Digital Identity and Performance: How Student Identity Construction can be Influenced Through Digital Social Media and Expressed Through Theatrical Performance

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Mindy M. Nelsen

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT


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Adolescents and teens are surrounded by a myriad of influences that affect how they see and present themselves. Contemporary communication for these young people frequently happens in an online forum through digital social media. The primary purpose of this master’s thesis is to examine the affect of digital social media on adolescent and teen identity construction and perception of self and other. Further research was performed to identify how that identity can be expressed through theatrical performance.

The first chapter is a review of current literature, theory and practice of those within the educational paradigm who are trying to incorporate media literacy skills into contemporary pedagogy. An action research project was formulated to create lesson plans that aid students in engaging critically with digital social media and then empowering them with the skills to access, analyze, evaluate and create that media. Students then use their findings in the creation of a devised theatre piece. Chapter Two discusses the methodology involved with the gathering of the data and the process of analysis using open coding. Chapter Three presents the findings and exhibits student work and Chapter Four analyzes the findings and presents a course for future study, research and use of the findings in the contemporary drama classroom.

Key Words: [adolescents and teens, devised theatre, digital social media, drama education, identity, media literacy education, media messages, storytelling, technology]
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CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review

Introduction

“We owe our development to a thousand influences of our great world.”

- Goethe (Cooley, 2004)

After nine years of teaching drama, technical theatre, and film at Lehi High School, in Lehi, Utah, I find I have barely begun to scratch the surface of what it really means to educate. I can certainly impart the theatrical knowledge that I have acquired over the years. I can, with relative ease, create projects and tests for my students, assess their understanding of a principle, and then watch them walk out of my classroom. But to engage them in the process of deep and critical thinking, to help them retain not only an understanding of the material once they leave, but a desire to look and examine further is truly at the root of educational practice. I have found that it is necessary, especially in an arts classroom, to engage students in ever-changing methods of instruction, to speak with them, not just at them, and to understand the multiplicity of influences, inside of my drama classroom and out, that affect their perception and representation of self.

As an adolescent, the arts gave me a purpose. I was blessed to be in dance lessons from the time I was four. These lessons taught me poise, determination, hard work, and collaboration. Further exploration into theatre, performance, music, and the visual arts allowed me the space to become a passionate thinker and problem solver. Now in my own classroom, I see students embrace and internalize storytelling in a way that is so freeing and full. The arts provide the “power of human beings to overcome problems creatively and collaboratively…through art,
human beings can acquire a more dynamic understanding of our world.” (Knight & Schwarzman, 2005)

Each day, for eight to eleven hours, my high school drama classroom is filled with teenagers, ages fourteen to eighteen. Some enter apprehensively the first day of class while others walk in with an air of having something to prove; however, regardless of their abilities and their confidence, all of my students seem to be right in the middle of determining who they are as individuals. They all have emerging identities that they are continually constructing; each day brings with it small alterations and developments. Carrington noted “Children are immersed in a ‘textual landscape’ of multimedia identity messages” (2003). These “landscapes” form students’ immediate digital surroundings on phones, iPads and tablets, laptops, iPods, etc., and the messages within their individual media landscape both affect and reflect their identity. In a world of constantly changing technology and modes of communication, it has become necessary for educators to acknowledge the role of these digital landscapes in students’ lives and to help their students critically examine how identities are formed and the influences on those constructed identities.

Studies suggest that identity emerges during adolescence and is in continual formation throughout the teen and young adult years (Sprinthall & Collins. 1984; Klimstra, Hale, Raaijmakers, Branje, & Meeus, 2010). Erikson proposed that identity formation is the key developmental task of adolescence (Erikson, 1972). Consequently, identity formation involves “changes in identity that can be characterized as progressive developmental shifts” (Waterman 1982). This is highly evident in the ever-changing and fluid way in which adolescents and teens identify themselves online on their digital social media walls. As their constructed identity is updated frequently online, external factors that shape internal views of self
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and others must be examined. Further evidence of the influences that can affect identity formation are found in Erikson’s psychosocial model of development, in which identity is perceived by the individual and then recognized and confirmed by others. Therefore, establishing an identity involves “Integrating into a coherent whole one’s past experiences, ongoing personal changes, and society’s demands and expectations for one’s future” (Sprinthall & Collins, 1984). Given these environs, I wish to examine how student expression and construction of self and identity can be influenced by digital social media and expressed using digital artifacts and digital storytelling in theatre settings.

The Flow of Communication

It is paramount to understand the role of art in self-representation, identity construction, and the flow of communication. Ian Bogost stated that: “Art has done many things in human history, but in the last century especially, it has primarily tried to bother and provoke us. To force us to see things differently. Art changes. Its very purpose, we might say, is to change, and to change us along with it” (2011). I have the privilege and opportunity to use the arts as a method for storytelling on a daily basis, but the need goes far beyond mere stories, for in the high school drama classroom, we are working within the realm of actual human beings.

