Brigham Young University

BYU ScholarsArchive

2011-07-12

Co-learning Pedagogies in the Media Literacy Education Classroom

Erika Hill
Brigham Young University - Provo

Co-learning Pedagogies in the Media Literacy Education Classroom

Erika Hill

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Amy Petersen Jensen, chair
Dean Duncan
Darl Larsen

Department of Theatre Media Arts

Brigham Young University

August 2011

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Erika Hill

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

Date	Amy Petersen Jensen, Chair

Date	Dean Duncan

Date	Darl Larsen

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Erika Hill in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials, including figures, tables, and charts, are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

_____   _____
Date   Amy Petersen Jensen,
                                                                   Chair Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

                                                             _____
                                                             Sharon Lee Swenson
                                                             Graduate Coordinator

                                                             _____
                                                             Rodger D. Sorensen
                                                             Department Chair, Theatre and Media Arts

Accepted for the College

                                                             _____
                                                             Gary Barton
                                                             Associate Dean
                                                             College of Fine Arts and Communications

ABSTRACT

Co-learning Pedagogies in the Media Literacy Education Classroom

Erika Hill
Department of Theatre and Media Arts
Master of Arts

This qualitative research project describes the experiences of students in BYU's Hands on a Camera Project as they were introduced to co-learning pedagogies. Hands on a Camera is a media literacy service-learning project where university students are placed in public schools to teach K-12 students documentary production and media literacy. The project consists of a preparation phase and a teaching phase. In the research project, students were required to complete peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments during the preparation phase as in order to prepare for the teaching phase. This ethnographic study describes student experiences—positive and negative— with peer learning during both phases of the project.

Keywords: new media, media literacy education, peer learning, co-learning pedagogies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Hands on a Camera (HOC) is an on-going service-learning project developed by faculty and students from the Brigham Young University (BYU) Theatre and Media Arts Department. This media literacy service-learning project seeks to instill the basic principles of media literacy in local primary and secondary students by providing them with critical engagement and hands-on experiences with a variety of digital media. In this context, media literacy is defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create different forms of media (Aufderheide, 1993). This ongoing media literacy experience (guided by BYU students) helps young people from local public school classrooms explore media's form and content, understand ideologies embedded in popular media, contextualize individual and personal understanding as media forms shape it, create media forms to make personal statements, and encourages them to make choices regarding media consumption and creation.

Service-learning as utilized by the Hands on a Camera Project is a pedagogical strategy "combining authentic community service with integrated academic outcomes" (Erickson & Anderson, 1997, p.1). An oft-quoted definition of service learning was provided by Bringle and Hatcher (1995):

> Service-learning [is] a course-based, credit-bearing, educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. (p.112)

The Hands on a Camera Project is run in two phases. In phase one of the project, BYU film students participate in *Media Literacy Education* (TMA 458), a course taught by media education and production faculty. In this course, students are introduced to the concepts of media literacy and media literacy education. They study media pedagogy and instruction techniques, and they create a variety of different media projects (photo, audio, and video). They generate lesson plans to teach media literacy and digital storytelling, and their final project in the class is to teach one of their lesson plans to the class in order to demonstrate their preparedness to teach these principles.

This experience of learning about media literacy, creating several non-fiction digital media projects, and then teaching in a supervised setting prepares students for phase two of the project, where they actually enter a K-12 classroom and endeavor to teach those things that they have learned the previous semester. For four months of the school year (January – April), the BYU students form small teams and choose one K-12 classroom to work in for the duration of the project (the number of classrooms participating in the project depends on the number of available BYU students). The teams visit their classrooms once a week to teach the K-12 students about media literacy in general and documentary filmmaking in particular, working closely with K-12 students to plan, film, and edit their own documentaries. This phase of the project proves mutually beneficial to both the K-12 and university students; as the younger students are given the opportunity to critically engage with media and engage in their communities by creating a documentary story, the university students gain practical pedagogical experience in a media education setting. The project culminates in a film festival held at BYU, where all participants screen their films for parents, friends, and other participants in the project.

When the screening is finished, each student is given a DVD copy of the films created by their classmates.

Media literacy (the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media) is a growing field of study that is nevertheless unknown to most students in both the university and K-12 settings. Students often suffer from what Jenkins (2006a) calls the "transparency problem": though they are more and more adept at using and navigating media, they are not always adept at critically examining those media, or are sometimes unwilling to articulate the ways in which they do critically engage with media. The goal of the project (for both the university and the K-12 students) is to help all students be critically engaged in their own media use, to become active constructors and creators rather than passive consumers, to help them "articulate more fully their intuitive understandings of [their] experiences" with media (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 10).

Statement of Problem

As a teacher and supervisor to these university students, I am faced with the challenge of helping them establish both the form and the content of media education: my course attempts to foster an understanding of media literacy while also providing a firm grounding in the pedagogical principles of media literacy education. After supervising university students teaching in the K-12 setting for three cycles of the project, I have noticed two consistent patterns. First, though I made many attempts to provide BYU students with pedagogical training and opportunities to practice teaching before they entered the K-12 setting, university students always expressed a need for more teaching practice and feedback before entering the actual classroom setting. Second, I noticed that despite my best efforts to encourage the university students to generate their own lessons based on their own experience of the material in their

training class and drawing upon their own interests and media use, they always seemed to rely on the basic lesson plans that were provided for them (or simply to re-present a lesson that they had been taught during phase one of the project). So, while students had a great desire for more teaching experience, I also felt a need to help students become more autonomous learners and teachers to better prepare them to become practitioners in and contributors to the field of media literacy.

Statement of Purpose

A possible answer to both of these problems—that the students need to gain critical autonomy and practice teaching—can be found in some of the pedagogical training upon which our class is grounded. In 2007, the National Association for Media Literacy Education issued *The Core Principles of Media Literacy Education*, a document that explains and encourages a pedagogical stance that would allow teachers in all subjects to teach in a way that encourages media literacy; among their suggestions is that teachers that practice media literacy education will establish classrooms that make use of "co-learning pedagogies," where "teachers learn from students and students learn from teachers and from classmates" (NAMLE, 2007, p.5). Bruffee (1999) asserts that collaborative learning of this sort encourages interdependence between students and is a pedagogy that allows students to "construct knowledge as it is constructed in the knowledge communities they hope to join after attending colleges and universities" (p. xiii). Introducing co-learning pedagogies into the classroom is an existentially disruptive act; when we invite students to become collaborators in the classroom, we blur the clear distinctions and boundaries between teachers and students. Service-learning programs are particularly well suited for introducing co-learning pedagogies because they require teachers to "acknowledge [their]

students as active, reflective, and resistant agents in their own educational processes" (Butin, 2010, p. 20). The purpose of my study is to examine the experiences of students in a media literacy service-learning project as they are introduced to co-learning pedagogies in the classroom.

Background on the Research Project

As stated previously, the Hands on a Camera project has two main goals:

1. Participation in the project should help both university and K-12 students become media literate.

2. Participation in the project allows university students to gain experience teaching utilizing the pedagogy of media literacy education.

In the following sections, I will explain each of these concepts in more depth. Throughout this chapter, the terms "media literacy" and "media literacy education" are not interchangeable; media literacy refers to the set of key competencies needed to access, analyze, evaluate, and create, and the media literacy education refers to the pedagogical framework necessary to allow students to develop critical autonomy in all subject areas.

Media literacy.

The New London Group (2000) offers the following statement about the mission of education:

If it were possible to define generally the mission of education, it could be said that its fundamental purpose is to ensure that all students benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate fully in public, community, and economic life. (p. 9)

If we agree with this statement, then it follows that adequate education must account for the range of ways that we communicate through an increasingly mediated world. Media literacy is concerned with helping students acquire the skills necessary to "access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a wide variety of forms" (Aufderheide, 1993,p.xx). Though there are still many "great debates" on the particulars of media literacy (Hobbs, 1998), scholars and practitioners alike will often coalesce around the notion that media literacy encompasses these four key competencies. Various organizations (such as the National Association for Media Literacy Education, the Center for Media Literacy, the Action Coalition for Media Education, Project Looksharp, Temple University's Media Education Lab, and others) each offer their own key questions and concepts about what it means to be media literate (for a comparison of some these key concepts, see Appendix A). The main argument of these and other scholars and organizations is that we are increasingly realizing our capacity to be multimodal (utilizing many different senses, or modes, to send and receive messages) learners and creators (Kress, 2000); in any given day, we encounter media that communicates using visual, verbal, aural, spatial, and gestural languages. Because a student's in- and out-of-school experiences with media tend not to privilege one media form over another, we need to make sure that our literacy pedagogy accounts for the variety of ways that we communicate in print and non-print forms (New London Group, 2000).

The goal of media literacy instruction is to create an informed consumer and creator, a student who thinks critically about media messages they receive and produce. A student critically engaged and conversant with multiple media forms will be "able to use the dominant symbol systems of the culture for personal, aesthetic, cultural, social, and political goals" (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009, pp. 4-5).

Though many scholars have noted the fact that though we tend to agree on the "what" of media literacy, there is not nearly enough research on the pedagogical requirements of media literacy (Rogow, 2005; Luke, 2003). The definition of media literacy as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media is useful, yet, as Martens points out, the definition "lacks specificity, that is, it cannot provide much detail to people who want to design educational strategies" (2010, p. 2). A survey by Silverblatt and others (2002) indicates that although offering classes in media literacy is becoming more commonplace, very few university courses focus on preparing university students to teach media literacy to others. Recently, more and more scholars have started paying attention to how to encourage the cultivation of media literacy skills through pedagogical practices.

Media literacy education.

Media literacy education refers to a pedagogical framework that is used to teach and encourage media literacy throughout many subject areas. In 2007, the National Association for Media Literacy Education issued *The Core Principles of Media Literacy Education*, a document that explains and encourages a pedagogical stance that would allow teachers in all subjects to teach in a way that encourages media literacy. They state that *The Core Principles of Media Literacy Education* "[shift] the focus of the discussion from what we believe to be true about *media* to what we believe to be true about *how people learn to think critically*. [They expand] the boundaries of the field to encompass not only *what* we teach but also *how* we teach, thereby distinguishing these as Core Principles of 'media literacy education' rather than solely as key concepts of 'media literacy'" (NAMLE, 2007, p. 2).

Because *"literacy is no longer a static construct"* (Corio, et al., 2008, p. 5), literacy pedagogy and, by extension, media literacy pedagogy cannot remain static. Corio, Knobel, Lankshear, and Leu note that our pedagogy should encourage and cultivate "the ability to continuously adapt to the new literacies required by the new technologies that rapidly and continuously spread on the Internet" (2008, p. 5) In other words, we must allow for a pedagogy that allows our students to learn how to learn, to become "experts at becoming experts" (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993, as cited in Gee, 2000, p. 48). Media literacy education seeks to help students become these kinds of learners, to "enable them to reflect systematically on the processes of reading and writing, to understand and to analyze their own experience as readers and writers" (Buckingham, 2003, p. 41).

In their core principles, NAMLE (2007) suggests that media literacy education "is most effective when used with co-learning pedagogies, in which teachers learn from students and students learn from teachers and from classmates" (p.5). Making the barriers between students and teachers more flexible encourages the creation of a community of learners (rather than a hierarchy in which the teacher holds all authority) where students are as likely to learn from one another as they are from the teacher. Cultivating this atmosphere in a classroom is important in any subject area, but it seems particularly pertinent in course of pedagogical instruction; though much research exists on peer learning and teaching in higher education, and still more research exists on teacher preparation programs, little research combines the two to explore co-learning pedagogies as a necessary component of pedagogical instruction. It is my hope that introducing intentional peer-learning activities into my classroom will help cultivate an atmosphere conducive to co-learning, and will help my students to feel more prepared to teach in the K-12 setting.

Peer learning and peer teaching.

Peer learning is defined by Falchikov (2001) as a situation in which "students learn with and from each other, normally within the same class or cohort" (p.3), and peer teaching is defined as a situation in which "students take turns in the role of teacher" (p.5). Combining these two definitions, Boud, Cohen, and Sampson (2001) coin the term, "reciprocal peer learning," in which peer learning is "a two-way, reciprocal learning activity. Peer learning should be mutually beneficial and involve the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experiences between the participants. It can be described as a way of moving beyond independent to *interdependent* or mutual learning" (p. 3; emphasis in original). Reciprocal peer learning gives students "considerably more practice than traditional teaching and methods in taking responsibility for their own learning and, more generally, learning how to learn" (pp. 3-4), partly because the roles of student and teacher "are undefined, or may shift during the course of the learning process" (p. 4).

When reciprocal peer learning is at its best, the students and teacher become partners in a co-learning agreement, where they "are both participants in processes of education and systems of schooling. Both are engaged in action and reflection. By working together, each might learn something about the world of the other. Of equal importance, however, each may learn something more about his or her own world and its connections to institutions and schooling" (Wagner, 1997, p. 16). It has been widely asserted that this type of learning "maximizes student responsibility for learning" (Falchikov, 2001, p.5).

Peer learning is often implemented by including classroom discussion (in which students participate in class and listen to one another) and small group work, but intentional peer learning requires that students understand that they are meant to learn with and from one another (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). The following are examples of activities were a part of my class as

intentional peer–learning activities designed to help students learn from one another and collaborate to form a learning community:

- Each week, one student was responsible for stepping into the role of teacher and providing a portion of the week's lesson.

- Students posted their weekly assignments on a class blog and were required to read and respond to one another's assignments.

- Students worked collaboratively on a group wiki research project.

- Students worked in teams to generate and co-teach lesson plans.

In short, then, peer learning is a model in which students learn from one another as well as from the teacher, and it can encourage students to become more actively engaged in the learning process. This is particularly pertinent for media literacy and media literacy education, where the goal is to help students become active and engaged in their own media use and in the learning process in general. Furthermore, in our current media environment, much of the out-of-school learning that young people participate is peer-based, and bringing those learning practices into the classroom operates as a way to make their in-school experiences more relevant to their out-of-school lives.

Peer learning and the new media environment.

In *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture* (2006a), media scholar Henry Jenkins talks about collective intelligence as one of eleven competencies necessary for participating in modern culture, and notes that the modern workplace often employs a model where employees are "brought together because their diverse skills and knowledge are needed to confront a specific challenge, then dispersed into different clusters of workers when new needs

arise" (p.41). If the goal of our educational system is to prepare students for the workplace, it follows that our schools should work to establish environments that help students develop the skills necessary to work collaboratively with others.

This ability to learn with a networked public in a digital environment is a key skill for students, and yet it is often only utilized outside of the classroom. After studying the online lives of young people for three years, a team of researchers noticed that most young people regularly participate in self-directed, peer-based learning in the online spaces and activities in which they choose to participate (Ito et al., 2008; Ito, 2009). These young people use the availability of a networked public to gain new skills and understanding and to receive feedback on creative products. Participants can act as both producers and critics, offering feedback on the work of others while simultaneously receiving feedback on their own contributions (Ito, 2009; Jenkins, 2006b), and in this process of collaboration, they create a knowledge-building community.

Scardamalia and Bereiter (1994, as cited in Grant, 2009) define a knowledge-building network as one where learners take responsibility for their own learning goals. In a knowledge building community, participants feel free to voice opinions and offer ideas without fear of negative consequences (Bielaczyc & Collins, 2005). A knowledge community is only as strong as its individual members, who "must know how to solve problems on their own," but who nevertheless know "how to expand their intellectual capacity by working on a problem within a social community" (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 42). New media tools (such as blogs and wikis) have proven effective in helping students to collaborate, offering teachers the chance to "exploit the potential of the learning opportunities available through online resources and networks" (Ito et al., 2008). On a wiki or a blog, students have the chance to build and participate in a knowledge community.

In the new media environment, the particulars of specific tool use are less important than the way in which they are utilized and the principles of collaborative knowledge building that they represent; Grant (2009, p. 115) notes that "the real opportunity and potential offered by wikis and other forms of social software in the classroom may not be in introducing the software itself, but in terms of focusing a debate on the value of collaborative learning and collective knowledge-production." Linn and Slotta (2005) suggest that the ways that students learn to collaborate in online forums can translate into actual face-to-face collaboration. They go on to assert that collaborative activities help students "negotiate meaning with others, critique ideas, build group norms for evidence, construct more powerful representations of their knowledge, monitor their progress, and integrate their ideas. Students potentially both develop more coherent views and learn how others think" (p.63).

For these reasons, peer learning is particularly pertinent in a media education classroom. Media literacy is explicitly concerned with helping students to navigate the new media environment, and learning from others in knowledge-building communities is a key feature of the new collaborative technologies available to students.

Research Directions and Questions

As stated previously, the entire study is guided by the following research question: What are the experiences of students in a media literacy education setting when they are introduced to co-learning pedagogies? The goal of my research is not to measure cognitive gains because of peer learning[1], but rather, to investigate the way that students respond when classroom authority

---

[1] Though studies of this sort are not difficult to find (see A. O'Donnell & A. King (Eds.), 1999, *Cognitive perspectives on peer learning.* Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.).

[2] Though this may seem too informal an assessment, Strauss and Corbin (2008) argue that grounded theory (and

is reorganized to place more emphasis on learning from one another. Since our project is a two-phase project, I am also interested in seeing if and how students choose to implement peer-learning techniques when they step into a more formal teaching role. To answer the larger research question, smaller research questions for the study correspond to the two phases of the project, and are as follows:

- In phase one of the project, how do students respond to peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments?

- In phase two of the project, do student perceptions and experiences with co-learning pedagogies change based on their experiences acting as teachers in the K-12 classroom?

- In phase two of the project, how do students choose to implement or ignore peer-learning strategies?

In the following chapter, I will describe my methodology for pursuing this research project. I will describe ethnography and grounded theory and their suitability for educational research of this kind. I will explain methods of data collection and analysis, focusing on how each was accomplished throughout the research project.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

Ethnography in Education Research

I have adopted an ethnographic approach to answering the research questions at hand. First utilized in anthropological research, ethnography has proven itself to be useful to many disciplines throughout the social sciences. Though ethnographers throughout different disciplines tend to disagree about the particulars of ethnographic research (Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2003; Green & Bloome, 1997), most agree that ethnography is a disciplined study of cultural practices discovered through careful observation for the purpose of cultural description (Zaharlick, 1992; Wolcott, 2008). Berg (2009) makes the distinction that ethnography "places researchers in the midst of whatever it is they study" (p. 191). The goal of an ethnographic study is to understand a certain group's cultural practices—rites, rituals, likes, dislikes, and basic modes of operations. Ethnographers look for patterns to attempt to explain the human condition in some way. The product of an ethnographic study is something of a narrative, using concrete observations as a way of developing theories that explain how and why people act the way they do.

Since the purpose of an ethnographic study is to attempt to understand a culture, ethnographers rely on qualitative research procedures that immerse them in that culture. Ethnography is a method that "involves extensive fieldwork of various types including participant observation, formal and informal interviewing, document collecting, filming, recording, and so on" (Van Maanen, 1982, p.103, as qtd. in Berg, 2009, p. 193). Participant observation, one of the key features of ethnography, means that the researcher must spend enough time with the researched community that they become a functioning member of the

community.

