP

program was an important component of this school, with 20 AP course offerings and 63% of students passing the AP exams for those courses (above the national average).

I initiated contact with this site through a teacher, with whom I had taught previously. I knew that this teacher had an interest in using technology in his classes, and once I made initial contact with him, I learned that the school where he was teaching (Riverside High School) shared his interest in technology. I ultimately selected this site because of its commitment to innovation and incorporating instructional technology, which had resulted in the establishment of practices involving technology that were absent from many other schools. Technology was readily available for student and teacher use, through multiple computer labs, a Macintosh laptop cart, and a technology desk where tools (such as computers, cameras, etc.) could be checked out. The district maintained a minimum 4:1 student to computer ratio. In addition, the high school participated in a one-to-one initiative that provided each student enrolled in “early bird” classes (before the start of the traditional school day) with his or her own Macintosh laptop for the duration of the school year. One of the classes observed for this study was an early bird class, in which all students had their own Macintosh laptops.

The availability of technology and commitment to using technology to support student learning contributed to multimedia composition becoming an established practice at this high school, which was relatively uncommon for high schools across the country. During the three years prior to this study, teachers of the AP English Language and Composition classes had incorporated multimedia composition in their classes, in the form of collaborative video essays in response to literature (this assignment is described in detail below). This being an established practice in these classes was an important

consideration for me in terms of site selection. Although the practice was new to the students, the teacher in this study had engaged in the project the previous year, giving him the benefit of experience and perspective.

Video essay assignment. In the AP English Language and Composition classes at Riverside High School, students read classic American novels. When students finished the novels, they selected topics and worked in groups to complete a project that involved both a print research paper and a video essay. The print research paper involved students researching literary analysis and literary criticism regarding a particular topic from the assigned novel (e.g. transcendentalism in *The Scarlet Letter*) and composing a paper to organize and display their research of the topic. The video essay was described as a visual presentation of the research paper, in which students introduced the same content they addressed in their print research papers. The video essays included video clips, print images, on-screen text, voiceover, music, and other media. Upon completion, students submitted both the print research papers and the video essays to the teacher for grading, and they presented their video essays to the class for a class viewing. Students participated in this project for each novel they read throughout the year. This study explored the first two cycles of this assignment, which focused on the novels *The Scarlet Letter*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain.

As a form of multimedia composition, this assignment engaged students in using multiple forms of media to convey a message. Because this study sought to understand the system of activity of classroom multimedia composition, particularly the ways the teacher designed the system and the ways that students responded to the teacher's design,

this assignment fit this purpose, offering a form of multimedia composition to explore in a classroom setting.

It is likely that systems of activity for different forms of multimedia composition would differ in some ways from that of this video essay. For example, while this video essay was mostly academic, other forms of multimedia composition, such as digital storytelling, are often much more personal, and so we might expect some changes in the system based on this, such as greater involvement of family members and the use of personal artifacts as materials for compositions. Just as systems of print writing in classrooms may look different across different forms of writing, the same is true with multimedia composition. This study did not propose to understand and describe all systems of multimedia composition. Rather, this was a beginning step, seeking to understand this system of multimedia composition and opening a space for dialogue about other systems of multimedia composition. In addition, this study explored the design decisions made by one teacher and the ways that three classes of students responded to his decisions; this study is not intended to speak for design decisions made by other teachers in other contexts.

Participant selection and description.

Teacher. Participant selection began with the identification of the classroom teacher. As I began searching for sites and participants for this research, I reached out by email to several teachers I knew from various contexts (teachers with whom I had taught, teachers I had previously taught at the university level, and teachers I knew from social settings), inquiring about their uses of technology in the classroom and whether they asked students to compose in different forms of media. I received multiple responses

about the uses of technology in the classroom, but only two teachers mentioned students composing in different media: Ms. Prawn and Mr. Carter.

I had taught Ms. Prawn in a university course and recalled her being interested in using media in her high school English classes. In her response to my inquiry, she described several uses of technology, primarily centered on having students read texts of different media. In addition, she described a new project she was hoping to try out during the upcoming school year, in which she would have students create commercials in video format within a unit on persuasion. While this sounded like an interesting project, I was concerned that it would be Ms. Prawn's first attempt at such a project. I had hoped to find a teacher who already had some experience with the project I would be studying, in part to help the project run more smoothly, but more importantly, because I believed the teacher would be able to better discuss and articulate design decisions. Luckily, I received a response from another teacher who had the benefit of experience with the project I would be studying.

I knew Mr. Carter from my first teaching position, where we both taught high school English classes. I had been familiar with his interest in and use of technology in the classroom. When he responded to my initial inquiry, he described having students analyze the messages portrayed in various media, as well as a video essay project. He explained that the video essay assignment had been in place at the school for three years. Another teacher had designed it and taught it for the first two years in the AP English Language and Composition courses, but when Mr. Carter took over these classes the previous school year, he kept that assignment as part of the course. Therefore, he already had one year of experience with the project. This was an important consideration in my

selection of Mr. Carter as the classroom teacher for this study. In addition, I was intrigued by the description of the assignment, as different from many other multimedia composition projects I had seen previously. When I invited Mr. Carter to participate in the study, he immediately consented, and administrators at the school and district levels agreed to this study being conducted at their school.

Mr. Carter was in his 11th year of teaching. He had taught at two other high schools before coming to Riverside High School, and he was in his fifth year at Riverside. Mr. Carter was currently teaching grades 10 and 11, both standard and Advanced Placement classes, but across his previous years of teaching, he had taught grades nine through 12. This was Mr. Carter's second year of teaching the AP English Language and Composition classes at Riverside High School, and it was his second year of assigning this video essay project.

Mr. Carter had worked to find meaningful ways to incorporate technology and media into his classes, and he described three particular ways he did so prior to designing the video essay project examined in this study. First, in his English II (10th grade) classes, he used a range of media in order to teach rhetoric and media literacy, teaching students how to read media such as news clips and advertisements. Second, in the last high school where he taught, Mr. Carter assigned his 12th grade students a video project, which he called the "senior videos." In these videos, students used still images, music, on-screen text, and voiceover narration to tell stories about their lives. Mr. Carter explained that this project was more about the exposure to technology than about the writing component, and he described this project as a "sentimental, end-of-high-school reflection" (Interview, October 26, 2010). The third project was for an elective class he taught, entitled

“Literature and Film.” For this project, students created video adaptations of short stories they had read. Each of these three projects involving media served different purposes, but together they established Mr. Carter as a teacher who had an interest in technology and media and a commitment to using these in his classes.

Students. Once I identified Mr. Carter as the participating teacher, I identified the three classes that would be composing the video essays, which were his three AP English Language and Composition classes. I invited all students in these three classes to participate in the study. Prior to the first day of the project, I gave a brief introduction to the study in each of the three classes and distributed parent consent forms and student assent forms. Students took the consent forms home to their parents, and students returned the consent and assent forms directly to me. Of the 57 students (15, 16, and 26, respectively in classes A, B, and C) who were invited to participate in the study, 49 consented across the three classes (13, 13, and 23, respectively in classes A, B, and C).

The student participants in this study were all 11th grade students enrolled in one of Mr. Carter’s three AP English Language and Composition classes and were 16-18 years old. Of the 49 students who consented, 48 (98%) were Caucasian and one (2%) was African American. All student participants (100%) reported having a computer at home; 14 students (29%) had access to Macintosh computers at home, while the remaining 35 students (71%) had only PCs at home.

Because students were composing collaboratively for this project, non-participants presented an additional challenge. When participating students were grouped with non-participating students, I had to make decisions about how to collect and analyze data from those groups. Across the three classes, a total of eight students did not consent

to participate in the study. Tables of groups (including participants and non-participants) and their topics for the two cycles are included in appendices G and H. In one case (Cycle Two, Class C, Prophecy group), all group members were non-participants. Therefore, I did not collect any data from this group. In 12 other cases across the study, groups consisted of both participants and non-participants; in all 12 cases, at least half of the group was made up of participants. For these groups, I did collect and analyze group data, but I focused attention on the participating group members to the greatest extent possible. While the work of the non-participants was certainly captured through their contributions to the assignment, the work of the non-participants was not a central focus in either data collection or analysis. Additionally, the roles that non-participants took on within their groups were captured and analyzed only as revealed through comparisons with participating group members. For example, in cycle one for class C, the anti-transcendentalism group consisted of two participants (Lexie and Teri) and two non-participants. This group divided the work of the project so that Lexie and Teri worked on the video, and the two non-participants worked on the paper. So, while I did not specifically analyze the work of the two non-participants, I did reveal some aspects of their contribution to the group and project, simply by comparing their roles to the roles of the two participating group members. However, throughout data collection and analysis, I maintained a focus on the participants of the study.

Data Collection

In order to address the research questions listed above, a variety of data was collected. This section provides an overview of data collection methods, as well as specific descriptions of data sources and methods. Data collection occurred over a period

of seven weeks, with a period of separation between the first four weeks and the final three weeks. Table 1 offers a timeline and overview for data collection. Table 2 displays the alignment between research questions, data sources, and theoretical framework.

Table 1
Overview of Data Collection.

Time	Data Collection Event
First Cycle (October – November, 2010)	
Prior to Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participant recruitment • participant consent
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher interview 1 • daily observations (5 days per class) • artifact collection
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • daily observations (5 days per class) • artifact collection • student interviews 1
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • daily observations (2 days per class) • artifact collection • student interviews 1
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student group interviews 2
Second Cycle (January – February, 2011)	
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • daily observations (5 days per class) • artifact collection • teacher interview 2
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • daily observations (2 days per class) • artifact collection
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher interview 3 • student group interviews 3

Table 2

Alignment of Research Questions, Data Sources, and Theoretical Frameworks

Research Question	Data Source	Theoretical Framework
1. How does the teacher design a classroom system of collaborative video essay composition?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher interviews (1 & 2) • Whole class observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Rules, object, division of labor</i>
2. How does the teacher make adjustments to his design, across classes and over time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole class observations • Small group observations • Teacher interviews (1 & 2) • Student interviews (1, 2, and 3) • Artifact collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Rules, community, division of labor</i> • Participation frameworks • Art worlds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Types of activity</i>
3. How do students respond to the system the teacher has created?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole class observations • Small group observations • Teacher interviews (1 & 2) • Student interviews (2 & 3) • Artifact collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Tools, rules, community, division of labor, object, outcome</i> • Participation frameworks

Observations. I conducted ethnographic observations of all class sessions related to the video essay assignment (19 days of observation across the two cycles of the assignment, for each of the three classes). Data was recorded using ethnographic methods of field notes and video recordings. During all class sessions, one stationary camera was focused on the whole class. During class sessions when students were working in small groups, I also focused observations on groups, placing cameras on individual groups. I attempted to capture footage of two groups per class per day, alternating between groups across days to represent a range of groups.

The purpose of whole class observations was to capture “big picture” data. At all times throughout the process, I wanted to see what was happening in the classroom as a whole. This allowed me to trace students’ movement around the classroom, teacher’s movement and engagement with groups, and movement of materials around the

classroom. In addition, these whole class observations allowed me to see interactions between all groups, which might have been missed if I focused observations only on small groups. During whole class observations, I paid attention to a number of things. I watched for movement of bodies and movement of materials across the classroom. I also watched for shifts in teacher behavior, as a way of documenting his role in the system and how he participates in the system. I paid attention to rules for behaving and participating in the classroom, and regular practices across the system.

During small group observations, I paid particular attention to the dynamics within the group. I looked for roles each student played and particularly how the work of the composition was divided among group members. Just as I paid attention to participation across the whole class, I considered participation within the small groups as well. I also focused these small group observations on attempting to capture groups' processes, part of which related to the movement of materials, students' participation, and students' understanding of production. As I tracked groups' processes, I also considered the kinds of activity the groups and individual students were involved in, stemming from the types of activity in Becker's (1984) art worlds. Gaining a clear picture of students' processes and how they understood the production of these compositions was important, so that these things could be tracked over time, allowing analysis about how the system was transformed over time. Groups were selected for these small group observations in an attempt to represent a range of students in terms of interest levels and abilities, as well as representing both male and female students.

My role in the classroom was that of observer participant. I did not intervene in regular classroom activities, and I attempted to purely observe the happenings of the

classroom. However, on the few occasions when the teacher addressed me or students asked for my assistance, I did respond to them, offering a brief response and returning to my role as observer. I made this decision so as not to interfere with the regular classroom activity. I wanted to see how the system functioned on its own, without my presence having a significant impact on the system. Because my goals were to understand the teacher's design and students' responses to the teacher's design, I wanted to purely observe those elements. I felt that if I participated in the system in any regular or significant way, I might be altering the teacher's design, the students' responses, or the overall system enough to affect the data. I recognize that my presence alone in the classroom had an impact on the system. Particularly in the first few days of observation, I noticed students looking at the video camera, looking at me, and joking about being on video. However, over time, this greatly diminished, lessening my impact and offering me a truer picture of the system. As the camera and I became regular fixtures in the classroom, it seemed that my observation had less effect on the system.

Teacher interviews. Teacher interviews were used to get at issues of design, structures and practices within the classroom, adjustments over time, and the teachers' perception of students' processes and work. I conducted two semi-structured interviews with the teacher using qualitative interviewing techniques put forth by Rubin and Rubin (2005). The third interview with the teacher combined a semi-structured interview with a discourse-based interview (Odell, Goswami, & Herrington, 1983). Each teacher interview lasted 30-60 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Each teacher interview is described in more detail below.

I conducted teacher interview 1 during the first days of classroom observation, during the first cycle of the video essay assignment. The purpose of this interview was to gain an understanding of this teacher and his background, his rationale for the video essay assignment, and his prior experiences with the video essay assignment. Guiding questions for this interview are included in Appendix A. Many of these questions were intended to provide information about a few key elements of the activity system, including the teacher's position within the system, rules that the teacher had set up for the system, and the teacher's objectives in creating this assignment (the object of the system).

I conducted teacher interview 2 during the second iteration of the video essay assignment. The purpose of this interview was to explore some of the changes made from the first cycle of the assignment to the second (based on observations) and to understand the teacher's reasoning for some of those changes, as well as whether the changes were intentional or accidental. This interview also served as a member-check regarding the changes that occurred between the first and second cycles. Guiding questions for this interview are included in Appendix B. Again, the design of this interview was built upon an understanding of activity systems, particularly seeking to understand the rules and object of the system from the teacher's perspective.

I conducted teacher interview 3 at the end of the second cycle of the assignment, after all students had presented their video essays. The purpose of this interview was to see the students' video essays through the eyes of the teacher, in order to discover how he evaluated the videos and what he believed was effective or ineffective in them. This interview focused on the outcome of the activity system and looked for the teacher to provide some commentary on that outcome. I began this interview as a semi-structured

interview, asking the teacher to comment generally about what made a video essay good or not good and whether students knew the difference. I then shifted to a discourse-based interview, as the teacher selected two to three video essays to watch with me and to comment on. Guiding questions for the semi-structured portion of this interview are included in Appendix C.

Student interviews. Student interviews were used to better understand students' experiences with and processes of composing the video essays. Three rounds of student interviews occurred. The first round involved semi-structured interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) with individual students; each of these interviews lasted 15-20 minutes. The second and third rounds of interviews were conducted with groups of students and combined semi-structured interview protocol with discourse-based interviews (Odell, Goswami, & Herrington, 1983), with each of these interviews lasting 20-30 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Each student interview is described in more detail below.

I conducted student interview 1 during the first cycle of the video essay assignment, as students were nearing completion of the assignment. The purpose of this interview was to understand students' prior experiences with technology and media, to clarify things I saw happening in the classroom, and to get students' perspectives on the assignment and process. Questions for this interview were aimed at understanding the students in this system and how they perceived elements of the system (rules, division of labor, etc.). I selected six students (two from each class) to participate in this round of interviews. I selected students for this interview to represent a range of abilities and comfort levels with the assignment, as seen through classroom observations, as well as to

obtain a balance of males and females. The teacher's recommendations regarding who would likely be willing to talk and able to articulate their thoughts in an interview were also considered in selecting students for this interview. Guiding questions for this interview are included in Appendix D.

I conducted student interviews 2 and 3 at the ends of the first and second cycles of the video essay assignment, respectively. The purpose of these interviews was to further understand students' processes in composing the video essay (including work done outside the classroom), to develop a sense of group dynamics and division of labor, and to understand particular decisions made and materials used by students in composing their video essays. Six groups (two from each class) were selected to participate in each of these rounds of interviews. Groups were selected to represent a range, not necessarily in terms of ability (as in high and low level), but rather in terms of process, approach to the assignment, and group dynamic. I identified groups that seemed particularly interesting or compelling, and then made selections from those groups to represent a range of processes, approaches, and dynamics across the classes. Guiding questions for the semi-structured portions of each of these interviews are included in Appendices E and F. Following the semi-structured portions of these interviews, I shifted to discourse-based interviews (Odell, Goswami, & Herrington, 1983). At this point, I asked students to watch their video essays with me and to pause the videos at different points to comment on them. I offered examples of issues they might comment on, including decisions they made while composing, difficulties they encountered, and resources they used. I told students that I might also stop the videos at certain moments to ask questions. Some of the groups interviewed were very active in terms of pausing the videos to provide

commentary. Other groups were much more hesitant to do so, causing me to initiate the moments of discussion. With these groups, I did most of the pausing to raise questions, but students were active in their discussions and responses to my questions. At the ends of student interviews 2 and 3, I returned to a semi-structured protocol to raise a few final questions.

Artifact collection. Throughout the two cycles of the assignment, I attempted to collect a range of artifacts that were relevant to my questions about teacher design and student response.

In terms of teacher design, I collected the few handouts that the teacher gave the students. For each cycle of the assignment, I collected the list of topics that Mr. Carter gave students to choose from. I also collected copies of the resources he provided regarding MLA references and citations. For each of these handouts, Mr. Carter had extra copies for me to keep. I collected these handouts to fully understand the information that Mr. Carter was providing to the students. I also collected a digital artifact that Mr. Carter used in his mini-lesson about iMovie: the Apple support document for iMovie from Apple's website. Mr. Carter utilized this document in his demonstration of how to use iMovie, and I wanted to be able to refer back to the informational material he used in his presentation. During the classroom observation on that day, I noted the web address from which he accessed this document. I had hoped to collect Mr. Carter's written feedback to students regarding their videos. However, I was not able to access this. Therefore, I used Mr. Carter's in-class commentary and his discussion of the videos in teacher interview 3 to gain understanding about his evaluation of the video essays.

In terms of student response, I collected three types of artifacts related to students' composition processes. First, I collected all final video essays in some form. For all groups, I videotaped the presentations of the video essays on the class sharing days. When possible, I also copied the digital files of video essays onto my hard drive, as this provided clearer and unobstructed views of the video essays. Second, I collected final print research papers. During the first cycle, I collected these from six groups across the three classes. During the second cycle, I collected these from all groups. I borrowed these papers from the teacher once students turned them in, made copies for myself, and then returned the originals to the teacher. Third, I collected a few process drafts of compositions. In this category, I collected four sentence outlines for the research paper and one beginning storyboard draft for the video essay. These artifacts were collected during class, and because students needed them to continue working on their projects, I used a digital camera to capture these artifacts.

