Experiments in Visual Analysis: (Re)positionings of Children and Youth in Relation to Larger Sociocultural Issues

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One of the most distinctive features of the 21st Century is the dominance of the visual and its relationship to multiple modalities of communication. Human experience is more visual and visualized than ever before (Mirzoeff, 1999). Visual communication is becoming less the domain of specialists, and more and more crucial in the domains of public communication (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), particularly as dominant modes of communication shift from page to screen (Snyder, 1997). Generating information about children's and youth's knowledge, and perceptions of their own lives and learning typically involves language-based modes, which may not build access to the multiple layers and complexities of their knowing. Visual representations have been utilized by researchers in various fields such as psychology and anthropology to learn more about participants' constructions of their worlds (e.g., Adler, 1982; Diem-Wille, 2001; Koppitz, 1984). Siegel and Panofsky argue literacy studies have taken a semiotic turn: "the unsettled status of the field appears to be a productive moment of experimentation, invention, and problem-posing as researchers design analytic approaches that draw on a range of theoretical frameworks relevant to their research interests, purposes, and questions... analyzing multimodality requires a hybrid approach—a blend or 'mash-up' of theories" (2009, p. 99). Similarly, Pahl and Rowsell assert that, in accessing the underlying meanings of multimodal practices, "we need not only to account for the materiality of the texts, that is, the way they look, sound, and feel, but also have an understanding of who made the text, why, where, and when" (2006, p. 2).

In this multi-authored collage, six researchers (Maureen Kendrick and Harriet Mutonyi, Theresa Rogers and Chelsey Hauge, Kelleen Toohey and Elizabeth Marshall) and two discussants (Jennifer Rowsell and Marjorie Siegel) explore the possibilities for the visual as a rich component of data collection and analysis in literacy as social practice research. These experimentations with visual analysis began as part of a multimodal interest group that included literacy scholars from two

Canadian universities: the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University. Although our work traverses diverse geographies, contexts, projects, and populations, what links our work is our interest in the affordances of the visual in sociocultural contexts. The three projects represented in this report include: a project involving the use of cartoon drawings as a tool for understanding Ugandan secondary students' health literacy, in particular, their conceptualizations of HIV/AIDS knowledge (Kendrick and Mutonyi); a project exploring the critical literacies and arts-integrated media practice, particularly video productions of Canadian urban youth (Rogers and Hauge); and an intergenerational bilingual and multimodal storytelling project explicitly designed to draw upon a Western Canadian school community's "funds of knowledge" (Moll & Greenberg, 1990) (Toohey and Marshall).

Drawing on three literacy research projects, we "experiment with blending different theoretical lenses" (Siegel & Panofsky, 2009, p. 99) to read the visual as a means of analyzing the (re) positioning of children and youth in relation to larger social issues; as a site of struggle within particular sociocultural contexts; as an alternate construction and coding of reality and identity; and as a site of audiencing that simultaneously includes the image-makers' and researchers' perspectives across private/public domains. These experiments in visual analysis demonstrate the need for broader sociocultural analytical/conceptual frameworks to more fully articulate and analyze what we think children and youth are doing with the visual as discursive resources.

A SOCIOCULTURAL STANCE

Across the three examples, literacy/ies are viewed as social practices rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being (Street, 2003). This perspective assumes the importance of understanding how literacy practices are embedded in other human activity—in social life and thought (Barton, 1994). The analyses are also informed by social semiotics, which, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), is an attempt to explain and understand how signs are used to produce and communicate meanings across social settings from families to institutions. Signs created through visual representations such as drawings and digital images simultaneously communicate the here and now of a social context while representing the resources individuals have available from the world around them (Kress, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978). The meanings encoded in visual representations also reflect reality as imagined by sign-makers and influenced by their beliefs, values, and biases. Extending these socio-cultural analyses with perspectives on identity, agency, and subject positioning (Bakhtin, 1986; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998) provides additional lenses through which to understand the available positions that children and youth take up in their multimodal work; particularly, how they appropriate and transform various discursive modes and resources to (re)position their own subjectivities (Davies & Harre, 1990; Holland et al., 1998).