From its roots in anthropology, ethnographic research has proven quite useful when studying education (Zaharlick, 1992; Green & Bloome, 1997; Frank & Uy, 2004; Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2003). Zaharlick describes ethnography's utility for education this way: "To the extent that educational researchers believe that understanding beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of sociocultural groups will enable them to design more effective strategies for bringing about educational improvement, ethnography can also be expected to serve education well" (1992, p. 122). To this end, educational ethnography has evolved into its own discipline, implementing ethnographic tools in order to study and improve classroom practice (Green & Bloome, 1997; Moss, 2011).

Green and Bloome (1997) make a key distinction between ethnography *of* education and ethnography *in* education. In their definition, ethnography *of* education is research undertaken mostly by outside observers (who may themselves be involved in education, but whose research does not involve their own classrooms) with a goal to "understand what counts as education to members of the group and to describe how this cultural practice is constructed within and across the events and patterns of activity that constitute everyday life" (p.186). Ethnographers *of* education explore classroom culture in a manner similar to the way that anthropological ethnographers might explore village culture, identifying "norms and expectations, roles and relationships, and rights and obligations of membership in a society, a community, a group, or a classroom" (p.187). In slight contrast, ethnography *in* education provides a way to investigate learning from a social perspective. According to Green and Bloome, ethnography *in* education begins with the following key question: "What counts as knowledge and learning in classrooms to teachers and students?" (p.191). Ethnography *in* education is more often conducted by

insiders, allowing teachers (and oft times students) to become researchers in their own classrooms. Ethnographic studies *in* education are processes of inquiry "framed more by questions and dialectics than by accumulated bits of abstracted knowledge" (p. 192). Throughout the remainder of the chapter, when I refer to ethnography, I will be referring to this model of ethnography *in* education.

Ethnography in education allows researchers to study the social practices of the classroom as they happen (Frank & Uy, 2004; Green, Dixon, & Zaharlick, 2003) and to discern theories about learning and interaction from these practices. Ethnography helps researchers to see classroom practices from multiple perspectives (Frank & Uy, 2004), thereby allowing the depth and complexity of classroom practices to remain intact even as we search for wide-reaching answers about teaching and learning. Finally (and perhaps most useful to the lay teacher), ethnography allows us to close the gap between teachers and researchers, allowing the story of educational processes to be told from within the educational community (with teachers as participant-observers) rather than from without it (Woods, 1986). When teachers become researchers within their own classrooms, the results "assume the shape of practical knowledge, such as procedural knowledge or narrative" (Root, 2003, p. 174).

The utility of ethnography—its ability to observe and uncover the social practices that accompany the learning process—seems particularly relevant for my study because the attempt to establish co-learning pedagogies is an exercise in altering the fundamental social relationships that exist in the classrooms. Classroom practices are often dependent on perceived power relationships: where do students stand in relation to the teacher? Where do they stand in relation to each other? Where to do they stand in relation to their field of study? Ethnography is suited to exploring this realm of the classroom because it's all about revealing and analyzing social

practices, "a process that attempts to describe and interpret social expressions between people and groups" (Berg, 2009, p. 191). Within my study, I want to explore the things that students say and demonstrate about their ability and willingness to learn from each other as well as from the teacher.

Grounded Theory and Educational Ethnography

To analyze and interpret my data, I will be using a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory, as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and utilized by scores of researchers since, is simply defined as "the discovery of theory from data" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.1). Using grounded theory is a way to discover theories from the data at hand; grounded theory is a way to generate (rather than verify) theories and hypotheses. It involves looking closely at data and sorting that data based on various coding mechanisms deemed useful throughout the analysis process[2].

Grounded theory is especially appropriate for ethnographic studies, because it discourages the researcher from analyzing the data with preconceived notions of what will and will not prove effective in the classroom (Frank & Uy, 2004); indeed, one of the critiques often leveled against educators using ethnography is that they embark on the ethnographic study as a way to verify what they already think they know about education (Green, Dixon, & Zaharlik, 2003); placing an emphasis on grounded theory is a way to avoid pre-theorizing and pre-judging the data.

Though the presence of the term "theory" in "grounded theory" marks theory-generation

---

[2] Though this may seem too informal an assessment, Strauss and Corbin (2008) argue that grounded theory (and qualitative research in general) is less about following a strict set of steps and more about finding ways to survey the data that are appropriate and meaningful for the study at hand; researchers must be clear about their methods, but they need not be rigid in adhering to what they believe constitutes "grounded theory" or "ethnography."

as an obvious goal of grounded theory, Corbin and Strauss (2008[3]) note that the goal of a researcher using grounded theory might also be to provide thick description. This description might take the form of what they term "conceptual ordering" (p. 53), or organizing the data into conceptual categories while providing description. Though these categories can certainly lead the researcher to generate a theory, they are often just as useful when left in descriptive form.

It is for this reason that grounded theory is a well-suited analytical method for ethnographers in general, and for educational ethnographers in particular. Ethnography generates a narrative, and the goal of an ethnographic study is seldom to test a theory. Though a researcher may have a series of hypotheses about how students learn and how classrooms operate, grounded theory asks that there be a "constant interplay between data and ideas throughout the research process. Ideas are emergent from one's experience in the field, and from one's preliminary analytic reflections on the data" (Hammersly & Atkinson, 2007, p. 159).

In a study of pre-service teachers, Frank and Uy (2004) found that ethnography was invaluable in a teacher-preparation course. When pre-service teachers were encouraged to abstain from *a priori* theorizing about how students learn and to focus only on recording classroom conversations as they observed them, they recorded more material overall and had more rich descriptions of classroom culture. This result not only validates the utility of ethnography for education, but also indicates that choosing to find theory in data—rather than use data to prove theory—helps educators see clearly the things that are happening (and not happening) in their classrooms. Generating theory in this way allows us to arrive at theory "suited to its supposed uses" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.3), theory that is practical and applicable to the classroom.

---

[3] Though Strauss passed away in 1996, this publication is a third edition of the book Strauss and Corbin published together in 1990.

Procedure

As described in the previous chapter, the Hands on a Camera project is performed in two phases: in the first phase, BYU students take a course about media literacy and pedagogy, and in the second phase those BYU students enter the K-12 classroom to teach K-12 students about media literacy through documentary filmmaking. In like manner, this ethnographic study was carried out in two phases: in the first phase, I studied the BYU students as they interacted with each other and with me. In the second phase, I focused my study on one group of BYU students as they entered the K-12 setting, observing the ways that they interacted with each other and with the K-12 students and utilized the elements of instruction taught in phase one. Though investigating all student experiences (K-12 and university) would certainly prove beneficial, this research project centers only on the experiences of the university students.

In an ethnographic study of pre-service teachers implementing content area multiliteracies in their practice, Sheridan-Thomas (2007) found that pre-service teachers often struggled to implement the concepts of the class (in her case, content area multiliteracies) into their own teaching practice; like other studies, this study is specifically an attempt to understand student experiences as they attempt to make the transition from theory into practice, to see what relationship (if any) reciprocal peer learning has to their ability to make this transition, and to determine whether students are comfortable teaching with the kinds of "co-learning pedagogies" (NAMLE, 2007) called for in *The Core Principles for Media Literacy Education*.

Study context and participants.

This study was conducted over the course of two university semesters: Fall 2010 (September – December) and Winter 2011 (January – April). The participants in phase one of

the study were seven BYU students enrolled in TMA 458: Media Literacy Education. There were six male students and one female student[4], with two female instructors. The class was composed of students who were either majors or minors in Brigham Young University's media arts program (all student names have been changed):

- Ben is a senior media arts major emphasizing in new media studies.

- Robert is a senior media arts major emphasizing in theory and critical studies.

- Andy was a senior in the political science program with a minor in media arts, but during the semester he changed his major to media arts and his minor to political science. He is emphasizing in narrative production and screenwriting.

- Jordan is a sophomore in the media arts program with an emphasis in narrative production, and was the youngest member of the class. In addition to filmmaking, he enjoys public speaking and magic.

- Carson is a senior double majoring in media arts and computer science. His emphasis is in documentary production.

- Gwen is a senior in the media arts program emphasizing in documentary production. She is also earning a minor in anthropology.

- Oscar is a senior in the technology teacher education program with a minor in media arts.

All students had the option not to participate as a research subject, but all students chose to participate in the study. They received no monetary compensation for participation in the study, though the course counts as an elective that can fulfill a graduation requirement.

---

[4] There were actually two more students at the beginning of the semester (one male, and one female); they both dropped the class midway through the course. They will be mentioned briefly in conjunction with some group interactions, but their data was not included in the actual study.

The students who chose to continue on to phase two of the project (and, consequently, the study) were self-selected. The team that became the focus of phase two of the research was composed of Andy, Carson, and Gwen. These BYU students were assigned to teach in an integrated studies classroom of 10th-12th grade students at a local high school. The high school is the school district's alternative high school, which features a variety of programs and services for students who need to make up credit for various reasons. Though some students at the high school are there in order to accelerate their graduation, most arrive at the school because they have not succeeded within the traditional classroom. Though much of what the school offers is the ability to complete classes through independent study (where students check out credit-bearing packets, work independently, and have the opportunity to receive help from teachers assigned to various subject areas) the school does offer an integrated studies program that allows students to complete the credit they need while staying in a more traditional classroom environment. In the integrated studies program, students study core subjects together as they work to complete the course materials required to earn credit. They work together on several class projects like growing a class garden, building electric bicycles, and training for a half-marathon. The Hands on a Camera project has been offered as part of this integrated studies program since 2005 as a way for the high school students to earn English credit. The BYU students entered the high school once a week for 10 weeks.

Data collection.

As stated earlier, ethnography requires "extensive fieldwork of various types including participant observation, formal and informal interviewing, document collecting, filming, recording, and so on" (Van Maanen, 1982, p.103, as qtd. in Berg, 2009, p.193). Data in the study

21

came through all of the aforementioned channels, and will be detailed below. Though the two phases of the study emphasize some forms of data more than others (phase one relies more heavily on document collecting and interviewing; phase two relies more on interviewing and observation), each utilized all of the following forms of data.

Student assignments.

The documents collected in this study consisted of "natural student products of the course" (Sheridan-Thomas, 2007, p. 126). Student assignments, such as maintaining a class wiki, contributing to a class blog, and turning in written lesson plans, were collected and analyzed as data (assignment descriptions can be found in Appendix B). In studying students' use of wikis in the classroom, Forte and Bruckman (2007, 2010), and Grant (2009) found that student interactions and contributions to a classroom wiki acted as concrete examples of collaboration in practice. Without a video camera, classroom collaboration is difficult to capture, and since the presence of a video camera often alters student behavior, collecting concrete data on the results of collaboration is quite challenging. By moving the collaboration to a virtual space (a wiki and a blog), students create a digital trail of collaborative efforts. Written lesson plans also offer a paper trail for examining whether or not students are actively implementing peer-learning practices.

During phase two of the projects, students completed lesson plans that were given to the researcher for analysis. As Sheridan-Thomas (2007) found, analyzing written student lesson plans is a way to effectively measure whether or not students are able to use their theories in practice.

Field notes and observations.

Bath (2009) notes that in educational ethnographic research, "the researcher/practitioner

in action research can, and indeed should, extend the level of reflection on (or indeed, *in*) action by developing practices of reflexivity that include accounts of both autobiography and theory" (p.215). During phase one of the study, the teachers in the study took field notes that both record and reflect on the activities happening in the classroom.

During phase two, students and teachers kept field reports detailing experiences in the classroom and personal observations about teaching and learning. These were collected throughout the semester for analysis. The field notes of the researcher were based on observations of the students while teaching; field notes from the students were based on their own teaching experiences.

Student interviews and reflections.

Transcripts from verbal interviews with the students, along with written interviews and written student reflections on assignments, were also collected as data. These interviews were held as a way of encouraging reflection and reflexivity in the students (Bath, 2009). Interviews also provided students a way to explain "what they were doing, and why" to the researcher (Forte & Bruckman, 2010). The interviews allow the researcher to understand and correctly interpret other data sources (specific interview questions can be found in Appendix C).

Data analysis.

I analyzed the data in my study using grounded theory as described earlier, an approach that "accounts for the patterns of behavior which are relevant and problematic for the participant" (Gregory & Jones, 2009, p. 774). I first sorted the data into two general categories by asking the following questions:

- What did students say about their peer-learning and peer-teaching experiences?

- What did students demonstrate about their ability and willingness to learn from and teach with their peers?

Once I organized the data into these two general categories (things students said and things students did), I started the open-coding process by looking for any themes that emerged (Aronson, 1994). I memoed my own observations about what student words and actions seemed to entail (a process described in Trochim, 2006). After this step, I identified several themes from the data:

1. Collaborative assignments are useful for learning.

2. Collaborative assignments are frustrating when group members do not contribute equally.

3. Group projects are useful for learning, as long as everyone participates.

4. Students appreciate specific assignments and roles within peer-learning projects.

5. Teaching assignments are useful for teacher preparation.

6. When teaching their own lessons, most students still rely on lecture and presentation rather than activities that encourage peer learning.

7. Students appreciate peer feedback on their production projects.

8. Students enjoy production projects more than other class assignments.

These themes were interesting, but did not seem to address the research question in a concrete way (since some themes seem to stand in direct contradiction to one another). In a discussion of open-coding techniques, Strauss (1987, p. 30, cited in Berg, 2009, p. 354) provides the following advice: "Ask the data a specific and consistent set of questions." Though I had discovered themes in the open-coding process, I recognized a need to go back through those themes while asking the questions, "How this is relevant to peer learning in a media literacy education project? What does this tell teachers about the ways that students learn? What does

this tell us about student experiences with peer learning?" When asking these questions of the data, I discovered three over-arching themes that can act as concrete lessons for the teacher interested in exploring student experiences with co-learning pedagogies:

1. Students in an MLE classroom need defined roles and clear expectations for their behavior when they are introduced to peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments.

2. Students in an MLE classroom understand the intellectual purpose of peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments but have mixed responses to the execution of said assignments.

3. MLE students are most receptive to peer-learning activities associated with production assignments.

With these three themes in mind, I went through the data one more time and selectively coded the data (Trochim, 2006) to find items that related specifically to these three key concepts. In the following chapter I will present the results of this analysis, illustrating each of these three themes as they manifested themselves throughout each phase of the project.

Limitations

As with most qualitative educational research, this study is a description of particular students in a particular setting, and though the results will hopefully lead to theories about learning that can benefit all classrooms, they cannot reasonably be generalized to apply to all students in all situations.

Limitations are also inherent in the teacher-researcher relationship. Though I try to be impartial and objective in my observations and analysis, I am hardly an uninvolved observer in the process. Additionally, when negotiating the responsibilities of a teacher and a researcher, the

priorities of being the teacher (e.g. grading student work, resolving student issues) will always take primacy over the priorities of being a researcher (e.g. recording field notes, conducting interviews). Though I have attempted to keep my observations and analysis strictly data-oriented, my views of certain practices are certainly influenced by my own perception of how well a student performed in the class. This is especially clear in my own field notes, in which I often analyze student behavior even as I record it.

CHAPTER III: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of my ethnographic study is to describe student experiences in a media literacy education classroom as they are introduced to and attempt to utilize co-learning pedagogies. This research is conducted specifically on a two-phase media literacy service-learning project. In this chapter, I will present data relevant to the research questions detailed in chapters one and two.

Data from each phase will be presented separately. Within these two major sections, I will present the themes discovered in the open coding process. Discussion of these themes will be subdivided into two sections: student perceptions of their experiences in the classroom during and after the project, and student demonstrations of their ability and willingness to learn from and with their peers. To determine student perceptions, I will draw on interviews and surveys conducted with the students (written and oral) during and after the project. For student demonstrations, I will draw on student assignments and my own observations of their behavior in the classroom from my field notes. For each theme, an effort has been made to balance student perceptions and student demonstrations; however, because some themes emerged more clearly from data detailing either perceptions or demonstrations, perceptions and demonstrations will not always be detailed equally.

In all sections, I am relying heavily on student words and descriptions of student actions. As such, I will occasionally present long passages of student work, student answers, or my own field notes to illustrate various student experiences. This is in alignment with ethnographic principles of attempting to understand classroom culture as the students experienced it; the narratives that emerge from student demonstrations accompanied by their own words provide the

most complete picture of what happened in the classroom. All students' names have been changed to pseudonyms to protect student privacy.

Throughout this chapter, I will refer to two basic categories of assignments: peer-learning assignments and peer-teaching assignments (detailed descriptions of specific assignments will be provided throughout the chapter and in appendices). Peer-learning assignments are assignments where students are expected to contribute equally as peers; no hierarchical roles are assigned in peer-learning assignments. Examples of peer-learning assignments are the class blog, class wiki, and in-class discussions. In peer-teaching assignments, one or more students take on the role of teacher and the rest of the students act as their students. Examples of peer-teaching assignments are group-authored lessons, group presentations, and weekly mini-lessons. Both categories of assignments are examples co-learning pedagogies and offer students the chance to learn from and with each other.

Data Analysis – Phase One (Preparation Phase)

In phase one, students participated in a class entitled "Media Literacy Education" where they were taught principles of media literacy, media literacy education, and non-fiction production. The three core themes that emerged when analyzing the data from this phase are as follows:

1. Students in an MLE classroom need defined roles and clear expectations for their behavior when they are introduced to peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments.

2. Students in an MLE classroom understand the intellectual purpose of peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments but have mixed responses to the execution of said assignments.

3. MLE students are most receptive to peer-learning activities associated with production assignments.

Data relevant to these themes will be presented in the following sections, focusing on things that students said and did that illustrate the theme.

In a peer-learning environment, students need defined roles and clear expectations for their behavior.

One of the goals of implementing co-learning pedagogies is to help students take more responsibility for their own education and to take an active role in contributing to the education of their peers. Though this role-sharing in the classroom (where students become teachers and teachers become students) can be mutually beneficial for students and teachers, students still expressed a need for structure within the classroom. Cooper (2002) makes the following statement regarding peer-learning activities:

Inadequately planned activity and dialogue structures can lead to poor communication, unequal responsibility, unreflective group thinking, and failure to engage students' cognitive structures. (p. 55)

Student experiences surrounding two major assignments (the wiki assignment and the group teaching assignments) demonstrated how students responded positively to clear structure and expectations in a peer-learning assignment and negatively to a more open-ended, less structured assignment.

I will first detail the experiences that students had collaborating on the wiki assignment. In the wiki assignment, students were given the task of collaborating on a group research project about media literacy and media literacy education (the full assignment description can be found in Appendix B). Though they were given clear guidelines about what constituted participation

on the wiki, they still struggled with the assignment and expressed frustration about the end

product. After this discussion, I will contrast the wiki experience with the experiences students

had creating lesson plans and teaching in groups, an exercise toward which most students had

positive feelings. In the group teaching assignments, students clearly understood their role, and

they expressed more confidence in their ability to accomplish the purposes of the assignment.

Student perceptions of the need for structure in peer-learning and peer-teaching experiences.

Student responses to the wiki assignment ranged from general apathy to extreme distaste

for the assignment. When prompted to explain what they did not like about the assignment,

Oscar provided a concise response:

> I've had a wiki before and it turned out the same way this one did. We're given the wiki,
>
> "here, update it, build this Wikipedia page and contribute to it" and we're not told what to
>
> research or what topics or what outline and most of the class always just leaves it alone
>
> until the end and then throws in some chunks of notes they took in class.