Data Analysis

I used the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to analyze the data from this study. This method involved multiple readings to identify emerging patterns and categories of interest, namely in the areas of teacher design of the system and student response to teacher design. All interview transcripts were coded for this analysis, as well as field notes and video logs from all classroom observations. In the video logs I created for each classroom observation, I tracked type of activity, duration of activity, and notable practices (both routine and unique). I first used open coding to identify emerging concepts from the data, grounded in the research questions, and then used axial coding was used to organize those emergent concepts. This allowed me to

identify and trace themes across the data. As Strauss and Corbin emphasize, this analytic process of open and axial coding is not a set of sequential, linear steps, but rather a recursive process. Therefore, I completed multiple passes through the data for this analysis, as I will describe below.

Throughout data collection, I read and reread my field notes from classroom observations, listened to audio recordings of interviews, read interview transcripts, and watched videos of classroom observations, beginning to note possible themes across the data. I recorded these initial ideas as theoretical notes within my field notes. I used some of these emerging ideas and themes to focus my attention during observations and to inform future data collection, such as using these notes to shape questions to be asked in subsequent interviews. For example, on the first few days of the first cycle, I noted the distinct separation that Mr. Carter attempted to create between the print research paper and video essay portions of the assignment. Once I recognized this theme, I noted each time it appeared within my field notes, became more aware of the issue in subsequent observations, and included questions related to this issue in both teacher and student interviews.

As data collection concluded, I returned to all data sources, including field notes, video logs from observations, interview transcripts, and artifacts, and began a cycle of reading, coding, rereading, and recoding the data. I began assigning descriptive category labels to data units, using digital color codes and notes. Following this initial open coding, I returned to the categories and began to look for connections among them. In doing so, I eliminated some categories as irrelevant to the research questions. For example, patterns related to students' uses of resources and media in their videos, while potentially

interesting in relation to students' processes, did not advance the purpose of this study, regarding the teacher's design choices and student response; thus, this category was eliminated.

During axial coding, I identified five top-level categories (parent categories): design of the composition process, pedagogical design decisions, design of social experiences, design of experiences beyond the classroom, and overall expectations and understanding of the system. (Code book is included in Appendix G.) These categories, each of which contained several subcategories (child categories) within them, were developed both from a priori hypotheses and from patterns that emerged in the data. Because the first two research questions for this study focused on teacher design, I knew that I would be looking for aspects of the teacher's design within the data. However, the specific areas of his design that were identified as top-level categories came from emerging patterns within the data. For example, I knew going into the data that I was looking for areas of the teacher's design, but it was not until I began exploring the data that I identified the top-level category of design of the composition process. During open coding, I had identified categories such as separation between print and multimedia composition, role of prewriting, and use of tools. Then, during axial coding, I began grouping these categories into top-level categories and arrived at a parent category of design of the composition process, with several child categories below it (media sequence, prewriting, tools and technology, publication and distribution, and feedback). Additionally, some of the child categories came from theoretical understandings of activity systems (e.g. division of labor within groups), while others came from patterns that emerged from the data (e.g. media sequencing). For each category, I mined the data

for two particular areas: information related to the teacher's design decisions and information related to how students responded to each of those decisions.

When data units represented more than one category, I used multiple codes for them. For example, in this data unit, Mr. Carter explained to students why they would be working in groups for this project. "This is too much work for anyone to do alone. You need to work in a group so that you can divvy out the workload" (Observation, October 18, 2010). I coded this data unit first as related to grouping, as Mr. Carter justified his decision to have students compose in groups. I also coded this as division of labor, since this was the first time Mr. Carter mentioned the importance of dividing the work of the project among group members.

Throughout data analysis, I continued to return to observational data, interviews, and artifacts, to ensure triangulation of the data. I relied on multiple data sources both to identify aspects of the teacher's design and to understand students' responses to his design. In exploring students' responses, I looked both for commonalities across students and unique responses, in an attempt to develop a complete picture of how students responded to the teacher's design.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the ways in which a study must "demonstrate its truth value, provide the basis for applying it, and allow for external judgments to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p.29). Lincoln and Guba (1985) break trustworthiness down into four components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability. As a method of evaluating the trustworthiness of this study, I will examine each of these components in the design of this study.

Erlandson et al (1993) say that credibility can be “assessed by determining whether the description developed through inquiry in a particular setting 'rings true' for those persons who are members of that setting” (p. 30). Three strategies for establishing credibility in this study aligned with Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) recommendations: prolonged engagement, triangulation of data, and member checks. Prolonged engagement was achieved by being in the classroom full time for the duration of the video essay assignment across two cycles, totaling more than 20 hours for each class. I spent additional time in the classroom outside of these class sessions, to introduce the research study, interview students and the teacher, and discuss elements of the project with the teacher. The amount of time spent in the classroom and with the students allowed me to establish myself as a common presence in these classrooms, helping to diminish the effect my presence may have on the happenings of the classroom. This also allowed participants to become more familiar with me, so that I could gain their trust. In addition, my one-on-one interactions with students, through interviews and fielding their questions, strengthened this engagement. While additional time spent in these classrooms would certainly have strengthened this aspect of credibility, I believe that my impact on the system as an observer was minimized. Credibility was also strengthened by the opportunities for triangulation of data, through the combination of observations, interviews, and the collection of artifacts. This triangulation allowed me to examine teacher and student behaviors along with their statements. In addition, various forms of member checking were included throughout the study to strengthen credibility. Informal

member checks with the teacher occurred throughout the study during conversations about classroom happenings. The second teacher interview also served as a form of member checking, to confirm the changes in design to the assignment and the intentionality behind those changes. Portions of student interviews were also used to confirm conclusions.

Transferability, a second aspect of trustworthiness, refers to the ability to apply findings from naturalistic inquiry to other contexts or other participants, which can be achieved through thick descriptions and purposive sampling (Erlandson et al, 1993). My prolonged engaged in the site and triangulation of data sources allowed me to provide thick descriptions of the system and the process of multimedia composition; these thick descriptions allow for transferability to other contexts and other participants. I utilized purposive sampling in selecting focal students for each interview and for the small group observations, attempting to represent a range of types of students in terms of gender, participation in the class, and proficiency with the assignment. However, purposive sampling is a limitation of this study, due to the nature of the school context and the classes that were studied. All students were enrolled in an Advanced Placement course in a relatively affluent school; therefore, the ability to transfer findings to other contexts and other participants may be limited.

Dependability, or the ability of the findings to be replicated if the study were repeated in the same context, is a third component of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, I created a record of methodological decisions and shifts through the use of methodological notes embedded in daily field notes. This detailed account of

the research methodology and how it developed across the study was an effort toward maintaining the dependability of this study.

The fourth component of trustworthiness is confirmability, which ensures that the findings from a study are “the product of the focus of its inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 34). In this study, confirmability was strengthened by the triangulation of data sources, member checking, and peer debriefing, all of which are described above.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand and describe systems of multimedia composition in a high school classroom, as a way of increasing the field’s understanding of systems and processes of classroom multimedia composition. In particular, this study focused on the teacher’s design of this system of collaborative video essay composition and students’ responses to the teacher’s design. The discussion of data from this study is divided into the next two chapters. In Chapter IV, I explore specific elements of the teacher’s design and how students responded to each of those elements. Chapter V explores the teacher’s expectations of the activity, as well as how students responded to his expectations and developed their own expectations of the activity.

CHAPTER IV

DESIGN OF THE ACTIVITY

In this chapter, I address the first two research questions about teacher design of this classroom system: (1) How does the teacher design a classroom system of collaborative video essay composition? and (2) How does the teacher make adjustments to his design, across classes and over time? Building off of the teacher's design, I also address the third research question in this chapter: How do students respond to the system the teacher has created?

Throughout this chapter, I identify aspects of the teacher's design, specifically, design of: time, composition process, and publication and distribution practices. For each of these aspects, I first share findings from classroom observations and teacher interviews to build portraits of the design. Second, I share findings from classroom observations and student interviews to demonstrate how students responded to these aspects of the design. When relevant, I also discuss adjustments the teacher made to his design, across classes and across time, and students' responses to those adjustments.

Design of Time

Throughout the course of this assignment, Mr. Carter made particular design choices in regard to the use of time. Time is often an important consideration for teachers – what to spend time on, how much time to spend on particular activities or material, and how to order or sequence time. Two areas related to time that appeared particularly

salient in the data were Mr. Carter's use of pedagogical time and his sequence of activities within the assignment.

Pedagogical Time

Teacher design. The timeline for the first project was divided into one week for doing research and writing the paper and one week for composing the video essay, with a few days in the third week being devoted to sharing the videos. He explained this division of time as his effort to create balance between the two pieces of the project. "I don't want to shortchange one or the other. I don't want to spend five days on research and two days doing the video and then you still get a bad product, or vice versa. I think both are equally important. It's a balanced equation there" (Interview, October 26, 2010). Within each of these weeks, class time could be classified as *instructional time* and *independent work time*.

Instructional time refers to whole-class, teacher-centered instruction, in which the teacher introduced content or tools to the students. Much of this instruction, after the assignment introduction on the first day, took place in the form of mini-lessons, scattered across the span of the first cycle of the assignment. Mr. Carter justified his design of these mini-lessons as trying to introduce content and materials in a way that would be most useful and have the most impact for students.

I started most classes with a mini-lesson, like talking about how to do in-text citation, instead of taking whole days. In the past, I would take like a whole day to talk about how to do in-text citation and two to three other things, and then before we knew it we lost a whole day. So it seemed like it worked better doing the little mini-lessons, the first 15-20 minutes of class, and then they could immediately apply that skill. So like the day we talked about how to use iMovie, and then we immediately got the Macs out. Last year, I frontloaded all that stuff, and then I had to end up

going back and reteaching it, because they had forgotten it by the time they needed it. So, by spreading out the instruction when they needed it, it seemed to be more impactful (Interview 1, October 26, 2010).

Table 3 includes an account of the mini-lessons Mr. Carter conducted across the first cycle.

Table 3
List of Mini-lessons during the First Cycle of the Assignment

Day	Mini-lesson Topic
Day 2	Creating reference page entries using MLA
Day 5	Creating in-text citations using MLA
Day 5	Using Google docs for the writing of the group paper
Day 6	Using iMovie: A general introduction
Day 7	Converting movies from YouTube
Day 8-9	Using other resources: Podcasts

As Mr. Carter explained, the timing of his mini-lessons was purposeful, to provide information or skills at the time that students would need it. Remembering that the first week (days 1-5) was designated for research and writing the paper and the second week (days 6-10) was designated for composing the video essay, Mr. Carter's mini-lessons are clearly organized to coordinate with what students were doing. The two mini-lessons on using the MLA format and the mini-lesson on Google docs, which students could use for the collaborative writing of the paper, were conducted during the first week, when students were doing research and writing the research paper; the three mini-lessons related to iMovie and resources for the video essays were conducted during the second week, when students were working on their videos.

The mini-lessons ranged from approximately five to 20 minutes. The mini-lessons on Google docs and video converters were on the short end of the spectrum; these mini-lessons mostly consisted of introducing a tool and demonstrating how to use it. The mini-

lessons on iMovie and MLA citations were longer, as they required more detail and contained content that students were less familiar with.

The podcast mini-lesson occurred on different days for different classes. At some point during the school day on day eight, Mr. Carter had the idea of using podcasts in the video essays. During his lunch break, which fell between classes B and C, he searched and found some podcasts that might be relevant for the students' topics. Therefore, he shared this resource with class C on day eight, but he had to wait until day nine to share the resource with classes A and B. This was the only example across the project of Mr. Carter spontaneously creating and adding a mini-lesson between classes, so that the same mini-lesson was delivered on different days to different classes.

It is important to note that no mini-lessons took place during the second cycle of the assignment. Mr. Carter expected students to have remembered and mastered skills from the first cycle of the assignment, making those mini-lessons unnecessary. This would have given him an opportunity during the second cycle to introduce additional skills, resources, or content to the students through different mini-lessons, but Mr. Carter made a different decision. Because he could eliminate the time spent on mini-lessons from the first cycle and because he expected students to better understand the process, he shortened the timeline for the second cycle from 10 class days spent on research and composing to five days.

Independent work time refers to student-centered time, in which the students worked independently in their groups on pieces of the project. Independent, in this case, does not mean individual; in fact, much of the independent work time was spent with the students working in groups, because they were composing collaboratively. What this

label means is that students were working independently on their own projects. While this time was somewhat structured from a top-level perspective (week one as research and paper writing, week two as video creation), the time was very unstructured on a daily basis, and even the top-level structure was not strictly enforced (aside from classes B and C not having access to the Mac laptops until the second week). On a day-to-day basis, students selected what they would work on and how to organize their time. Mr. Carter did not provide a daily list of tasks or require completion of certain elements each day. The design of this independent work time was very open to allow students to work on the parts of the project that they chose.

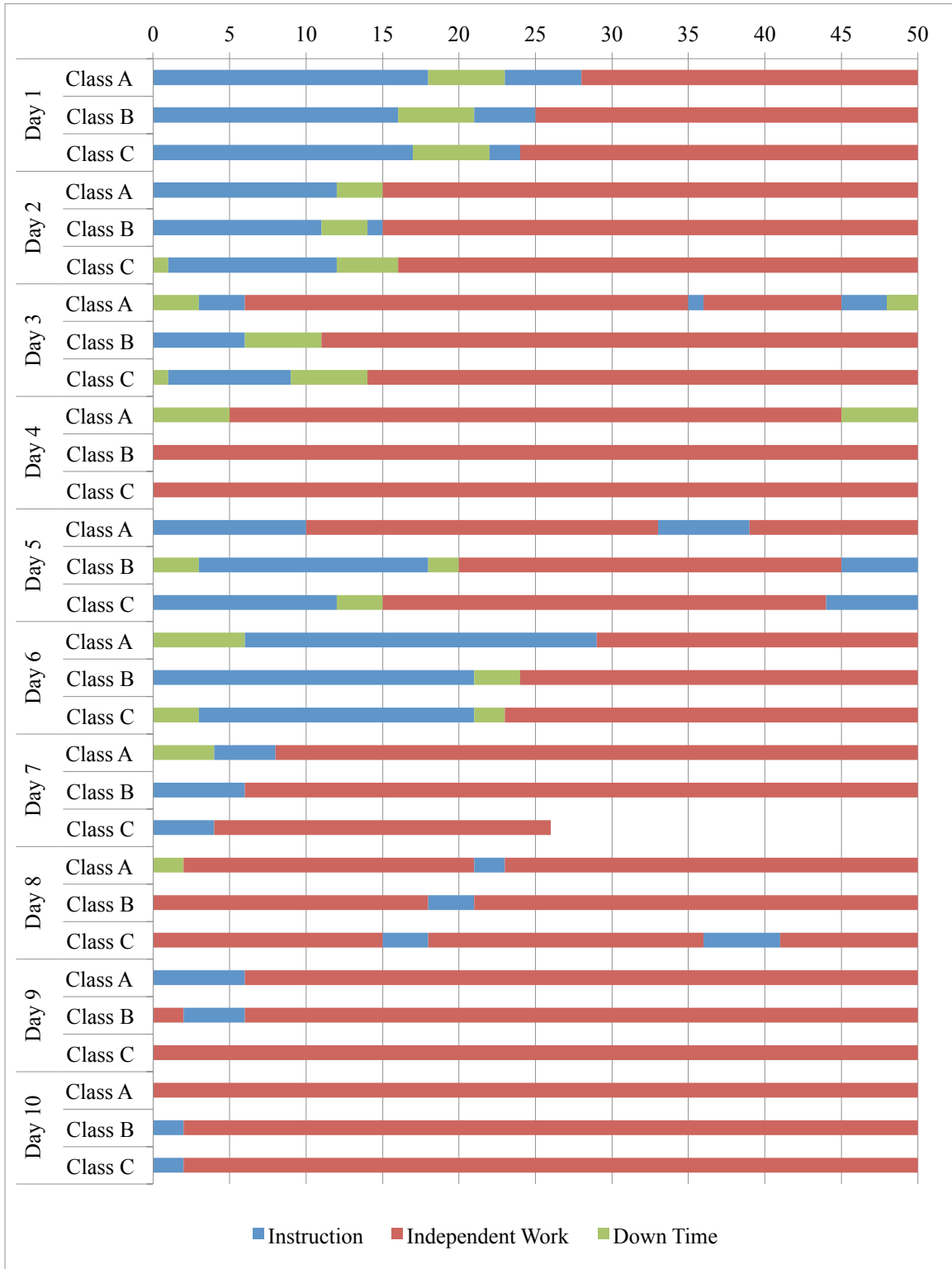
There were occasions where these lines between the types of instructional setting were blurred. One type of this blurring of lines occurred when Mr. Carter would provide instruction to a particular group, while other groups continued working independently. Another type of this blurring of lines occurred during independent work time, when Mr. Carter would spontaneously share some piece of information (for example, a new tool) with students, shifting the setting to a more teacher-centered, instructional environment. One example of this second type occurred on day eight of the first cycle. On the previous day, Mr. Carter had conducted a mini-lesson on converting videos taken from YouTube. Videos taken from YouTube needed to be saved as a different file type in order to import them into iMovie, and several conversion tools existed for accomplishing this. During the mini-lesson on day seven, Mr. Carter introduced two converters that students could use. On day eight, Mr. Carter was doing some exploring on his own computer, while students worked independently in their groups, and he discovered another conversion tool that worked more quickly than the other tools he had shared. He spontaneously stopped class

for a few minutes to show students this new conversion tool, providing the web address for the tool and demonstrating how to use it. This was not a planned mini-lesson, but rather a spontaneous decision to introduce and demonstrate a new tool that students could use for their video essays. These kinds of shifts usually only lasted a few minutes, before students would quickly and smoothly transition back into independent work time.

Due to this dynamic nature of the classroom, it was sometimes difficult to classify particular moments as clearly instructional time or independent work time. However, in Figure 2, I have mapped out the instructional setting for each day across both cycles of the assignment. In accounting for the spontaneous teacher instruction mentioned above, I decided that any such instance that lasted fewer than 30 seconds would not be coded. Several of these instances occurred in which Mr. Carter made an announcement or reminded students about a tool, for example. However, because students were never pulled completely out of independent work time and back to instructional time, and because these instances were more reminders than instruction, I chose not to identify them as instructional time in this graph.

Each class session was 50 minutes in duration. As shown in Figure 2, only one session did not last 30 minutes: class C on day seven. The school experienced a weather emergency on this day, and the first part of this class period was spent with all students being held in safe places.

Figure 2. Use of Class Time during the First Cycle of the Assignment



One thing to note on this graph, which has not yet been discussed, is the amount of “down time” (green), or time spent on tasks or conversations unrelated to the assignment or other course content. One type of down time that occurred involved movement from one location to another. During days one and two for all classes, as well as days three and five for classes B and C, there were periods of down time that occurred in the middle of class, after a period of instructional time (blue). These periods of down time occurred as students changed locations within the school. On days one through three, this involved students beginning the period in the classroom to receive instruction from Mr. Carter, then moving downstairs to the school library to conduct research. On day five, a similar move occurred, as Mr. Carter began the period with instruction in the classroom, before moving students to the computer lab to work on typing their papers.