Examining how students communicate with and through various media (theatre, art, technology, etc.) is imperative for the progressive theatre arts educator. More important though is the need for teachers to equip students with a vocabulary for these mediums as well as critical questions that aid in their engagement. This allows for a space where one is able to create lasting meaning and necessary thought that will continue after the students have walked out of the door.
Learning to understand their textual media landscapes should promote students’ thoughts and
develop ownership in the creation and sharing of media messages.

Cooley notes: “A man’s social environment embraces all persons with whom he has
intelligence or sympathy, all influences that reach him, [and that] character and conduct are
nourished upon social influences” (2004). Our social environment sphere grows as it includes all
the technological and physical influences we encounter. The written word and shared images, it
seems, connect people rather than isolate them. The increased availability of messages through
printing and Internet technologies has democratized information, opening it up to a wider
spectrum of people. With the increased availability of media messages, we need to observe the
role of communication and media messages in how we view others and ourselves. Outlining the
flow of communication, Laswell encourages understanding the roles of the control analysis
(who), the content analysis (what), the media analysis (in which channel), the audience analysis
(to whom) and the effect analysis (to what effect). He observes that most media messages take
place within families, neighborhoods, schools, and other local contexts, and students must be
taught to identify the manipulators/controllers that modify media content (Laswell, 1960).

This practice is necessary in both understanding how students are affected by the media
messages they encounter and helping them understand and apply these influences in their own
lives. Their online posts tend to represent and even form the world in which they operate.
Lippman notes that the authentic person is formed by the authentic messages that surround her,
or those messages that he perceives to be reliable and trustworthy. Observing the power of the
media artifacts that surround individuals, he remarks: “under certain conditions men respond as
powerfully to fictions as they do to realities” and in many cases they “help to create the very
fictions to which they respond” (1929). This model, though observed a number of years prior to
the inception of Media Literacy Education, functions in the realm of adolescent identity construction through digital social media today. He notes that real consequences exist in pseudo-environments, like online communities and forums. Fictions become constructed representations of our environment that we make ourselves. Further, he states: “we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage it” (Lippman, 1929). This practice is readily present today on Facebook walls and Instagram profiles. People of all ages are reconstructing portions of their lives online in a pseudo-environment. Others are then able to comment, like, or share a post, thus enlarging the sphere of communication from user/creator to friend/audience.

Dewey states, “all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative. To be a recipient of a communication is to have an enlarged and changed experience” (2008). These changed experiences allow students to learn to foresee consequences and act intelligently. Students must be given the opportunity and skills to understand the communication and media messages that they encounter daily. Freire observed “students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge” (2000). That call to duty comes at the core of an educational paradigm, where a teacher can no longer be satisfied with a predictable approach, and therefore, must consider the repercussions of the many problems, questions, and influences that affect her students on a daily basis. In order to fully comprehend this challenge, it is imperative to examine how adolescents and teens are representing themselves online or allowing their identity to be constructed or influenced by the media messages they encounter.
Adolescent and Teen Identity Construction and Representation

From infancy, children are surrounded by messages, suggestions and cultural enactments, appearing in mainstream and digital social media, which affect their identity and its representation. Hecht observes the power of commodity in construction of identity. She discusses how this attitude and practice of adopting behavior, traits, and in essence, identity, is passed down from generation to generation through consumer consumption, merchandising, and demand (Hecht, 2011). Wohlwend adds, “Children’s media franchises communicate anticipated identities, expectations for future users embedded in commercial product designs and circulated to young consumers through global advertising that targets children by age and gender.” She observes that often franchises are anchored by popular media characters, like Disney princesses, superheroes, etc. that “circulate identity texts, embedded storylines that communicate idealized ways of ‘doing boy’ or ‘doing girl’” (Wohlwend, 2012). Further, Wohlwend observes that children begin to make sense of their world as they interplay with these character roles. This practice of influence and suggestion continues late into life and comes from a variety of formats and locations.

A number of on and offline influences surround Adolescents, teens, and young adults. Indeed contemporary media frequently addresses the notion of teen constructed reality and representation. In 2013, an episode of the popular crime series, Castle, featured a conversation with the title character and his teenage daughter who had started a video blog. The writers tackled the repercussions of online posts, examining the perils of posting personal images and text online. In a selection of dialogue from the episode entitled Girls Gone Crazy, the patriarchal character, Richard Castle, cautions his daughter, “When you put something out there, anyone can see it; from a future job interviewer to Internet creep.” His daughter, Alexis, simply responds:
“You don’t think I know that? My generation grew up in a digital fish bowl. No matter how careful we are, stuff will get out there. Friends will tag me in photos, inevitably doing something stupid. Why should that define me? Why can’t I go out there and define myself” (Marlowe, Bowman, Amann, Zaks, & Bernstein, 2013). These sentiments have been parroted in my classroom and from my students.