In the age of multimedia, literacy practices need to be recognized as necessarily changing and multiple, "where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, the behavioural… Meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal in which written-linguistic modes of meaning are part and parcel of visual, audio, and spatial patterns of meaning" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 6). From this perspective, it is argued that literacy learning, teaching, and research will

require the development of a multimodal toolkit (Dyson, 2001; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; New London Group, 1996) that builds access to the complexity of literacy practices and discourse resources that constitute the contemporary social landscape (Luke, 2000). Three examples are offered as ways to begin thinking about how researchers and educators might draw on a range of theoretical paradigms and approaches to analyze the visual representations of contemporary children and youth.

EXAMPLE 1: UGANDAN STUDENTS' VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF HIV/AIDS KNOWLEDGE[1] BY MAUREEN KENDRICK AND HARRIET MUTONYI

In this first example, the visual is analyzed as a tool for understanding students' health literacy in Uganda, specifically, their conceptualizations of HIV/AIDS knowledge. The study addresses the question: "How do secondary school students in Uganda use cartoons to represent their HIV/AIDS knowledge?" Senior 3 (Grade 12) biology classes from four eastern high schools were selected because of the focus on HIV/AIDS in the senior biology curriculum. The cartoons were collected as a subsidiary part of a larger study investigating adolescent students' understanding of the relationship between health literacy, HIV/AIDS, and gender in the context of Uganda (see Mutonyi, 2008). As part of a questionnaire on HIV/AIDS, they were asked to produce a cartoon-type message about HIV/AIDS. Specifically, "What would be your own slogan for HIV/AIDS? Illustrate in a cartoon form the message your slogan would convey about HIV/AIDS. Explain the message your cartoon is conveying." The analysis of the cartoon drawings was the focus of a University of British Columbia faculty-graduate student mentorship grant.[2]

Method of Analysis

In the interdisciplinary field of visual analysis, interpreters of visual images broadly agree that there are three sites at which the meanings of an image are made: the site of production, the site of the image itself, and the site of viewing (Rose, 2001). Many of the theoretical disagreements about visual interpretation relate to disputes over which of these sites is most important and why. From a sociocultural perspective, and in relation to the research reported here, Rose's three sites of meaning-making are viewed as inextricably connected and recursively relational to each other. Rose's framework in combination with an adaptation of Warburton's (1998) analytic framework is used to explore what the cartoons as mediated images might mean within the context of Uganda. The analysis traverses the sites of viewing/audiencing and production in relation to the image itself (Rose, 2001). The images were interpreted collaboratively and the students' own voices, evident in their written texts, were critical to this process. The analysis began with an *initial description* of the image (What visual and textual material is contained within the cartoon? Who and what is represented?), focusing on *immediate connotation* (What does the image/text signify in this context?), then *systemic connotation* (What is the place and status of the cartoon with respect to the communication system or systems it is part of?). Finally, *narrative threads* are established (For what/whom was the cartoon intended? What is the relationship between the cartoon and local/global discourses on HIV/AIDS?), which provide a synthesis across the three sites of meaning-making.

Developing a method of analysis in the study was particularly challenging because the images were produced in a non-Western context and dominant frameworks for visual analysis are based on

the history of Western image-making (see e.g., Baldry & Thibault, 2006; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The combination of analytic frameworks (i.e., Rose and Warburton) served to foreground the unique sociocultural context of Uganda, revealing visual narratives that were not initially evident (see also Mutonyi & Kendrick, 2009; in press). These narrative helped raise questions about the possible meanings of the cartoons in relation to broader theories and discourses on health literacy; identity; and personal, public and cultural constructions of HIV/AIDS.