Oscar's response reflected the opinions of many of the students; the students were given the

assignment to research and build the wiki together to reflect the things that they were learning in

class and discovering on their own, but this general description did not provide enough structure

to motivate students to work on the wiki until near the due date. Ben agreed, offering the

following:

> I've done wikis in the past too and google docs—they're very similar—where everyone's
>
> supposed to collaborate on this one large thing. Without some kind of leadership, some
>
> direction, it's chaos. Nobody knows what to do, and nobody wants to step in and take that
>
> role either.

Here, in a clear way, Ben articulated the need for greater leadership. He also makes clear that even in a situation where students recognize that someone needs to take charge or that the class needs to get together and make some decisions on their own, students are reluctant to actually take on that responsibility; they are willing to be responsible for their own learning and their own work, but they stop short of attempting to take responsibility for another student.

Frustration with a lack of direction and a focus on individual work are evident in the following comment from Robert as he articulates his own feelings about the wiki assignment:

> In all honesty I thought the wiki was a joke. I didn't understand how it was different than a group paper involving the whole class. I felt there wasn't proper direction given and the topic was way too large for even a class to handle. It wasn't until halfway through the semester (when most students were not participating anyway) that we were even told we needed to cite our works. I got really tired of checking the wiki every other week to find that Gwen and I were the only ones to contribute still. In all honesty for the last and biggest check I posted what I wanted and said I was done with it. I feel that I've contributed to at least a third of the material on there, why should I have to break my back to make up for the lack of effort on my peers' part?

Still, students were not upset about the idea of collaborative work in general. Indeed, Ben noted that this subject matter (MLE) practically calls for peer learning and collaborative work, noting:

> I think [our education] has to be collaborative as well in order to gain a firm understanding of how the media works today, because it is so all-engrossing, and people are working together and collaborating. I think small groups are necessary for our

learning, just so we can experience what it's like to collaborate and create something

together because the world is becoming a more together society.

Students expressed a feeling that group projects could help them feel more accountable and

responsible for their work because other team members relied on them to do their part:

> Jordan: Group projects help me because you set a goal together and then you accomplish
>
> it together. And so they're all relying on you to do your part. It's more like the
>
> real world that if you don't do your part you're letting people down.

Talking about one group project in particular (the documentary modes presentation), Carson's

comments reflect that a well-executed group project contributes to learning in a variety of ways:

> These group projects helped create cohesion between students and carried with them the
>
> collateral social learning that comes from navigating group dynamics and synthesizing
>
> efforts. The Doc Modes Presentation was a great way to help students own the material
>
> and led to many casual conversations about the material within our group as we
>
> researched and formulated our presentation. These conversations were learning
>
> opportunities that almost go unnoticed but prove valuable as they caused us to process the
>
> material on several levels and forced us to put what we were finding into our own words.
>
> Then, the actual presenting of the material to the class created another layer of processing
>
> which gave me new ideas and discoveries about the subject matter, in this case the poetic
>
> mode of documentary film.

So, generally speaking, students seem to be in favor of group projects when work is distributed

evenly and when the expectations of individual students are made clear. In practice, student

actions reflected their stated opinions about group work; in the places where they felt confused

about their own roles and the teacher's expectations, they generally did not collaborate, did not

enjoy the assignment, and student contributions were minimal. In the assignments where students clearly understood their role and the teacher's expectations, they thrived.

Student demonstrations of the need for structure in peer-learning and peer-teaching experiences.

Student behavior on the wiki absolutely reflects their general dislike of the assignment. The wiki assignment was supposed to work like a class research project, where students contributed their thoughts based on things we'd read in class and their own out-of-class research. Though I checked the wiki informally on a weekly basis, grades were awarded based on three formal "wiki checks" spaced throughout the semester. In the assignment description, students were offered a number of options for demonstrating participation on the wiki:

- Write new material on the home page.

- Make a new page (for example, we might want a separate page discussing Participatory Culture)

- Start discussions about current material.

- Participate in discussions initiated by your classmates.

- Find relevant references and resources to supplement material written by your classmates.

Doing each of these things was considered one contribution. Total student contributions to the wiki are as follows (multiple drafts of the same page saved within 10 minutes of each other are considered one contribution):

- Robert: 10

- Oscar: 7

- Jordan: 7

- Gwen: 6

- Andy: 4

- Ben: 2

- Carson: 0

Early on, it was clear that something was not working with the wiki assignment; at the time of the first check, only four students had contributed something to the wiki. The week after the first wiki check (October 11, 2010), I made a comment in my field notes that I wanted to give students more time to collaborate on the wiki in class. While they were discussing the assignment, I made the following observation:

Students were fine about pointing out flaws in their research so far, but were reluctant to offer any real solutions. Oscar suggested that the students assign roles to each other so they could meaningfully break up the work, thus making it seem less daunting. Several students nodded their heads at this, but no one stepped forward to claim responsibility for actually doing anything.

In this situation, even though students saw a need for greater structure, their conversation did not seem to lead to any kind of beneficial action.

A brief survey of the history of the main page of the wiki indicates that even when students chose to contribute to the wiki (which they generally only did in the 2-3 days immediately before a formal wiki check), they were reluctant to work collaboratively with their peers (this behavior was consistent with behavior documented in prior studies of classroom wikis (Grant, 2009; Forte & Bruckman, 2007, 2010)). I started the wiki page on September 13 by posting the sentence, "Media education is…" and then giving students the challenge of

completing the page by the end of the semester. Fairly soon thereafter (September 16), Robert

offered the following three-sentence definition:

> Media Literacy Education is defined as teaching individuals how to read media texts as
>
> well as write them. This education is crucial because society is being bombarded with
>
> informational media. New media is literally sitting at the fingertips of society and if there
>
> is no education then this great tool will go to waste.

Three days later (September 19), he expanded on his definition:

> There is a fundamental shift in the way that society is thinking about Media
>
> Literacy Education. We are no longer a society that is comfortable sitting back and
>
> reading texts. We are a society that is actively involved in the creation process. If we are
>
> to truly understand the way that mediums are read then we must develop a participatory
>
> culture.

One week later (September 26, the day before the wiki check), Jordan added two paragraphs to

expand Robert's definition. He did not edit or comment on anything that Robert had written so

far. The same day, Gwen added a brief outline of how to expand on Jordan statement that "David

Buckingham is considered a pioneer in media education." Gwen's insertion of text into Jordan's

work is the first moment when students worked collaboratively on the main page; Jordan's

statement that "David Buckingham is considered a pioneer in media education" prompted Gwen

to add an outline of some of Buckingham's theories about media education that we were reading

and studying as a class.

The next day, Jordan received a number of comments in class that the following claim

seemed unsubstantiated and slightly unrelated to media education: "Humans will not thrive

without interaction and a feeling of importance." He edited his statement to include a

parenthetical comment: "Humans will not thrive without interaction and a feeling of importance (see Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The pioneer in human psychology and human motivation)."

One day later (September 28), Robert revised something Jordan and Gwen wrote by removing the phrase "considered a pioneer" from an earlier statement. He then inserted detail into the outline she had provided. This is the second instance of students working somewhat collaboratively. Both of these early examples of collaboration happened along non-controversial lines (students generally inserted, not deleted, text) and in places where students left room and invited detail from other authors (Jordan initially wrote a one-sentence paragraph; Gwen responded to his sentence with an outline; Robert turned her basic outline into a detailed outline). It is worth noting that all of this writing and collaboration on the main page took place between three students. A few students were contributing to the wiki in other places (Dan posted a message in the discussion board; Andy tried to create a new page discussing intellectual property, but then changed his mind and deleted it), but at the time of the first wiki check, only five students had contributed to the wiki in any fashion, and only Robert, Jordan, and Gwen had made an attempt to contribute to the main body of research. Students rarely commented (in class or online) on things that their classmates wrote, and did not communicate with one another about future directions for their collaborative work.

There may be a number of reasons that students chose not to work collaboratively on the wiki, but the most obvious reason may perhaps be that "edit content created by another student" was not explicitly listed as a possible way to contribute to the wiki. Though the wiki interface explicitly invites collaboration with the "edit this page" option, students did not see collaboration of this sort as one of the requirements of the assignment, so they were reluctant to do it.

After the first wiki check happened on September 27, students did not contribute to the wiki for two weeks. On October 18, Gwen added a section called "Gwen's note to self" that included some links for research that she wanted to discuss. One week later (October 25), some students finally got together during wiki time and made a section called "assignments" that detailed their self-selected assignments for research:

Ben - Representation (Buckingham)

Gwen - Language (Buckingham), list of Schools with media literacy programs

Oscar - Resources[5] (websites that can be used), Semiotics

Steven[6] - Audience (Buckingham)

This was the first and only time that students got together to divide their workload in a way that would benefit the research product.

One week later (November 1), Robert made some minor grammatical changes to the page. On November 7th (in preparation for the wiki check on November 11th), Gwen wrote a new definition of media literacy education:

Media Literacy Education is a relatively new field that aims to teach people how to critically engage with modern media texts. Most media literacy education programs focus on an "inquiry-based pedagogic model" that teaches students how to ask pertinent questions and analyze the things they watch, read or listen to. Many programs also focus on eventually empowering people to create quality media content of their own.

---

[5] Oscar took this assignment seriously; his contributions to the resources page were significant, but will not be detailed in this history of the main page.

[6] Steven was a student who withdrew from the course in November; though he did consent to participate in my research, I have chosen to use data only from students who finished the course. I mention him here only in conjunction with his fellow students He did not actually ever join the class wiki, and he did not fulfill this research assignment.

This new definition displaced Robert's definition (though Gwen did not actually delete Robert's original draft of the definition; she simply moved it farther down the page) and was accompanied by the following note:

> (A Note From Gwen: so this is still a work in progress, but I think we should try to work out a good, simple, accurate and unbiased definition of media literacy education--just answering the basic "what is it?" question. cutting away any other superfluous content, and saving that for other sections--or just cutting it altogether!)

This comment from Gwen is the first attempt anywhere on the wiki to comment on and collaborate with another student's writing in this virtual space. Until this point, almost all collaboration had happened in the classroom space with little comment on how the wiki was coming together as a whole. Gwen's comment that some content seems "superfluous" indicates that she isn't happy with the product that students had heretofore created.

The next day, Andy wrote a few paragraphs about audiences (an assignment neglected by another class member). On November 11 (the day of the wiki check), Ben added a few paragraphs about representation (as was his assignment). Oscar introduced NAMLE's *Core Principles of Media Literacy Education* and wrote a short section he titled "Creativity in Teaching." At the time of the second wiki check, six students had contributed content to the main page.

After the second wiki check (November 11), students did not contribute to the wiki in any way until December 11. In preparation for the final wiki check, Gwen edited several of the sections she authored for grammar and flow. She edited a few things written by her classmates, mostly changing punctuation. Later that day, she went back and deleted a massive amount of text written by her peers and placed it into a section she called "outer darkness" with this note: "I

am throwing all the random stuff that doesn't really have a place but that perhaps people will still want to salvage here."

On December 13th, Robert spent some time with the wiki, adding paragraphs on history, participatory culture, and digital natives and digital immigrants. Andy added a large section of text, including a new heading for the "motive" of media literacy education. He filled this section by editing some of the things written by his classmates in order to save them from "outer darkness."

On December 16th (the day of the final wiki check), Jordan added two paragraphs to an existing section and a section called "other experts in the field" (though he moved it to resources a few minutes later). He also edited the "production" and "language" sections, and added some resources. Not surprisingly, no students contributed anything to the wiki after the final wiki check.

The final wiki page does not resemble any kind of finished product; the section titled "outer darkness" still exists in its published form, containing all of the things that one classmate deemed unfit for the main page (but that she was still reluctant to delete entirely). The headings for the final main page are as follows:

- Definition

- Motive

- Goals and Principles

- History

- Participatory Culture

- Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants

- David Buckingham

- Buckingham's 4 Key Concepts

- Media Education Programs

- Creativity in Teaching

- Outer Darkness

Though the first four headings seem to make logical sense for a research project of this broad nature, the remaining headings are quite specific and provide summaries of things that we had read in class, suggesting that instead of doing outside research into the fields of media literacy and media literacy education, students were content to limit their focus to the articles and books that we had studied as a class.

At the final wiki check, Carson still had not contributed any content to the wiki. Oscar had contributed significantly to the wiki, but not on the main page (he chose to work on the resources page on his own). With a few exceptions, students only contributed to the wiki in the 3-4 days immediately preceding a graded wiki check. When they chose to contribute to the wiki, students usually chose to add—not edit or delete—content. When students did choose to edit content, it was usually only done to content that they personally authored. Of all the students, only Gwen seemed to make an effort to really collaborate online or to take any kind of leadership role, embedding comments within the article to ask class members to help shape the wiki in particular ways; no students responded to her request to shape a simple, unbiased definition of media literacy education, and only one student bothered to scan and rescue some of the text that she placed in "outer darkness."

In practice, students demonstrated that unclear expectations and a lack of assigned roles, if uncorrected, leads to frustration and disengagement with the assignment. Students

demonstrated with their actions that they were not willing or eager to collaborate with their classmates in coming up with a research project that they felt proud of.

Though the wiki assignment was the least favorite assignment for all members of our class, they responded well to other collaborative assignments, most notably those in which students were asked to team-teach a lesson. In this situation, students had clearly defined roles (as group members and teachers), and clear expectations for their behavior (teach specific material in an understandable and engaging way).

On September 29 (week five), the students had their first chance to teach a group lesson plan. For the Documentary Modes Presentation, students were divided into four groups (at this point in the semester we had nine students) and each group was assigned one documentary mode to teach to the rest of the class. Groups were given short summaries of each mode, but were encouraged to do their own research to find appropriate film clips and essays illustrating or commenting on that particular mode of documentary filmmaking.

Even in the planning and preparation phases, students seemed interested in the opportunity to research and teach these specific topics to their peers. The following comments were made in my field notes on September 22, 2010:

> After the Garageband tutorial, Becca divided [the students] into groups and assigned each group a documentary mode to give a presentation about next week. We have not discussed documentary modes yet, so this requires students to do their own research and pool their resources (as some of them have taken the class that teaches about these in detail and some of them have not). We gave them about 30 minutes to plan their ten-minute lesson, and they seemed to use the entire time planning (we imagine they will

need to do some work outside of class). They seemed more energized than I've ever seen them while they were planning their lesson plans.

In this situation, it seems that since students had a clear understanding of what they were expected to do, they did not spend their time wondering which group member would do what; they simply started working and preparing for their lessons the following week.

Enthusiasm in preparing for the assignment extended into its execution as well. Students were respectful and responsive to the things that their classmates were teaching. After watching all the students teach, I made the following comments in my field notes:

I think we should do this sort of group-oriented teaching more often. The individual lesson plans seem to be going fine, but I felt more a sense of community today, as if students were more willing to participate and engage with the lesson than they are when just one student or teacher is teaching.

While teaching, students demonstrated two models of collaborating and negotiating the shared teaching space. The first group had a "divide and conquer" approach, where they each had a laptop with their individual presentations slides.). Tiffany[7] introduced the expository mode of documentary filmmaking, and Jordan discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the mode. Though there were a few things in their presentation that seemed to indicate that they worked independently (not collaboratively) on their various portions of the lesson plans, it was a well-executed lesson. Tiffany and Jordan provided many illustrative clips, explained their concepts clearly, and provided several quotes for discussion. Two other groups (the groups that taught third and fourth) had a similar teaching dynamic (though someone had taken the time to synthesize their slide presentations into one presentation to avoid the need to switch computers).

---

[7] Tiffany is a student who withdrew from the class in the middle of the semester to transfer to another college. Though she did consent to participate in the research project, her data is only used here as it pertains to other students in a group situation.

The second group's (Steven and Carson) teaching dynamic was the most collaborative of any of the student presentations. Rather than dividing the material and choosing who would explain what, they stood at either edge of the screen, both contributing insight and delivering lecture concepts as appropriate. One of them would explain a concept, and then the other of them would ask a question about the concept that their classmate just explained. Steven and Carson had a give-and-take dynamic that invited the other students to feel comfortable contributing and asking questions.

I concluded my field notes with the following observation:

This is the first class period this semester where I have actually felt like we sufficiently covered everything that needed to be covered, and where I had a sense at the end of the day that the students actually understood what they were supposed to understand. I'm trying to decide if I think it has anything to do with the fact that students taught it, that we gave them some sort of preliminary information about each of their topics, or just that it was a fairly concrete lesson kind of day.

At the end of the class period, students were conversant with these four modes of documentary, and demonstrated in assignments later in the semester that they still remembered and could utilize the four modes for their own purposes. In his final documentary evaluation, Carson explained his use of various modes in his own film:

This documentary incorporates the observational mode and the personal voice documentary approach, although the subject is not the filmmaker in this case. I chose these approaches because they allow the subject or character of the documentary to be themselves and tell their own story. By watching them, we learn about them. By hearing them tell their story at the same time, we gain deeper insight into why they do what they

do. If we were only to watch Scott make his flower, we might not learn about his past journey and his motivations.

Carson's assessment of his film demonstrates that he recognizes not only the presence of certain documentary modes within his film, but also the purpose of using them to convey his message. In this case of the documentary modes presentation, clear expectations and roles within the peer-teaching assignment contributed to students' understanding of the modes of documentary film, and helped them gain pedagogical experience as they tried out different teaching styles and methods.

Students' statements and behavior about the need for structure and clearly defined roles also begin to illustrate the next theme discovered in the research: students understand the intellectual purposes of peer learning and peer teaching but have mixed responses to their implementation. Though students expressed favorable opinions of group work in general, their behavior surrounding the wiki assignment demonstrates that these opinions did not transfer into collaborative actions. Student responses to the theory and the practice of peer learning and peer teaching will be further detailed in the following section.

Students understand the intellectual purpose of peer learning and peer teaching but have mixed responses to their implementation.

As Sheridan-Thomas (2007) found in a study of pre-service teachers as they took a class on implementing a multiliteracies framework into their own teaching, students are often able to understand the intellectual purpose of certain assignments or theories while still ignoring said theories in practice. As I surveyed the data provided by my students (particularly as I compared what they *said* about peer learning to what they *did* in the classroom), it became apparent that

even though students could see the potential benefits of peer learning and peer teaching, they had mixed responses to their actual implementation.

Student perceptions of the purposes of peer learning and peer teaching.

When asked directly about collaborative learning and group work, most students expressed optimistic opinions of the potential that such assignments have to increase their learning. In an anonymous survey taken five weeks into the semester, many students described group projects as "good" for various reasons. One student said that group projects were a "good way to see how people think." Another student commented that they are "good for getting to know people and good for motivating me to put ideas into words." The student who spoke most positively of group projects noted that "collaboration is a great skill to learn, plus it assists in learning as dialogue (instead of monologue)."

Another student made the comment on the survey that group projects "motivate me to perform well since others are counting on me." This theme—that group projects made students more motivated to perform well—emerged in the interview conducted with students at the end of the class. Jordan commented that

> group projects help me because you set a goal together and then you accomplish it
> together. And so they're all relying on you to do your part. It's more like the real world
> that if you don't do your part you're letting people down.

Ben responded to Jordan by stating that group work provided "good motivation to get things done."

Not all students were as positive about the potential of group work to add to their learning experience or motivate them to perform well. At the time the following comment was made in a survey, students had been assigned one major out-of-class group project (a teaching

presentation), and several small group projects in-class. The most prevalent reason for students'

dislike of collaborative projects related to an uneven distribution of the workload and the

difficulty finding time to collaborate outside of class. One student noted that group projects were

> […] sometimes good, sometimes frustrating; when groups collaborate well and divide the
>
> work evenly and make time to meet together and prepare the project outside of class, a
>
> group project can be a worthwhile exercise. However, when a group project is just a
>
> couple minutes in class discussing who is doing what and then everyone works
>
> separately…then the final project is often disjointed and it might as well have been an
>
> individual project.