Adolescents and teens have a desire to choose their own path and present their own versions of their lives, both online and off. However, it is important to note that studies have found that adolescent brains are “more vulnerable [than their adult counterparts] to external stressors“ (Ruder, 2008). Teens are also bombarded by information in this electronic age, and multitasking is as routine as chatting with friends online. However, a recent study highlights how sensory overload can hinder students’ ability to recall words. “It’s truly a brave new world. Our brains, evolutionarily, have never been subjected to the amount of cognitive input that’s coming at us,” Ruder says. “You can’t close down the world. All you can do is educate kids to help them manage this” (2008).

The Contemporary Theatre Arts Classroom

Nine years inside a drama classroom and even more hours outside of the normal curriculum time spent directing, coaching, running rehearsals, and creating the technical aspects of high school drama productions have allowed me to get to know my students on a personal level. I have found that each student is a complex individual and needs to be treated as such. Any efforts to teach in what Freire terms the “Banking Model” of education, where a student is treated like an empty vessel to be filled with knowledge, would be unsuccessful in a theatre arts classroom. Drama classes are not founded on dates or terms, though these things have some
elementary import. The core curriculum instead necessitates analysis, reflection, and creation. Therefore, Freire’s argument for the integration of “problem-solving” education, which helps students to perceive critically the world in which they operate and that world malleable and in transformation, enables the learner to be treated as a co-creator of knowledge (2000). Ideally, education can and should instill critical thinking skills, allowing for a “dialogue with people about their actions” (2000). Contemporary teachers, and especially those within the arts, must learn to engage in discourse with their students and prompt those students to have thoughtful discussions with each other and within their various communities.

Dewey suggests that “democracy is the idea of community life” inasmuch as the community is one that provides shared experiences and participation. A classroom community is an ideal point from which to explore the necessary questions that promote thought and action. He further observes, “Only continuous inquiry can provide the material of enduring opinion about public matters” (Dewey, 1927). Though written nearly ninety years ago, Dewey succinctly details the necessity of critical questioning found in quality educational practices and methods of analysis and introspection. Theatre Arts curriculum should embrace these ideals of student learning and understanding, while adding the element of audience. Theatrical practice can open up a dialogue that empowers both the audience and the participants. Many dedicated theatre educators have realized that “Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it” (Boal, 2002).

Creativity expert Ken Robinson recently discussed the challenges of education in the standard school system. In a widely publicized TED talk about the need for arts education, he argued that the limitations of standardized testing are in danger of taking autonomy and
creativity away from the teacher. In his frequent public and private school observations, he notes “education is a personal and unique experience, a human system under which certain conditions, people can thrive or die” (2013). Robinson has surmised that personalized and diverse curriculum is the only approach that works for the masses; but sadly, these are the strategies classified as alternative education and at times can be far too infrequently utilized. He notes, “A real education has to give equal weight to arts, the humanities, physical education and [core] subjects… The arts aren’t just important because they improve math scores, they are important because they speak to parts of children’s beings which are otherwise untouched” (Robinson, 2013).

I have seen that power manifest in class after class of students as they embrace John Proctor and Tevye, Ophelia and Fiona, Pippin and Millie. Walking in characters’ shoes, telling stories with their words, and using their hands to create has allowed my students to reflect and to question and to wonder. Stories can be a powerful force. From those told to us in our childhood to the commercialism circling all around us in this media age of access, we are a part of the places and experiences that shape our lives and the stories handed down through our various cultures. Forbes argues that nations are created upon the stories they feed themselves. The same can be said for families, individuals, and school environments. If, as he surmises, stories make us human and help us create a shared value system, then are we doing all we can as parents, teachers, politicians, et al., to promote communication and application in creativity and creation? He states, “We tell stories to reveal our most authentic selves, to pull ourselves toward our most authentic selves” (Forbes, 2008). I have found this to be true of my students. In creating characters onstage, my quest is to help student actors and technicians discover the characters’ stories, to make the honest telling of the narrative the most important thing, and to facilitate
students’ discovery of their own stories along the way. In my classroom, and many other contemporary theatre arts classrooms like it, teachers and students are in a constant process of discovery and creation.

Many contemporary drama classrooms like mine focus on student-driven learning, use of body and image, and enactment. Educational researchers have found that “drama educators are uniquely placed to offer the possibility of engaging students in culturally framed exploration using technology to create new learning” (Anderson, Cameron & Carroll, 2009). Ideal classrooms also find ways to engage students with current technology. Far too often, however, there is a disconnect between the students, who are “Digital Natives” engaging with technology that has always been a part of their lives, and the teachers, who appear as “Digital Immigrants,” struggling to catch up to changing trends and modes of interaction and communication. Though some aspect of the native and immigrant dilemma might always be with us as technology and communication are continually evolving, there is still a need to address this disparity.