Opondo's Cartoon

Site of production. Uganda is considered the first African country to successfully reduce the rates of HIV infection in the larger populace (Stoneburner & Low-Beer, 2004; USAID, 2002). Public education campaigns have included various media for communicating messages about AIDS that are consistent with cultural ideologies (oral and written). Yet, discussion of HIV/AIDS issues directly related to sexual issues is generally taboo, and adults and youth do not talk easily about sexual matters in formal settings, particularly in the presence of outsiders (Nyanzi, Pool, & Kinsmen, 2001). The cultural practices associated with HIV/AIDS place considerable limitations on language, thus, at the site of production, a mode of representation that provided an atmosphere of safety and allowed students to express their knowledge of HIV/AIDS, sexuality, and social behaviour was required.

Figure 1. Opondo's Cartoon

Site of the image. Opondo's cartoon is set outdoors amidst a heavy downpour (see Figure 1). There are three people: one wrapped in a condom, sheltered from the storm, the other two standing side by side in the rain without protection. The cartoonist uses metaphor to convey his message on HIV/AIDS prevention. The rain is labeled AIDS/HIV; the person wrapped in the condom is labeled "protected sex" whereas the unsheltered people are labeled "unprotected sex." The accompanying text reads, "To stay safe from HIV/AIDS simply abstain from sex or use condoms." Opondo's cartoon demonstrates his knowledge of condoms as protection from HIV/AIDS. The person wrapped in the condom does not appear wet while the ones without shelter are soaked,

signifying their vulnerability to infection. The underlying narrative threads present two possibilities for the future: protected sex = no HIV/AIDS infection; unprotected sex = probable HIV/AIDS infection. The story he tells simultaneously provides a public message while also possibly serving as a private reminder to Opondo himself about the importance of practicing safe sex (or abstaining as his written text indicates). The metaphoric portrayal of condom use respects local cultural practices by presenting taboo topics of sexuality and sexual practices without being explicit. This cartoon shows a high level of creativity and cultural sensitivity in a message that moves beyond more common public media messages.

Site of viewing/audiencing. Reading the image as a whole text requires understanding how the various sign systems (e.g., visual and linguistic) work in relation to each other, that is, as fused rather than as separate systems. Opondo's cartoon is a highly effective metaphor comprised of multiple sign systems that work simultaneously to communicate his intended meaning and to open possibilities for viewer interpretation (e.g., in relation to the ambiguous nature of the image of the couple having unprotected sex). The cartoon format allows him to "talk" about sex metaphorically, which makes visible the kinds of "invisible" knowledge, experience, and emotion that for personal, social, and cultural reasons, he may have difficulty expressing through language alone. The cartoon is also an intermingling of cultural and personal narratives told to both public and private audiences that allow for the expression of a much fuller range of human emotion and experience than spoken or written communication alone (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Lange, 2007). Of particular importance is how the cartoon serves to acknowledge the limits of language by simultaneously integrating and transcending taboo cultural practices around discussions of sexuality and condom use.

This example raises important questions about the potentials and limitations of visual modes of representation for understanding the relationship between students' own social histories and identities and their interpretation of public HIV/AIDS messages. The cartoon as a visual narrative allows us to understand Opondo's construction *and* critique of social reality, in particular how he simultaneously transcends and integrates local and global discourses on HIV/AIDS.

EXAMPLE 2: "TRACEI IS AWESOME": A FILMIC REPRESENTATION OF CONTEMPORARY GIRLHOOD BY THERESA ROGERS AND CHELSEY HAUGE

In the context of a project exploring the critical literacies and arts-integrated media practices of urban youth (www.YouthCLAIM.ca), a young woman named Tracei made an "identity" video entitled "I am Tracei, hear me roar!" Identity videos were created as part of a workshop that extended the photojournalism activities of youth participating in a community anti-violence program. Tracei's video, through a series of still images, chronicled her transformation from a traditionally wholesome-looking young girl to a young woman with multicolored hair and facial piercings that, she said, conveyed her as "all crazy and older." In this video, she uses music from a third wave ska band (The Madd Caddies) entitled, "Mary Melody," to re-enforce her message. The coda is: "I showed you Tracie, now take it!"