A second type of down time that occurred was the opening and closing minutes of class. At times, it would take a few minutes to get class started, leaving the opening minutes as down time for students. Similarly, at the ends of periods (days three and four in class A), students would occasionally finish early and spend the remaining minutes conversing about other topics. This type of down time (opening and closing minutes) frequently included the teacher, as Mr. Carter participated with students in these off-topic conversations. In many cases, particularly at the beginnings of classes, it was even Mr. Carter who initiated these conversations, usually about school sporting events and other community issues. There were some differences between classes in this second type of down time. Class A participated in this type most frequently (seven times across days three, four, six, seven, and eight), class C participated less frequently (two times on days two and three), and class B rarely participated in this type of down time (one time on day

five). This might be indicative of Mr. Carter's perception of and relationship with the three classes, particularly the distinction between class A versus classes B and C. Mr. Carter characterized class A as a more mature group of students: "The kids that come in for the early bird classes, they are typically more mature, in the fact that they have the self-discipline to come in every morning at 7:00 and to stay on task" (Interview, October 26, 2010). Perhaps it was because he believed these students to be more mature and better able to keep themselves on task that he initiated more off-topic conversations with these students and engaged in more down time behaviors with them. With the other two classes, Mr. Carter was much more purposeful about beginning class immediately at the bell and expecting the students to work until the end of class.

In addition to the times noted as down time in Table 2, there were multiple occasions during independent work time that Mr. Carter engaged in off-topic discussions with groups of students in class A. These were not coded as down time, because most of the class was working independently. However, it is important to note that this kind of off-topic conversation between teacher and students was a regular occurrence in class A.

Also notable in Figure 2 is where the instruction usually occurred within class periods. Mr. Carter tended to begin class with some form of instruction, either a mini-lesson or some general guidance about the project. In 22 of the 30 class sessions included in Figure 2, Mr. Carter began class with some form of instruction, before allowing students to move into independent work time. This was his way of providing the instruction discussed above in mini-lessons and encouraging students to stay on track throughout the process. On several occasions (six times), though, Mr. Carter interrupted students' independent work time in the middle of class to provide instruction. For

example, on day eight, Mr. Carter provided mid-period instruction in each of the three classes regarding a new tool for converting videos that he had found. He found this tool mid-period during class A on day eight, so his sharing of this tool in class A was spontaneous. However, instead of sharing this at the beginning of classes B and C, he chose to do this mid-period with them as well. In only three cases did Mr. Carter end a class period with whole-class instruction. On day three with class A, toward the end of class, Mr. Carter engaged students in a spontaneous discussion about thesis statements and topic sentences. However, once this discussion ended, students never returned to their work, despite there being a couple of minutes remaining in class. On day five in classes B and C, Mr. Carter reserved the last few minutes of class to introduce and demonstrate Google docs for students. This was the end of research and paper writing week, so he offered students a tool for continuing work on their group paper outside of class. In both of these classes, his instruction lasted until the bell, so he ended these classes with whole-class instruction.

The amount of independent work time (red) across the project, but especially toward the end of the project, is notable. A quick glance at Figure 2 demonstrates this. Days seven through 10 were spent almost entirely with students working on the projects either individually or with their groups. At this point, students had received most of the instruction and guidance that Mr. Carter had designed for them, and so these remaining days were designated as time for them to work on completing the project. Even days three and four, which were near the end of the time designated for research and paper-writing, were mostly spent on independent work time, as Mr. Carter had already delivered the content and introduced the materials necessary for this part of the project.

Student response. Students seemed to respond positively to the methods by which Mr. Carter provided instruction, but they had varying responses to the amount of instruction. Most students seemed to understand his design of providing information through mini-lessons and the timing of those mini-lessons. For example, Alexander and Dean both commented that it was helpful to have the iMovie lesson on the first day that they began the video part of the project, because they could use the information immediately. Brendan had a similar feeling about the lesson on converting videos, saying, “If he had showed us how to do that the first week, I probably would have forgotten it by the time I needed to do it” (Interview, November 3, 2010). Students recognized that Mr. Carter was purposeful in his choices about when to introduce particular information to them, and they seemed to agree with his designs in this regard.

The use and timing of the mini-lessons seemed to have the effect that Mr. Carter had intended: they provided instruction on topics at the particular moment that students would be able to use and apply it. Students reviewed MLA citations and then immediately worked on citing information in their research papers; students learned how to convert YouTube videos and then immediately converted the YouTube videos they were collecting. This instructional method resulted in students have relatively few questions about the topics addressed in the mini-lessons, after they were presented. Because students could practice and apply skills immediately upon being introduced to them, they seemed to understand them more fully and take ownership of them.

The amount of independent work time and the lack of specific structure for this time were somewhat unnerving to many students. While students, for the most part, did not have questions about specific topics or skills, such as those covered in the mini-

lessons, they had many questions regarding the overall process and how to make progress with the project. Several students, both in class to the teacher and outside of class in interviews, stated that they needed Mr. Carter to provide more structure for them across the project, especially on the days in class and on what they could have been doing outside of class. Natasha explained this feeling:

I think just telling us to make a movie from a paper was kind of vague, and I think it took us a couple of days to wrap our minds around what we had to do for this. So now that it's down to the last day, we're like, I wish he would've been like, today you need to do this, today you need to do that. And maybe even assign us some homework for our project, because we didn't try to do much outside of class (Interview, October 28, 2010).

Natasha's feeling stemmed mostly from this being a new form of composition for her, so she felt like she needed additional guidance about the necessary steps and how to move forward. This desire for more guidance about to progress was common across groups. It was a regular occurrence to hear students say, "What should we be doing now?" or "We finished that. What should we do next?" Alexander expressed a similar feeling. He explained that during the first week, his group "might have slacked off a lot," and he believed that this wouldn't have happened if Mr. Carter had provided more structure for their independent work time (Interview, November 1, 2010). Both Natasha and Alexander, as well as many other students, felt like more guidance was needed regarding what should be done each day.

Some students, though, did not express this need for additional guidance and did not appear to experience the same issues with not knowing how to progress. Samantha, for example, progressed smoothly through the process. As she finished steps along the way, she continued on to the next step, without asking for guidance or directions from Mr.

Carter. For instance, on the day that her group finished converting videos for use in their video essay, Samantha directed students that their next step should be to figure out which video would go with each of their points and to begin to decide on the order of things in their video essay. Samantha was one of the few students who seemed to have a solid grasp on what needed to be done in order to complete the video essay, and she was able to identify necessary steps for her group in the composition process. Another group of students that seemed to have a strong grasp on the process and how to proceed was the group comprised of Dean, Evan, Andy, and Logan. This group had a clear vision for their video essay from the beginning, which helped them know what needed to be done. As a group, they designed a schedule, in which they identified dates for having their narration scripted, recording their narration, compiling the sections of the video, and so on. In creating this schedule, this group essentially outlined their process as a series of steps, allowing them to always know what they should be working on next.

Students like Natasha and Alexander, who expressed confusion about how to proceed in the composition process, did not seem to experience these same difficulties during the second cycle of the assignment. Having completed the first cycle of video essays, they seemed to have a better understanding of what needed to be done in order to complete the project. Instances of students asking in class what they should be doing next were rare during the second cycle.

A couple of students in class A expressed a desire for the teacher to do more to keep the groups focused and on-task. Again, class A included more down time than the other two classes, so it is not surprising that if this feeling were expressed that it would come from this class. Brendan believed that if the teacher had enforced a more productive

work environment in class, the time in class would have been more productive. Natasha agreed:

I think our time we spent in class working wasn't productive enough, and I don't think me saying, 'Okay, guys, we need to work,' was enough. So I kinda wish that maybe our teacher would've said, 'Okay, we need to buckle down,' instead of talking about outside topics, cause it really got us off track (Interview, October 28, 2010).

The off-topic conversations between Mr. Carter and students were often distracting not only to the students directly involved in the conversations, but to other students as well. Students frequently stopped their work to listen to these conversations, even if they did not actively participate in them. Natasha and Brendan, in particular, believed that this affected their productivity in class and wished that Mr. Carter would have enforced a more productive work environment.

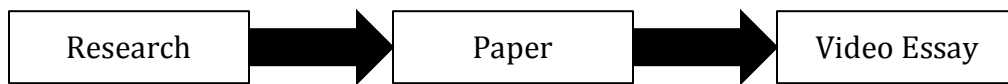
The kinds of off-topic conversations that occurred in class A occurred much less frequently in classes B and C. Therefore, students in these classes did not express this need for a more productive work environment. While several groups of students in classes B and C still managed to be off-task and lack productivity, this did not come as a result of distractions from the teacher, but rather distractions within the groups, which will be discussed later within collaborative composing.

Sequence of Activities

Teacher design. In Mr. Carter's design of the sequence of activities, he intended for students to do research for the research paper component of the assignment, to write the research paper, and then to compose the video essay, in that order. This process, or sequence of activities, as Mr. Carter designed it, is depicted in Figure 7. When he introduced the project in each of the three classes, he presented these two components

(paper and video) as separate and needing to be done in a particular order. Further, the way that he organized days and weeks spent on the project reflected this separation and order of activities.

Figure 7. Teacher-Designed Sequence of Activities



On the first day of introducing the assignment in class B, Mr. Carter opened class by passing out a list of topics to students. He explained to students that they were beginning a new project based on the novel they had just finished reading, *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Mr. Carter described this project as a “research project,” and he asked students to think back on other research projects they had done. He reminded students of what it means to do research and how they had used the MLA format to cite references. He told students that this would be different from other research projects they have done in the past, both because they would be doing them in groups and because they would be creating different products. For several minutes, Mr. Carter explained the research paper component of the assignment to students, noting that they would be writing a four to five-page research paper in their groups, and offering some description of what it meant to write a paper as a group. While this product (a research paper) was a familiar product for the students, the collaborative composing of this product was new to them.

After describing the paper, Mr. Carter said, “And then once we get that part of it [the research paper] done, then we’ll begin to focus on the video essay,” leading into a discussion of the video component of the project (Class B, observation, October 18,

2010). He described the video essay as a visual representation or presentation of the paper. While the research paper was a familiar product for these students, the video essay was mostly new for them. Many students had previous experience creating videos for other classes, but never had they created a video essay, in which they were expected to use different media to create an argument or convey research. On this first day, Mr. Carter provided very little information about the video portion, stating only that it would include video clips, images, and student narration, as a way to visually present their research paper.

On this introductory day, Mr. Carter's separation of these two pieces of the assignment was quite clear. He signaled this separation with language ("and then once we get that part of it done"), with gestures (using his hands to show the research paper on one side and the video essay on the other side), and with separate introductions for these two elements (first the research paper, then the video essay). His intended separation and order was further signaled by his withholding information about the video essay until the second week; he intended to prevent students from moving ahead in the process and completing the steps out of his designed order.

This intended separation and sequence of the assignment (research, then paper, then video) was evident not only on this introductory day, but also in the way Mr. Carter laid out the entire span of the project. He explicitly planned the two-week span in class to follow his design of research, then paper, then video, even labeling the first week as "research week" and the second week as "video week" for the students. During the first week of class, he prompted students to gather research and to write the paper. Although students asked questions during this first week about the video, Mr. Carter did not

provide any information or instruction related to the videos until the second week. He responded to their questions with comments like, “We’ll talk about that next week,” and, “Don’t worry about that yet. Just focus on the paper for now.” It was not until Monday of the second week that he introduced students to the Mac laptops, to iMovie, and to other materials necessary for the video essay (e.g. video converters). During the second week, he prompted students to be doing work related to the video essay (gathering materials, converting videos, recording narration, editing their videos, and so on). This design of the sequence of activities across the process was explicit throughout the entire assignment.

Mr. Carter justified this design of the process, arguing that students could not begin creating the video without first doing the research and organizing the ideas. “They need to do the research and start putting their ideas down on paper, so that they know what they should be looking for when they get to the video. If they try to start there [with the video], they are all over the place – they just lack focus” (Interview, October 26, 2010). He emphasized the importance of researching and fully understanding the topic before beginning to compose, arguing that failure to do so usually results in an unfocused paper and video about the novel in general, rather than being about the specified topic. In addition, his stance seems to indicate a belief that print writing allows for better organization of ideas than multimedia composition, in other words, a belief that students must first organize their ideas in print before they can compose with other media.

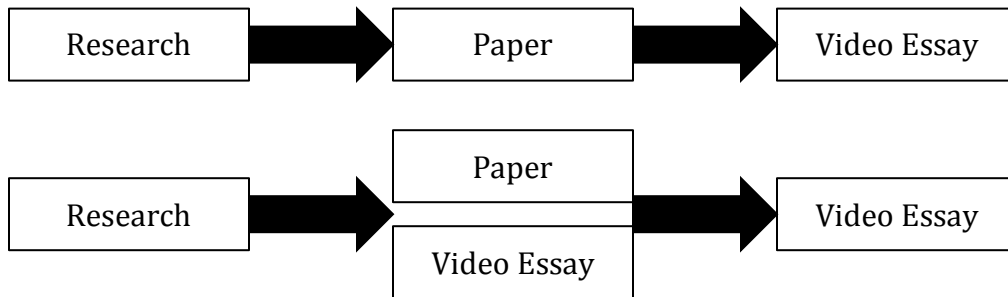
Student response. The extent to which students adhered to or resisted this teacher-designed sequence of activities varied. While the teacher’s design was very clear and explicit, not all students followed this process. Students did spend the entire first week working on research and the paper, but few groups had made any significant

progress on the paper by the end of the first week. Therefore, most groups spent the second week working on the paper and video simultaneously. Some groups even completed the video before completing the research paper. Students' commentary on the sequence (research, then paper, then video) indicated varying views regarding its significance. These views, discussed in the following paragraphs, can be categorized into four distinct groups.

The first category of students viewed the completion of the paper as necessary for working on the video essay, because the text of the paper provided direct narration for the video. For these students, it would be impossible to narrate or even organize the video, without having the text of their papers. One student, Lexie, explained that it would be possible to gather materials for the video essay (video clips and images) without having finished the paper, but that the paper was necessary to create the video, because it essentially provided the script for the video. Another student, Natasha, viewed the completion of the paper as a necessary first step for the same reason: that it provided the narration for the video essay. For Natasha, knowing that the paper would become the video script even changed the way she wrote the paper. "I thought, well this is gonna be read over the movie, I need to say it a little differently. It made my writing style different, because I wanted it to sound cool in the movie" (Interview, October 28, 2010). Lexie, Natasha, and students like them agreed with Mr. Carter's belief that the paper needed to be completed before the video, because they needed the paper's text to provide a script for the video essay. However, even most of these students worked simultaneously on the paper and video for at least a short time, but did ultimately complete the paper before

completing the video essay. Two variations of the sequence of activities for this category of students are illustrated in Figure 4.

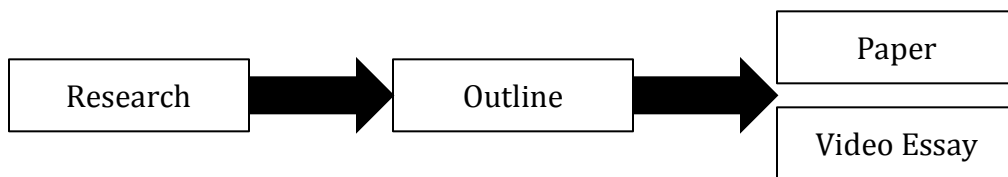
Figure 8. Two Variations of Category One Students' Sequences of Activities



The second category of students saw the research paper as an important first step, because it provided a structure or outline for the video. For these students, it was not important to fully complete the paper in order for it to be useful for the video essay; rather, they simply needed to have an outline of the paper, which would also provide the structure for the video. Alexander's group was a good illustration of this category of students. During the first week ("research week"), Alexander's group gathered some information about the topic and created an outline for the research paper. Because this group had a difficult time focusing and making progress during class, at the end of the first week, they had only a sentence outline and had not written any of the paper. Alexander believed that the outline they created for the paper was sufficient to provide a basis for the video essay. Alexander explained, "The essay provided the story line, like what I was gonna do and the information I was gonna go over. The essay kinda provided that" (Interview, November 1, 2010). Similarly, Dean's group used the paper to organize their video. They divided the paper into four sections, with each group member being responsible for writing one of those sections. Each group member, then, was also

responsible for creating the section of the video that corresponded to that part of the paper. At the end of the process, they put together their sections of the paper, and they compiled all sections of the video and edited them together. Dean said, “The paper helped direct the video. We would’ve been lost in the video if we didn’t have that structure” (Interview, November 10, 2010). These two groups, as well as some others across the three classes, used the paper to provide an organized structure for their video essays. These students seemed to agree with Mr. Carter’s belief that the work of organizing ideas needed to be done in the print component of the assignment, but did not agree with the completely separate order of activities. Figure 5 illustrates the sequence of activities followed by this category of students.

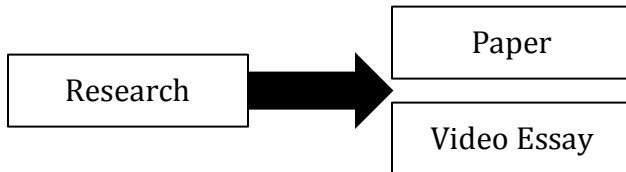
Figure 9. Category Two Students’ Sequence of Activities



The third category of students believed it was not the paper itself that guided their work on the video essay, but rather the research done during “research week” that was important for composing their videos. These students saw the information, rather than the script or the outline, as the driving force of the video. Brendan argued that they did not need the paper in order to create the video essay, they just needed to have done the research. Brendan’s group needed to understand the term “anti-transcendentalism” and be familiar with examples of it for both the paper and the video. It was the research part of the process that provided this understanding, not the writing of the paper. For Brendan’s group and others like it, the process looked more like “research, then paper and video

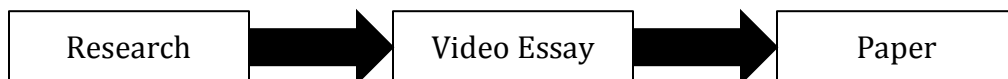
simultaneously,” rather than the teacher-designed process of “research, then paper, then video.” Figure 6 illustrates this group’s sequence of activities.

Figure 10. Category Three Students’ Sequence of Activities



The fourth category of students (much smaller than any of the other three) believed that the research they did for the video (e.g. finding videos and images, connecting to sources outside the text) actually helped with the paper – the opposite of the process that Mr. Carter had designed. Evan described how this process worked for him: “Doing the video and having all the examples helped me find direction for my section, because I was gonna use the book of course, but I didn’t have any other ideas until I did the video and got clips” (Interview, November 10, 2010). For Evan, the research for the video gave him ideas about what he could include in the paper, such as connections to other texts outside of *The Scarlet Letter*. Figure 7 illustrates this sequence of activities. The process as Mr. Carter designed it did not allow for this use of the media to inform the written paper.

Figure 11. Category Four Students’ Sequence of Activities



It is important to note that different approaches to this sequence existed even within groups. For example, Dean (whose approach is described above in the second category) and Evan (whose approach is described above in the fourth category) were in the same group. However, because this group divided their topic into sections at the

beginning of the project and students were responsible for completing their own section of both the paper and the video, these varied approaches within groups, as illustrated by Dean and Evan, were made possible. As a result, students could select the approach and sequence that best suited their composition styles and preferences.

Design of Composition Process

In addition to his design of time across the project, Mr. Carter made intentional choices as he designed particular aspects of the composition process for students. Of the many aspects he designed, the following emerged as particularly important in the data: the use of planning and prewriting in the process, the process of composing collaboratively, and the tools and technology for composing. The first of these three is compelling because while the teacher did not include it in his design, the students took it up in interesting ways. The second and third of these aspects were central to Mr. Carter's design of the system and therefore warrant discussion. Each of these areas of Mr. Carter's design of the composition process will be discussed in this section.