Students were more positive about the more informal peer-peer interactions provided by

class discussions. In the anonymous survey, students described our class discussions (distinctly

separate from class lectures) as "helpful," "insightful," "interesting," "beneficial," and

"valuable." One student summed up the general consensus by stating that class discussions are

valuable because "people offer perspectives and insights that I might not think of on my own."

Students also stated that class discussions offered them the ability to evaluate their own

understanding of the subject; one student noted that

> discussion reveals what my peers understand and allows me to thereby determine where I
>
> am in relation to them with my own comprehension. Additionally it allows me to express
>
> my thoughts verbally and realize how much I actually know or do not know.

In contrast, when asked more specifically about their online peer-learning assignments

(the blog and the wiki), only one student, Andy, had something positive to say about the wiki,

stating that although he didn't necessarily enjoy the assignment, he understood its intellectual

purpose:

The thing I liked about the concept of the wiki was that there was no—I feel like the intent was to not give any instruction, and I actually liked that even though I failed miserably at it. The responsibility was on each one of us to do that and I like that because that's the concept of this new media generation. It's that people can get together who don't have the same schedules, who aren't even geographically proximate to each other, and can coordinate and make something that is valuable. I think that was the point, and I think any attempt to reduce the group size or give specific assignments beyond what the students themselves do would defeat the purpose I think. No assignments or instructions should come outside of the students once the assignment has been given to do the wiki.

As Andy discussed this assignment in these terms, many students nodded to express their understanding, but they still maintained their dislike of the assignment, adding that even when they did contribute, they "felt like it was a lot regurgitation of exactly what [they had] read" (Gwen).

Students seemed to feel similarly about the blogging assignment. In our final interview, Jordan said the following about the blogging assignment:

At the beginning I was super excited that everyone was reading the stuff, and I hoped that it wasn't just an assignment, that they actually cared about what I had to say.

Many students echoed this sentiment, the early feeling that it was a bit exciting to be able to have people other than the teacher read and respond to their ideas. Students mentioned that the knowledge that their peers would read their writing motivated them to work harder on their reading responses:

Jordan: In short, I always work harder on something my peers are going to see.

Andy: It's one thing if I write a bad paper and hand it to a professor because in my mind

I think, "Well, they're already smart, and they know everyone below them is

stupid, so this is going to be relatively on the same plane." Whereas it's different

if your peers know that you're dumb. It kind of motivates you to spell words

correctly and make sure that words are where they're supposed to be.

Most students nodded agreement with these statements; at the beginning of the semester, they

felt that writing for an audience of their peers would have a motivating effect on the depth and

quality of their writing. As the semester went on, their feelings started to change, a change

articulated by Gwen:

Overall, I enjoyed the blog assignment and thought it was a good opportunity to reflect

more on our weekly reading and synthesize that information. I also thought it increased

my feeling of participating in a learning community, because I also got to read and

comment on the thoughts of my classmates (although that feeling steadily declined over

the semester as fewer and fewer classmates participated on the blog). I did read the

comments my classmates made on my posts—but never felt that there was enough

participation and interaction to facilitate a true discussion in the comments.

Though students tended not to always respond positively to peer-learning assignments,

they were more positive about peer-teaching assignments.

Jordan: The group lesson was extremely helpful. […]Our class seemed to have a lack of

engagement so the connection is very similar to high school students. Nothing can

prepare you more for doing something than actually doing it. Involvement with

each other will always help. I felt the lesson plan, the documentary modes, and

teaching the class were the most rewarding.

Gwen: I think I learned the most from my peers as I watched their teaching styles. I

learned that it is best to keep things simple and clear and engaging when teaching

a lesson.

Throughout the interview, students proved that they understood many of the purposes for

and potential benefits of peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments. They understood that

writing for an audience of their peers could help them feel motivated to improve the quality of

their writing; they understood that working with their peers to generate research was an authentic

model that mirrored how products like Wikipedia are actually generated; and they understood

that even in an informal setting, they would greatly benefit from the multiple perspectives and

opinions that their classmates offered. When students actually started engaging in peer learning

and peer teaching, however, they did not always find that the potential benefits turned into actual

benefits. In practice, our class often became frustrated with collaborative exercises. In our final

interview, Robert summed up his frustration this way:

This class was a challenge for me, not because of the difficulty of the material, but

because of the lack of difficulty. I never really felt engaged in what I was learning.

The readings were thoughtful, but I felt outside of the blog we didn't engage them

fully. This was, in my opinion because no one ever showed up to class. It was too small

of a class to rely on hour+ group discussions on readings that almost no one did. In that

way I felt both active and passive in the class. I worked and contributed, but I rarely felt

engaged in the subject.

Robert's response indicates that even though students agree that collaborative learning is

beneficial in theory, it only continues to be beneficial as long as all class members contribute.

Over the course of the semester, students demonstrated that class discussions and group projects

were not successful when all parties are not willing or prepared to contribute. However, when students came to class prepared and willing to contribute, peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments were more successful.

Student demonstrations of the frustrations and rewards of peer learning and peer teaching.

The students this semester had a serious attendance problem. Though we had a small class to begin with (nine students at the beginning of the semester, seven students at the end), most class periods were attended by only three or four students. This made class discussions and group projects less than beneficial. In the third week of class, I came to class ready to discuss a particularly important reading (*Confronting the Challenges of a Participatory Culture* by Henry Jenkins) only to discover that none of the students except for the student in charge of teaching a mini-lesson had done any of the reading. This necessitated changing the lesson from a format that relied heavily on class discussion to one that relied heavily on lecture. The following week I made the following observations in my field notes:

September 20, 2010 - Four people were late today. This made it hard to start on time. We started the day with what I hoped would be a good peer-peer activity: I asked them to tell me one interesting thing that a class mate said in last week's reading response. Unfortunately, no one really had anything to say, either because they hadn't read their classmates' responses or because they didn't really remember [what they'd read]. In fact, some of them had a hard time actually remembering what they wrote themselves. I don't really know how to instill a greater sense of accountability in these students. Last week they hadn't done the reading at all (I imagine that some students were still like that today).

This is not to say that all students were disengaged in class. When students all came to class, students tended to engage and contribute to class discussion. This was particularly the case when they were given specific responsibilities for class discussion. Field notes from one class period demonstrate that when students were given clear assignments about how to prepare for class, they enjoyed and contributed to peer-learning exercises.

> **November 1, 2010 -** Prior to class, I had asked each student to come prepared with 3-4 discussion questions that emerged from the reading, and I pulled myself up to the table and we spent 20-30 minutes just discussing the reading (with their questions, not mine). I started to see my students in a bit of a different light today—they were completely engaged in the discussion, and even though it wasn't always exactly relevant to the day's topic, it was the first time I saw students actually asking questions about concepts in the reading, and then attempting to answer them. This openness about asking questions continued throughout the lesson as I started teaching, and many times their questions could be answered by their classmates rather than by me. For example, Oscar asked me what the difference was between ideology and philosophy; I addressed the question to the class, and Robert provided a succinct and clear answer.

Gwen remembered a similar class later in the semester this way:

> I was just thinking as we've talked that maybe some of my favorite classes were where we had all done the reading and we just talked about it. There was the one where there were like three of us, where we talked about Digital Natives, and that was like…we were going for a whole hour! And there wasn't a ton of structure but we were getting some good thoughts out there and I felt like I learned a lot, and I wrote my post just after that, maybe the next day because it made me think so much about things. There were a few

other times where we really did have some interesting readings and some interesting

conversations.

Unfortunately, these two class periods mentioned were the exception, not the rule. Most class

periods operated much like the class held on September 20 (discussed previously) where students

came to class unprepared or unwilling to contribute to discussions. This unwillingness to actively

participate in discussion also extended to our class blog. For the blog assignment, students were

asked to address a question about their weekly reading assignment in 500-1,000 words. They

were encouraged to include relevant media examples for the week's topic that illustrated their

thoughts in a concrete way (full assignment description can be found in Appendix B). They were

then assigned the task of reading and responding to at least two of their classmates' posts, posing

questions or comments about the things that their classmates wrote. Each week, students often

left comments for one another similar to the following comment offered by Robert. This

comment was made in response to a Carson's thoughts about advertising:

> I'm glad that someone talked about propaganda and persuasive media. It, for me, is one of
>
> the giant revelations that occurred to me really early on in the program. I began to watch
>
> commercials and see how the structure they had affected the audience. I remember
>
> hearing a study once that stated that the two colors that induce hunger the most as red and
>
> yellow. Think about all of the fast food logos that are red and yellow. It's crazy, right?

Though Robert's comment is certainly relevant to the subject matter (advertising), Robert

chooses to engage not with the actual content of Carson's post except to praise Carson's general

focus on advertising. Instead of posing questions or further expanding on Carson's thoughts,

Robert chooses to focus on his own experience. Comments like this—where students offer

surface-level praise and minimal criticism—make up the majority of responses on the blog. Each

week, fewer and fewer students actually completed the weekly blog assignment, and even fewer

students read and responded to each other's posts. Only one student (Jordan) ever gave any

indication on the blog that he even read the comments that his classmates made on his posts,

often answering the questions they may have posed about his writing or restating an opinion if he

felt his classmates had misinterpreted his ideas.

At the end of the semester, I reminded students that participating on the blog was a part

of their grade and told them that late assignments or comments would be accepted for partial

credit. On December 13, Andy went through the archives and posted 16 separate comments on

various class members' assignments; Robert posted 7 comments in a similar manner. The day

before that (December 12), Carson posted 19 separate comments on posts written throughout the

semester. In these cases, it is difficult to imagine that students viewed this peer-learning exercise

as anything more than a hoop to jump through in order to earn back the participation points they

were lacking. Though students probably did feel some sort of benefit from reading a high volume

their classmates' thoughts in a short amount of time, it seems that their participation is motivated

more by the desire to pass the class than their desire to become part of a knowledge-building

community.

Though students did not always respond well to their own peer-learning experiences,

many students did make efforts to incorporate peer-learning exercises into their peer-teaching

assignments. In their final lesson plan and teaching presentation Ben and Oscar included the

following activity:

> *Documentary Evaluation Handout/Assignment:* Students will be given a DVD
>
> containing [clips from] the following documentaries: *Super Size Me, Urban Media,* and
>
> *Ancient Astronauts.* They will be given a handout describing the assignment and they will

be required to answer the questions. Once they are finished with the assignment we will

discuss as a class what they came up with.

This activity was an excellent example of peer-based discovery learning designed to help

students explore what tools documentary filmmakers can use to portray their message. After a

brief introduction to some of the tools of documentary filmmaking (e.g. voice-over narration,

interviews, archival footage, etc.), Oscar and Ben divided the class into three groups and

distributed the stated film clips. Each group member was given a list of questions to discuss with

their group:

- What is the primary documentary mode being used?

- Who is telling the story?

- What is the message of the documentary?

- Who is the audience?

- What techniques are being used in the documentary?

- What did/didn't you like about it?

- What would you do differently?

Groups were given about 20 minutes to talk together about the films before bringing their

conclusions to the rest of the class. This peer-learning activity required that all class members

participate and voice their opinions, and demonstrated the utility of various documentary tools

and techniques in a way that most class members seemed to respond to positively. The very

presence of this activity in Ben and Oscar's lesson plan indicates that they feel that peer learning

and discussion is a valuable pedagogical strategy for learning about documentary filmmaking.

The fact that their peers were enthusiastic about participating in the activity indicates that they

saw the benefit of this kind of activity on their learning.

 In our final interview, when asked the general question "What did you learn from your peers this semester?" Carson had the following to say about Oscar and Ben's lesson plan:

> I was especially impressed with Ben and Oscar's final lesson plan. They approached the subject matter from a simple perspective and used few, but effective illustrations and questions. Their learning activity was discovery based and provided a nice balance and extension of the class discussion.

The two remaining group lesson plans incorporated peer learning in the form of discussion and media analysis as a class. A sample from Gwen and Robert's lesson plan is typical of the kind of exercise that made up the majority of lesson plans from the remaining two groups:

> Film and other media can also be used as a powerful agent for community action and change. Show the film *bike vs. car vs. transit* and talk about how this film is aimed at convincing people to switch to more environmentally friendly transit options like biking (which also happens to be quicker in a lot of instances). Discuss how creating media together, as a community, is one way to build and strengthen that community. Media can bring community together by empowering community members to tell their stories and bring light to problems and challenges.

Though these activities are based around class analysis and discussion, Gwen and Robert are clearly gearing the discussion to reinforce a specific point (making media together empowers communities; film is useful for community action). In this activity (and many activities like this in student-authored lesson plans), students indicate that though they value class discussion, they do not entirely trust that students will learn everything they need to from discussion alone. Instead, the peer-learning activities are inserted directly following a period of lecture and

designed around a communal viewing of a single media example. This is still a form of peer learning, but it represents a more hierarchical view of learning where the teacher ultimately decides when a discussion has reached the point it needs to and the class can move on.

These are the ways that students manifested their different responses to peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments. Students participated in class discussions, but the quality of class discussions depended entirely on student preparation and attendance. Though poor attendance in the class was most likely a result of outside influences (personal illness, family emergencies, etc.), it had a demoralizing effect on many peer-learning activities. Students treated our class blog (a collaborative forum for exchanging ideas) as a weekly task to be accomplished rather than an opportunity to expand discussion outside the classroom. When offered the chance to teach, students generally included some form of peer-learning activities, though they were generally somewhat reluctant to include peer learning beyond simple class discussion.

Despite these challenges, students always had positive opinions of peer-learning opportunities when they related to documentary production. Students were clearly engaged in class discussions surrounding their own documentaries, often asking follow-up questions or soliciting advice from their peers. Furthermore, the most successful peer-teaching exercises were those that focused on documentary production (the group-authored and group-taught lesson plans were always about some aspect of documentary production) rather than media literacy principles (the weekly mini-lessons). So, while student responses to peer learning and peer teaching in general were mixed, student responses to peer learning and peer teaching about documentary production were always positive.

Students are most receptive to peer-learning activities associated with production assignments.

As stated in chapter one, students in TMA 458 complete non-fiction production assignments in addition to their assignments related to media literacy education and pedagogical training. Though students tended not to mention their production assignments when they were asked to talk about their group work, many of the instances in which students engaged in true peer learning (where they were willing to listen to their peers as well as their teachers) centered around our production assignments. In the following sections, I will describe student perceptions and demonstrations of peer learning and its role in production assignments.

Student perceptions of peer learning and documentary production.

In our final interview, students did not talk at length about our production projects[8]. When asked the specific question, "What did you learn from your peers this semester?" most students talked about learning about different teaching styles from observing their peers teach, or about learning to have a more open mind. Two students, however, did mention the role that their peers played in shaping their production projects. Ben said:

> From my peers, I learned that feedback is an extremely important thing. It is a tool that we can't not use. I learned that I need to trust my peers' opinions as well. I don't have to always agree with it, but I can't just sit back and not pay attention to it either.

In a similar manner, Carson added the following:

> Peer feedback on films and teaching helped me to formulate clearer perceptions of my work. Peer feedback on my final documentary proved invaluable in re-working it between rough cut and fine cut.

---

[8] This is probably partly because of the ways that the questions were worded, and partly because students were so passionate about their dislike of the wiki and blog assignments that we spent most of our time in the interview discussing them.

In their comments, these students noted that peer feedback was invaluable to helping them create better products.

Ben also pointed out that the collaborative model of learning was quite relevant for young film students:

I think [learning] has to be collaborative as well in order to gain a firm understanding of how the media works today, because it is so all-engrossing, and people are working together and collaborating.

As a producer of a number of projects for broadcast television, Ben's experiences with collaboration in the area of film production have helped him value collaboration within the classroom space.

Beyond these few comments, students did not explicitly comment on the peer-learning aspect of our non-fiction production assignments (Robert and Jordan were quick to point out that creating an audio documentary was the assignment that they found most beneficial to their learning, but its stated utility had little to do with the feedback from their peers). However, in practice, students seemed most willing to learn from and with their peers in all the assignments centered on production. Through their actions and comments in class, students demonstrated that they were most engaged in conversations relating to production assignments. Within these assignments, students were willing to share their experience and expertise with their classmates, and were not afraid to ask for and receive meaningful feedback from their peers.

Student demonstrations related to peer learning and documentary production.

One of the first successful demonstrations of genuine peer learning where students consciously "[shared] knowledge, ideas and experiences between the participants" (Boud,

Cohen, & Sampson, 2001, p. 3), happened the week that they learned about creating audio

documentaries. The following is an excerpt from my field notes on September 22, 2010:

>We started the day by listening to two audio documentaries—one good, one not so good.
>
>I find that often times students can learn as much from a bad example as from a good
>
>one. The analysis of these texts allowed Becca and me to offer them a little more
>
>instruction, but students also started offering their own observations and tips for audio
>
>documentary production, which I thought was great. For example, when Becca
>
>mentioned finding a quiet place to do narration (or using things like blankets to dampen
>
>sound), Robert raised his hand to offer validation of Becca's idea, noting that he does
>
>voice over work all the time, and even when recording onto his computer with the iSight
>
>microphone, he can get good sound if he throws a blanket over his head and the
>
>computer. Jordan asked how we can be sure to get good interviews, and Carson suggested
>
>trying to ask non-cliché or unexpected questions to get different kinds of answers from
>
>interviewees.

In this class period, students were not content to merely listen as their teachers offered

production advice, but shared advice based their own experiences of creating documentaries.

Later on in the class period, I taught the students who were unfamiliar with GarageBand

(an audio editing program) how to edit their audio. After completing the brief tutorial, I made the

following observations:

>Most of the students had used Garageband before so once I went over some of the basics,
>
>they seemed content to edit on their own. Most of the students sat apart from one another,
>
>but two students who had never used the program, Jordan and Steven, sat right next to
>
>each other. I noticed that while they were playing around and editing, they would often

comment to each other on what they were doing, share a new tool they found, or ask each

other if they knew how to do things. They would often ask each other a question first, and

then if the other person didn't know the answer they would ask Becca or me. A lot of

times we didn't know the answer either, so it was often a kind of race to see who could

use the help menu and Internet resources the fastest. It seems like students are willing to

work with and learn from their peers in a production kind of situation—which they

should be accustomed to, since this is how they are taught to produce films.

Though future incidents of peer learning of this sort are not documented in as much detail, I did

make several observations throughout the semester that when students were editing all of their

documentary projects, they were not particular about who they went to for help; in fact, when we

reached the video documentary project, students were more likely to ask one another for help

editing than they were to ask a teacher. When editing a project, students were comfortable giving

advice to and getting advice from their peers.

When students presented their final audio documentaries, their peers were open and

honest about the successes and failures of the projects:

October 6, 2010 We listened to students' audio documentaries and had them respond to

each other about each documentary. Becca had the students first share the things they

liked about the project, and then she gave the creator a chance to say anything they

wanted to say about their project. Many of the students talked about issues they had with

their projects that were not apparent when listening to it alone, but were evident when

listening to it as a group. They also addressed areas that they thought they could have

improved in, or clarified details about their stories for their classmates. Then we opened

up the floor to students again to talk about specific things that could be improved for each project.