Shortly after finishing this first video, Tracei sent us another video, entitled "Traceisawesome," from a site that hosts and shares images. The accompanying message was, "I wanted to share

something with you." This second video, which is analyzed here, can be seen as a "publicly private film" (Lange, 2007) that provided a way to recognize an even more complex set of identity positions that Tracei took up in her life outside of the research relationship.

Figure 2. Tracei's Video

Arts-integrated media production in and out of schools provides a rich site for analyzing how youth exploit visual and multimodal resources to (re)position themselves in and through their work, and to make larger claims by engaging in cultural critique (Rogers, 2009; Rogers, Winters, LaMonde, & Perry, 2010). To analyze youth productions, the three-site approach developed for visual cultural analysis by Gillian Rose (2001), as discussed in the first study described by Kendrick and Mutonyi, is adapted here. The discussion of Tracei's film emanates from an analysis of the intersecting sites of production (creating the image), the site of the image itself, and the site of audiencing the image, which examines Tracei's video as an instantiation of a socio-cultural process of identity positioning.

The analysis also draws on theories of genre hybridity (Bakhtin, 1986; Biggs & Baumann, 1992) and multimodal intertextuality to understand how youth exploit cultural forms and layer various modes of expression into their work across these sites; and on current theories of social/cultural identity, agency, and discursive subject positioning that posit identity work as both situated and fluid. For instance, Davies and Harre (1990) provide a useful perspective on the ways individuals position themselves and others in jointly produced storylines, and view the world in terms of the images, metaphors, and concepts from the perspective of the "discursive practice in which they are positioned" (p. 46). Holland et al. (1998), drawing on Bakhtinian theory, also illustrate how identities are formed (improvised) in the flow of historically, socially, culturally, and materially shaped lives. They emphasize the role of agency in this process as individuals shift—by hope, desperation or, most relevant here, play—from one set of socially and culturally formed subjectivities to another.

In terms of creating her film (site of production) Tracei referred to her passion for taking pictures and filmmaking, which she often did on her own and with friends; and she wanted the researchers to experience another, more complex rendering of her identity—one that is usually available only to her peers. The analysis of her film at the site of the image included analyzing the structure (scenes) and the use of technological tools, and the layering of genres and modes and embodied representations (see Rogers et al., 2010 for details on this analytic approach). This film has three distinct scenes (see representative still images in Figure 2). The first scene includes two

extended and close-up filmed shots of Tracei's bottom lip being pierced (first image). The second scene is a filmed shot of Tracei singing, laughing, and talking with a helium voice [to friends behind the camera who can be heard giggling], saying, "I don't know what to say. Hey you guys are putting pressure on me. What am I going to do? I'm gonna sit here an' cry making 'emo' songs, gonna die, this is gonna make me fall over. It's gonna hurt. I'm done" (second image). The third section of the film, which also serves as a kind of coda, is a mixture of print messages and photos of herself with her friends, and one still shot of her dressed in drag. This section begins with the text "the end" and continues with "This video was made to prevent the use of chemically made drugs" and "Kids learn about drugs before you think about using them…These kids didn't have a clue what they were doing." After several more photo sequences it ends with "save yourselves! Before it's too late" (third image).

How Tracei positions herself as a young woman throughout the three scenes becomes visible through this analysis of the use of discursive resources across three sites of production. In fact, this film is a fascinating representation of feminine subjectivity. The literal embodiment of expression and resistance to normalized feminine behaviour through piercings, hair color, and cross-dressing is evident. Drawing on popular culture and using new media provides her tools to parody gender identity and to engage in social commentary and critique (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994): Her choice of music playfully draws on her interest in film and TV genres of horror. She uses the "Freaker's Ball" song by the 1970s rock band, Dr. Hook and the Medicine Show—itself a parody of the 1960s countercultural love-ins. The film becomes even more complex when she satirizes "emo" behaviour and appropriates discursive resources of popular media to parody Public Service Announcement (PSA) anti-drug messages. When asked about her use of print in her films she said, "words help get the point across. Some people can be totally oblivious but once they read it, they say 'oh, I get it.' "