Planning and Prewriting

Teacher design. Mr. Carter did not explicitly incorporate prewriting in his design of the composition process. He did not suggest any methods of prewriting, nor did he build this in as a step in the composition process. He did suggest one method of planning in terms of organization of ideas; he suggested that students divide their papers into sections, so that group members could divide responsibility and take ownership of a particular section of the paper. This was a rather general kind of planning for the compositions.

While he never said this directly, Mr. Carter implied that the paper itself served as a form of prewriting for the video essay. He suggested that the paper might help students to organize ideas and divide the video into sections. He further suggested that portions of the paper could even provide a script for narration of portions of the video. His design clearly directed students to write the paper before working on the video, so that the paper could serve these functions. So, although he never labeled the paper as a method of prewriting for the video essay, it did seem that the paper served this function in his design.

It is particularly important to note here that planning and prewriting were not central to Mr. Carter's design of this system. In fact, they were nearly absent from his design. What a teacher chooses to omit is equally as important as what he chooses to include, in terms of understanding and analyzing his overall design. This area of planning and prewriting was one area that he quite clearly selected not to include in his design of the composition process.

Student response. Although Mr. Carter did not specifically include prewriting in his design of the composition process, many students still incorporated this into their own processes. Most students elected to organize their ideas for the research paper by dividing the paper into sections (as suggested by Mr. Carter) and creating an outline to organize their ideas (a decision made by students). Across the three classes, nearly all groups created some form of outline for the paper, though these varied greatly in levels of detail. These students were in the 11th grade and had years of experience as writers, particularly as writers in school settings, and presumably many of these experiences involved forms of prewriting. This step in the composing process seemed to be ingrained in them, even though in this case the teacher did not require it, nor include it as part of his design.

Most students followed Mr. Carter's suggestion of using the paper to guide the organization for the video. As described in the previous section, Alexander used the same outline to provide the structure for both the paper and the video. Similarly, Dean used the sections of the paper to plan the sections of the video. Some students, like Natasha, used the paper to provide a script for the video. Each of these forms of planning for the video was in line with what Mr. Carter had designed, through his sequence of activities and his implicit suggestion that the paper could help them plan the video essay.

Only two students referenced a different form of organizational prewriting for the video essay; Tyler and Natasha both mentioned storyboarding. Natasha described "putting a storyboard together in my mind, because I'm the kind of person that likes to put it all together in my mind to see how I want it to be" (Interview, October 28, 2010). She did not create a physical storyboard, but she was familiar with this concept from a previous class, so she used that structure as she planned her group's video in her mind. Tyler, on the other hand, actually created some small sketches for his storyboard, as he planned his group's video. Perhaps these students were more visual learners, who benefitted from a more visual depiction of a plan for their videos; perhaps being familiar with the concept of storyboarding, they viewed this as the most natural form of planning and prewriting when creating videos. Regardless of the reason for their choice, these students selected an alternative form of organizing their ideas for the video essay, a form that was never introduced or recommended by the teacher.

Teacher adjustment to design: Outlines. Following the students' lead from the first cycle of the assignment (*The Scarlet Letter*), Mr. Carter instructed students to complete a sentence outline for the paper during the second cycle (*The Adventures of*

Huckleberry Finn). He asked students to submit this sentence outline by the end of the second day. He encouraged students to use this outline to organize their paper and to divide the work into sections for each group member to complete. When asked about this change in his design, Mr. Carter explained that he wanted a way to hold students accountable for their work in class on the first couple of days. He discussed groups from the first cycle who wasted class time and did not make the progress he expected. Based on his explanation, he used this form of prewriting for a different purpose than the students. When students created these outlines on their own during the first cycle, they did so to organize their ideas and divide sections among group members. Although Mr. Carter echoed this reasoning when requesting outlines from students during the second cycle, his primary purpose was to hold students accountable for their time spent in class and to ensure that students were making progress on the assignment.

Collaborative Composing

Teacher design. In his design of the project, Mr. Carter chose to have students compose collaboratively in groups. The main reason he gave for this was the amount of work that the project entailed. On the first day of introducing the assignment, he told the students that they would be working in groups, saying, “This is too much work for anyone to do alone. You need to work in a group so that you can divvy out the workload” (Class A, observation, October 18, 2010). He further explained this decision: “There are several parts of this project, and it’s more than I would expect any one student to do. So I have them work in groups so that they can divide and conquer” (Interview, October 26, 2010). Mr. Carter explained that the concept of a video essay was new for students, and so group support was helpful for getting students to understand this type of composing.

He also described the steep learning curve for the technology, as students learned to work within iMovie and to manipulate the different media. As a result of these considerations, Mr. Carter believed that students needed to work in groups for this project.

For the first cycle of the assignment, Mr. Carter told students to divide themselves into groups of three or four students. He explained that he didn't want any groups larger than four students, because in his experience with the video essays, that was too big and then someone would be left out. While he recognized that this is true in many group work situations, he explained that it was "especially [true] with the video essays, when you try to huddle too many people around a computer screen. It usually works out that one or two people at the computer do everything while the other group members mess around" (Interview, October 26, 2010). For the first cycle, all groups contained three or four students, with the exception of two groups: one group in class A, which became a group of two students when one student moved and left the school, and one group in class C, which asked for permission to work in a group of two. For the second cycle of the assignment, Mr. Carter reduced the size of groups. This time, he asked students to work in pairs (class A contained one group of three because there was an odd number of students in the class). Mr. Carter explained this reduction in group size:

With the exposure to the new skills that we saw in *The Scarlet Letter* projects, and the learning curve of having new technology, for two people to have to overcome and do all of that would be too much. I think being able to break it down initially so that they mastered the skills in small chunks, allows me then to go back the second time and expect them to be able to do more because they've already learned the skills. And then it also takes care of people who were kind of able to skim through the first time. It now makes them have to step up and do something in the pairs, instead of in the fours (Interview, January 25, 2011).

So his purpose in reducing the size of the groups was twofold. First, he believed that because students already had some experience with the process and the tools, they should be able to take on a larger portion of the project this time and complete it with fewer group members. Second, he believed that the smaller groups would force all students to take a more active role, instead of being able to rely on other group members to do all of the work. In particular, he referenced some students who did not work with the technology at all during the first cycle and relied on other group members to work in iMovie and manipulate the media, which was something he wanted all students to experience.

Both in his explanations in class and in his interview, Mr. Carter discussed the ways that he envisioned the groups working – that groups would divide the workload among group members. While Mr. Carter explicitly encouraged students to divide the work of the project among group members, he did not describe specifically how they needed to do this. He told class B on the first day of the project, “Part of this process is you divvying up the workload, so that no one ends up doing all of it. It’s not about doing the whole project; it’s about doing your part of it” (Class B, observation, October 18, 2010). Mr. Carter reminded students multiple times, especially in the first few days, that they should think about ways to divide the project so that each group member would have a part to be working on. He believed that one reason for having students work in groups to complete this project was to divide the work among group members and make the work load lighter on each of them. So, for Mr. Carter, division of labor within the groups was an important part of this activity.

Student response. Students' responses to composing collaboratively varied greatly, with many students having conflicted feelings about the group nature of this assignment. While composing in groups alleviated the amount of work required by individuals and allowed students the opportunity to work with their friends, it also caused challenges.

Students were aware that these projects required a significant amount of work. As a result, many students were grateful that they did not have to do all of the work alone. Lexie explained, "It was nice to be able to split things up, so that no one person had to do all of the work" (Interview, October 29, 2010). Kayla said, "I don't know how I would have gotten it done if I had to do everything myself. It was a lot" (Interview, November 10, 2010). Students seemed to agree with Mr. Carter's belief that these projects were too much for an individual student to accomplish, due to the multiple parts of the assignment and their unfamiliarity with the technology and the type of composition. Many students also enjoyed the opportunity to work with their friends. In fact, several students (including Dean, Evan, Kayla, Andy, and Max) cited "working with friends" as one of their favorite parts of the project.

The change in group size between the first and second cycles did not seem to affect students. They were able to complete the project in the smaller groups, and no one ever complained about the smaller group size. From observations, it did seem as though students maintained more focus in these smaller groups. During the first cycle, several examples existed where one or two group members were engaged in the process, while the remaining group members were off-task. Alexander and Emily's group was a good example of this; while the two of them worked on the project, particularly toward the end

of the process, the other two members of their group did not engage with the project in any way. This may have resulted, in part, from the nature of working at a computer. For this group, Alexander and Emily were always seated in front of the computer on which the video essay was being composed and were in control of this computer, while the other two group members either worked at two separate computers or sat at desks without computers. Figure 12 displays the common physical configuration of this group, showing Alexander and Emily seated at the main computer and the other two students working at separate computers. It would have been difficult to have four people working at one computer, and so perhaps this contributed to the other two group members being off task. This is one example of how the technology may have affected group dynamics or the social organization within groups. While the other two members of this group could have worked on other pieces of the project or worked at a separate computer, the other two members of this group chose instead to engage in off-task behaviors, such as talking about outside topics or using the computers in ways that were not related to the project. During the second cycle, however, when groups were limited to pairs, no such clear examples of this existed. This could certainly be the result of the students having a better understanding of what they should be doing, but the smaller group size may have been a contributing factor as well. With only two students in each group, it was much more difficult for one student to elude work.

Figure 12. Typical Physical Configuration of Alexander and Emily's Group



Students took up Mr. Carter's call to divide the labor among group members. Across the groups, students primarily chose two ways of dividing the labor of the project: by section or by activity.

Most groups divided their projects into three to four sections. For example, Dean's group had the topic of "transcendentalism" for their project on *The Scarlet Letter*, and they chose to divide their project into four sections: "defining transcendentalism, the history of transcendentalism, the importance of nature, and seclusion from society" (Interview, November 10, 2010). Once they had their projects divided in this way, some of the groups divided the labor according to these sections. In the group example mentioned above, the students divided the sections in this way: Logan took defining transcendentalism, Andy took the history of transcendentalism, Dean took the importance of nature, and Evan took seclusion from society. Each student was then solely responsible for their section of the project, both for writing that section of the paper and for

composing that portion of the video essay. This group offers a nice contrast to Alexander and Emily's group, where two students were often off task. In Dean's group, each student had a piece of the project that he was responsible for, so each student always had something to be working on. Most days, students in this group worked separately on different computers, until near the end of the process when they began putting their work together on a shared computer. Figures 9 and 10 display examples of each of these configurations. Figure 13 is a picture of this group on the second day of working on the video essay, when each group member was working on his own section at a separate computer (the four male students visible in the picture are the four group members). Figure 14 is a picture on the final day of working on the video essay, when all group members were huddled around a shared computer to compile each member's contribution to the video essay. On this final day, this group had relocated to another room in the building, so that their final video would not be seen or heard by others in the class prior to the class sharing (three of the four group members were present).

Figure 13. Physical Configuration of Dean's Group Working Separately



Figure 14. Physical Configuration of Dean's Group Working Together



Other groups divided their projects by type of activity, namely who would be responsible for the paper and who would be responsible for the video. For example, during the second cycle of the assignment, Tim and Max divided the labor in this way: Tim was responsible for writing the paper, and Max was responsible for composing the video. They shared their research with one another and offered ideas, but the composing responsibilities were divided by these activity types. Lexie's group also took this approach: Lexie was responsible for working in iMovie to create the video essay, Teri was responsible for locating media and resources to use in the video essay, and the other two group members were responsible for the research paper. Again, in contrast to Alexander and Emily's group, all members of Lexie's group were consistently contributing. It seemed that when the labor was clearly divided and students had clearly defined responsibilities, as was the case with both Lexie's and Dean's groups, it was less

common for students to be off-task, than when all group members tried to work together on the whole project at one computer. When students divided the labor among group members, as Mr. Carter instructed, things seemed to function much more smoothly in regard to group dynamics.

Lexie offered an explanation for why this type of division of labor by activity occurred:

I've kind of done most of that [work on the video], and I think usually, in all of the groups, whoever knows how to do it just kind of does it. Some of the other kids in the class do journalism and the news class, so they know how to do it. So, I think like half the class knew how to do it [the video] and half the class didn't. So you just kind of focus on different things (Interview, October 29, 2010).

Lexie explained this division of labor by activity as a matter of expertise, saying that students focused on what they knew and what they were good at. Students who were familiar with iMovie and knew how to create the videos stepped up and took the lead on that part of the project. This is another example of how the tools and technology affected the social organization within groups.

Even with this division of labor, some students still eluded work. If a particular group member did not complete an assigned task, other group members would often fill in and do that work instead. In one case, a student had been assigned tasks on the first day, but then was absent days four through seven, so other group members elected to do her work, so that they could be sure it was completed. In another case, Alexander and Emily discovered on day nine that their other two group members had not completed their parts, so Alexander and Emily came to Mr. Carter's classroom after school to complete the work that had been assigned to the other group members.

The two biggest challenges identified by students were some group members not doing their share of the work and difficulties getting all group members to agree to aspects of the project. Particularly in the first project, when students were working in larger groups of four students, several instances occurred where all of the work was placed on one or two students, while other group members offered little contribution. This is a common problem in any kind of group work. During the class work sessions, Alexander frequently expressed frustration with his group members for not doing their share of the work. Although he could not seem to get much help from most of his group, he continually prompted them to be on task and described his frustration with having to do all the work. Other students in this situation were much more reserved in their group interactions and quietly carried the burden of the group's work. Both Bryan and Natasha, although visibly frustrated by having to do all of the work for their respective groups, did not verbally express this anger to their other group members or try to enforce a more balanced share of the labor. Most of the students who shouldered the load of their group's work expressed frustration following the end of the project. Following the project, Alexander commented, "I did most of the work, and they just kind of slacked off and did nothing. It would've been nice if my group would have worked. I haven't really enjoyed the fact that I've had to do almost all of the work" (Interview, November 1, 2010). Bryan shared this sentiment, saying, "My group members messed around, which made me very mad" (Interview, November 3, 2010).

This issue of certain students shouldering the majority of the work arose, at times, in relation to an issue of division of labor. In some groups that divided the workload by activity, students felt as though their portion of the project required more work. For

example, Nate had experience with iMovie from the news and journalism class, so he was in charge of creating the video essay portion of the assignment for his group. He seemed to enjoy working on the video, but at the end of the process, he expressed frustration at doing more work than the other members of his group. He commented on this to his group, saying, “You guys didn’t help me with this at all. I had to do the whole thing! All you did was write the paper” (Class C, observation, October 29, 2010). He also expressed this in an interview, saying, “The rest of my group just worked on the paper and doing the research. I had to do the whole video by myself, and it took a lot of time. I spent way more time on this than the rest of them” (Interview, November 3, 2010).

The second common challenge to group work was getting all group members to agree on various aspects of the project. Dean’s group identified this as a major challenge, due to creative differences. Each member of this group had a particular vision for what the final video should look like, and because these visions conflicted, group members experienced difficulties coming to agreements about certain features of the video. Dean explained, “It’s kinda hard when other people don’t see the same things you see, and you have to try and teach them how you think the project should go” (Interview, November 10, 2010). Evan agreed with this, saying that “agreeing on things to put in was pretty tough” (Interview, November 10, 2010). Perhaps one of the reasons that this was such a significant challenge for this group is that these students were very focused on the aesthetic and entertainment qualities of the video. They were very invested in creating something that others would enjoy. Rather than being purely concerned about the content of the video, they were focused on the manner in which the content was presented. The four students in this group had differing ideas about what would appeal to their peers and

what would be deemed acceptable by Mr. Carter. This led to disagreements about how to compose the video and what should be included. Other students also cited these creative differences as a challenge in composing the videos in groups. This challenge to collaborative composing seems more specific to video work, due to aesthetics and stylistic choices that are so much a part of this form of composition.

Tools and Technology

Teacher design. Mr. Carter selected the tools and technologies that students used in the composition process. During the research phase, he selected the books from the library and the online databases that students could access. For the video essay, Mr. Carter instructed students to use iMovie on the Mac laptops (provided on the school's laptop cart) to create the videos and to use YouTube and iTunes podcasts to locate video clips for use in their video essays. Mr. Carter brought the Mac laptop cart into his classroom for the duration of the project, and he provided some instruction and support for use of Macs and iMovie (this instruction is discussed in the Design of Pedagogy section). When asked about his decision to use Macs and specifically iMovie for the video essay, Mr. Carter identified two reasons. First, he explained that he has found iMovie to have greater capabilities than its PC counterparts (e.g. Movie Maker). In his previous experiences with other video projects, he found that iMovie was "fairly user-friendly, even with little experience" and had "greater functionality than most other programs" he had seen (Interview, October 26, 2010). He expressed the belief that students could, with little instruction and exposure, become proficient enough in the use of iMovie to create a quality product. Second, Mr. Carter explained the practical

consideration of wanting students to work in the classroom, and that the Mac laptop cart was readily available for his use.

Student response. Students' responses to the tools Mr. Carter selected for their composition process varied mostly due to their levels of familiarity with the tools. These students could be grouped and labeled as proficient users, emergent users, and novice users of the tools. Some students also experienced frustration with the tools due to issues of identity and access.

Although most students were unfamiliar with Macs and iMovie, a few students had previous experience with these tools and responded quite differently to Mr. Carter's decision to use them. Lexie and Nate were both familiar with Macs and had experience creating video projects in iMovie. When Mr. Carter announced that these were the tools they would be using, Nate expressed excitement. As other students in the class complained that they would rather use PCs and Movie Maker, Nate defended Mr. Carter's decision, saying, "No way! You can do so much more with iMovie" (Class C, observation, October 25, 2010). Lexie used her experience with iMovie to alleviate her group's concerns over their lack of familiarity. She told her group, "It's okay. I know how to use it. I can show you" (Class C, observation, October 25, 2010). Nate and Lexie, who could both be identified as proficient users of the tools, understood the technology from the beginning and responded positively to Mr. Carter's choices of tools and technology. As proficient users of the tools and technology, these students took primary responsibility for the video essay portion of the assignment, and in the case of Lexie, even became a teacher within her group, showing other members of her group how to use

the tools. Again, students' levels of familiarity with the technology influenced the social organization within groups.

With the exception of the early bird class (Class A) and a few students across the other two classes, most of the students were not familiar with Macs, having had experience only with PCs. Even among the students who did have previous experience with Macs, most of those students had never used iMovie. So, this project presented nearly all students with new tools and new technology. Students frequently expressed frustration with the Macs, mostly due to this lack of familiarity. Alexander, on multiple occasions, exclaimed in the middle of class, "I hate Macs!" This was usually in response to something not working the way he expected it to in iMovie. After one of these exclamations, Alexander asked Mr. Carter, "Why do we have to use Macs? It would be so much easier if we could do this on PCs" (Class C, observation, October 26, 2010). Similarly, Jack, who identified himself as "a PC guy," expressed his frustration with the unfamiliar technology, saying, "Stupid Macs" (Class B, observation, October 26, 2010). Like Alexander, Jack believed the project would be easier if they used PCs.

Across the two cycles of the project, students gained experience working with Macs. For some students, this experience did not translate to an increase in their comfort level with the tools, but for other students, this experience completely shifted their attitudes toward the tools. For example, Alexander, who continually and forcefully expressed his frustration with the Macs during the early part of *The Scarlet Letter* project, exclaimed during the final work day, "I really want a Mac right now!" (Class C, observation, October 29, 2010). As he gained experience with the tool and learned how to manipulate the technology, he began to recognize some of the features and capabilities of

Macs. This, coupled with his enjoyment of composing the video, shifted his stance toward the Macs. Similarly, Joe, who struggled greatly with the Macs during the first cycle and frequently had to ask for assistance, was excited to work with the Macs during the second cycle. When he entered the classroom and saw that the Mac laptop cart was back for the second cycle, he said, “Yes! We got the Macs again! I know how to do this now!” (Class B, observation, January 11, 2011). Alexander and Joe could be classified as emergent users of the tools.