I think that this has been the best class period so far; everyone seemed engaged in the process, and seemed willing to give each other feedback (both positive and negative) on their documentaries. I think the fact that we allowed the creator to defend their project helped assuage any potential discomfort at offering negative feedback, since we all acknowledged that these are imperfect projects and are made to be learning experiences.

This was a stark contrast to other opportunities for students to give one another feedback on their work (such as the blog comments discussed previously). When asked to provide constructive feedback and criticism around the production projects, students were enthusiastic and engaged.

A week after presenting their audio documentary projects, students were asked to pitch story ideas for their final video documentaries. During this class period, students were given the chance to explain their documentary idea to the class in one to two minutes. After that, their peers could give them feedback and ask questions about their ideas for implementation. As students talked together, I found that their questions were thoughtful, and forced the prospective filmmaker to think about the strengths and weaknesses of their idea as they presented it to the class.

Jordan, one of the more inexperienced documentary filmmakers in the class, was having a difficult time deciding between two ideas. The first film idea he pitched was an essay-type film about how and why he performs magic tricks; the second idea was for a skateboarding documentary specifically about one of his friends who owned a skate shop. The following are examples of some of the questions that his peers asked him (taken from field notes on October 13, 2010):

- Carson: The magic is a personal voice one? So you would let someone else interview you? What's your b-roll?

- Andy: [regarding the magic trick documentary] Would you sit there and let them talk to you, or would you do stuff while talking?

- Robert: How would you visually tell each of the stories? If you had no sound, how would you tell the story?

- Oscar: Would the skateboard one be more observational? What would be the theme on that one?

- Andy: Do you know the shop guy enough that you could film him doing things?

For each of these questions, Jordan was challenged with redefining his ideas for each documentary and was quickly able to gauge what elements were or were not interesting to his classmates (who formed the audience for his film). After discussing the initial themes and flow of the magic documentary (Jordan wanted to be the subject, and wanted someone else to interview him about why he loves doing magic), Andy and Carson were both forthright with their opinions that they were much more interested in hearing Jordan talk about teaching magic tricks to his friends and family than they were in hearing Jordan talk about why he loves magic tricks. Pitching story ideas became a peer-learning exercise where students asked questions, offered suggestions, and challenged each other to think about their potential projects in concrete (rather than abstract) ways.

This pattern of production-based peer learning continued throughout the documentary production process. Though much of this kind of learning was informal and therefore undocumented, written feedback for one student's film after a rough cut screening exercise is quite illustrative. In the rough cut screening exercise, students watched their peers' films and

were provided a list of questions to answer about each film. The students wrote their answers to the questions, and then gave the finished feedback forms the filmmaker to use in improving their final documentary.

When Andy's first choice for his film fell through, he decided to explore the story of DIY filmmaking: specifically, how filmmakers might go about creating their own jib arm. At the time of the rough cut screening, he had completed an observational film of two engineering students designing a new and innovative jib arm. Here are examples of feedback he received on his film (each bullet point represents feedback from a different student):

In response to the question, "What community does this story explore?" students offered the following feedback:

- Not sure if it's the film or engineering community

- A community of engineer-type people who design things…?

- DIY, outsider's look on a mathematical art form, the mechanical engineer's complexity.

- Engineers? DIY filmmakers?

In response to the question, "Is there a clear beginning, middle, and end? If so, what are they?" students answered as follows:

- There is no end. The beginning has establishing shots of the engineering department and the plans being drawn.

- There is a somewhat clear beginning, middle, and end. The titles are the main thing that orient me. But it does end kind of abruptly.

- Clear beginning: drawing plans (love it!). Middle: Drafting on computer. End: ? Does the thing get made?

To the question, "What are the strengths and weaknesses of this story?" students responded as follows:

- Strengths

    o The sketching part is strong but after that I don't really get what's going on.

    o The attention to technical detail.

    o Process- making something provides natural story

- Weaknesses

    o Needs more footage for now

    o I want a more <u>human</u> side. I want personality.

    o The weakness is a lack of central idea. A lack of conflict.

    o Need a person with a strong motive

Many students left some of these questions blank or provided one to three word answers (these short answers have not been included). The final question on the feedback form ("What questions do you still have about their film or story?") received the most responses, indicating that Andy's film prompted questions more than it prompted answers:

- Is there a reason to watch this?

- What is the story really about and is there a theme?

- What is he making? I appreciate the strict observational approach—what want a little more orientation, exposition.

- Who is the community?

- Whose story is it?

- What is the inciting incident?

One student, Carson, went so far as to offer himself as a possible character (since he had a personal history of dismantling things like roller blades in order to construct film equipment) and to suggest a possible story arc (drawn on the paper in the shape of three act structure):

> Student filmmaker wants a jib → engineering friend → takes way too long → visit
>
> Carson → way too ghetto → strap the camera to a 2 x 4 → come to realization about
>
> what it's all about (filmmaking, making products, etc.)

Students were not just content to give Andy the written feedback forms. Several students offered him verbal feedback as well; Carson and Jordan actually stayed after class to help Andy talk out some ideas for possible directions his film could take. In his written evaluation of his final documentary (which followed a story arc very similar to the one that Carson suggested in his feedback), Andy reflected on the changes he made to his film between the rough cut and final cut:

> Changes between the rough cut and the final cut are extreme, almost impossible to
>
> compare. The rough cut was indeed so rough and pointless that class criticism was
>
> useless. In simply discussing the subject with the class members I was able to develop a
>
> potential story. I did not really look at or read the feedback forms since I knew already
>
> that the rough cut was too incomplete.

Though Andy's reflection initially seems to dismiss class feedback, he does note that talking to his classmates helped solidify the story and increased the film's quality. Though Andy chose not to take advantage of the written feedback from his peers[9], he did use their verbal feedback when completing his final film.

---

[9] A detail that explains how his feedback forms found themselves in my office rather than in Andy's possession.

Overall, students demonstrated that they were most willing to engage in peer-learning activities surrounding the documentary production process. They gave feedback, offered suggestions, and listened intently to the advice they were given from their peers. In the production assignments, students were willing to act simultaneously as students and mentors, learning from and with their peers.

Data Analysis – Phase Two (Teaching Phase)

One goal of introducing peer learning and peer teaching during phase one of the Hands on a Camera Project was to give students more confidence in their own preparedness to become teachers. Another goal was to help students gain a more complete understanding of media literacy by acting as a knowledge building community rather than simply as knowledge-seeking individuals—to rely on and demonstrate Jenkins's notion of "collective intelligence" (2006). In phase one, it was discovered that even though students understood the purpose of collaborative learning in theory, they did not always perceive or demonstrate that peer-learning exercises provided any educational benefit.

In phase two of the project, BYU students took on the role of teachers in a high school classroom. In this phase, I have focused my research on one group of BYU students, Carson, Gwen, and Andy (hereafter referred to as teachers), as they taught a documentary production unit. As I analyzed the data for phase two, though I kept my original research question in mind (What are the experiences of students in a media literacy service-learning project as they are introduced to co-learning pedagogies?), I was interested in the following two sub-questions:

- How does the experience acting as teachers affect the way that students perceive their previous experiences with peer learning and peer teaching?

- Do teachers choose to implement peer learning or peer teaching into their own teaching? If so, how? If not, why not?

The data represented in this phase is related primarily to the teachers' attempts to implement co-learning pedagogies with their own students, though we did talk at length about the preparation that the teachers felt they did or did not receive during phase one. While the teachers were not explicitly encouraged to utilize peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments in their own teaching, I was interested in investigating their experiences and perceptions of what impact, if any, their experiences in the previous semester had on their own teaching.

Data in this phase is drawn from interviews with the teachers, field reports (completed weekly) from the teachers, field notes from my own observations of their behavior as teachers, and lesson plans submitted by the teachers at the end of the semester. Because of the limited focus of this phase of the study (only three students from phase one chose to participate as teachers), data for this phase is not as exhaustive as in phase one of the study. It should also be noted that I was not interested in studying the high school students, so data related to their peer-learning experiences (beyond that reported by their teachers) was not collected.

In reviewing the data from this phase, I looked for evidence of the themes discovered from the data in phase one of the project because I am interested in the relationship between the two phases. The themes from phase one were present in phase two as well, though in this case the themes apply to a documentary production classroom in a secondary education setting.

1. Teachers are most willing to implement peer-learning activities associated with production assignments.

2. Peer learning in a documentary production classroom is most effective when students are given clear roles and expectations for their behavior.

67

3. Teachers understand the intellectual purpose of peer learning for their students in a documentary production class but have mixed responses to its implementation.

Teachers are most willing to implement peer-learning activities associated with production assignments.

During phase two, the teachers were most willing to implement peer-learning activities surrounding student production assignments; indeed, most of the instruction Carson, Gwen, and Andy provided came in this format (small group workshops discussing various production assignments) rather than in a traditional lecture format. When asked to comment specifically on how they utilized peer-learning activities, Gwen gave a succinct answer about the role that peer learning played in their classroom:

> We have done quite a bit of peer learning in the sense that we break into smaller groups and have discussions about their films, their footage, their written assignments, and have them comment on each other's work and give each other suggestions and insight into what they've been doing.

When teaching about documentary production, teachers relied on group feedback sessions almost exclusively as the way to give students instruction and guidance as they created their documentaries.

Teacher perceptions of peer learning and documentary production.

Teacher perceptions detailing their reasons for using peer-learning activities are limited; when I asked students to describe their use of peer-learning activities, they generally tended to describe the various successes and failures of such activities rather than describing their reasons for using them (perceptions related to success and failure will be discussed in detail later in the chapter). However, it should be clear after reading about the teachers' demonstrations of their

willingness to incorporate peer-learning activities into their documentary production process that the teachers perceived peer-learning activities as a vital tool in helping their students to create the best documentaries possible.

Teacher demonstrations of utilizing peer learning for documentary production.

Analysis of short lesson plans submitted by the teachers at the end of the semester indicates a conscious desire to use peer-learning activities to help students think about and improve their documentaries. The phrase "break into groups" is found in nearly every lesson plan, followed by instructions for helping students to think about ways that they could apply concepts discussed in lecture to the production of their own documentaries:

> **Lesson 2** - Break into groups and discuss the films they viewed at Sundance. As they discuss the films, we will show them how to recognize the story arc that exists in the films. The beginning, middle, crisis, climax, and resolution.
>
> Within the same groups, have each student pitch two of their favorite documentary subjects out of the five they worked on the week before. Each student is allowed thirty seconds to explain what makes the story they want to tell special or unique from other similar stories. After the first minute for the two pitches, the group is given a minute to give their peer feedback.

Here, as early as their second week of teaching, their discussion of content presented during the lecture portion of the class (in this case, the story arc) leads directly into a discussion of the story arcs that students see in their own documentary ideas.

On the third week of teaching, the teachers presented a lesson about four documentary modes. After a brief lecture detailing each mode and showing an example of each, the lesson plan contained the following instructions:

Lesson 3 - Break into groups and have the students re-pitch new ideas or improved ones from last time. Use the same time constraints of 30 sec for each pitch and a minute for group feedback. Ask students what is working for them, what isn't and what can they suggest for improving their peer's idea.

Instructions for the next few weeks are similar: after a brief illustration of a concept (e.g. visual language, uses of sound in film, ways to capture a process on film), students would break into groups to talk about their own documentaries:

Lesson 4 - Break into groups and follow up on subject contacts and potential interview questions.

- Verify that students have contacted their potential interview subjects.

- Go over their list of interview questions looking for ways they can help the subject open up and give good explanations.

- Always ask, "tell me more about that."

Lesson 5 - Collect Tapes and Break Into Groups

- Separate students into two groups, the first being those without process footage and the second those who do. The group with process footage will view their footage on the projector.

- Students without footage to review will further refine their story ideas, interview questions and web diagrams.

Lesson 6 - Break into groups. Play student created process footage (raw) on the projector without sound. (They were assigned to film only about 3 minutes total of a thirty minute process) In groups, discuss what they notice. What is working, what is not? What shots seem to be missing?

Follow up on web-assignment. In groups, present webs and offer feedback. How thorough is the web? Are the ideas broken down into film-able shots?

Watch film example and discuss in groups: Locksmith/Healthcare documentary.

Lesson 8 - Split into 2 groups –one for those still editing, one for those with rough cuts. In rough cut groups, watch movies and discuss using the "questions to consider" listed below. Look over and improve paper scripts.

In each of these lesson plans, "splitting into groups" was an intentional choice made by the teachers because they believed that was the best mode for allowing students to receive feedback on their ideas. As evidenced by the activities on Day 5 and on Day 8, teachers used groups as a way of helping students at all stages of their projects. Students who had completed a filming assignment would review their footage together; students who had not completed the assignment would spend their time refining their story ideas so that filming would be easier. On Day 6, teachers also started to favor small group discussion of clips rather than discussing clips as an entire class.

Of the ten weeks that the students spent in the classroom, only four lesson plans did not contain explicit instructions for group assignments: the first week focused on introducing the class to documentary form, and weeks seven, nine, and ten were devoted to video capture and individual editing time. Each week, teachers talked with students in groups about assignments and concepts related to documentary production. Aside from the documentary modes assignment (where student groups analyzed documents to determine their purpose; this assignment is discussed later in the chapter) and an assignment about communities (where students used "I Am…" statements to determine communities that they participated in), their lesson plans seldom include any peer-learning activities that are not tied directly to documentary production.

Peer learning in a documentary production classroom is most effective when students are given clear roles and expectations for their behavior.

Teacher perceptions during phase two of the project indicate that confusion about their roles and expectations for their behavior during phase one had a negative impact on their overall feeling of preparedness as they entered the classroom. Teachers were quick to state that despite their training experience the previous semester, they did not feel adequately prepared to teach in the high school setting[10]. Teacher demonstrations of this theme show that teachers found peer-learning activities most successful when they were clear and firm about what they expected from their students.

Teacher perceptions of the need for clear expectations within peer-learning activities.

During phase two of the project (the teaching phase), I asked the following question in an interview: "Did your experiences in TMA 458 prepare you to teach in Hands on a Camera?" The responses from the students reveal that although they did find the class helpful in general, the focus on teaching and learning with their peers was not perceived as helpful because high school students are fundamentally different from university students:

What I felt like is that [TMA 458] didn't [help us prepare]. Partly because our peers were

college students, and so anything that felt like we were teaching high school

students we automatically just brushed over it. I felt like that was a fault. I wish I would

have focused more on thinking in terms of high school students rather than thinking in

terms of "these are our peers, we're all university students". […] I wished that I would

have focused on more was just the essential story elements. What makes a good story?

Rather than focusing on a bunch of abstract concepts. In a way I felt I got caught up in

---

[10] It is, of course, possible that teachers will always say this no matter what we do to prepare them for the experience of teaching high school students.

media literacy and all of that and I wasn't really thinking about what makes a good story, and how are young people going to connect with the idea of story, and how can we help them learn to create and recognize stories in everyday situations?

Carson's response indicates that he felt that his desire to learn from and with his peers and to provide his peers with interesting material to think and talk about distracted him from thinking about teaching documentary production from high school students. In this case, even though part of his role was clear—he was acting as the teacher—confusion about the expectations for his behavior in that role—who he was supposed to be teaching—made the exercise less-than effective as preparation for his future teaching endeavors. Even though he was making attempts to think about how to discuss certain material with his peers, he did not feel it was adequate preparation for teaching a high school class. Andy agreed:

I'd have to agree with about all of [Carson's comment]. In terms of teaching it, there weren't specific items that relate to what we're actually having to do now. I will say that what we did learn about media literacy was kind of helpful because now when we are there, it's nice to be able to recognize when some of the students pick up on those things. […] Otherwise I'd have to agree a lot of the exercises were made difficult simply because we were working with college age students and not the actual high school students.

Gwen also agreed, but noted that she did feel that her own teaching experiences helped prepare her for phase two:

I agree somewhat. I felt like there were things that were helpful to me and that transferred over to my teaching experiences. I don't think there's any way you can really adequately prepare without just the experience of going and being with high school

73

students. We couldn't have pretended to be high school students much better than we did, because you can't quite anticipate the way that they're going to react to the material or act it out as if we're responding like them. So a lot of it is just experience actually working with them, so I don't think that anything could have prepared me for that. But as far as some of the topics that we went over, just the simple things like documentary modes and methods, we taught lessons on them at the high school and I felt like having been taught lessons on those things before and preparing lessons and thinking about them helped me be familiar enough to feel comfortable teaching others about it.

The final sentence of Gwen's answer emphasizes that she understood her role throughout the class, and that role-shifting within the classroom (acting as a teacher instead of a student) was helpful in helping her feel prepared to act as a teacher.

Still, two out of three teachers felt that confusion about expectations for their behavior in the preparation class (should they act as if they are teaching their peers or as if they are teaching high school students?) made it difficult for them to make the transition from acting as students to acting as teachers. Lack of instruction and guidance for their own behavior made peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments less than effective. When these teachers established their own classroom, they also found that when they introduced peer-learning assignments (related almost entirely to the production of student documentaries), these assignments were most successful when they gave students clear directions and expectations for what peer learning should look like during the activity.

Teacher demonstrations of the need for structure within peer-learning activities.

As discussed previously, breakout sessions happened nearly every week that the teachers entered the classroom; as students reflected on these group feedback sessions, they noted that

some days (and some teachers) were more successful than others. In one field report (written in the second week of teaching), Andy commented (somewhat sarcastically) about the ability and willingness of his students to talk with their peers at all when they tried to do a 30-second story pitching activity:

> Given the profound depth of these students, when we began listening to pitches, the thirty second time limit seemed an eternity. Typical responses were, "I'm going to do a documentary on glow sticks." Silence. "And . . . ?"
>
> "And how they're cool."
>
> "And you're going to film . . .?"
>
> "Glow sticks."
>
> Preston would then shout [that] time [was up] and the group would be asked about what they thought of that idea.
>
> "Ya, that sounds cool."
>
> "And . . . ?"
>
> If the student had a topic that was more than two syllables, it was guaranteed to be a difficult and impractical idea. These were the pitches that I struggled with the most. It wasn't hard to guide the skateboard or glow stick topic to focus on an individual, and one of the students actually made that suggestion. But the bigger topics were more difficult to guide the student through without just saying don't do it.

In this field report Andy's frustration and impatience with his students is clear; the students express little desire to elaborate on their ideas or to provide their peers with meaningful feedback. He also makes it clear in the final paragraph that since the students' peers were not

willing to provide feedback, he sees it as his role to guide students toward some documentary ideas and away from others.

Perhaps keeping this initial experience in mind, Andy's description of a peer feedback session in a later class period (recorded field notes on the ninth week of class) reflects his desire and ability to set forth clear expectations within a peer feedback session in order to avoid a similar experience:

> This was the week we decided to review rough edits instead of their final cuts. In order to view every one's edit and have a group discussion about how to improve each one, the class was separated into three groups. They were divided by random so that they weren't seeing the same docs over again. In each group, they would attach their laptop to a set of speakers and present their film. Afterward, each member of the group was asked to identify one thing they liked, one thing they didn't, and one suggestion. Then, the person presenting would explain how they structured their film and which parts represented the beginning, middle and end.
>
> In my group, the participation was mandatory and so it was sometimes a begrudging response. However, it was useful for the persons presenting to see their peers making the same suggestions and comments about their films as I would. It was the most structured and by-the-plan weeks I have had.