Within this kind of identity and cultural work, adolescent bodies represent lived realities (Grosz, 1994); that is, the body is further inscribed with information about youth subjectivity and positioning in their work and in their lives. In this way, media is a particularly productive space for appropriating, refiguring, and imagining these embodiments (Ellsworth, 2005; Grosz & Eisenman, 2001). In fact, the fluid spaces between the body and media give the body "new forms of corporeality" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 125-6).

Tracei's embodied visual production inscribes and repositions her in playful (parodic) and resistant ways to larger cultural narratives of gender; the images provide a private/public space for writing dissent on her body through piercing, the balloon performance, and presenting herself in drag. This dissent, in its representation of the complexity of girlhood and appropriation of stereotypes, cultural tropes, and a multimodal resources, can be seen as a form of private play and as well as more public counter-discourse of contemporary girlhood. As argued in Rogers and Winters (2010), and as demonstrated in this analysis, contemporary urban youth skillfully poach and play with a range of discursive and cultural resources to engage in or talk back to dominant cultural narratives about their lives and their social worlds.

EXAMPLE 3: "DEFEATING PURE EVIL": MULTIMODAL REPRESENTATIONS OF "DIFFICULT KNOWLEDGE"[3] BY KELLEEN TOOHEY AND ELIZABETH MARSHALL

In this example, one child's picture storybook from a larger intergenerational bilingual and multimodal storytelling project explicitly designed to draw upon a school community's "funds of knowledge" (Moll & Greenberg, 1990) is examined. The project took place in a classroom of 9- and 10-year-old mainly Punjabi Sikh English language learners on the west coast of Canada. The study included a Critical Discourse Analysis (van Leeuwen, 2008) of 19 multimodal and bilingual texts created by children for a school project. Below, a description of the study, a sample story and analysis, and some concluding thoughts are provided.

Figure 3. Jushinpreet's Story

As part of a larger study, one of the project teachers engaged with a group of children in an intergenerational storytelling project. She initiated this by mentioning to the children that very few of their grandparents came into the school for the 'noisy reading' half hour that took place in the school's primary wing, although it was almost always grandparents who dropped young children off at school. The teacher asked the children why they thought this might be, and the children said that maybe the grandparents didn't read English, and maybe they didn't understand the books available in the kindergarten. The teacher then suggested that the children might produce storybooks about the grandparents' lives as children, write them in English and Punjabi, and make them available to the kindergarten, so that the grandparents could come in and participate. The children were given cheap MP3 players and asked to ask their grandparents (in whatever language they were comfortable) to tell stories about when they were children. The children brought these recordings to school, selected, translated (and edited) the stories into storybook English, word-processed the stories, had relatives or the research assistants help them write the stories in Punjabi, illustrated them, recorded their readings of the stories in English and Punjabi onto CDs, and finally, included CDs in each of the bilingual storybooks. Nineteen storybooks of varying lengths were the result.

Means for analyzing mixed-mode representations are not as common as they are for analyzing written or spoken discourse. Van Leeuwen's recent (2008) work on theorizing mixed-mode representations was most helpful for this analysis. Van Leeuwen argued that "all texts, all representations of the world and what is going on in it, however abstract, should be interpreted as representations of social practices" (p. 5). Maintaining the distinction between

social practice ("doing it") and representation ("talking about it") (p. 6), he argued that the task of the critical discourse analyst is to uncover social practices, recontextualized in representations. This recontextualization is important, because the location of a representation and its actors, its customary actions and resources, may be very different from the original context in which the social practice occurred. Thus the analyst must make explicit the features of each representation including: who is represented, what actions are involved, how such action is to be performed, what time and space constraints bear on the action, and what resources are involved (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 7-12). In what follows, van Leeuwen's method is used to analyze one student's story.