For some students, the primary obstacle to the tools was tied up in issues of identity. Several students identified themselves as not being good with technology. Because this project and the tools necessary to complete it were all related to technology, some students felt intimidated and lacked confidence for being successful. Bryan called himself “technology-deficient,” as he explained why this project presented such a challenge for him (Interview, November 3, 2010). Natasha also cited this as a reason for struggling with the project: “I’m not very good with technology, so I’ve kind of had a hard time understanding how it all works” (Interview, October 28, 2010). Unlike Bryan, who never did gain confidence in his abilities with the tools, the experience of working with the tools and creating the video served to shift Natasha’s identity, at least in a small way, as she began to see herself as a more capable user of the tools and technology. Natasha said later, “I think by the end of the process, I’ll be able to do it. Like next time, I could probably do it on my own. I think it’s just kind of an experience thing of trial and error” (Interview, October 28, 2010). Natasha, like Alexander, could be classified as an emergent user of the tools, while Bryan, even after both cycles of the assignment, would still be classified as a novice user of the tools.

Because of this lack of familiarity, many students felt that they needed more instruction on how to use the Macs and iMovie. This was one of the most frequent comments from students, when asked how the teacher could have better supported them during the process. Alexander said, “It would’ve been nice to know more about iMovie since I had no idea how to work that. I’ve never used it, so it would’ve been nice if someone would’ve taught me how to use the iMovie and stuff” (Interview, November 1, 2010). Similarly, when asked what would have been most helpful to him in the process, Bryan said he needed “way more directions on iMovie” (Interview, November 3, 2010).

Regardless of students’ levels of comfortable with the tools, lack of access to the necessary tools provided a source of frustration for many students. Outside of the early bird class, in which all students had access to their own Mac laptops at home, only two students had access to Macs at home and therefore could work on the video project outside of class. Access was an interesting issue here. We generally think about issues of access as having versus not having, but here we had a different issue of access. Here, the students had plenty of access to computers and technology. The school offered multiple computer labs and computers for students to check out, and nearly all of the students in these three classes had computers at home. Here, though, the issue was *which* tools students had access to. The computers that these students were able to access were PCs, and they needed Macs for this project. The Macs were only available to them on the school’s Mac laptop cart, and therefore, they had limited access to these laptops outside of class and were not able to take them home. Alexander explained that this meant he “couldn’t do the iMovie out of class. I wish I would’ve been able to do that” (Interview, November 1, 2010).

An interesting contradiction existed within Mr. Carter's design in terms of access. As mentioned above, an important consideration in Mr. Carter's selection of the Macs was the availability of the Mac laptop cart, which would allow students to work on the project in the classroom with ease. However, access to the Macs became a stumbling block for students, as their lack of access to Macs outside of class necessitated that the project be completed entirely in class for most students. Therefore, Mr. Carter's intentional design of space for work on the project in class (being able to use computers in the classroom rather than in a computer lab and being able to use laptops rather than desktops) also resulted in an unintentional design of students not having access to tools needed to work on the videos outside of class. As each cycle of the projects came to an end and students became concerned about not finishing on time, due to lack of access to tools outside of class, Mr. Carter offered students the opportunity to come to his classroom early in the mornings or after school to work on the Macs in his classroom. Several students took advantage of this offer. However, Mr. Carter only made this option available on the final days before each project was due, as it became apparent that lack of access was causing difficulties for students.

Design of Publication and Distribution Practices

Two types of publication and distribution practices arose within the design of this system: practices within the classroom and those that extended beyond the classroom. While the first type was a specific part of Mr. Carter's design, the second was not, and yet some students still took up these practices outside of the classroom.

Publication and Distribution within the Classroom

Teacher design. On the last two days of the first cycle of the assignment, students shared their final video essays with the class. Mr. Carter told them from the beginning of the assignment that they would share their final videos in class, so students had expected this. For these two days, each group came to the front of the room, announced its topic, and briefly described some aspects of its process (decisions they made, difficulties they encountered, etc.). The group then played its video for the class. Following each video, Mr. Carter asked other students to comment on the video, providing feedback about what they liked and what the group could have done better, and then offered commentary on the videos himself.

Mr. Carter believed that the class sharing of videos was very important to the process. Because they knew from the beginning that they would share their videos with an audience, students worked harder on their projects, Mr. Carter believed. As such, this class viewing established community and gave students an authentic audience and purpose for their compositions. Mr. Carter further explained that this was an opportunity for students to see how others approached composing a video essay and to get ideas for their future work. Here, students' compositions served as examples and models for other students. Finally, he believed that this class viewing was important as a method of exposing students to the various topics related to each novel (for example, transcendentalism in *The Scarlet Letter*); in this way, the class viewing also served the purpose of teaching content.

Mr. Carter explained why he had students comment on the videos after watching them in class:

That's a chance for them to hear from each other what worked and what didn't work in their videos. It's one thing for me to comment on those things, but it's a whole different thing when they hear it from their peers. That's an important part of the learning that takes place here; you know, having conversations about what worked and didn't work and why. And it helps me to hear how they watch these things and how they understand what is working or not. And the students always like getting positive feedback from their peers on something they've worked on. It validates their work and makes them proud of what they've done.

It is clear from this explanation that Mr. Carter had multiple purposes for having students respond to each of the videos: to engage in discussion about composition choices, to understand students' perceptions about what makes these compositions effective (so that he can guide their understanding), and to create a positive classroom community of composers.

Student response. Students mostly responded positively to the class sharing of the video essays. Throughout the project, students commented that they were looking forward to seeing all of them. A few students even made expressed excitement about getting to show their videos. For example, toward the end of the project, Dean said, "I can't wait for everyone to see this. It's going to be awesome!" (Class C, observation, October 28, 2010).

As one might expect, when the day came to share the videos, many students were nervous. In two of the three classes, no one volunteered to go first. In the other class, a group of three girls volunteered to go first, because they said they "want[ed] to get it over with" (Class A, observation, November 1, 2010). Before sharing their videos, an overwhelming majority of the groups made an effort to lower the expectations of the class, describing aspects of their own videos in self-deprecating ways. When Mr. Carter

asked at the beginning of the presentations what would make a good video, Curtis said, “The opposite of ours!” (Class B, observation, November 1, 2010). Natasha mocked her own voice in the video for sounding “really young,” and she highlighted a moment in the video where she took a “dramatic pause” in her narration, because she lost her place while reading (Class A, observation, November 1, 2010). Jack warned the class about how choppy his group’s video was. This was common across the three classes, as students prepared to share their videos.

Despite this, most of the response to the videos was quite positive. Even when students offered critical feedback to one another, they tended to temper it with several positive comments. Once students received positive feedback from their peers, they ceased criticizing their own work. On the whole, this discussion demonstrated a positive community of composers, with one notable exception: Bryan’s group.

Throughout the process, Bryan clearly and openly struggled with the video assignment, both due to the technology and due to not receiving much help from his group. Before Bryan shared his group’s video, he described many of the difficulties he had with the technology, and he spoke about his video in a self-deprecating manner, as many other students did. While his video played, there was audible laughter in the classroom. Bryan sat with his head down on his desk the entire time that the video played. When the video ended, Mr. Carter asked students what worked in the video. Beth volunteered that all of the video clips used in the video essay were relevant for the topic, and Jack followed up on that, commenting that a couple of the video clips were too long. Mr. Carter agreed with Jack, saying that a few clips did not seem related to the topic. Mr. Carter also critiqued the organization of the video essay. No other students commented

on Bryan's video, and no positive comments were made after Beth's initial comment. Bryan appeared upset following the discussion of his video, but he did not make any additional comments. The other students in Bryan's group did not appear upset, but as Bryan had done the majority of the work, he had the greatest sense of ownership of the video and therefore felt the most impact. When asked later about the response to his video in class, Bryan said, "It was awful. Everyone pretty much hated it. I mean, the video could have been a lot better if I had help from my group, but since I had to pretty much do all of it myself, that's all I could do. So, yeah, it was pretty bad" (Interview, November 3, 2010). While Bryan did not appear quite as upset about the response to his video a few days after the incident, it was clear in his comments that he was still affected by the negative response he received. Across the three classes and across the two cycles of the assignment, this was the only discussion of a video essay that was completely negative. In all other cases, positive comments were made in addition to criticisms, and no other discussion ended with a student visibly upset.

Students commented that they really enjoyed watching the video essays their peers' composed. Dean said, "It was just cool to see what everyone came up with and how they did stuff" (Interview, November 10, 2010). Kayla explained that watching the videos helped her get ideas for things she could do in her own video essays. When she was describing design choices in her second video essay, she said, "I got the idea to do that [on-screen text] from one of the videos last time. I liked it because I could get my ideas across without having to put my voice on there!" (Interview, January 25, 2011). Students seemed to find both enjoyment and value in viewing their peers' video essays.

Of Mr. Carter's three goals for the class sharing (engaging in discussion about composition choices, understanding students' perceptions about what makes these compositions effective and guiding their understandings, and creating a positive classroom community of composers), each appeared to be fulfilled to some extent. Students did participate in discussion about composition choices, commenting on decisions their peers made. In doing so, they offered commentary about what they liked and didn't like. Important to note is that students' ideas did not always align with the teacher's views; this will be discussed in more detail in chapter V. As for the positive classroom community of composers, the class sharing seemed to foster this, with the exception of the incident surrounding Bryan's video. Aside from this, students were quite encouraging of one another's work and had positive and constructive comments. For Bryan, though, it seemed that this class sharing had the opposite effect.

Publication and Distribution beyond the Classroom

Teacher design. Mr. Carter did not specifically consider distribution of the videos beyond the audience of the classroom in his design of the system. When asked if students shared videos across the classes, he explained, "I'm sure they do, but I don't hear about it. We don't make a conscious choice to sit down and show them. I mean, they probably look at it with each other, but I never hear kids talking about it either way" (Interview, October 26, 2010). He also explained that he hasn't received any parental response to the videos. "I haven't seen that so much. I don't even know if our kids work on this much at home, like I don't know if they go home and say, 'Hey Mom and Dad, I'm doing this.' I've not had that experience with it" (Interview, October 26, 2010).

Mr. Carter did refer to seeing some students post their video essays online in more public spaces, but he did not consider this sort of distribution in his design of the system. He explained, “I have seen kids post it on their Facebook page or onto their YouTube channel” (Interview, October 26, 2010). Despite knowing that some students choose to do this, Mr. Carter did not seem particularly interested in how or why students distributed their videos beyond the classroom. This was not a consideration for him in terms of this project.

What is interesting to note here is that for other video, media-based projects that Mr. Carter had designed as a teacher, distribution beyond the classroom had been a key component of the system. At a previous high school, Mr. Carter designed a video project for his senior classes, in which students combined photos, music, and on-screen text as one of the final projects before graduation. He discussed the distribution of those projects, saying, “The senior videos were big deals. They were played at graduation parties. They were huge community deals and always came back with lots of feedback” (Interview, October 26, 2010). Mr. Carter also designed another video project in a Literature and Film class at his current school, in which students selected a short story and created a video representation of the story. In regard to this project, he explained, “The Lit and Film projects always came back with good feedback from people that had seen them in other classes” (Interview, October 26, 2010). For both of these other video projects, distribution beyond the classroom was a design consideration. What makes these video essay projects different? In some sense, these videos are less personal than either of the other projects. The senior video projects were extremely personal, as students used personal images of themselves, friends, and family members, to tell some kind of story

about their lives or their high school experiences. The Literature and Film videos involved students actually performing in front of the camera, as they acted out the short stories. The video essays, on the other hand, did not contain this same kind of personal element. They were much more academic in nature, revolving around novels and research about those novels. Perhaps these video essays felt more like essays than videos to Mr. Carter, leading him to believe that audiences beyond the classroom would not be as interested in these videos as they were in the other two projects.

Student response. Most students said that they did not plan to share their video essays with anyone beyond the classroom. Lexie and Brendan, for example, say that while they had shared other videos they have made in the past for other projects, they did not plan on sharing their video essays. Lexie described a video she created for her eighth grade graduation, which was shared with many people. However, she said she didn't feel like the video essay was something she would share with anyone else. Brendan described a video he created for his chemistry class, which he shared with his friends and family and even posted online. "My chemistry video was really funny, so yeah, it's on my Facebook. But this one, I probably won't. I mean, if it had been funny like the chemistry one, I probably would have shared it" (Interview, November 3, 2010). For Brendan, humor was an important consideration in choosing to share the other video he had created for school. Because his video essay for this project did not involve humor, he did not choose to share it outside of the class.

A few students broke the mold here, namely Dean's group. Every member of this group had either already shared or planned to share their video with family at home, and they had shared the video with friends at school from outside their class. This group also

elected to post their video essay on YouTube, and at the time of the group interview (which was less than one week after the completion of their video), Andy shared excitedly that their video already had 48 views. Kayla and Maria said that they planned to share their second video with their friends and family, and Kayla said she would post it to her Facebook page. While some students reported sharing their videos with students from other classes, this more public kind of sharing was quite rare across the students in this study.

There is an important question here in terms of student response to the design of the system: what would make some students feel compelled to share their video essays with audiences beyond the classroom, despite this not being a part of the design of the project or the system? Perhaps it was pride in the work; these two groups (Dean, Evan, Andy, and Logan; and Kayla and Maria) were particularly proud of their final products. Perhaps it was the entertainment value of the video; both of these groups made an effort to connect to the audience. Dean's group was one of the few that placed special emphasis on creating a video that would be entertaining for their peers, through the use of humor. Kayla's group made an effort to make the content of their video relevant to their peers, by connecting their topic of superstitions in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to superstitious behavior that may be more prevalent in today's society. So, maybe it was that focus on audience and entertainment that made these students want to share their work with broader audiences, which would coincide with Brendan choosing to share his chemistry video online but not his video essay. Therefore, it is possible that the nature of this assignment, which was designed as more academic and less entertaining, impacted students' decisions about distributing their video essays beyond the classroom. It was

only the students who stepped outside the mold that Mr. Carter had designed for the project who felt compelled to share their video essays with broader audiences.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined decisions made by the teacher in his design of this activity of multimedia composition, specifically his design of time, composition process, and publication and distribution practices. Within each of these categories, I identified aspects of his design and discussed how students responded to these aspects. While at times the students seemed to approve of and participate in the system as Mr. Carter designed it, some instances of students pushing back against his design occurred as well. These moments of adherence to and divergence from the teacher's design offer points of discussion and implications.

CHAPTER V

EXPECTATIONS OF THE ACTIVITY

In the previous chapter, I explored specific aspects of the teacher's design and how students responded to each of those design choices. In this chapter, I step back to explore the teacher's design on a top-level, by examining his expectations of the activity. As discussed in chapter I, participants' conceptions of an activity impact how they engage in the activity. Therefore, while this is a much broader level than the areas discussed in the previous chapter, the teacher's expectations of the activity are important to consider regarding design, as they affected all of his design choices. In this chapter, I again address a piece of the first research question about teacher design (how does the teacher design a classroom system of collaborative video essay composition?), here focusing specifically on the teacher's expectations of the activity. I also address the third research question (how do students respond to the system the teacher has created?), as I consider how students understood and responded to the teacher's expectations.

In this chapter, I begin by laying out the teacher's expectations of the activity, focusing on his goals for the assignment, his communication of goals to students, and his ways of valuing the video essays. By way of exploring students' responses to the teacher's expectations, I examine students' understanding of the teacher's goals and their ways of valuing the video essays, both how they aligned and conflicted with the teacher's ways of valuing. Students' ways of valuing the video essays indicate that students had some of their own expectations and goals for the activity. These goals and expectations

serve as a kind of response to the teacher's expectations, as students sought to redesign the purpose of the activity, changing it in ways that made the activity more meaningful for them.

Teacher Expectations of the Activity

Goals of the Assignment

When asked to articulate his goals for the video essay assignment, Mr. Carter defined his goals much more broadly than just related to the video. This assignment involved multiple pieces, as described earlier, and each of those pieces held a particular purpose for Mr. Carter. He identified his goals as follows:

First, to cover the American lit, the classics of American lit, to expose them to that classic literature. Also, to embed in them the skills of research and source manipulation, making sure sources are credible, which gets us back to the AP Language skill of being able to use source guides and being able to understand the difference between types of sources. But then, also, part of the AP Language exam is visual rhetoric. They have to analyze pictures. And so making them make conscious choices about visual images helps reinforce what they will have to do on that part of the exam as well. So it's another type of literacy that, I think in our world, is probably the most fundamental that we all use the most, but that is taught the least - visual rhetoric. So, it makes them tie those things together, I think, in a more concrete way (Interview, October 26, 2010).

In this statement, Mr. Carter identified three separate goals tied to three separate pieces of the assignment: exposure to classic American literature (reading the novels), research skills (writing the research papers), and visual rhetoric (composing the videos). The first of these goals was tied to Mr. Carter's belief that students in any English class should be reading literature. The second two goals were specific to the class being an AP course, as the College Board sets specific goals for each AP course.

This third goal, being the one related to the video essays, is of particular interest here. Mr. Carter referred to visual rhetoric numerous times in interviews. The College Board website, which is the central source of information regarding Advanced Placement courses, states that students in the AP English Language class should learn to both to analyze written arguments and to create their own written arguments. This relates to the rhetoric that is taught in this course. The visual rhetoric that Mr. Carter mentioned appears in the AP English Language course description as follows: “to reflect the increasing importance of graphics and visual images in texts published in print and electronic media, students are asked to analyze how such images both relate to written texts and serve as alternative forms of text themselves” (Puhr, 2007). Mr. Carter used the video essay assignment to accomplish this goal and even to take it a step further: he asked students not only to analyze arguments across a variety of media (words, image, video, etc.), but also to create arguments using these different media. His primary goal for the video essay part of the assignment was to have students analyze the rhetoric of individual media (e.g. images and video clips) and then to manipulate and combine those media to create their own arguments.

At the beginning of “video week,” Mr. Carter began explaining the video essay:

The video project is basically a presentation that encompasses the ideas that you found through research. You should have visual, sound, and text segments that convey to the class what you learned through your research... The video should be able to run and stand alone. Any talking or explaining that you need to do should be recorded as narration in the video. This is a lot different from PowerPoint, where you read and explain what’s on the slides. This pushes you to think about what needs to be said and make sure that the video says it all (Class A, observation, October 25, 2010).

He never used the term “visual rhetoric” with the students as he did in explaining his goals in the interview. However, he did address some of the same elements, namely that they should use different media (visual, sound, text) to convey the ideas from their research and that the media in the video should be used to create their argument.

Another goal that Mr. Carter mentioned in discussing the origins of the assignment was to expose students to new technological tools. This was something that the school as a whole had been working on, and he saw this assignment as working toward that purpose. “Within the last two or three years, we’ve made a conscious decision as a school to expose them to more than just PowerPoint. So that’s part of this too” (Interview, October 26, 2010). So, in addition to the skills of analyzing and manipulating media in terms of rhetoric, there was a goal of exposure to the technology and tools.

Mr. Carter’s primary purposes or goals for the video essay assignment were to increase students’ understanding of rhetoric across different media, both in their analyses and in their own creation of arguments, and to expose students to new tools and technologies.