In this activity, Andy took the time to set up more structure for the feedback session and to make it clear to students that they were each expected to contribute at least three things to the group discussion. He also seems to have more respect for his students (choosing to speak with less sarcasm about their abilities and contributions) and to take less personal responsibility for helping students to recognize what is and is not a good idea for a film.

Reflecting on this same class period in our final interview, these three teachers had the following conversation (edited for length and clarity):

Carson: One thing that I wish that I would have done differently, I feel like we didn't
have enough time with them, and so instead of trying to help them discover what
was wrong with something, [we would ask] "Okay, any feedback anybody?" And
then one person [might answer], "I thought it was nice."

Then you just kind of tell them [your own opinion of what's wrong]
because we don't have time to figure it out using the Socratic method or whatnot.

Gwen: And how to get it out of them too, even if we had a little more time, it's hard to
get them [to move] from saying, "It's cool" to saying "It was cool but maybe this
and this and this."

Andy: And sometimes you just need to point and say, "One good thing, one bad thing,
and one suggestion. Go, go, go" and they will give you—they will say something.

Carson: Did you point at them?

Andy: Yes. We had a bored table. Part of it is, yeah, they're probably going to repeat
what their neighbor might have said, or they might say something like "I liked
the music" maybe say something not as useful. [Their first time providing
feedback] wasn't so good, but as they got used to it [they improved], and
eventually [got] to the point where they wouldn't say one good thing and one bad
thing and one suggestion they would just say, "This worked for me but if you try
doing this [it might be better]." So it was just a little bit of training wheels and a
little bit of force and they picked up on it.

Gwen: That was an example of where I thought my authority issue was [apparent]—we decided that we were going to do that, we were going to say tell us one good thing, one bad thing, and one suggestion. I did have some successful discussions but I wish I had been more confident in my leadership of these students, that I would make them [all participate]. Because after a while I [would say], "And if you don't have anything to say, we can skip you." At first I tried to make them go around and the first two were great, but then I just got a little less confident and so then I was just like, "Alright, any comments?" and it started being me talking too much again and telling them instead of letting them figure it out.

Of the three teachers, Andy was much more authoritative in his treatment of the students[11], setting forth clear expectations for peer feedback (provide one positive comment, one negative comment, and one suggestion for improvement), and ensuring that every student participated equally in the activity. In this conversation, Carson and Gwen both admit that they were not as confident or authoritative about sticking to these clear guidelines for discussion. The result, in their words, was that in Gwen's and Carson's groups student participation and feedback diminished throughout the class period, whereas Andy's students grew more comfortable and confident in their ability to provide feedback and suggestions to their classmates.

This discussion of teacher successes and failures surrounding peer-learning activities leads into the next theme. Even when the teachers did their best to provide structure and support during peer-learning activities, they still had mixed responses when asked about the utility of such activities.

---

[11] The students noted this authority when assigning nicknames to each teacher; in Lord of the Rings fashion, they dubbed Carson "Frodo", Gwen "Arwen", and Andy "Gandalf." After a few weeks of using these nicknames, students merely started referring to Andy as "the troll."

Teachers understand the intellectual purpose of peer learning for their students in a documentary production class but have mixed responses to its implementation.

Though examining lesson plans from previous cycles of the project is outside the scope of this research project, I can report from my own experience that teachers in this cycle of the Hands on a Camera Project chose to use peer-learning strategies far more than teachers in past cycles of the project. A survey of their lesson plans indicates that this focus on peer learning was not just coincidence, but was a conscious effort on the teachers' part: they tried to avoid long periods of lecture, instead choosing to focus on small group discussion and media analysis activities. This decision to focus on small group discussion indicates that students recognized peer learning as a pedagogical tool at their disposal.

In describing their experiences as they implemented peer-learning activities into their teaching, the teachers indicated that some activities were more successful than others, and that the success of said activities depended equally on their own ability to structure the activities and on students' willingness to participate.

Teacher perceptions of the purposes of peer learning.

An analysis of student perceptions of the reasons for implementing peer-learning activities reveals that these teachers often used these activities as a classroom management tool; after struggling to figure out how to manage a class of nearly 30 students, the teachers found peer-learning activities to be an effective way of helping students to pay attention and help each other. In an interview in the middle of the semester, Carson describes their trajectory in his way:

> One thing that I have been slightly overwhelmed with, is just when you're dealing with a larger classroom of almost 30 students it's harder to keep everyone on the same page, and to deal with things like capturing footage, or giving people one on one attention as far as teaching iMovie or really getting into each person's idea that they're trying to develop. It

just seems like there isn't enough time to do that and teach lessons, so I wish I would

have thought about that more in advance. Some of those things could probably be solved

just by planning ahead even more than we do, but I don't know exactly what the solutions

are except to get used to having that big of a class. And I think breaking into groups like

we do has been helpful.

Andy agreed, noting that breaking into groups was a way to obtain "just a smaller

classroom." Carson went on to make the following comment:

I think that when we've had conversations and group work where people get feedback, I

think they're more engaged in smaller groups and they've contributed which has been

impressive. Sometimes there's people that are disengaged like, "I'm bored hearing about

my all peers' ideas", but overall it seems like they're more engaged in that smaller group

and they're actually contributing more than they would be if we were just lecturing to the

class.

All of these comments illustrate the teachers' perception that peer-learning activities can be used

as a tool for managing a large class as effectively as possible (Carson had the most to say about

the effectiveness of small-group instruction versus class lectures). The teachers also saw small

group work as a way of retaining student interest; in a field report from the third week of class,

Carson noted

These students are quite intelligent, but easily disengaged if we are not reaching them on

their level. Also it seems that they are less distracted when we break into smaller groups.

Teacher demonstrations of the frustrations and rewards of peer learning.

In practice, teachers noticed that simply breaking students into groups was not always enough to adequately engage students. On week nine (a week discussed in more detail earlier), Carson wrote the following in his field report:

> Today we watched rough cuts in groups. Each table watched each other's films and gave feedback. There was a lack of energy today. Perhaps it was the group dynamic, since we mixed them up randomly and they were not with their friends, necessarily. Two students had nothing to show. Lisa's doc on her young married sister was quite well done. There was some inherent drama in the situation and she used a lot of supplemental imagery to bring the story to life. Several students didn't really have a story developing, but had some interesting footage. Blake was one of them who filmed Sabas longboarding down the canyon. It was entirely silent, since the wind made the audio unbearable, he said. He had some nice shots, but there wasn't something to really bring us in. I suggested an interview with Sabas. Blake said he'd give it a try.
>
> After their peers gave feedback I offered feedback. Other than CJ, who always had something useful and insightful to say, the other students seemed dead. Maybe it's because I was dead! Hopefully it was helpful to some who were lacking direction.

Carson's reflection on the day seems less than enthusiastic. He is not positive about the results of his group's discussion. His earlier statement that students occasionally act bored when listening to all their peers' ideas seems to have manifest itself in his experience.

Teachers also demonstrated a willingness to try to incorporate peer-learning activities into their regular instruction. On the week that they discussed four documentary modes with the students, Gwen reported the following in her field report:

After [the opening activity I launched into my powerpoint presentation on the "4 modes" of documentary film. First I handed out 4 different kinds of written documents to each group. Each document was supposed to correspond roughly with one of the documentary modes I was presenting on and I told them that as we went along we were going to talk about which type of film matched up with each type of document.

The presentation went well enough, although I think I lost some of the kids. Most of them were able to match up the documents—pairing the news article with expository, the field notes with observational, the personal essay with the personal voice and the poem with the poetic mode. I had film examples for each mode of documentary that I think were pretty clear and I really hope that the students gleaned something from the lesson.

Gwen's activity—analyzing the documents as a group to determine which mode they corresponded with—was an attempt to encourage students to collaborate together to come up with a collective understanding of the concepts from her lecture. Carson reported about the activity as well:

Gwen presented the 4 modes via powerpoint after we passed out 4 papers to each table. The papers had text examples that mirrored the 4 modes of documentary. There was a field report, a poem, an article and a personal essay. The students were asked to decide which category of the 4 modes these text examples fit in. It was not as easy for them as I thought it would be, which is good because it prompted analysis. However, perhaps we should have passed out more papers, since some were disengaged by not having a paper to look at of their own.

Though their descriptions imply that the activity was not engaging for every student, the inclusion of the activity does seem to indicate that the teachers believed that a peer to peer discussion about how and why a newspaper article or a set of field notes would be an example of a certain documentary mode would be more beneficial to students than lecture and class discussion alone.

As mentioned in chapter two, the purposes of a grounded theory analysis can be twofold: the researcher can attempt to generate a theory based on the data they have collected, or the researcher can provide a categorical description organized around several themes. My analysis falls in the latter of these two categories; though I feel that my research is inadequate to generate generalizable theories about learning, I do feel that these three major themes throughout the data can serve as concrete lessons for the teacher interested in incorporating peer learning into a media literacy education classroom. In chapter four, I will further discuss the themes and sub-themes of my analysis, paying particular attention to the ways in which my students' experiences aligned with or differed from existing literature and studies about peer learning and media literacy education.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Looking for an answer to the question, "What are the experiences of students in a media literacy service-learning project as they are introduced to co-learning pedagogies in the classroom?" illuminated both the challenges and the rewards of consciously implementing co-learning pedagogies into our project. In this chapter, I will discuss the findings of my research, paying particular attention to the ways in which my findings are consistent with and different from existing research about peer learning and media literacy education.

To aide in answering the main research question, I looked for answers to the following secondary research questions:

- In phase one of the project, how do students respond to peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments?

- In phase two of the project, do student perceptions and experiences with co-learning pedagogies change based on their experiences acting as teachers in the K-12 classroom?

- In phase two of the project, how do students choose to implement or ignore peer-learning strategies?

As I examined the data closely I realized that although I had predicted some of the challenges and benefits of the peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments, there were several unforeseen elements in our class that merit further discussion. In the following sections, I will detail the foreseen and unforeseen affordances and limitations of peer learning and peer teaching in a media literacy education classroom. I will then look back to my own data and existing research to suggest a possible framework for introducing peer learning and peer teaching into a media literacy education classroom that provides remedies for the challenges without losing the potential benefits of peer learning.

Foreseen Affordances and Limitations of Co-learning Pedagogies

As mentioned in chapter one, I have been the instructor for the Hands on a Camera project for four years, and in each cycle of the project I noticed that despite our efforts to prepare them for their teaching experience, the university students always had long lists of things that they wish they had learned in the preparation class. The most consistent concern that they expressed was that they wished they had had more teaching opportunities during phase one of the project. Though each year I have made minor adjustments to the course to try to remedy this problem, students still complained of a need to teach more. Before I began this research project, I decided to make some major structural changes in the course, requiring students to participate and collaborate more on group projects and teaching experiences than they had in previous cycles of the project. I decided to try to change my teaching style (relying less on traditional lecture and more on group discussions), and introduced new assignments all with the goal of helping students to feel more in control of the classroom in the preparation phase. It was my hope that this control in the preparation phase would translate to allowing students to feel more prepared to enter the teaching phase.

I had all sorts of worries about the changes that I was planning to make. Though it can take much longer to achieve measurable improvement, it is easier to determine the success or failure of any one change to a course if all other things remain constant in order to act as a sort of informal control in the education experiment; what if all of the things that I thought were effective about the course got lost in all the changes? What if students missed out on key knowledge and information because I ceded more classroom control to them? What if students simply did not want to participate in classroom discussion or group projects? These were just a few of my concerns when considering intentional implementation of co-learning pedagogies within my classroom, and represent the foreseen challenges; I worried that a larger emphasis on

learning from peers would hinder students' ability to concretely recognize the things that they learned in the class.

As was made evident in the data, these concerns were not unfounded, and illustrate the some of the foreseen limitations of fostering co-learning pedagogies in the classroom. Students were sometimes confused about their role in the class, and did not want to take responsibility for contributing to other students' education. Class discussions were beneficial, but they were made challenging on the days when many students were absent or had not adequately prepared for class discussion. In our final interview, I posed the following questions to students: "What, specifically, did you learn from your peers this semester? What did you learn from your instructors?" In response, Jordan offered the following: "As I look back it seemed that my instructor was avoiding the instructing. I do not remember much interaction." Ben's response was similar (although kinder to the instructor):

> From the teachers I learned the importance of media literacy education. The fact that our discussions were all over the place and even were sometimes unresolved is a statement to me that as a society, there is still some defining to do on how we interpret our media.

Both students note (Jordan in a direct way, Ben in a roundabout way) that I occasionally avoided instruction in favor of discussion and peer-learning activities. This reliance on student-led discussion and activities led Ben to feel that our class periods were "all over the place" and "unresolved." Jordan had a difficult time remembering anything specific he learned from his instructors; though Ben is more positive, he also doesn't offer specific lessons he learned from the instructors other than stating that we helped in establish the importance of the subject matter. Though not all students felt that their concerns were unresolved or that their teachers avoided the responsibility of teaching, at least one student felt ill served by the emphasis on peer learning.

As discussed in chapter three, students' abilities to feel that peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments are beneficial to their learning depend upon the clarity of the assignment description. Students need to clearly understand what is expected of them, and they cannot do this without a consistent model. In his discussion of using wikis to establish a collaborative learning environment, Grant (2009) makes the following observation: "If teachers really do want to encourage students to be independent, responsible for their own learning, and collaborate with one another, then teachers themselves will have a significant role to play in modeling and facilitating these practices" (p. 114). The goals that Grant mentions—independence, responsibility, and collaboration—succinctly summarize my purposes for implementing co-learning pedagogies. Though my attempts were not always successful, Carson's response to the question about what he learned from his instructors indicates that he did see our classroom as a model for his future classroom:

> I learned the key principles of media education and how they can be practically
> implemented in a classroom. Not only did we discuss them, but activities in class such as
> group and individual discussions, computer activities, etc. helped to reinforce the core
> principles they taught. I also learned from them that raising the right questions and
> shaping the learning environment can take learning along the way. By creating activities
> that prompt students to own what they learn (rather than merely let a lecture wash over
> them), Erika and Becca helped bring the material to life.

It was my hope that my behavior in the classroom would serve as a model for the kinds of classrooms that I hoped my students would establish in the future. In NAMLE's *Core Principles of Media Literacy Education*, they assert that co-learning pedagogies are useful for all classrooms (not just university classrooms); Carson's statement (and his behavior as a teacher)

indicate that he did view our classroom as a model for his future classroom, and he tried to implement co-learning pedagogies when he taught in the high school setting.

The answers, then, to the question, "In phase one of the project, how do students respond to peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments?" are varied; this variance seems consistent with existing literature on peer learning. Discussing choices that teachers can make when choosing to implement peer learning, Cooper (2002) notes the following:

> The choice to incorporate peer-learning strategies into an educational program commits the instructor to a challenging task. Peer learning represents a major shift in focus from what is being *taught* to what is being *learned,* and transfers greater responsibility for knowledge acquisition, organization, and application from the teacher to the student. This shift in focus and responsibility is not an opportunity for the instructor to step back and let things happen. At best, such an attitude would guarantee that very little would happen on the cognitive level; at worst, it could result in real loss for the student. (p. 54)

In practice, some students felt that their instructors had stepped back and merely let the class happen, and they did perceive it as a real loss. Other students saw the benefits of peer learning, and in some cases they tried to extend those benefits to their own students after they became teachers. In almost all cases, however, though students expressed mixed feelings about the instructor's position in the classroom, they often reported that the emphasis on peer learning did capitalize on the fact that they did not want to look bad in front of their peers. This desire to seem intelligent was often a driving force motivating students to perform their best on peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments.

The positive peer-pressure offered by peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments is one foreseen affordance of these assignments. The discovery that students seemed to care more about

the quality of their work (whether it be a written paper, a documentary assignment, or a lesson plan) when they knew that other students would be able to evaluate it was not surprising. In a review of empirical research regarding the use of blogs in higher education settings, Sim and Hew (2010) found that many students felt it was instructive and motivational to read the assignments posted by their classmates. In the media literacy education classroom (and, I imagine, other classrooms) collaborative assignments have the potential to provide a kind of peer-pressure that encourages students to put forth their best effort on assignments. However, as my students found throughout the semester, this peer-pressure only exerts its influence when students have confidence that their peers are actually paying attention to their work; once students feel certain that no one is reading their writing or paying attention to their input, the motivational benefits of collaborative learning experiences dissipate.

Though students' unwillingness to engage in meaningful discussion on the blog by providing (and then responding to) feedback on their classmates' posts was somewhat surprising to me, Sim and Hew (2010) note that studies of peer feedback on blogs have yielded similar results. Citing a study by Xie, Ke, and Sharma (2008), Sim and Hew comment that

> Content analyses of the peer comments revealed that students did not engage in
>
> meaningful or constructive feedback activity. Their comments were more social (e.g.,
>
> "good job", "I agree") rather than providing informative prompting. (p. 155)

In our class, students did not want to feel responsible for contributing to their classmates' learning. Perhaps they did not feel it was their place to evaluate a classmate's writing critically, instead leaving that task to the teacher. The challenge, then, in introducing collaborative assignments like a blog or a wiki into the classroom is to find ways to capitalize on the positive peer-pressure these assignments offer. If students feel like they have a real audience, and feel

that their comments are being read and valued, blogs can contribute to their learning and their sense of community (Sharma & Xie, 2008).

Another affordance that I anticipated based on prior research and personal experience was the positive response to peer learning as it surrounded media production assignments. In a study of Peer-Assisted Learning in media production courses, Court and Molesworth (2008) found that even when peer teachers were encouraged to only talk to younger students about topics like adjusting to university life and understanding expectations from their instructors, peer teachers often found themselves designing activities and initiating discussions related to specifically to students' production assignments. Students seek out feedback and validation from students that they feel have 'been there' (Court & Molesworth, 2008). The students in my class had a wide range of experience related to documentary production, and were eager to ask their more experienced classmates for help related to their documentary projects. The pitching and feedback process is a well-documented element within most sectors of media production, and it was not surprising to see that students were willing to give and receive feedback about their documentaries.

Unforeseen Affordances and Limitations of Co-learning Pedagogies

Though many of the issues the students faced in our classroom could be predicted, the most surprising challenge to me as a researcher came in many students' severe aversion to online peer-learning experiences. In many cases, students expressed open animosity toward these assignments, and seemed to agree with Jordan when he said (regarding the wiki assignment),

> I was not a fan. Collaboration face to face is more personal. It is also much easier to overcome obstacles. I am not an active member of the online community. So it was different because I was very repulsed by it.

Jordan doesn't just say that the assignment was challenging or frustrating, but that he was "repulsed" by the idea of collaborating on an assignment online. This repulsion expressed by Jordan and demonstrated by many of the students in their almost complete lack of collaboration on the wiki assignment was shocking to me, especially after conducting research about online learning that contained musings like the following from Ito et al. (2008):

> Our cases demonstrate that some of the drivers of self-motivated learning come not from institutionalized "authorities" setting standards and providing instruction, but from youth observing and communicating with people engaged in the same interests, and in the same struggles for status and recognition, as they are. (p.11)

It was my hope that students would view their classmates as "people engaged in the same interests," and that the online forums for reporting the results of their research and collaborating together would provide a nice opportunity for them to see a synthesis of their research represented concretely by a somewhat comprehensive wiki resource. Instead, students declined to participate, often doing just the minimum amount required in order to earn their participation points.