Jushinpreet's Story

Though Jushinpreet entitled his book "Darshen as a soldier," he began his grandfather's story in childhood. His front cover included a military vehicle and a drawing of an (American) Navy Seal plane. The narrative began, "There was a boy named Darshen. He was walking and in his mind he was thinking of being a soldier [when] he grew up." Coming from a long line of soldiers, Jushinpreet tells us that Darshen's great great great grandfather "helped the gurus defeat pure evil," perhaps a reference to the beginnings of Sikhism in the 1600s during which time the Sikhs fought many battles with the central Mughal government. As seen in Figure 3, Jushinpreet illustrated his narrative with a smiling man wearing a turban and a labeled Nike jersey in the foreground, with another smiling (but probably dead) man with an "x'ed out" eye in profile in the background wearing a Champs jersey with a machete through his chest. The next pages of the story then go back to Darshen and his life, and end with his travel to Canada and his retirement.

To apply van Leeuwen's (2008) question, "How are the people depicted?" to this illustration, one might first consider perspective. The figure in the foreground, presumably the hero, most likely Darshen's great-great-great-grandfather, faces out to readers. The smiling dead man in the background is shown in profile. Pure evil (the enemy) is outside the picture frame, and is not identified with a human figure. Following van Leeuwen (2008), one interpretations is that the dead man and possibly pure evil in this drawing are objectivized, which he defined as "representing people as objects of our scrutiny, rather than as subjects addressing the viewer with their gaze and symbolically engaging with the viewer in this way" (p. 141). Such objectivization abstracts the story so that the tales of war in Jushinpreet's story seem heroic, bloodless, and almost people-less. Van Leeuwen (2008) also encouraged analysts to consider if figures are portrayed specifically or generically. On this page of the story, Darshen's great-great-great-grandfather is the agent and the patient (unspecified) is pure evil. In none of Jushinpreet's illustrations throughout the book is the villain moving. The hero is specific, and viewers are invited throughout to identify with the heroism of the grandfather, and his ancestors. The soldiers of pure evil are, on the other hand, an unseen and unspecified group.

Overall, Jushinpreet's grandfather's story represents a heroic vision of soldiering, and a rather abstracted vision of armed conflict. The social practices of soldiering, and the social practice of talking about soldiering with one's grandchild, are re-contextualized in school, a place where depictions of machetes through chests (and phrases like "pure evil") would usually not be permitted. Through his story, Jushinpreet brings home and community knowledge to school and not only his grandfather spoke about war; several other stories showed the violence of the Partition of India and Pakistan. One interpretation—and there other equally plausible explanations—is that this

knowledge of violence and war exists uneasily in school and gets re-contextualized as something special, grandparents' stories, a "project." The attention given to the technologies of war (largely American) in it also presents a particular view of such conflict.

This project's stories as a whole demonstrated to us how reading, writing, and illustrating are not neutral practices; rather they are social tools used to re-contextualize and re-present in more than just this case, "difficult knowledge." The images the students created allowed them to convey traumatic material about topics such as war, which are often hard to represent in language. Like Jushinpreet, other children shared traumatic knowledge through their grandparents' stories that challenged school notions of appropriate conflict resolution, secularity, gender equity, cultural authenticity, and sunny childhoods. Pitt and Britzman (2006) argue that "difficult knowledge" might include "narratives of historical traumas such as genocide, slavery, and forms of social hatred and questions of equity, democracy and human rights" and highlighted "the problem of learning from social breakdowns in ways that might open teachers and students to their present ethical dilemmas" (p. 379). In this project children's multimodal productions highlighted the school as a contested socio-cultural site in which children's lives and their re-contextualizations of those worlds might become resources for children and teachers as well as the community.