Communication of Goals to Students

Two methods of demonstrating goals and expectations for the students arose: models of video essays, which Mr. Carter elected not to use, and discussions of video essays during class sharing, which Mr. Carter did elect to use.

Mr. Carter made a conscious decision not to show students any models of video essays. He had several models available to him from previous years of doing this project,

but he chose not to show students any of those examples. He explained this decision, saying:

I don't like showing them good ones. They've asked - some of the kids in class have asked for models. I'm not a big model person, because I think it pigeon-holes them into, 'This is what it has to be.' And I've never really said this is what it has to be, I've just given some vague parameters and allow them to fill in the gaps. They are creative individuals, and so hopefully they can do better things than even I could anticipate. I think it works better to just let them figure it out (Interview, October 26, 2010).

Mr. Carter's decision not to show models was based on the belief that models would be limiting to his students. Rather than helping them understand the assignment better, he believed that models would stifle students' creativity. Because creativity and originality were important to Mr. Carter's vision of this activity, he elected not to use this method of communicating his expectations, which he believed would limit students' originality and creativity. However, it also seems from Mr. Carter's articulation of both his goals and his ways of valuing the video essays that he had some specific parameters or expectations in mind. So, while he described the project as being very open to students' creativity, it may not have been quite as open-ended in terms of what he wanted and expected as he described.

Mr. Carter built in a different method for demonstrating his expectations at the end of the first cycle: offering commentary on the first cycle of video essays during the day of class sharing. During these days, Mr. Carter asked for students to offer feedback to their peers, but he also provided comments on each video, stating what he thought was done well or what could have been done better. Mr. Carter's commentary during these class sharing days typically fell into the following categories: use or manipulation of

media, research of the topic, connection to or focus on the topic, organization of the video essay, and production elements. Table 4 offers examples of comments (one from each category) given by Mr. Carter on the class sharing days from the first cycle.

Table 4
Examples of Teacher Comments from Class Sharing Days

Comment:	Class:	Group:	Category:
“Their manipulation of the content was evident. They were intentional with what they chose to show. Instead of just showing a whole video clip, they picked the parts that were relevant for their topic and only showed those.”	A	Samantha and Katie	Use of media
“You could definitely hear some of their research. They read some of the meat of their paper as narration. We knew that they had researched the topic.”	A	Natasha, Amy, and non-participant	Research
“They got a little sidetracked at the end and started talking about other things outside their topic. Try to stay focused on your topic and your thesis.”	C	Kayla, Candace, Andrea, and Michelle	Focus
“My question would be how was that organized at all. If you were to write a paper like that, I’d give it back to you. I felt like that video didn’t have any organization.”	B	Bryan, Matt, Aaron, and Dan	Organization
“The video was well edited and well produced. Transitions were smooth, the sound was well done. It looked professional.”	C	Nate, Kenny, Todd, and Keith	Production

Mr. Carter explained the purpose of this method of communicating his expectations to students: “The first video is always a learning experience, and so by me talking about what I see in the videos, that helps them understand my perspective. It’s like another layer of assessment, where they get to see what I’m thinking” (Interview, January 25, 2011). While this method did not support students’ understanding of his

expectations for the first cycle (since it came after the completion of the first video essays), it did provide support for them in the later cycles of the assignment.

Ways of Valuing the Video Essays

Mr. Carter had strong opinions about which video essays were good and which were bad. He was able, in interviews, to articulate criteria that made for quality video essays, as well as specific video essays that met or did not meet those criteria.

The first criterion Mr. Carter identified was that the video essay must be well researched, referring to the content of the video. He explained that the research would appear either through the voiceover, which he said should occur in small pieces, or through a combination of words and images. He explained that it was important that the video essays “convey the research and the understanding of the larger concept” (Interview, January 25, 2011).

The second criterion Mr. Carter identified for a good video essay was that video clips and images used in the video essay were connected to the topic and ideas. He explained that the relationship between the media (videos, images, etc.) and the ideas in the video essay should be clear and consistent throughout the entire video essay. Mr. Carter identified this as an area where he would like to see improvement, saying, “I think that’s the next step, the next area of improvement – doing a better job of linking those things up continuously for the whole five minutes, the images and the videos with the words and ideas” (Interview, January 25, 2011). So, Mr. Carter saw it as important that the video clips, images, and sounds be clearly connected to the topic and information presented in the narration of the video.

Third, Mr. Carter identified appropriate tone as a feature of good video essays. He described the video essays as a form of academic writing, and he explained that as such, they should maintain a formal, academic tone. Connecting this point to print writing, Mr. Carter gave the example of writing a formal essay and the tone that would be appropriate for that kind of writing. He explained that he expected a similar tone for these video essays. He stated that students missed the mark on this sometimes, because “it seems like when kids do videos they think academic tone isn’t necessary” (Interview, January 25, 2011). He explained that this did not mean that the videos had to be dull or boring, but that they should maintain a tone appropriately formal for this kind of setting and composition.

Related to this issue of tone in the video essays is the issue of humor, which came up numerous times in the interviews with Mr. Carter. By humor, I am referring to students attempting to incorporate humor or wit into their video essays for entertainment value. From the beginning, Mr. Carter clearly stated that he did not believe humor was appropriate in the video essays. He explained that these compositions should be professional and formal.

For some reason, students have this notion that videos and presenting are okay to be funny. They don’t make a switch to a serious level - I mean, not serious, but like formal, I guess is the word. When it’s a formal presentation, that there’s a certain decorum that goes along with that (Interview, October 26, 2010).

For students to try to be funny in their video essays would be in direct contrast to the formal tone Mr. Carter expected. While Mr. Carter never made this expectation of formality quite as explicit for the students as he did in the interview, he did allude to this issue a couple of times. For example, on the day he introduced the video portion of the

assignment, he told students not to shoot their own video footage, because in his experience, this “becomes schticky, trying to be funny” (Class C, observation, October 25, 2010). Although he did not explicitly state here that humor was inappropriate, it was implied in his statement.

The fourth criterion of good video essays Mr. Carter identified was originality. He explained that there were different ways for students to make their video essays original, but what was key here for him was that students’ videos should not look the same as everyone else’s and should not contain all of the same clips. He explained, “When you have three pairs doing the same topic, and they all show the same videos, it makes you really wonder how much research went into any of their projects, if they all came up with the same product. So originality is a big deal” (Interview, January 25, 2011). This issue of originality, for Mr. Carter, gets back to his first criterion of the essays, that they be well researched. He believed that originality corresponded with a video that was well researched.

Finally, Mr. Carter explained that it was also nice if the videos were well produced. However, he made it very clear that being well produced could not make up for a lack of content or lack of understanding. He explained, “If a video is nice and it’s well produced, which is what I noticed with a lot of them, but they really didn’t say or do anything as far as demonstrating or creating understanding, then that’s still a weak video” (Interview, January 25, 2011). The production value of the video essays was secondary to the content and composition for Mr. Carter.

In addition to these criteria for quality video essays, Mr. Carter identified a few elements across the classes that he noted as weak in the video essays. The two primary

elements he noted that made for weak video essays were a mismatch between ideas in media and an inability to communicate information to the audience. First, Mr. Carter noted that in some of the videos, there was a “disconnect between what they were showing and what they were saying, and in some cases, one of these things was not related to the topic” (Interview, January 25, 2011). Because his primary goal for the videos had to do with students creating an argument by combining different media, it is not surprising that this would catch his attention as indicating a weak video. In order for a video to be high quality, the various media being used needed to relate and work together in order to make a point. Coherence was key for him. Second, Mr. Carter noted that students might have selected appropriate images and videos, but if they were not able to communicate to the audience how those pieces worked with their topic or related to their overall argument, this would indicate a weak video essay. Mr. Carter related this weak use of media to a writer who uses quotations poorly: “It’s like a writer who has found information, has a bunch of quotes, and so the paper turns into quote after quote after quote, with no explanation, no analysis, no connections” (Interview, January 25, 2011).

Overall, it was clear from Mr. Carter’s perspective that the content of the video essay (the selection of media and the connection between media elements and research) was far more important than any production elements of the video essay. Of the five criteria for quality he identified, only the last was related to production, while the other four were related to content. This was certainly aligned with his goals for the assignment, as his goals were mostly related to rhetoric (getting students to read, analyze, and compose with different media) and exposure to the technology. It was not his goal that students become skilled in production elements of the technology. Therefore, his focus in

terms of valuing the video essays was much more on the content, which in this case related back to his goals of rhetoric, than on production.

Student Response to Teacher Expectations

Understanding of Teacher's Goals

Most students seemed unaware of the teacher's goals for the assignment. Students demonstrated their lack of understanding in regard to the teacher's goals both in their behavior in class and in their commentary on the assignment.

Students expressed frustration during the process, due to the vagueness of the guidelines for the assignment. Andy stated, "He didn't really give us any guidelines or anything" (Interview, November 10, 2010). Because Mr. Carter left the assignment so open ended and did not explicitly relay his goals for the assignment to students, many students were unsure how to proceed with the assignment during the first cycle.

Alexander expressed, "The movie itself was confusing, because I didn't know exactly what we were supposed to be going for, if it was mostly educational or if it was supposed to have some things in there, so I didn't really know exactly what to go for. I just had to go off what I thought" (Interview, November 1, 2010). Another student, Natasha, explained that the lack of clarity of Mr. Carter's goals and expectations made it difficult for them to begin the project. "I think just telling us, 'Oh, make a movie from a paper,' was just kind of vague, and I think it took us a couple of days to even wrap our minds around what we had to do for this" (Interview, October 28, 2010). On the whole, students expressed that they did not think the teacher's goals or expectations of the assignment were very clear, causing much confusion, particularly during the first cycle of the assignment.

Students demonstrated this confusion in class by failing to make progress early in the process and by asking numerous questions. On the first few days of work on the video essays, many students stalled and wasted time. They had a difficult time understanding how to begin, so they delayed as long as possible before getting started. When prompted to get to work, these students responded that they did not know what to do or where to start. In addition, students asked many questions about the assignment in class, because they did not understand what Mr. Carter was asking of them or what he wanted them to get from the assignment. Over time, Mr. Carter became very frustrated with the number of questions students had. For example, Bryan asked multiple questions during every day of class, including some questions about the technology and some questions about the video essays in general. Mr. Carter's frustration, both with students' lack of progress and with students' frequent questions, built across the assignment. He expressed that he believed students should be more independent and that they should be able to figure some things out on their own. Students continued to push back against Mr. Carter's design choice to leave the project somewhat open-ended with vague parameters.

As Mr. Carter referenced in his justification for not showing models, several students requested models during the first cycle of the assignment. Students asked questions like, "Are you going to show us what one of these looks like?" (Jack, Class B, observation, October 25, 2010) and "Do you have any good ones that we could see?" (Lexie, Class C, observation, October 27, 2010).

Students' feelings about the lack of models fell across a spectrum. On one end, students felt very strongly that they needed to see examples. This was a new form of composing for them, and many students were frustrated because they felt like they didn't

know what was being asked of them or what the product was supposed to look like.

Students like Natasha, Alexander, and Jack believed that the assignment was too vague, and without models, they were left without a clear understanding of what was expected of them.

On the other end of the spectrum, some students appreciated that Mr. Carter did not constrain their creativity by showing them examples of what the projects should look like. They enjoyed the freedom that this lack of models afforded them in their composition processes. For example, although Lexie was among the students who requested models, she understood Mr. Carter's decision and agreed with his rationale: "He didn't really show us any videos, because I think he wants everyone to kind of have a unique one. And if you see one video, then you'll do it exactly like that and it won't be different" (Interview, October 29, 2010). Brendan also appreciated that he didn't feel constrained in how he chose to approach his video, saying, "Mr. Carter lets you do your own thing, which I like" (Interview, November 3, 2010). These students appreciated the freedom of being creative and composing their video essays in any way they chose.

Many students fell somewhere in the middle on this spectrum. These students felt both some level of frustration by the lack of models and the vagueness of the assignment, as well as some level of appreciation for the freedom to use their creativity in composing the video essays. Dean explained, "We were complaining that we didn't know what it was supposed to look like, but it was more fun. We could do what we wanted, not what he limited us to do" (Interview, November 10, 2010). While this lack of understanding presented challenges and obstacles for students, many of them also recognized the benefits of the project being open-ended.

Students' videos from the first cycle of the assignment served as models for subsequent cycles. In discussing their video essays from the second cycle, several students referred to other students' videos from the first cycle, explaining ways that those videos influenced their work. For example, Kayla explained, "I got the idea to do that [on-screen text] from one of the videos last time. I liked it because I could get my ideas across without having to put my voice on there!" (Interview, January 25, 2011). In this way, the first cycle of videos served as models for students for the second cycle and gave them ideas about ways to approach the video essays and techniques to try.

In addition, Mr. Carter's commentary on those videos in class helped to guide students' understanding of his expectations. During the second cycle, some students used this increased understanding of the teacher's expectations to adjust their processes and their designs of the video essays, while other students pushed back against the teacher's expectations and used their own goals to drive their compositions. One example of a student who took into account Mr. Carter's expectations during the second cycle was John. On a work day in class, John said to his partner, "Don't forget that we have to explain why we chose each video and how it connects back to our topic. Mr. Carter said our videos shouldn't just be one clip after another" (Class A, observation, January 13, 2011). This was a direct reference to Mr. Carter's critique of some videos from the first cycle, in which he said that some groups just showed video after video, without providing any of their own commentary about how these videos related back to or supported the topic. John recalled Mr. Carter's comment and used it to guide his approach to composing his second video essay.

Evan and Andy, on the other hand, continued to use their own goals and visions for the video essay assignment to guide their compositions, despite having an increased understanding of Mr. Carter's expectations during the second cycle. For the first cycle, these two students were grouped with Dean and Logan. This group's video was on the topic of transcendentalism in *The Scarlet Letter*, and this was the only group that intentionally used humor in their video essay during the first cycle. This group had been fairly secretive about their video, not allowing others to see it before the day of the class viewing. This group even relocated to other places in the school building to record their narration and work on pieces of their video, because they did not want others to see it early and have it spoiled. They were excited about sharing their video with the class and believed that others would enjoy it, particularly for the humor. During the composition process, the group did not indicate any concern that their video would be seen as inappropriate or that Mr. Carter would not like the humor they built into the video. It was not until the class viewing, when Mr. Carter criticized their video for its humor and inappropriate tone that they realized there was an issue with their approach.

The other students in the class had a positive response to the video initially. Immediately upon viewing, Nate said, "I really liked it. It wasn't boring. I mean, it was funny but it still got the message across" (Class C, observation, November 1, 2010). Lexie agreed, saying, "It was interesting, not boring. It kept my attention" (Class C, observation, November 1, 2010). Following an initially positive response from other students, Mr. Carter raised some issues with the humor and entertainment value of the video: "I think the message gets lost in the entertainment" (Class C, observation, November 1, 2010). He explained that he thought the group had some good information

in their video, but that the humor and attempt to entertain the audience got in the way of that and interfered with the audience's ability to understand the information.

Following the class sharing, the group members had a clear understand that Mr. Carter saw their use of humor as inappropriate. However, they defended their use of humor, arguing that it kept the audience's attention and helped them better understand the topic. Upon reflection, Dean said that he would do things differently the next time. He planned to make changes to his approach so that his video essay would align more with Mr. Carter's expectations. During the second cycle, Dean and Logan omitted humor from their video and created something more in line with Mr. Carter's expectations. Evan and Andy, however, said that they would include humor in their second video, even though they understood that this was not what Mr. Carter wanted. Andy said, "I'm still going to use humor, because I'm still getting the point across but I'm also making it more entertaining" (Interview, November 10, 2010). For their second video, Evan and Andy once again incorporated humor into their video essay. Their increased understanding of Mr. Carter's expectations did not change their approach; they continued to allow their own goals to guide their composition, pushing back against the teacher's expectations.

Ways of Valuing the Video Essays

Students' criteria for what made a video essay good did not completely align with the teacher's criteria, furthering demonstrating their lack of understanding of some of Mr. Carter's goals and expectations. While these criteria differed across students, the three most common were that the video essays contain good information, be well produced, and be original.

All groups seemed to agree that it was important for the video essays to have good information. Many students struggled to articulate what it meant to have good information, despite stressing the importance of this criterion. However, a couple of students explained that to have good information would mean that it was “researched” (Lexie, Interview, October 28, 2010), “related to the topic” (Dean, Interview, November 10, 2010), and “that the information was right” (Brendan, Interview, November 3, 2010). So, for some students this first criterion was that the video contain good information on a very broad or general level, but for other students this meant specifically that the video was well researched, that the information presented was related to the topic, and that the information presented was accurate.

This student criterion of “good information” is related to Mr. Carter’s first two criteria about content, that the video essay be well researched and that the information and media be connected to the topic. Students also included as part of this “good information” criterion that the information be accurate. While Mr. Carter never explicitly addressed the accuracy of the information, we could assume that he would include this in his first criterion, that the video essays be well researched.

The second criterion identified by most students was that the videos should be well produced. Brendan described this criterion saying, “It shouldn’t be choppy or anything. It should look finished” (Interview, November 2, 2010). Alexander explained this very broadly, saying, “It should look good” (Interview, November 1, 2010). As students watched the video essays during the class sharing days, this was an area that students frequently commented on, noting whether the video ran smoothly, whether it contained interesting production techniques, and whether it looked like a finished product.

Max justified the importance of this criterion, stating, “When it’s a video, it’s something you’re going to show to people, to share with an audience. That means it needs to look good and be finished” (Interview, November 10, 2010). So, perhaps the audience was an important factor for students in selecting this production criterion for quality. This criterion was much more important to students than to Mr. Carter. He named this at the end of his list of quality criteria, while for students, it was among the top considerations.

The third criterion mentioned by many students was that the video essays should be original. Lexie explained, “It shouldn’t look like everyone else’s” (Interview, October 28, 2010). Evan took this a step further, saying, “It’s boring if they all look pretty much the same and use the same clips and everything. They should be different. Unique” (Interview, November 10, 2010). Originality was also a key issue for Mr. Carter, so this is a criterion that he and the students seemed to agree on. However, in Mr. Carter’s discussion of originality, he tied it back to being well researched. The students’ discussion of originality seems to be more about style and how the video essay looked. Both the teacher and students cited use of the same clips as an example of how videos might lack originality.

A small subset of students added one other criterion for quality video essays: that it help the audience understand the topic. While Mr. Carter raised this issue initially in the discussion of goals of the assignment, he did not identify this as a consideration of quality of the video essays. However, a few students stated that this was important. Samantha said that the best video essays were “the ones I understood, where I felt like I got the information they put in there” (Interview, November 10, 2010). This audience

understanding was a key factor for Evan’s group, when they decided to make their video more entertaining (this issue is discussed in the next section):

I think our video was the best, because we got the information across without being boring. I’m sure if we asked the class what transcendentalism was after they watched our video, they would at least know something about it, because they liked it and paid attention to it (Evan, Interview, November 10, 2010).

For these students, the audience’s understanding of the topic was an important factor in determining the quality of the video essays.

Table 5 illustrates the alignment between the teacher’s criteria and students’ criteria for valuing or judging the quality of video essays, with colors in each column indicating a criterion that is consistent across the teacher and the students.