Not everything about students' online participation was surprising; a study by Grant (2009) found that even when presented with collaborative technology like a wiki, students were reluctant to edit the work posted by others, focusing instead on their individual work. Students often did not trust their work with their classmates because they felt like a classmate could compromise their work, thus affecting their grade. These new media technologies allow students to participate more actively in the knowledge construction process (Forte & Bruckman, 2007), but only if students care more about working collaboratively than they do about their individual grades (Lund & Smørdal, 2006). I anticipated that students might complain about the group

nature of the project, but their experiences illustrated that these particular students did not appreciate the online assignments or utilize them for their full collaborative potential.

In a description of different kinds of learning groups, Johnson and Johnson (1999) make the distinction between a traditional classroom learning group and a cooperative learning group. In a traditional classroom learning group, "students are assigned to work together and accept that they have to do so." Students will "seek each other's information, but have no motivation to teach what they know to group-mates" (p. 68). In a traditional learning group, students are assessed and rewarded as individuals, though often students do not share an equal workload. In a cooperative learning group, "students work together to accomplish shared goals. Students seek outcomes that are beneficial to all. Students discuss material with each other, help one another understand it, and encourage each other to work hard" (p.68). When participating in their online assignments, students favored traditional classroom learning groups rather than cooperative learning groups. This is especially apparent on the wiki. Johnson and Johnson state that in traditional learning groups, "the more hard working and conscientious students would perform higher if they worked alone" (p.68); in their comments, many students expressed the sentiment that they would have preferred to complete an individual assignment rather than participate as a group. Students felt little desire or motivation to work together to create a cohesive product.

So why were these online assignments ineffective? In our final interview, Ben seemed to sum it up perfectly in two statements. His first statement specifically relates his own dislike of the blogging assignment:

> Blogging to me is the opportunity to make a statement and express my opinion when I have one. It has always been a sort of venting place for me as well. So for me to have an assigned blog to participate in was to go against my very nature of blogging. I know

that's a lame excuse for not always participating like I ought to, but that is, in the end,

how I felt about it. I never read the other comments, because I think the subject matter

was mostly "matter of fact." Why would I need to read their comments about the same

subject? It seemed rather pointless.

Ben's second statement was made in our discussion of the wiki assignment, but relates to new

media assignments in general:

Ben: This might sound abrasive, so I apologize if it is. I think social media is driven by

passion, like people have something to say on a blog or on a wiki, and so they put

that down; they have something to share, so they put that down on YouTube or

wherever. So the whole idea of the wiki or the blogs, in my case, was that this

wasn't something I was so excited about…

Erika: I assigned you a passion.

Ben: Right, you assigned me a passion, and I'm just like, "I can't do it! I just don't

want it!" because I don't feel like I have anything valuable to say. It's not that

there's nothing for me to say, it's just that social media is driven by the passion of

people willing to share, wanting to share, wanting to create and collaborate. And

if you're trying to force it upon them—while you're trying to teach a concept—it

kind of goes back on itself at the same time. But if we're in a class and we

understand that concept and we can get past that barrier of passion—which I

failed to do this semester—then it would work really well. I just didn't like it.

This is the element that I did not anticipate, although I probably should have: new media

platforms like blogs and wikis *are* documented to be fabulous forums for self-directed, peer-

based learning (Ito et al., 2008; Jenkins, 2006a, 2006b), but attempting to integrate these forums

into in-school instruction is complicated because we are, in essence, ignoring the key driving

factor behind all of these forums: passion. In a report about youth online participation, Ito et al.

(2008) pose the following question:

> What would it mean to enlist help in this endeavor from an engaged and diverse set of
>
> [networked] publics that are broader than what we traditionally think of as educational
>
> and civic institutions? In addition to publics that are dominated by adult interests, these
>
> publics should include those that are relevant and accessible to kids now, where they can
>
> find role models, recognition, friends, and collaborators who are co-participants in the
>
> journey of growing up in a digital age. (p.3)

In our class, it seemed to mean that students were not engaged in the assignment. This could be

because students did not understand my expectations for their participation, or because this

particular set of students was just not interested in the kinds of collaborative learning afforded by

new media tools like wikis and blogs, but for whatever reason, the attempt to meaningfully

integrate peer learning and new media in our class failed on most counts.

In this regard, educators from all disciplines need to recognize that merely including the

latest technological innovation in a class is not a guaranteed motivator for learning. Just because

students are interested in collaborative social media outside of school does not mean that the

practices they use there will translate to the classroom. Actual learning is dependent upon the

quality of instruction and class assignments, not tools alone.

Based on my experience with students as they struggled to collaborate with online

assignments, it seems that further research needs to be done regarding actual student experiences

using blogs and wikis. In a review of empirical studies of blogs in higher education settings, Sim

and Hew (2010) report that most of the research surrounding this subject does not account for or

provide explanations of *why* students perceived blogging exercises as successful or unsuccessful. It is not difficult to find literature praising these online collaborative environments for their potential, but research detailing what kinds of assignments are best suited for these environments would be beneficial to teachers and researchers across multiple disciplines.

Creating a Framework for Incorporating Co-Learning Pedagogies Into Media Literacy Education Classrooms

Keeping these affordances and limitations in mind, I would like to propose a pedagogical framework for preparing media literacy educators. This framework is not a unique construction, but rather, a synthesis of existing research as it applies to the implementation of co-learning pedagogies.

In their description of an ideal pedagogical model for educating students in the future, the New London Group advocates for four key components of instruction. These components, when utilized together, provide a complete educational experience that is "embodied, situated, and social" (New London Group, 2000, p. 30). The components of instruction are as follows:

- Situated Practice: Immersing students "in meaningful practices within a community of learners who are capable of playing multiple and different roles based on their backgrounds and experiences" (p. 33). In situated practice, students are immersed in learning tasks that are authentic to their discipline, where they are encouraged to learn by doing rather than simply by listening.

- Overt instruction: Overt instruction is not simply direct transmission of knowledge; instead, it accompanies situated practice as a way for the teacher to help students overtly articulate the things that they are learning through situated practice. Overt instruction "includes all those active interventions on the part of the teacher and other experts that

scaffold learning activities; that focus the learner on the important features of their experiences and activities within the community of learners; and that allow the learner to gain explicit information at times when it can most usefully organize and guide practice" (p. 33).

- Critical framing: Critical framing encourages students to take the things that they have learned through situated practice and overt instruction and to place them within a larger framework of knowledge to see how they relate to other texts and disciplines. In critical framing, "learners can gain the necessary personal and theoretical distance from what they have learned; constructively critique it; account for its cultural location; creatively extend and apply it; and eventually innovate on their own" (p. 34) This process helps students to contextualize their knowledge, and will deepen their understanding.

- Transformed practice: Having participated in situated practice, overt instruction, and critical framing, students are prepared to transform and use their knowledge in other scenarios. This step is much like returning to situated practice, where students can show "that they can implement understandings acquired through overt instruction and critical framing in practices that help them simultaneously to apply and revise what they have learned" (p. 35).

I propose that the success of co-learning pedagogies depends on the ability of the teacher to explicitly implement these four elements of instruction into peer-learning and peer-teaching activities, and explains in part why my students generally had more positive experiences in the peer-teaching assignments than they did in the peer-learning assignments. As the students prepared to become teachers, they viewed peer-teaching assignments as authentic instances of situated practice. They adopted the identity of the teacher in order to simulate a classroom

experience (two skills mentioned in Jenkins, 2006a). In feedback sessions related to their teaching, students were open to scaffolding provided by their instructors and their peers. When they read articles related to media literacy and media literacy education, they were able to relate their own practical knowledge acquired through teaching to the broader realm of media literacy. Finally, groups were offered the chance to participate in transformed practice when they taught their final lesson plans and moved on to phase two of the project.

In my class, peer-learning activities did not follow this clear trajectory. Though participating on a blog or a wiki or in a class discussion is an instance of situated practice, students could not or did not always see the connection between this practice and their future practice as media literacy educators. There was a lack of overt instruction on my part; I sometimes failed to overtly explain why and how the experience of participating on the blog or the wiki contributed to their preparation as educators or to their knowledge of media literacy in general. Though I hoped that the blog and the wiki would be an ideal space for students to engage in critical framing (a space where students could place the things they were reading and discussing in class within the larger context of media literacy), students generally declined the opportunity to relate the things they were learning inside the class to issues they might investigate outside of class. Failing at all of these three points, it was challenging for students to engage in any kind of reflective practice.

One of the themes discussed in chapter three (that students need clear expectations and understandings of their roles within peer-learning experiences) expresses the particular need for overt instruction within peer-learning assignments. Students need to understand *what* they are doing, and *why* they are doing it. A lack of overt instruction meant that students were not always

focused on the things that they might be learning through situated practice; they felt that teachers were sometimes avoiding instructing by placing such an emphasis on peer-based learning.

The presence of the second theme in the data (that students understand the intellectual purpose of peer-learning assignments but have mixed responses to their implementation) can be explained by a lack of connection between these four elements of instruction. At some point during their education, students were instructed that group projects were good for learning; students said that learning with others was beneficial in providing different perspectives and forcing them to articulate their own understanding. However, the fact that students often declined to participate indicates that there might be a disconnect between situated practice and overt instruction that makes it challenging for students to make the transition to transformed, meaningful practice.

These four elements of instruction also give explanation for the third theme found in the data (that students are most responsive to peer-learning activities associated with documentary production). Students had three major documentary production assignments, with smaller supportive assignments along the way. Each assignment offered the chance to engage in situated practice. Each group feedback session offered overt instruction, asking students to concretely articulate what they learned from the production assignment at hand. The class's dual focus on media literacy instruction and documentary production was a consistent invitation for critical framing, as students were invited to consider the place of documentary production inside the larger fields of media literacy and education in general. Finally, each subsequent assignment became an opportunity for transformed practice; the practice of making an audio documentary allowed students to engage in more reflective practice while making a video documentary. Though they were not explicitly addressed or pointed out to the students, the presence of these

four areas of instruction accounted for some of the success of the peer-learning projects

surrounding documentary production.

As media educators consider a framework for implementing co-learning pedagogies—

particularly as they think about the ways to prepare young people to teach media literacy—I

suggest that they keep these four elements in instruction in mind. Students need authentic

experiences acting as teachers of media literacy. Though this need not mean that students

actually take on the role of teacher, they need to clearly understand their roles as co-constructors

of knowledge in the classroom. They need overt instruction that allows them to recognize co-

learning pedagogies as intentional elements of instruction and experiences utilizing collective

intelligence (Jenkins, 2006a) so that such pedagogies are not merely perceived as teacher-failure.

They need the opportunity to relate their experiences inside the class to the larger discipline as a

whole. Finally, they need the opportunity to practice what they have learned. In the Hands on a

Camera project, this transformed practice comes most strongly in phase two of the project, where

students become teachers in a supervised environment. In other projects, such transformed

practice might take a different shape, but it should always offer the ability for students to clearly

articulate the things that they have learned in the class.

Conclusions and Directions for Further Research

At the end of this project, I still have many unanswered questions about peer learning and

its place in the media literacy education classroom, and the most lingering one is this: was the

increased emphasis on peer learning actually beneficial to students? Though there was a great

deal of literature to assure me that, yes, peer learning is beneficial for myriads of reasons, I had a

difficult time seeing any benefits while in the middle of the study. Why did my students stop

coming to class? Why were they choosing not to complete their assignments? Why did they hate

the wiki so much? Were they even reading anything I ask them to read? Were students actually learning anything, or was I just providing a space for them to talk about media literacy in merely a general way?

Though the answers to these questions may have nothing to do with the introduction of peer learning into the course, the failure of many students to complete assignments and show up to class did little to ease my anxiety that placing so much power into the hands of the students actually meant that they were being ill-served by the educational institution. If students failed to learn, whose fault was it? When teachers choose to cede power to the students and make them responsible not only for their own learning but partly responsible for the learning of their classmates, they must do so with the knowledge that such an approach may actually mean that students learn less about the subject at hand than they would in a more traditional classroom environment. Gee (2000) suggests that the role of the teacher is not only in helping the student learn, but rather, in helping the student learn *how* to learn: to become expert at becoming an expert. Co-learning pedagogies and peer-learning activities have the ability to shift more responsibility for learning from the teacher to the students, but merely shifting responsibility does not mean that the student will have a positive experience.

At the end of phase one (and prior to any substantial data analysis), I was ready to declare that peer learning in a media literacy education classroom did not work; students seemed to hate most of their peer-learning assignments, and I felt like we had not covered most of our class material to the depth that I would have liked. When only three students chose to continue on to phase two, I was disappointed, feeling that my perceived failure to instruct the students had motivated them to decide not to teach.

The successes of the teachers in phase two gave me cause to reevaluate phase one and acknowledge that not everything about the experience had been a failure. Though qualitative data is ill equipped to prove direct correlations between instruction and student behavior, the teachers in this cycle of the project incorporated peer learning in an intentional way. They viewed themselves less as teachers and more as facilitators of the project. Unlike teachers in previous cycles of the project, they spent their planning sessions discussing student projects; instead of planning lessons generally and hoping that students would learn something useful, they evaluated the group conversation and planned lessons to fulfill specific student needs. They avoided long periods of lecture, and instead spent their time talking with students and encouraging students to talk with each other. This year, almost every high school student who started the project finished a documentary, a success rate unmatched by previous cycles of the project at this particular high school.

Based on my observations of the students from phase one to phase two, I am led to believe these peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments were effective in helping prepare my students to become teachers in the Hands on a Camera project. There were certainly many ways that the experiences could have been restructured to prove more beneficial to students in the preparation phase, but the three students who chose to act as teachers were some of the most effective teachers in the project to date.

The conclusion that I come to at the end of the research is that introducing co-learning pedagogies into a media literacy education course designed to prepare teachers for a service-learning project (and, truly, into any classroom) brings with it a host of challenges that cannot be overlooked. Though there are certainly rewards as well, teachers and students need to be honest with one another about the complications that come from disrupting traditional classroom

authority in such a significant way. Further research needs to be conducted about the ways that students respond—in their own words—to these sorts of activities. Much of the literature surrounding peer learning that I studied prior to the research project only advocated for the benefits of peer learning without acknowledging that peer-learning assignments—on or offline— will always fail if students are not willing to actually participate in them.

Further research could also be conducted about things teachers can do to motivate students to work collaboratively and take responsibility for their own learning. How can we cultivate actual student investment in the academic conversation surrounding media literacy (or any academic discipline)? My research indicates that grades are not enough—even though they were graded, some students chose not to contribute at all to some of our assignments. Positive peer-pressure created by peer-learning and peer-teaching assignments is not enough; handing classroom authority to students is not enough. Researchers should pay attention not only to how students respond to these kinds of assignments, but also ask *why* students respond these ways.

The final question I have is certainly one asked by many educators: Ultimately, what is my responsibility to students, and how do I measure if I have fulfilled that responsibility? By introducing co-learning pedagogies into my classroom, I feel that I both succeeded and failed in fulfilling my responsibility to the students. Though no teacher can take complete responsibility for any student's actions, I naively assumed that simply altering the nature of our classroom assignments and placing more emphasis on peer leaning and teaching would only introduce positive changes into the project; I did not anticipate that students would loathe a collaborative assignment like the wiki or view the practice of reading and commenting on one another's work on the blog as just another task to complete in order to avoid failing the class. By placing so

much emphasis on peer teaching, I fear that some students left the class without as much as a concrete definition of media literacy education.

On the other hand, student responses through both phases of the project seldom place blame upon the instructors for various student failures; students are quick to point out their own reasons for failing to complete an assignment satisfactorily, and can recognize the potential of collaborative assignments even without fully experiencing their benefits. In the future, I plan to continue incorporating co-learning pedagogies, but will do so with increased structure and overt instruction to help students get closer to realizing the practical (not merely theoretical) benefits of peer learning.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aronson, J. (1994). A pragmatic view of thematic analysis. *The Qualitative Report, 2*(1).

    Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/BackIssues/QR2-1/aronson.html

Aufderheide, P., ed. (1993). *Media Literacy. A report of the national leadership conference*

    on media literacy. Aspen, CO: Aspen Institute.

Bath, C. (2009). When does the action start and finish? Making the case for an ethnographic

    action research in educational research. *Educational Action Research, 17* (2), 213 – 224.

Berg, B.L. (2009). *Qualitative research methods* (7th Ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon

Bielaczyc, K. & Collins, A. (2005). Fostering knowledge-creating communities. In A.

    O'Donnell, C. Hmelo-Silver, & G. Erkens (Eds.), *Collaborative learning, reasoning, and*

    technology (33-60). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Boud, D., Cohen, R., & Sampson, J. (2001). *Peer learning in higher education: Learning*

    from and with each other. London: Kogan Press.

Bringle, R., & Hatcher, J. (1995). A service learning curriculum for faculty. *The Michigan*

    Journal of Community Service-Learning, *2*, 112-22.

Bruffee, K. (1999). *Collaborative learning: Higher education, interdependence, and the*

    authority of knowledge (2nd ed.). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Buckingham, D. (2003). *Media education.* Cambridge, UK : Polity Press

Butin, D. (2010). *Service-learning in theory and practice: The future of community engagement*

    in higher education. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cooper, S.M.A. (2002). Classroom choices for enabling peer learning. *Theory Into Practice*, *41*

    (1), 53-57.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research* (3rd Ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Corio, J., Knobel, M., Lankshear, C., & Leu, D. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of research on new literacies.* New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Court, S., and Molesworth, M. (2008). Course-specific learning in Peer Assisted Learning schemes: a case study of creative media production courses. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, *13*(1): 123-134.

Erickson, J. & Anderson, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Learning with the community: Concepts and models for service-learning in teacher education.* Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education.

Falchikov, N. (2001). *Learning together: Peer tutoring in higher education.* New York: Routledge.

Farabaigh, R. (2007). 'The isle is full of noises': Using wiki software to establish a discourse community in a Shakespeare classroom. *Language Awareness*, *16*, (1), 41 – 56.

Forte, Andrea & Bruckman, A. (2007). Constructing text: wiki as a toolkit for (collaborative?) learning. Proceedings from *WikiSym 2007*, 31-42.

Forte, A., & Bruckman, A. (2010). Citing, writing and participatory media: Wikis as learning environments in the high school classroom. *International Journal of Learning and Media*, *1*(4), 23-44.

Frank, C.R., & Uy, F.L. (2004). Ethnography for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 55*, 269-283.

Gee, J. (2000). New people in new worlds: Networks, the new capitalism, and schools. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 43-68). London: Routledge.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* New York: Aldine Publishing Company.

Grant, L. 2009. "I DON'T CARE DO UR OWN PAGE!" A case study of using wikis for collaborative work in a UK secondary school. *Learning, Media and Technology*, *34*(2),105–17.

Green, J., & Bloome, D. (1997). Ethnography and ethnographers of and in education: A situated perspective. In J. Flood, S. Heath, & D. Lapp (Eds.), *A handbook of research on teaching literacy through the communicative and visual arts* (pp. 181-202). New York: Simon & Shuster Macmillan.

Green, J. L., Dixon, C. N., & Zaharlick, A. (2002). Ethnography as a logic of inquiry. In J. Flood, D. Lapp, J. Squire, & J. Jensen (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts, 2nd ed.* (pp. 201-224). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gregory, J., & Jones, R. (2009). 'Maintaining competence': a grounded theory typology of approaches to teaching in higher education. *Higher Education*, 57(6), 769-785. doi:10.1007/s10734-008-9175-8

Hammersly, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3rd ed.) New York: Routledge.