COMMENTARY 1: (RE)POSITIONING AND (RE)READING LITERACY IN THE FACE OF THE VISUAL BY JENNIFER ROWSELL

If you see the world as read and positioned through the visual, literacy looks different. Literacy at this moment in time is becoming far more visual. What this means in terms of literacy education is rereading assumptions about literacy learning: rereading our original epistemologies; rereading notions about 'reading' and 'writing'; and, perhaps most powerfully of all, rereading our methodologies for conducting literacy research. In other words, as literacy researchers, we are compelled to reread core issues of our vocation to ensure that they align well with visually dominant texts and environments.

What threads the three distinct research studies presented in this report is not only adopting visual methodologies as a more viable way forward, but also naturalizing an approach to materiality and multimodality that rereads epistemologies about literacy learning; rereads reading and writing; and rereads methodologies for investigating meaning making. To focus on the latter point, that of rereading research methods, researchers need to pay closer attention to issues of semiosis and materiality in texts along with sensory and embodied experiences that, quite naturally, even tacitly, occur when we see and experience images. Researchers such as Pink (2009) and Ingold (2007) remind us that there are wider possibilities for seeing and understanding everyday life that accounts for embodied experience. Accounting for embodied experience positions the multimodal and semiotic as sensory, as tactile and as felt in everyday life (Pink, 2009).

With the three research studies in mind, there is a participatory and sensory methodology embedded within each study. Through descriptions of Opondo's cartoon as expressive of his knowledge about HIV/AIDS and social behavior dealing with sexuality, there is a felt sense of the impact of HIV/AIDS on Ugandan youth (Kendrick and Mutonyi). Similarly, Tracei's story unravels through the optic of a short video that Tracei made wherein her visuals powerfully illustrate her

embodied and sensory reactions to coming of age as a girl (Rogers and Hauge). Finally, the last analysis illustrates how a group of children came to terms with intergenerational events involving war and other traumatic episodes through digital stories (Toohey and Marshall). Each study throws into relief how such notions as modal choice, design, and remixing stories and ideas signal key information about participants' pathways into meaning and, broadly speaking, what inspires them to make meaning. To revisit core themes only possible through a participatory and sensory approach, in the first visual example, Opondo consolidates and critically frames knowledge and experience through art, drawing, and design. In the second example, Tracei's film-making resituates and repositions her within larger cultural narratives. In the third example, children come to terms with intergenerational trauma through enactment and modal compositions of family stories.

Place is experienced bodily and the mapping of place through visual methods such as video camera, photography, and audio recordings can call up memories of place that can be collectively shared in educational contexts. These sensory evocations of place are powerful tools for literacy learning. Whereas multimodality is useful, as Sarah Pink (2009) has written, there needs to be a sensory ethnographic understanding to respect what our students bring into the classroom, and what their artifactual knowledge could be.

COMMENTARY 2: ANALYZING VISUAL TEXTS AS THEORETICAL MASH-UPS BY MARJORIE SIEGEL

Stretching beyond the limits of words, literacy researchers are beginning to reinvent the analysis of visual texts by blending visual and sociocultural theories to explore the rich panoply of literate practice. The examples of visual representation presented in this paper illustrate what can be known about literacy if we complicate the dominant assumption that texts are autonomous signifying structures. The recent history of literacy research could be read as a move toward theories (e.g., sociocultural, critical) and methodologies (e.g., ethnography, critical discourse analysis) that show how textual meanings are both local and global, socially situated and discursively produced. Yet, the initial efforts to analyze visual texts have tended to reinscribe the idea of texts as autonomous, disconnected from what Rose (2001) calls the sites of production and sites of audiencing. For example, Kress and van Leeuwan (1996) offer a grammar for reading images that they characterize as grounded in the history of Western image-making. However, the historical aspect of their work is often left behind in their construction of a "grammar," resulting in readings of visual texts that dislodge images from the social, cultural, and political contexts that shaped their production, interpretation, and circulation.