Table 5
Alignment of Teacher and Student Criteria for Quality

Teacher’s Criteria	Students’ Criteria
1. Well-researched	1. Good information
2. Media connected to the topic	2. Well-produced
3. Appropriate tone	3. Original
4. Original	4. Aids audience understanding of topic
5. Well-produced	

Several of the criteria were consistent: both teacher and students identified as criteria the content or information of the video essay (red), originality (blue), and production elements (green). However, while these criteria were consistent across the teacher and students, the ordering of these criteria or the level of valuing of them was different. For example, the second most important criterion identified by students was production quality, while Mr. Carter identified this criterion last and explicitly named it as the least important consideration. Both groups did identify the information of the video essays

(content or research) as the first and most important consideration for quality. The only two criteria that were not aligned were the teacher's criterion regarding appropriate tone and the students' criterion regarding facilitating the audience's understanding of the topic. Students did not address tone as a consideration when judging the quality of video essays, while Mr. Carter believed it was very important. In addition, Mr. Carter did not identify audience understanding of the topic as an important element of quality, while some students saw this as important. In some ways, these two criteria could even contradict one another, as some students believed that incorporating humor into their video essays (which would go against Mr. Carter's argument about a formal, academic tone) would better facilitate the audience's understanding of the topic, because it would increase their interest level. This point is illustrated by the group including Dean, Evan, Andy, and Logan, who intentionally created a humorous video. Following the class sharing of the video, when Mr. Carter critiqued their use of humor in the video, this group had a very negative and defensive reaction to Mr. Carter's feedback. They had been very proud of their video, and they continued to defend their use of humor and their video's entertainment value, when they discussed the video in follow-up interviews. Evan argued, "I think entertainment was very important, because I didn't like watching other people's... I wanted to watch something that was entertaining and modern. If I can use my imagination and make it funny, and still have all the information, I think that's the best" (Interview, November 10, 2010). Andy agreed, "I think the entertainment helped people understand it, because we didn't really care to listen to other people's, because they were so boring" (Interview, November 10, 2010). The group believed that their use of humor and their attempt to entertain the audience also helped them to better inform the

audience, because it would actually keep their attention. This group's valuing of the audience's understanding seemed to conflict with the teacher's valuing of a formal, academic tone. In his critique of their use of humor, Mr. Carter actually argued that their humor interfered with the information and the message. He believed that it made it more difficult to understand the good information in their video, because the audience was so focused on the funny parts of the video. Based on this critique, it sounds as though audience understanding was important to Mr. Carter, but his belief about how this could be accomplished conflicted with this group's beliefs and their approach.

Mr. Carter recognized the discrepancy between students' responses to this group's video and his own response, and he noted that this was problematic. "When they see someone who is trying to be funny and kind of making a mockery of it, and they think that's good, then I've not done a very good job of communicating why that's not good" (Interview, January 25, 2011). While this is related specifically to the issue of humor here, Mr. Carter did seem aware that students' understanding of quality of the videos was not completely aligned with his own, and that this needed to be addressed. Mr. Carter framed this discrepancy between students' understanding of quality and his own much more in terms of clarity (him clarifying his own goals) rather than in terms of different goal sets. While this lack of understanding is certainly an issue, particularly during the first cycle of the assignment, different goal sets between the teacher and students were also evident during both cycles of the assignment.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed the teacher's design using a more top-level approach. Here, I examined the teacher's expectations of the activity, by looking at his goals for the

assignment, the ways he chose to communicate those goals to students, and the ways that he interpreted quality of the video essays. To describe students' responses to the teacher's expectations, I explored how students understood and worked within the teacher's goals and how they assigned value and quality to the video essays.

In the next chapter, I will discuss conclusions from data analysis and implications of the findings for systems of classroom multimedia composition.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

In this final chapter, I discuss the findings of this study of a teacher's design of classroom multimedia composition. I begin by returning to my research questions and summarizing the research findings related to each question. Next, I discuss implications of these findings for teachers and students engaging in multimedia composition in classrooms. Finally, I identify limitations of this study and consider directions for future research.

Summary of Results

Three research questions guided this study. In this section, I summarize the findings for each research question, highlighting some of the conflicts and contradictions that arose within the system.

Research Question 1: Teacher Design

My first research question sought to understand how a teacher designed a classroom system of collaborative video essay composition. The data show that Mr. Carter purposely planned various elements of the project and had a specific vision regarding how students should complete the assignment, despite his claims that the assignment was very open-ended. Mr. Carter's conception of the video essay as a formal, academic form of composing, was evident both in his design of the system and in his response to students' compositions. Salient elements of his design can be broken down into three areas: time, the composition process, and publication and distribution practices.

With regard to time, Mr. Carter designed both the pedagogical time of the class as a whole and the sequence of activities for the assignment. In his design of pedagogical time, Mr. Carter utilized whole class instruction and independent work time. The whole class instruction occurred primarily in the form of mini-lessons at the beginnings of class sessions. Also, these mini-lessons occurred more frequently toward the beginning of the project timeline. The independent work time allowed students to work in their composition groups on their research papers and video essays. This work time occurred on every day throughout the process, with the final days of the project being devoted almost exclusively to this use of time. In his design of the sequence of activities, Mr. Carter planned the order of media in which students would compose, pushing them to begin with writing the print research paper before moving onto the video essay. Mr. Carter's sequencing of media reflects the reliance on traditional literacies, namely print, to support multimodal literacies that was seen in the review of the literature (e.g. Bailey & Carroll, 2010; Gilje, 2010; Smythe & Neufeld, 2010).

In designing the composition process, Mr. Carter essentially eliminated planning and prewriting from the composition process, by neither requiring nor encouraging students to use any form of prewriting for their compositions. Mr. Carter designed this to be a process of composing collaboratively, requiring students to work in groups to complete the assignment. He planned for students to divvy up the work of the assignment among group members, to lessen the workload for all students. He explicitly encouraged this division of the work from the beginning of the process. Mr. Carter also selected and provided access to the tools and technologies that students would use for the video essay, including Macintosh laptops and iMovie. A conflict exists within this selection of tools.

Mr. Carter selected the Macintosh laptops and iMovie because he believed that they were user-friendly and provided the greatest functionality. However, these tools presented challenges within the process, due to students' lack of familiarity with them and their lack of access to them outside the classroom. Therefore, the benefits Mr. Carter anticipated with these tools were offset, to some extent, by these challenges. The selection and use of tools greatly impacted the social organization of the system, perhaps most notably in the roles that group members adopted and the ways that group members related to one another.

Finally, Mr. Carter designed the ways that students would distribute their final video essays. He planned an opportunity for students to share their video essays with the class, by designating days at the end of the process for this sharing. Mr. Carter did not design opportunities for students to share their compositions outside the classroom, nor did he encourage students to do so. The review of literature revealed that this was a common element of systems of multimedia composition. The opportunity for students' compositions to travel beyond the classroom and be shared with broader audiences was an important feature of these systems. However, at no point did Mr. Carter design experiences beyond the classroom as a part of this system of collaborative video essay composition. Returning to the heuristic of systems of writing production (figure 5) introduced in chapter one, it is important to recall the interconnectedness of such a system, which is a foundational belief of activity theory. The conceptions of distribution within a system of writing production affect not only the conceptions of production, but aspects of social organization and participation structures as well. No piece of the system is independent of the rest of the system; all elements are mutually connected and affect

one another. It is particularly important to note here that as Mr. Carter's design differs significantly on this point of distribution beyond the classroom from most literature in the field, the system must contain other significant shifts as well, as a result of the interconnectedness of systems. For examples, two key areas of the system that were affected by this design decision regarding distribution are conceptions of production and communities. Because Mr. Carter did not design the project to be shared with broader audiences, this affected both the communities that were involved in the system and the ways that members of the system (both teacher and students) thought about production.

An important conflict exists within Mr. Carter's design of this system of collaborative video essay composition. His design of the assignment contradicts his asserted vision for the assignment. Mr. Carter stated that the assignment was open-ended and allowed for students' creativity. He argued that his decision not to show models of video essays stemmed from this, as he wanted to leave the project open and not stifle students' creativity. Similarly, he offered students minimal guidelines regarding requirements for the video essays. However, as described above, Mr. Carter's design of the sequence of the process and other elements of the system indicate that his vision of the assignment was much more rigid than he described. Not surprisingly as we consider the interconnectedness of systems, this conflict lead to other conflicts within the system, namely the conflict between teacher and student visions and goals for the assignment, which will be addressed under the third research question.

The decision regarding models presented another contradiction in the system. Although Mr. Carter chose not to show models to students prior to the first cycle of the assignment, students' video essays from the first cycle became a kind of model

themselves for the second cycle of the assignment. Students referenced ideas they took from their peers' video essays in the first cycle as they worked on their second compositions. So, in some ways, the very thing Mr. Carter tried to avoid during the first cycle by not showing models manifest itself in the second cycle, as students relied on the first cycle of videos as models.

Research Question 2: Adjustment of Teacher Design

My second research question asked how a teacher adjusted his design across classes and over time. No clear adjustments across classes were evident in Mr. Carter's design. The only minor distinction made between classes was Mr. Carter's note that class A (the early bird class) was more mature and more focused than the other two classes. At times, this led to Mr. Carter creating a more relaxed atmosphere in this class and engaging students in off-topic discussions. Aside from this, no clear differences existed in the teacher's design across the three classes. However, a few areas of adjustment over time were evident. One important change was the amount of instruction provided to students. During the first cycle, Mr. Carter conducted six mini-lessons, but during the second cycle, he did not conduct any mini-lessons, believing that students had already received all the instruction they needed. A second change was the adjustment to group size. In the first cycle of the assignment, students worked in groups of three or four students. In the second cycle, groups were reduced to two students, as Mr. Carter believed students would have a better handle on the process, making the workload less demanding. A third adjustment over time occurred with planning and prewriting. In the first cycle, Mr. Carter did not ask for any form of prewriting for either the print essay or the video essay. However, in the second cycle, Mr. Carter asked students to submit

outlines of their print essays on the second day of the process, so that he could ensure that students were making progress on their compositions. While Mr. Carter did not make any notable adjustments to his design across classes, he did make these three adjustments to his design across time.

Research Question 3: Student Response

My third research question sought to understand how the students responded to the teacher's design of the system. Student responses varied greatly across elements of the teacher's design, and at times, even within elements of his design. For some elements, students generally adhered to the teacher's design. For other elements, students responded in different ways, some following his design and others challenging or pushing back against it.

Students generally responded positively to and adhered to Mr. Carter's design of collaborative composing and publication and distribution of the video essays within the classroom. For both of these elements, students demonstrated an understanding of and appreciation for Mr. Carter's design. They understood his decisions to have students work in groups and for students to divide the work among group members, and for the most part, they engaged in this process as he intended them to. They also understood Mr. Carter's purposes for having them share their video essays with the class, and they enjoyed this opportunity to share their own work and see the work of their peers. Students participated in this class sharing, both by showing their own work and by offering feedback to their peers on their work.

Students exhibited mixed responses to Mr. Carter's design of pedagogical time, sequence of activities, planning and prewriting, tools and technology, and distribution of compositions beyond the classroom.

In the area of pedagogical time, while students appreciated Mr. Carter's methods of providing instruction through the use of mini-lessons, many students expressed a need for more instruction. Because the tools and the form of composition were new for most students, they believed that additional instruction was needed, particularly during the first cycle of the assignment. Some students also wished that Mr. Carter would have implemented more structure in the class work days, believing that this would have helped them be more productive during the independent work time.

In regard to the sequence of activities, students demonstrated different approaches. Some students followed Mr. Carter's design and completed the print essay before composing the video essay. Some students used the general structure of the paper to inform the structure of the video; these students were somewhat following Mr. Carter's design, although not adhering to it entirely. Some students found that gathering resources for their video essays informed their writing of the print essays; these students were clearly pushing back against the media sequence as Mr. Carter designed it.

In the area of planning and prewriting, most students engaged in some form of prewriting, despite this not being a part of Mr. Carter's plan. Some students used prewriting in very casual, informal ways, such as creating basic topic outlines and envisioning storyboards, while other students used prewriting in more formal ways, such as creating fully developed outlines and sketching complete storyboards.

In the area of tools and technology, student response varied mostly by students' levels of familiarity with the tools. Students who were novice users of the tools tended to experience difficulty and frustration with the tools and technology they were being asked to use. These students were often very vocal about their frustration. Students who were more proficient users of the tools demonstrated ease of use and enjoyment with getting to use them. Over time, students' comfort levels with the tools increased. Even students who were frustrated with the tools did use them to compose their video essays. So, despite some students expressing displeasure with the selection of tools and technology, students did adhere to the teacher's design in this area and began to develop competence and confidence with the tools.

Finally, in the area of publication and distribution practices beyond the classroom, most students followed Mr. Carter's design and did not share their video essays beyond the classroom. However, two groups broke the mold and did share their videos with broader audiences, with one posting the video to YouTube, one posting to Facebook, and both sharing with friends and family members. These two groups expressed interest in sharing their video essays with other audiences, and so they found outlets that allowed them to do so, even though this was not a part of the teacher's design.

The ways that students pushed back against aspects of Mr. Carter's design exhibits another important set of conflicts within the system. In some cases, these may stem from the conflict noted earlier between Mr. Carter's asserted vision and his design of the system. In other cases, these may stem from different goal sets between teacher and students. Regardless, these conflicts within the system are rich areas for analysis and

the ways in which these conflicts were resolved or not resolved speak to the participation of individuals within the larger system of activity.

Implications

In Chapters IV and V, I examined various areas of the teacher's design of this collaborative video essay project and students' responses to each of those areas. In this section, I address specific implications these findings hold for teacher's planning and designing their own classroom systems of multimedia composition.

Sequence of Activities and Prewriting

It is clear from the varying levels to which students adhered to or resisted the teacher-designed process that one singular method (for prewriting and for media sequencing) may not work for all students. Students selected varied methods for completing the project and were even able to articulate why that method was most useful for them. Because of the differences in students' learning styles and composition preferences, students can benefit from different entry points to multimedia composition. As Halio (1996) and Jewitt (2005) suggested, multiple avenues or entry points into the process of multimedia composition are possible, and some of those avenues are better or more effective for particular students. In the case of this video essay, students could begin with their print texts (research paper) as the scripts or outlines of their video essays, they could begin with particular images or video clips and build their video essays and research papers around those, or they could begin with storyboards to provide the structures for both their research papers and video essays, among other possible processes. As the review of literature revealed, the process of production in multimedia composition can look very different depending on the design of the project and on the students' needs

and preferences. As a result, it is difficult to design a clear, neat structure for the process, as Mr. Carter attempted to do in his design of this video essay project. Mr. Carter designed the process for students to move from more familiar literacies (print composition) to less familiar literacies (collaborative video essay composition), using print to scaffold students into multimodal literacies (Gilje, 2010; Smythe & Neufeld, 2010). However, as some researchers have argued, this might be stifling for some students (Gilje, 2010). Instead, perhaps it would be more useful to introduce students to some of the possibilities for the composition process, including different forms of prewriting (for example, outlines and storyboards) and different views of the process (for example, research then paper then video, research then video then paper, or research then paper and video simultaneously). By making students aware of the possible avenues into multimedia composition, we set them up to make decisions based on their own learning and composing preferences, giving them the best chance at being successful.

Tools and Technology

Mr. Carter made a conscious design decision not to provide too much instruction on Macs or iMovie, because he believed that giving students the time and opportunity to explore the tools on their own, following his brief introductions in the mini-lessons (discussed in the Design of Time section in chapter IV), would allow them to gain the understanding they needed. Some research supports Mr. Carter's decision. A teacher does not have to become a "technology expert," in order to design an assignment in which technology is central (Kajder, 2006). Teachers can adopt multiple orientations to the technology, ranging from technology expert to passive participant (Reinking and Watkins, 2000). At times, Mr. Carter provided instruction and supported students' use of the

technology; at times, he was a learner along with students; and at times, he facilitated students' use of the technology. Students seemed to accept all of these approaches.

Although a few students wished that Mr. Carter would have shared more of what he knew, no student criticized Mr. Carter's knowledge of the technology. In addition, his level of knowledge about the technology did not seem to affect students' composition processes. Any of these orientations toward the technology could be appropriate and effective for a teacher to adopt.

The issue of identity with regard to technology use presents an interesting question in terms of the teacher's role and his design of the system: are there ways that the teacher could combat these obstacles presented by identity issues? As students gained experience and expertise with the technology, some students experienced shifts in their self-perceptions with regard to technology. Natasha, who initially described herself as not being good with technology, later felt much more competent as a technology user. On the other end of the spectrum, Bryan, who initially called himself "technology-deficient," still had a very low self-perception with regard to technology at the end of the two cycles of the assignment. Because students' participation in any activity is tied up in issues of identity and self-concept with regard to that activity, students who struggle with technology experience additional obstacles when composing in different media. Perhaps there are things teachers could do to support these students in their developing identities as technology users, such as providing additional support, praising their successes, and encouraging additional practice and exploration.

Use of Pedagogical Time

Interestingly, students' responses here seem in contrast to what was concluded earlier in regard to sequence of activities and prewriting. There, students arranged their own processes and developed their own ways of working through the process. I concluded that some freedom in this process would be helpful, so that students could choose the paths that worked best for them. However, students' responses regarding use of pedagogical time, particularly the structure of class days, seem to contradict that. Here, they indicated that they wanted more guidance and structure. Most of this desire for structure came from this being a new type of composition for students. Perhaps providing greater structure for the first cycle of the assignment and then offering more flexibility in subsequent cycles would satisfy students. Another possibility would be to provide students with multiple versions of the process and an idea of the steps that would be taken in each case. For example, the teacher could show examples of three versions of the process (research then paper then video; research then video then paper; and research then video and paper simultaneously), and talk about some possible steps for each. Balancing this need for guidance with flexibility in the process could be tricky to negotiate for teachers, however some level of balance seems preferable to students.

Division of Labor within Collaborative Composing

An important consideration for division of labor by activity is whether this excludes some students from learning particular skills. If, as Lexie explained, students chose to focus on the skills they are good at, whether that be composing the video essays or creating the reference pages for the research papers, are they cutting themselves off from learning and gaining new skills? Are they also preventing other group members

from gaining expertise in the areas they have chosen to take on? Perhaps it is important for teachers to encourage students to move beyond what they already know how to do and to take on tasks that are less familiar, with support from other group members.

Demonstrating Expectations

Across the three classes of students, there was general confusion regarding Mr. Carter's expectations and goals for the assignment. Many students expressed frustration over not understanding what they were being asked to do. On the other hand, some students appreciated the open-ended nature of the assignment. They enjoyed the opportunity for creativity, because Mr. Carter did not give extremely specific guidelines. However, even most of these students agreed that some additional guidance in terms of what the teacher expected would have been helpful. For example, Evan, who liked the openness and the opportunity for creativity, explained that "somewhat of a guideline" would have been helpful, "but not too much" (Interview, November 10, 2010). Therefore, it seems clear from the student perspective that some additional guidance would have helped them understand Mr. Carter's goals and expectations, so that they could have aligned their own understanding with what he was asking of them. Mr. Carter agreed with this point, recognizing that he did not sufficiently relate his expectations to students. He explained, "That's probably something I need to do a better job of in the future, telling them what I expect and making sure they understand what I'm asking" (Interview, January 25, 2011).

Mr. Carter seemed to believe that most of the conflicts that arose within the system were the result of misunderstanding or unclear expectations. While he

acknowledged the need for clarity, he did not recognize other issues that may have contributed to these conflicts.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study, including issues around sampling, observations, timing, and my presence in the research site.