Hobbs, R. (1998). The seven great debates in the media literacy movement. *Journal of Communication*, *48* (1), 16-32.

Hobbs, R., & Jensen, A.P. (2009). The past, present, and future of media literacy education. *Journal of Media Literacy Education, 1*, 1 -11.

Ito, M., Horst, H., Bittanti, M., Boyd, D., Herr-Stephenseon, B., Lange, P.G., Pascoe, C.J., & Robinson, L. (2008) *Living and learning with new media: Summary of findings from the digital youth project*. Chicago, IL: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.macfound.org/atf/cf/%7BB0386CE3-8B29-4162-8098 -E466FB856794%7D/DML_ETHNOG_WHITEPAPER.PDF

Ito, M. (2009). *Peer based learning for a digital age.* Transcript of talk given for *Breakthrough Learning in a Digital Age* eve*nt.* Mountain View, CA: October 2009. Retrieved from http://www.itofisher.com/mito/publications/peerbased_learn.html

Jenkins, H. (2006a). *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century.* Chicago, IL: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Retrieved from http://digitallearning.macfound.org/atf/cf/%7B7E45C7E0-A3E0-4B89-AC9CE807E1B0AE4E%7D/ JENKINS_WHITE_PAPER.PDF

Jenkins, H. (2006b). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York: NYU Press.

Johnson, D., & Johnson, R. (1999). Making cooperative learning work. *Theory Into Practice*, *38*(2): 67-73.

Kress, G. (2000). Multimodality. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 182-202). London: Routledge.

Linn, M., & Slotta, J. (2005). Enabling participants in online forums to learn from each other. In A. O'Donnell, C. Hmelo-Silver, & G. Erkens (Eds.), *Collaborative learning, reasoning, and technology* (61-97). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Luke, C. (2003). Pedagogy, connectivity, multimodality, and interdisciplinarity [online

version]. Supplement to Hagood, M.C., Leander, K.M., Luke, C., Mackey, M., & Nixon,

H. (2003). Media and online literacy studies (New directions in research). *Reading*

Research Quarterly, 38(3), 388–413.] Retrieved from

http://dx.doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.38.3.4

Lund, A. & Smørdal, O. (2006). Is there a space for the teacher in a wiki? *Proceedings of the*

2006 International Symposium on Wikis, Odense, Denmark: August 21-23, 37-46.

Retrieved October 2010 from http://www.wikisym.org/ws2006/proceedings/p37.pdf

Martens, H. (2010). Evaluating media literacy education: Concepts, theories and future

directions. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, *2*(1), 1-22.

Moss, G. (2011). Ethnographic research in teaching and learning the English language arts. In

D. Lapp & D. Fischer (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English*

Language Arts, 3rd ed. (pp. 370 – 374). London: Routledge.

National Association for Media Literacy Education. (2007). *Core principles of media*

literacy education. Retrieved from http://www.namle.net/core-principles.

New London Group. (2000). A pedagogy of multiliteracies designing social futures. In B. Cope

& M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures*

(pp. 9-37). London: Routledge.

Richardson, W. (2003). Web logs in the English classroom: More than just chat. *The*

English Journal, 93, 39-43.

Rogow, F. (2005). Terrain in transition: Reflections on the pedagogy of media literacy

education. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, *104*(1), 282-

288

Root, S. (2003). Teacher research in service-learning. In S. Billig & A. Waterman (Eds.), *Studying service-learning* (pp. 173-185). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Sharma, P., & Xie, Y. Student experiences of using weblogs: an exploratory study. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, *12* (3-4), 137-156.

Sheridan-Thomas, H. (2007). Making sense of multiple literacies: Exploring pre-service content area teachers' understandings and applications. *Reading and Research Instruction*, *46*(2), 121-150.

Sim, J. W. S., & Hew, K. F. (2010). The use of weblogs in higher education settings: A review of empirical research."*Educational Research Review*, *5*(2), 151-163.

Smith, G. (2009). Obtaining, processing, and constructing English: Blogging in the ESL classroom. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, *1*(1), 75-80.

Silverblatt, A., Baker, F., Tyner, K. & Stuhlman, L. (2002). *Media literacy in U.S. institutions of higher education*. Retrieved from

http://www.webster.edu/medialiteracy/survey/survey_Report.htm

Thoman, E. & Jolls, T. (2003). *Literacy for the 21st century: An overview & orientation guide to media literacy.* Center for Media Literacy. Retrieved from http://medialit.net/reading-room/literacy-21st-century-overview-orientation-guide-media-literacy-education.

Trochim, W. M. K. (2006) Qualitative approaches. Research Methods Knowledge Base. Retrieved from http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualapp.php

Wagner, J. (1997). The unavoidable intervention of educational research: A framework for reconsidering researcher-practitioner cooperation. *Educational Researcher*, *26*(7), 13-22.

Wolcott, H.F. (2008). *Ethnography: A way of seeing* (2nd ed.). Lanham, MD: Altamira Press.

Woods, P. (1986). *Inside Schools: Ethnography in educational research.* New York: Routledge
& Kegan Paul.

Xie, Y., Ke, F., & Sharma, P. (2008). The effect of peer feedback for blogging on college
students' reflective learning processes. *Internet and Higher Education,*
11(1), 18–25.

Zaharlick, A. (1992). Ethnography in anthropology and its value for education. *Theory Into
Practice, 31* (2), 116-125.

APPENDIX A – KEY CONCEPTS OF MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION

Principles of Media Literacy as Defined by Various Organizations (organized thematically)		
National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE, 2007)	Center for Media Literacy (Thoman & Jolls, 2003, p. 18)	Action Coalition for Media Education Questioning Media Ten Basic Principles of Media Literacy Education (provided by ACME at www.acmecoalition.org)
1. All media messages are "constructed."	1. All media messages are constructed.	2. "REALITY" CONSTRUCTION/TRADE-OFFS: Media construct our culture and involve trade-offs (goods and bads). Consuming media always involves choices that enhance or degrade our lives. We should ask ourselves, "What are the trade-offs of this media experience?"
2. Each medium has different characteristics, strengths, and a unique "language" of construction.	3. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.	4. PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES: Media use identifiable production techniques. Advertisers, the public relations industry, and other powerful media makers spend massive amounts of time, energy, and money carefully creating media to influence the ways we think, behave, and buy. "Deconstructing" or analyzing production techniques – camera angles, lighting, editing, sound effects, colors, font styles, symbols, etc. - can build awareness, leading to more careful and "literate" consumption of media.
3. Media messages are produced for particular purposes.	5. 5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power	6. COMMERCIAL MOTIVES: Media are business and commercial interests. Most media are produced within the commercial industry – researching questions of ownership, production, and distribution is vital to fully understanding media's influence.
4. All media messages contain embedded values and points of view.	3. Media have embedded values and points of view.	5. VALUE MESSAGES: Media contain ideological and value messages. Some value messages are intended, while others are unintended. Messages can be positive or negative, and messages target specific groups.
6. People use their individual skills, beliefs and	4. Different people experience the same media message	7. INDIVIDUAL MEANINGS: Individuals construct their own meanings from media. If parents, teachers, students and citizens are to

experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages.	differently.	learn about media, let's honor, discuss and debate each other's meanings.
8. Media and media messages can influence beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, and the democratic process		8. EMOTIONAL TRANSFER: Commercials and other multi-media experiences operate primarily at an emotional level and are usually designed to transfer the emotion from one symbol or lifestyle onto another (usually a product or behavior).

APPENDIX B: ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Assignment Descriptions– Phase One

Weekly Blog Assignment

Each week you will be required to respond electronically to our readings and our weekly topic on our class blog. These posts will be due weekly, and should be posted by midnight on Thursday. A quality post will be from **500 – 1,000 words**, and will include the following two elements:

1. **Response to Reading/Viewing:** Erika will post a guiding question about the reading that you should respond to (although the most important part of the assignment is to demonstrate your own ability to analyze and evaluate the reading from your personal context so you might move past the question to other topics that were important to you.) In addition to considering the questions posed, you should evaluate the reading material in terms of its pedagogical value, and should also pose questions with your own tentative answers to the readings, or compare the ideas in one set of readings to previous course readings or something you read outside of class.

2. **Answers in Context:** The goal of our discussions and readings are to provide you with tools and answers that you will implement in your own media usage. Each week, you should seek out a media text that informs (or is informed by) our weekly topic. For example, if we are studying media and expression of identity, you might look at *Six Billion Others* and discuss the ways that the filmmakers have explored identity across cultures. Your media example can be new or old, familiar or foreign, popular or obscure, but must be a relevant example that you would feel comfortable using in a classroom situation.

In addition to posting your own response, you must also respond to at least two other students' posts. These shorter responses should include further comments, questions, or ideas that are generated by the first reading. These responses can be under 100 words, and are calculated as part of your class participation grade, although if all you voice is agreement or facile praise, they will not be calculated at all. These comments are due by the Saturday after the initial post is written.

Wiki Assignment

As a class, we will maintain a wiki that contains our working definition of "Media Literacy Education." The wiki should extend beyond a basic definition and discuss ideas for implementation within multiple subject areas. Students will be graded on their participation and contribution to the definition (self-reported and observed).

Essentially, we will be creating a Wikipedia-type page for Media Literacy Education (preferably one that goes into even more detail than the actual Wikipedia page). As such, there

should be headings, hyperlinks to other relevant articles (in various places online or to other pages that you create).

This is a class assignment; as such, I am reluctant to give specifics as to how many times an individual needs to update the wiki or how many words they need to write, but students will be assigned an individual grade. Here are ways that you can demonstrate that you are actively participating:

- Write new material on the home page. We can all see who has updated the wiki, and what they have contributed.
- Make a new page (for example, we might want a separate page discussing Participatory Culture)
- Start discussions about current material.
- Participate in discussions initiated by your classmates.
- Find relevant references and resources to supplement material written by your classmates.

The wiki will be checked informally throughout the semester, but will be formally checked (with points awarded for having contributed) **September 27, November 11, and December 16.** The week of the formal wiki check, I will look at the history of the wiki, and you will report on your own contributions.

TMA 458 Mini-Lesson

The goal of the mini-lesson assignment is to give you a small taste of teaching before your final teaching assignments. Your 10-20 minute lesson should contain each of the following:

1. **Short presentation of a concept:** Choose a concept that emerged from the week's reading (perhaps you really latch onto one of the New Media Literacy skills and want to talk about it, or you find the concept of observing the ordinary to be worthy of discussing), and center your lesson on this concept. Offer us a brief explanation of the concept, treating your classmates as your students. Bear in mind that this is a lesson based on a concept, not merely a presentation about or summary of the reading.
2. **Mediated illustration or activity addressing this concept:** Your lesson should contain a media illustration or activity to address the concept. For example, if you have chosen to talk about Core Principle 2 from the CPMLE (Literacy should include all forms of media), you might do an activity where small groups tell the same story in different media forms. This can be a high- or low-tech activity, but should concretely demonstrate the things you introduced in the first portion of your lesson.
3. **Short class discussion:** Finally, lead a discussion with your peers about the concept in question.

After you teach, write a 500-word assessment of your teaching. Feel free to address the following questions (the assessment is due the Monday following your teaching, but doing it sooner is better than doing it later):

- What are your strengths as a teacher? What are your weaknesses?
- What specifically went well in your lesson?
- If you could do this lesson over again, what would you do differently?

Here is the rubric I will actually look at when determining your grade:

	Superior	Excellent	Good	Not-So-Good
Presentation of Concept	The student clearly explains all concepts clearly and accurately. The explanation goes beyond a summary of the reading, offering new and relevant information to all students.	The student explains most concepts clearly and accurately. The explanation goes somewhat beyond a summary of the reading.	The student explains some concepts clearly and accurately. The explanation is merely a summary of the reading.	The student does not explain any concepts.
Media Activity	The student includes an engaging and relevant media example and/or activity that clearly illustrates or expands the concept of the lesson plan.	The student includes an example or activity that mostly illustrates or expands the concept of the lesson plan.	The student includes a media example or activity, but the activity does not seem to expand or illustrate any concepts.	The student does not include an activity or media example.
Class Discussion	The student is prepared and confident in leading a discussion on the material, posing interesting and thought provoking questions for classmates to consider.	The student is somewhat prepared and confident in leading a discussion, posing appropriate questions for students to answer.	The student does not seem prepared or confident in leading a discussion, asking poor questions (such as questions with "yes" or "no" as an answer) for students to answer.	The student does not lead a discussion.

Media Education Resource guide with Lesson Plan

In pairs, students will create one 80-minute media education lesson plan with resources for their final project. The ideal lesson plan will include detailed practical activities, social and historical information, and cultural contexts that relate the media to secondary students. *Students will be assigned a topic to center their lesson on.* The resource guide should include the following:

- **Lesson context**. This is a general description and a justification of the content, methods and strategies you intend to present within the lesson (Why do you use particular theories, methods or questions? Why does the lesson progress in a particular fashion? What is the

focus of your unit in which this lesson belongs? What are the key concepts and ideas you plan to present in the unit)? The lesson context should be 1-2 pages in length and demonstrate broad knowledge of the subject you plan to teach.

- **A lesson plan that follows the format provided in class**. The lesson plans should include media activities but these activities should be balanced by an historical, theoretical or critical analytical component (an explanation of why we are considering the topic, the activity, or the strategy).

- **Visual/Aural support material.** This should include where to locate print material, art objects, DVDs, CDs, websites, other visual/aural materials that support your lesson plans.

- **Annotated bibliography.** The bibliography should include *descriptive* annotated citations of materials used to prepare your lesson. I prefer that you use MLA format for the citation. For our purposes a descriptive annotation obviously describes the source: what it is (book, website, etc.), who created it, etc., but it should also describe the content of the source and the material that is pertinent to the lesson, or unit. The annotation should be 50-100 words at most.

Teaching Presentation

Individuals will present a portion from their lesson plan, each person should teach a 30 minute segment (60 minutes total) that demonstrates the suitability of their lesson plan for classroom use. Please narrate and contextualize the activities, the information provided, the questions asked, aiding us in the conceptualization of the whole lesson plan.

Assignment Descriptions – Phase Two

Lesson Plan Revisions

This is an assignment to be completed with your classmates. At the end of the semester, you are responsible for giving me an electronic copy of the lesson plans you actually taught (since they will most likely undergo significant revision).

Field Reports

Once you start teaching, you will be required to submit a weekly field report on our class blog. You should plan to take detailed field notes while teaching, and prepare your field reports from these notes. This assignment should be a report of what you taught, what went well, what could be improved, and other anecdotal experiences that you think will be useful for our research.

In addition to recording your observations, each week you will have a specific question to address. As you answer the questions, please include classroom experiences that you have had that support your conclusions. A fantastic field report should be between 300-500 words.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Phase One

Written interview questions given throughout the semester will be designed to ask students to reflect on their experiences and learning from and with their peers. The following are examples of individual written interview questions submitted to the students:

1. Group projects are _____. Explain.
2. Class discussions are _____. Explain.
3. I am _____ % responsible for my own learning. Explain.
4. True or False?: My preparedness for class only affects my learning. Explain.
5. What excites you about our class?
6. What frustrates you about our class?

Interview questions given at the end of the semester will ask students to reflect on learning from and with their peers, and to talk about the knowledge building and process. They will also ask them to evaluate their own perceptions of their preparedness to teach media literacy education and documentary storytelling in the future.

Questions about peer learning (casual and assigned).
1. How did group projects contribute to your learning? How did teaching assignments contribute to your learning?
2. What, specifically, did you learn from your peers this semester? What did you learn from your instructors?
3. Evaluate your experience participating in the wiki. How was it different from other group projects you have done in the past? How did the group negotiate responsibilities?
4. Evaluate your experience participating on the blog. What impact did the knowledge that your peers would read your work have on your writing process? Did you read the comments that your classmates made to your posts?

Questions about knowledge building and learning.

1. Evaluate your experience in the class as a whole; how do your feel your contributions to the class helped your classmates? Did you feel you were a passive learner or an active participant?

2. What assignments or experiences in the class helped you feel like an active participant in constructing knowledge? What assignments or experiences discouraged this kind of participation?

3. Did participating on the wiki increase your understanding of media literacy education? If so, how? If not, why not?

Questions about preparedness to teach.

1. What is media literacy education?

2. How have your experiences in TMA 458 prepared you to teach these principles we've discussed in class to young people? Be specific.

3. What assignments helped prepare you to teach documentary production and storytelling? What assignments were ineffective at preparing you to teach?

Phase Two

Questions about teaching.

1. How did your experience in TMA 458 prepare you for your experience teaching K-12 students?

2. As you taught in the K-12 setting, what experiences did you wish you had been more prepared for?

3. Did you incorporate group projects and peer learning experiences into your classroom? How was this effective or ineffective? What effect do you think it had on the K-12 students?

Questions about learning.

1. What is media literacy?

2. Why is media literacy important for young people?

3. Why is media literacy education important for educators?

4. Why are media literacy and media literacy education important for you?

5. Is your definition of MLE influenced by the experience you have had in teaching high school students? If so, how? If not, why not?

APPENDIX D: CONSENT DOCUMENT

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction

This research study is being conducted by Erika Hill at Brigham Young University as part of her   Master's thesis project and investigates the role of peer learning in a media literacy education course. The study will explore the experiences of the students when they are engaged in multiple forms of peer learning as described by the students themselves and as perceived by the instructor, Erika Hill. The study will also observe how students implement peer learning in their own classrooms while teaching in the Hands on a Camera Project. You were selected to participate because you are currently registered for Media Literacy Education (TMA 458).

Procedures

You will be asked to participate in the collection of data. Data will be generated primarily through class assignments: maintaining a blog, participating in class discussion boards, contributing to the class wiki, and creating and teaching lesson plans for and with your peers (teaching presentations may be videotaped) . Additionally, all students will participate in a videotaped group interview at the completion of the class. Should you choose to teach as part of the Hands on a Camera, you will be observed in the classroom and continue to contribute to class blogs and create and teach lesson plans. The study will take place for 15 weeks over the course of Fall Semester and 15 weeks over the course of Winter Semester, with the option to discontinue the study after Fall Semester.

Risks/Discomforts

There are minimal risks for participation in this study. Students are not required to participate. All students in the class will be videotaped and will submit class assignments, but only those who choose to participate in the study will be used in the research data. Students will be videotaped during their teaching presentations. Student participants who sign this consent form agree that their videotaped teaching assignments and interviews will be viewed and transcribed for research purposes but that no names or faces will be used in the presentation of the research.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to participating in the study. However, it is hoped that the design of the research project to include more collaborative and peer learning opportunities will benefit all students and help to establish a classroom environment where students feel engaged in the knowledge construction process.

Confidentiality

All data, including artifacts such as classroom assignments, interviews, surveys, and videotaped teaching samples, will be stored in a secured cabinet in the investigator's office. The investigator's thesis committee may be shown some of the data for help with analysis, but no other person will have access to the data.

Compensation

There is no monetary compensation or extra credit offered for participation in the study. All students will complete the same assignments, regardless of participation in the study.

Participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate in the research project without jeopardy to your class status, grade, or standing with the university.

Questions About the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Erika Hill at hillerika@gmail.com or by phone at (801) 422-4929.

Questions About Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact IRB administration, A-285 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, (801) 422-1461, irb@byu.edu

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Name (please print):

_____

Signature:

_____Date:_____