In each of the examples presented in this report, there is more to reading images than the grammar of visual design. In the study of what Ugandan youth know about HIV/AIDS, the visual metaphor produced by the student required the researchers to consider both local and global discourses about HIV/AIDS. The discourse of silence that has surrounded the HIV/AIDS pandemic has particular cultural meanings in Uganda that are essential to reading the cartoon. The condom serves as both a literal and metaphoric barrier against HIV/AIDS, but, as Kendrick and Mutonyi note, the taboos about speaking about sex contribute to the ambiguous representation of the couple in the unprotected sex image. The fusion of visual analysis with what are characterized as

"narrative themes" serves to anchor the visual to the sociocultural. In doing so, this analytic "mash-up" offers "a view of text and meaning making that is interpreted, multimodal, socially performed, emplaced, and embodied" (Siegel & Rowe, in press).

A similar analytic blend is at work in the approach to visual analysis developed to produce a reading of Tracei's awesome film. Rogers and Hauge's analysis of the site of the image examines the structure of the film, the modes and genres, and the motifs, but goes beyond a structural analysis by tracing the intertextual connections from the site of the image to the site of production. Drawing on theories of social postioning and identity, they are able to show that the three seemingly disparate sections of the film—Tracei's lip piercing, playfulness with friends, and PSA-like texts declaring, for example, "This video was made to prevent the use of chemically made drugs"—work together as a counternarrative to the conventional discourses and subject positionings of Western girlhood. As these authors demonstrate, Tracei has not just produced a film, she has produced a film in which she plays with her identity, repositioning herself within the discourses of gender. The affordances of film multiply the resources available for this identity work, and vividly show the way in which multimodal texts are identity performances, entangled, embodied, and emplaced in time and space.

Finally, Toohey and Marshall's analysis of the texts produced by children and families at the intersection of home and school, offer another example of multimodal texts as assemblages of signs with local and global meanings. In their work, they describe the picture storybooks created from the stories that Punjabi Sikh family elders told their Canadian grandchildren as part of a school-sponsored project designed to tap and honor families' funds of knowledge. To analyze these texts, the authors trace the recontextualization of social histories narrated by Punjabi Sikh family elders into the multimedia texts, and show how these texts are shaped and reshaped by multiple global and local contexts. What this analysis makes visible are the ways in which family elders write themselves into new social positions for their Canadian grandchildren and their schoolmates. Even texts designed to tap the family's funds of knowledge cannot escape the history of schooling as sites of social regulation, regulating knowledge as well as bodies, so that what were intended as "family stories" become "something special" but do not count as knowledge for/in school. Instead, the multimodal texts shrink to fit what can be said, written, and drawn in school. Without an analysis that looked beyond the multimodal text as an autonomous structure, we would have missed the family story that matters.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The three visual examples, the cartoon, film, and digital story, are all places where meanings are created and contested in particular moments; each is "a constantly challenging place of social interaction" (Mirzoeff, 1999, p. 4). In relation to the research questions addressed within the three projects, the visual becomes a tool for understanding how children and youth momentarily *visualize* and *embody* their knowledge and experience of their everyday worlds. The use of discursive resources related to the visual (re)positions children and youth in relation to larger sociocultural narratives such as taboo cultural practices surrounding HIV/AIDS education, normalizing discourses of girlhood, and difficult knowledge of family social histories. Using these three examples, this group of authors calls for broader sociocultural, analytical, and conceptual frameworks to more fully

articulate and analyze what children and youth are doing with the visual as discursive resources. Such frameworks will enable researchers and educators to reccognize and support visual practices as powerful literacies and tools of learning in and out of schools.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]An expanded version of this example appears in Mutonyi, H., & Kendrick, M. (in press). *Journal of Visual Communication*.

[2]Kendrick, a Canadian, is faculty member at the University of British Columbia. Mutonyi, a Ugandan, was completing her PhD at the time of the study.

[3]Adapted from Elizabeth Marshall and Kelleen Toohey, "Representing family: Community Funds of Knowledge, bilingualism, and multimodality." Harvard Educational Review, v80:3 (Fall 2010). Copyright © by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission. For more information, please visit www.harvardeducationalreview.org.