This study focused on the design of one teacher and the responses of 49 students. While this sample size was intentional for the scope of this study, it certainly has its drawbacks. First, studying only one teacher limited the kinds of design decisions I was able to observe. This one teacher cannot be considered representative of other teachers. In addition, I observed a relatively small number of students, which may have limited the types of processes, approaches, and therefore, responses that I saw. The student responses observed here may not be representative of other students. This group of students is not representative of all high school students, as the students in this study were primarily white and from a relatively affluent area. All students had access to computers and other technology at home. Therefore, these findings do not represent all students, but rather the students in this context.

Limitations also existed within my observations. While I tried to capture both whole class data and small group data in my observations, obviously some things were lost. Each day, I had one camera on the whole class and two cameras on individual groups. I shifted my focus in each class, trying to observe additional things that were not being captured by camera, such as interactions in groups without cameras. I also moved the cameras to different groups, in an attempt to capture data from all groups. However, even with all of these efforts, some data were not captured, particularly as students were

working in small groups. I was not able to observe students responses from all groups on each day. Therefore, it is possible that some important responses from students were missed.

Timing was also a limitation of the study. I was in the classroom full-time for two cycles of the assignment, totaling approximately 19 days of observation in each of the three classes. This is a relatively short amount of time, which may have limited my ability to see changes over time both in the teacher's design and in students' responses. It is likely that as students gained additional experience with this form of composing, more changes would have occurred. However, because I only observed the first two cycles of the assignment, the adjustments I witnessed were limited.

Finally, my presence as a researcher may have influenced the data. While I attempted to be as unobtrusive as possible during observations, it is possible that my presence or the presence of the video cameras may have impacted behaviors in the classroom. In addition, it is possible that my presence may have impacted some of Mr. Carter's instructional decisions, as he was aware of my role as researcher.

Directions for Future Research

While this study made strides in furthering our understanding of classroom multimedia composition, particularly in terms of teacher design and student response, it also raised new questions.

One set of questions has to do with context, including the teacher, the school, and the nature of the multimedia composition assignment. First, studying a different teacher's design of such an assignment might yield new and interesting information. How would other teachers design a system of classroom multimedia composition? What would be

different or similar about their design choices? Would student response to their designs follow similar patterns as those found in this study? Second, it might be interesting to study a different type of school context. Issues of access are often discussed in studies related to media and technology. However, due to the context of this school, access was not a key issue. What might multimedia composition look like in a school with fewer or different resources than those available at Riverside High School? What might it look like in an environment with more resources? Third, I believe that the nature of the multimedia composition assignment would have a significant impact on all elements of the system, including the teacher's design and students' processes. It would be interesting to conduct a study similar to this one, but focused on a different form of multimedia composition, such as digital storytelling, book trailers, or hypertext stories.

Another set of questions relates to the teacher's goals or purposes for the assignment. This study explored teacher goals only as they related to his design of the system. It would be interesting to explore these goals in more depth and to examine how the assignment fulfilled or failed to fulfill those goals. This might also involve a more thorough examination of students' processes and final products, as evidence of whether or not these goals were achieved. How does the design of the assignment align with goals? How do students' processes align with the teacher's goals for the assignment? How do students' products demonstrate fulfillment of the goals for the assignment? This direction of research may be especially relevant for teachers and districts considering multimedia composition in their schools and classrooms, in determining whether such assignments would truly serve their purposes.

Finally, several new questions were raised through the findings of this study. This study explored the top-level issue of teacher design of collaborative video essay composition. Within the findings, I highlighted key areas of the teacher's design and student responses to those aspects of design. Several of these areas raise opportunities for future research, by exploring one such area in greater depth. For instance, I discussed issues of planning and prewriting, collaborative composing, and uses of tools and technology. Each of these areas could be studied specifically. Designing a study around one such area would allow for greater depth of analysis and discussion. Because this current study was focused on a more top-level issue, none of these areas garnered full attention.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the body of research on multimedia composition in classrooms, specifically teacher design of a classroom system of collaborative video essay composition and student response to that design. This study offers implications for classroom practice and research. With regard to classroom practice, the findings from this study offer multiple issues and considerations for classroom teachers, as they plan and design multimedia composition projects for their classrooms. With regard to research, future studies could explore similar questions across different contexts, teachers' goals of projects and their outcomes, or particular areas of design noted in this study. By increasing our understanding of systems of classroom multimedia composition, and more specifically, teachers' design of such systems, we can create a fuller understanding of how these systems operate and of the possibilities for learning created by and within these systems.

Appendix A

Guiding Questions for Teacher Interview 1

Background

1. Describe your background as a teacher. (How long have you been teaching? Where? What classes??)
2. How long have you been teaching the AP Language class?
3. What role has media or technology played in your teaching in the past?
4. Besides the video essay project, have you done any other kinds of media or multimedia projects with your students? (prompt for senior videos at previous school) Where did these projects come from? What was the purpose?

History of the Video Essay Assignment

5. When did you begin doing the video essay assignment? Where did this assignment come from?
6. Why did you decide to begin using this assignment in your classes?
7. What are the goals of the assignment?
8. Tell me about the first time you used this assignment. What did it look like? How did students respond?
9. What changes/adjustments have you made to the assignment? Have you done things differently each time you've used this?
10. From your past experience, describe the days spent in class on this project. What did the class sessions look like?
11. Is there anything you've been really impressed or excited by with students working on these video essays?
12. Is there anything you've been concerned about or struggled with in the past with these video essays?
13. What has been different about these video essays from a more traditional print essay? What has been similar?
14. Have you received any feedback on the video essay project (either positive or negative) from outside your classroom?
15. Have you received any assistance with this project? From other teachers? Administrators? Parents?

Current Video Essay Assignment

16. Did you make any changes to the assignment or the design of class sessions for this year? If so, what and why?
17. How will you assess the video essays? Do you give any feedback during the process?
18. How would you characterize the students in these three classes? Are there any significant differences between the classes?
19. How do you anticipate the video essay assignment going with this year's students?

Appendix B

Guiding Questions for Teacher Interview 2

I was interested as I watched the process this time in some of the changes you made. So I'd like to ask you some questions about some of these changes.

Would you take a minute to write a few notes about some of the changes you made between the first cycle of this assignment and this cycle? Then I'll ask you a few questions.

1. Tell me about your decision in shortening the **timeline** for the project this time around – one week.
 - a. How did you make this decision?
 - b. Is this something you've done in past years?
 - c. How did it work? Did you feel like they had enough time?
 - d. What will next time look like?
2. You had students work in **smaller groups** this time – pairs. Why did you decide to do this?
 - a. Do you think this worked better than the larger groups?
 - b. Will you stick with this next time around? Why or why not?
3. For the research portion of the process, you started in the classroom instead of the **library** this time around. Why?
 - a. Do you think this changed anything for the students or their process?
4. It felt like this time that you spent a bit more time talking through each of the **topics** before assigning them to students. You talked a bit about what each topic would require and that sort of thing. Was that intentional?
 - a. If so, what made you decide to do this?
 - b. Do you think it helped? (or accomplished whatever you wanted it to accomplish?)
5. The method for **choosing** groups and topics was a bit different this time as well. Can you tell me a little bit about your decisions here?
 - a. Choosing groups based on how well they did on quiz
 - b. Choosing topics instead of being assigned
6. Was there any difference in how you viewed your **role** in the process this time around?
 - a. Did you offer students the same kind and same amount of assistance this time around?
7. Were there any changes to the assignment, the **requirements**?
8. Were there any changes to the structure of the in-class **sessions**? Like, how you set those up or organized those?
9. We've spent most of our time talking about changes in what you did, in your design. What changes have you noticed in what the **students** did?
10. Going back to the notes you made at the beginning, are there any other changes you made note of that I haven't asked you about?

Appendix C

Guiding Questions for Teacher Interview 3

1. What makes a video essay “good?”
 2. What are the characteristics of student videos that typically receive the highest grades?
 3. What makes a video essay “not good?”
 4. How would you explain students doing these things that make their videos “not good?” Why do you believe they do these things?
 5. Do you think students understand the difference between what makes a video good or not good?
 6. Do students’ opinions about the best and worst videos usually mesh with your opinions? Why or why not? Explain.
 7. I’d like for us to look together at three videos – one that you thought was one of the best, one of the worst, and one that was average.
 - a. What group would you say had one of the best videos this time around? Why?
 - b. What group would you say had one of the worst videos this time around? Why?
 - c. Who had a video that you would say was average?
 8. Ok, I’m going to play at least a section of each of those videos, and I’d like for you to stop the video as it plays and comment on what you see or notice - things that are good, bad, or interesting about the videos, or anything you think I should know about the process or the video itself.
- ** Here, the interview will become a discourse-based interview, with the teacher stopping each video to comment on particular things.
9. After watching each video: How would you assess this video? (in terms of composition quality? in terms of technical quality? the overall effect of this video essay?)

Appendix D

Guiding Questions for Student Interview 1

1. Have you done anything like these video essays before?
2. What other experiences have you had with technology in school or out of school?
3. Were you familiar with iMovie before this project? How easy or difficult has it been to use the program so far? (What has been easy about it or difficult about it?)
4. How much of the research paper do you have finished right now? Do you feel like that's been an important part of working on the video?
5. On each of the days you've spent working on the video essays in class so far, what have you done? What have other members of your group done?
6. What work have you done outside of class on the video essays? What work have your group members done outside of class? Has there been a lot of work outside of class?
7. What kind of planning have you done for your video? Any sort of outline or storyboard? (if this is written out, could I see it or have a copy?)
8. Where have you found materials for your video (video clips, images, etc.)? What kinds of materials are you planning to use in your video?
9. Has there been anything that you felt like you needed more guidance on or directions for?
10. What have you enjoyed about the video essay assignment? What have you not enjoyed?
11. Has anyone outside your group contributed to your video essay? (teachers, students, friends, family) How?
12. Have you done anything to help any other groups with their videos?
13. Has anyone given you feedback on your essay?
14. Have you shared your video essay with anyone else? Who do you imagine sharing your video essay with once you're finished?
15. How has your experience of composing a video essay been different from your experience writing other essays for school?
16. How have these experiences been the same?
17. What difficulties have you encountered during the process of composing the video essay?
18. What has it been like to create the video essays as a group? Have there been any obstacles or problems with working as a group?

Appendix E

Guiding Questions for Student Interview 2

Part 1

1. What was it like to work on this video essay as a group?
2. How do you think this project would have been different if it were done individually? What about in smaller groups?
3. What did each group member do to contribute to the video? What work did you do in class and outside of class?
4. Did each of you adopt certain roles in your group? If so, who and which roles? How were these roles decided?
5. Would you say that there was a leader (or leaders) of your group? How so? Do you think having a leader of some sort was necessary?
6. How did you divide the work of composing among the group members? How did you make decisions about this?
7. Did all group members contribute equally? Or did some group members take on more or less of the work? Who and what?
8. What was Mr. C's role in your video?
9. Did you work with any other groups? Did anyone outside the class help with your video or see your video?
10. What was the hardest thing about making this video?
11. What did you enjoy about making the video? What did you not enjoy?

Part 2 [Discourse-based portion of interview]

Let's watch your video together. Any time you notice something that you want to comment on, stop the video. Think about the following topics to comment on: decisions you made in creating the video, difficulties you encountered, and the materials you used in the video. I might also stop the video to ask questions about things that I found interesting [this is gauged partially on how actively the students are stopping the video to comment].

Part 3

1. How do you feel about your final video?
2. Is there anything about your video that you would change, now looking back at it?
3. Did you receive any feedback during the making of your video? Was it/would it have been helpful?
4. What kinds of response to your video have you received? (from Mr. C, other students, etc.)
5. What was the reaction to your video in class on the day you presented? How did you feel about that reaction?
6. Have you shown your video to anyone else? Do you plan to? Have you posted it anywhere online?
7. What do you think the goal of this assignment was? What did Mr. C want you to learn from this?

8. What have you learned from making the video that you think will help you the next time you do this? What did you learn from watching the other groups' videos (content or technique)?
9. What advice would you give to a teacher who was planning to do a video essay assignment with his or her class?
10. What advice would you give to other students working on a video essay project like this?

Appendix F

Guiding Questions for Student Interview 3

Part 1

1. Tell me a little bit about your process of working on this video essay.
2. How was working on this video essay different from working on the first video essay?
3. What did you learn from your first video essay that helped you on this one?
4. How was this video essay easier or more difficult than your first?
5. Do you consider yourself a good writer, when it comes to traditional essays? Why?
6. What about when it comes to these video essays – do you consider yourself a good composer of video essays? Why?
7. What makes a good video essay? What makes a bad video essay? How do you know if a video essay is good or bad?
8. Who would you say had the best video essay in the class? What made theirs the best?
9. What was it like to work on this video essay in smaller groups?
10. What did each group member do to contribute to the video? What work did you do in class and outside of class?
11. How did you make decisions about who did what?
12. To what extent did everyone contribute equally?
13. How did Mr. C help you with your video? Is there anything you wish he would have done that he didn't do?
14. Did you work with any other groups? Did anyone outside the class help with your video or see your video?
15. What was the hardest thing about making this video?
16. What did you enjoy about making the video?

Part 2 [Discourse-based portion of interview]

Let's watch your video together. Any time you notice something that you want to comment on, stop the video. Think about the following topics to comment on: decisions you made in creating the video, difficulties you encountered, and the materials you used in the video. I might also stop the video to ask questions about things that I found interesting [this is gauged partially on how actively the students are stopping the video to comment].

Part 3

1. How do you feel about your final video? What specifically do you think was good/not good about your video?
2. Is there anything about your video that you would change, now looking back at it?
3. Did you receive any feedback during the making of your video? Was it/would it have been helpful?
4. Who has seen your video? What kinds of reactions or response to your video have you received?
5. Do you plan to show your video to anyone else? Have you posted it anywhere online? Why or why not?

6. What have you learned from making the video this time that you think will help you the next time you do this?
7. What did you learn from watching the other groups' videos (content or technique)?
8. What advice would you give to a teacher who was planning to do a video essay assignment with his or her class?
9. What advice would you give to other students working on a video essay project like this?

Appendix G

Table of Groups and Topics for Cycle One

		Students	Video Essay Topic
<i>Cycle One – The Scarlet Letter</i>	Class A	Brendan, Carson, John, and Trevor	Anti-transcendentalism
		Natasha, Amy, and non-participant	Feminism
		Jenni, Miranda, and Shannon	Human Law vs. Natural Law
		Samantha and Katie	Puritanism/City Upon a Hill
		Tim, Max, and non-participant	Transcendentalism
	Class B	Bryan, Aaron, and non-participant	Anti-transcendentalism
		Joe, Robbie, and Curtis	Feminism
		Jack, Tony, and two non-participants	Hidden vs. Revealed Sin
		Hayden, Beth, and Selena	Psychoanalysis
		Dan, Matt, and Jordan	Puritanism/City Upon a Hill
	Class C	Lexie, Teri, and two non-participants	Anti-transcendentalism
		Nate, Troy, Richie, and Nick	Feminism
		Alexander, Emily, Becca, and non-participant	Hidden vs. Revealed Sin
		Kelly, Frank, Kenny, and Annie	Human law vs. Natural Law
		Maria and Lindsey	Psychoanalysis
		Kayla, Candace, Andrea, and Jill	Puritanism/City Upon a Hill
		Dean, Logan, Andy, and Evan	Transcendentalism

Appendix H

Table of Groups and Topics for Cycle Two

		Students	Video Essay Topic
<i>Cycle Two – The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>	Class A	Shannon and Miranda	Biblical Allusions
		Jenni and Katie	Country without Kings
		Natasha and Amy	Epic
		Brendan and Trevor	Father/Son Conflict
		John	Prophecy
		Samantha and non-participant	Role of Government
		Tim and Max	Sophistication vs. Civilization
		Carson and non-participant	Superstition
	Class B	Bryan and Joe	Biblical Allusions
		Aaron and Beth	Country without Kings
		Jordan and non-participant	Epic
		Jack and non-participant	Father/Son Conflict
		Tony and non-participant	Prophecy
		Curtis and Robbie	Role of Government
		Hayden and Selena	Sophistication vs. Civilization
		Dan and Matt	Superstition
	Class C	Kelly and Becca	Biblical Allusions
		Dean and Logan	Country without Kings
		Andy and Evan	Epic
		Frank and Kenny	Epic
		Two non-participants	Prophecy
		Lexie and Teri	Role of Government
		Alexander and Emily	Role of Government
		Nate and Richie	Role of Government
		Andrea and Jill	Sophistication vs. Civilization
		Maria and Lindsey	Sophistication vs. Civilization
		Annie and non-participant	Sophistication vs. Civilization
		Nick and Troy	Superstition
	Kayla and Candace	Superstition	

Appendix I

Code Book

Parent Node	Child Node	Description	Example
Composition Process	Prewriting	Any form of prewriting, which may include (but is not limited to) outlining, drafting, storyboarding, etc., at the beginning of the composition process	“I sketched out some ideas for the video, like in a storyboard”
	Media sequence	Order in which the media portions (written paper and video essay) of the project were completed	First week as “research week,” and second week as “video week”
	Tools and technology	Use of tools and technological devices in order to compose	“I think it’s better for them to spend time just messing with the technology to learn it”
	Publication and distribution	Methods of sharing final composition products	“On the last couple of days, we watch all the videos in class”
	Feedback	Methods of providing feedback or comments on compositions, by the teacher or by peers	“I use a rubric that goes over a couple of things, like content and organization”
Pedagogical Design	Use of class time	Ways that instructional time was utilized throughout the process	Time spent on whole class instruction, group work time, etc.
	Mini-lessons	Use of mini-lessons to present material during whole class instruction	“Starting almost every class with a mini-lesson... instead of taking whole days”
	Timeline	Overall timespan of the whole project and use of time across it	“We could shorten the timeline and eliminate those front-loading days”
	Physical space	Arrangement of physical environment, location, and space	Movement among the classroom, library, and computer lab
	Teacher roles	Jobs or positions that the teacher takes on throughout the process	“This time, my job instead of being like the technology teacher or the research teacher was to be like the thought and logic leader”
Social Experiences	Grouping	Arrangement of students in groups for the project	“It’s more than I would expect any one student to do. So I have them work in groups”
	Division of labor	Dividing the work of the project among group members	“You need to work in a group so that you can divvy out the workload”
	Work between groups	Interactions between groups in or outside of class	“Samantha showed us how to do some things in iMovie”
	Teacher-student interactions	Ways that the teacher engaged with individuals or small groups of students	Bryan asked Mr. Carter how to split a video clip

	Status	Ways that students were valued in the class	"I want Nate in my group. He knows how to do all this stuff!"
Experiences Beyond the Classroom	Distribution	Sharing final composition products with audiences beyond the classroom	"We put our video on YouTube."
	Communities	Any groups of people outside of the class who participated in the composition process	"My girlfriend had to do this last year, so she helped me a little"
	Project work	Any work on the project that took place outside of class time	"We met at Starbucks this weekend to finish everything"
Overall Expectations and Understandings of the System	Goals	Both teacher and student goals for the assignment	"I have three main purposes for this project"
	Models	Use of other video essays to serve as models for students	"I'm not a big model person, because I think it pigeon-holes them into, 'This is what it's gotta be'"
	Quality	Understanding of what makes a video essay good or bad quality	"It should have images and videos that represent or link up with the ideas they are trying to communicate"
	Entertainment value	Value of making a video essay that entertains the audience	"We didn't want to do a dry, boring transcendentalism video. We wanted to make it cool"
	Enjoyment	Positive response to the process and/or project	"It was fun making a video in English class"

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