Anderson, Cameron and Carroll observe that drama educators are often left wondering how they might respond to this challenge “where the body seems to have been made marginal and dramatic role is pervasive and rendered ambiguous through the online world” (2009). Clearly, there is an inherent need to change the supposed method of drama education in favor of one that provides the inclusion of technology in its everyday practices.

This need for increased technology and media literacy in education was discussed by Glen Bull and his colleagues, who noted: “Students’ energy and passion are lost, in part, because of the need to address specific learning objectives in a constrained amount of time…” The added complexity introduced by technology combined with limited amounts of time available in school settings has proven to be a significant barrier to school use of these
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technologies” (Bull, Thompson. Searson, Garofalo, Park, Young & Lee, 2008, p. 102). Indeed, many traditional drama teachers fear breaking from thousands of years of established and quite workable practice. The evidence demonstrates that seeing and participating in theatre can be a healthy activity for students’ minds and bodies. Researchers found that viewing live theatrical productions leads to “enhanced knowledge of the plot, increased vocabulary, greater tolerance and improved ability to read the emotions of others.” They determined that “seeing live theater produced positive effects that reading a play or watching a movie of the play does not produce” (University of Arkansas, 2014). From this, we can conclude that live theatre does much for student learning, critical thinking, and practical application.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that educational theatre practice and technology need to be exclusive of each other. Their compatibility can reach beyond simply lighting a stage or amplifying vocals. Educational drama can be transformed by technology and the inclusion of media literacy; our perceptions of life, culture, circumstances, etc. can change because of the everyday use of mobile technology. Carroll, Anderson, and Cameron seek to bring youth theatre, educational drama, and digital media through process drama. Anderson encourages teachers to start thinking of Generation Y (Gen-Y) as “interactive creative partners rather than passive consumers of entertainment and information” (2006). Perhaps that is where some tenured teachers may feel some hesitancy in going beyond the established cannon of dramatic works and approaching students as playwrights, co-creators, and co-directors. There could be a fear that a student’s age might, in some ways, impede their ability as writers, their experience growing up immersed in technology must be utilized for creative expression. Further, Carroll observes that, “Young people live in a world where the boundaries between producer and consumer have become quite fluid; their mobile phones are becoming personal media production
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studios for real-time interaction.” A contemporary theatre arts classroom can be an ideal space for such exploration, observation and creation. Indeed, Cameron observes, “In a sense, drama is the original virtual reality classroom” (Carroll, Anderson & Cameron, 2006).

The Necessity of Technology Inclusion in Classrooms

As a Theatre Arts teacher, I have often approached technology with trepidation. I teach an art form that is thousands of years old; its skill sets and terminology really reached its peak in the past two hundred years. Often, for teachers like myself, there is hesitation to change from the trusted practices of Stanislavski or the classic texts like Shakespeare and Arthur Miller. I find myself at odds with much of what is now deemed popular on television, the internet, and film. However, a hesitation to or even an intolerance of the addition of popular culture texts limits the accessibility of the contemporary student learning and application. Therefore, a compromise must be made. If I wish to help my students thoughtfully encounter and even appreciate the classics, I must find a way to engage them by using the technology through which they function and communicate.

The current generation of students entering college, sometimes termed Generation Y, is the first to have lived their entire lives immersed in digital technologies. In the community at Lehi High School, nearly all of the current Gen-Y students have computers and cell phones. They use communication technologies (instant messaging and texting) and social media (blogs, Facebook, etc.) extensively. Prenksy (2001) coined the term “digital natives” to describe this generation of students who are all “‘native speakers’ of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet” (Bull, Thompson. Searson, Garofalo, Park, Young & Lee, 2008). While
the definition is a bit dated, the term now includes those with constant mobile technology and accessibility and has been adopted by media literacy scholars like Thompson, Bull, Lee, and others.

Teens today are actively involved with telling their stories in a digital format and using technology as an outlet for their creativity. It is a disservice to those students learning styles and to the ever-changing world of education to not adapt Web 2.0 technologies for school use. Further, “Technology also changes the way teachers teach, offering educators effective ways to reach different types of learners and assess student understanding through multiple means. It also enhances the relationship between teacher and student. When technology is effectively integrated into subject areas, teachers grow into roles of adviser, content expert, and coach” (Franklin, 2008).

It’s important for modern educators to realize the status quo might not be the optimal situation and that innovation often needs to be at the forefront. We need to stop avoiding the truth of how powerful popular culture is and its presence in our classrooms and our lives. Although as parents or teachers we may feel out of our league in incorporating it in our classrooms or homes, we have an obligation to reach out and help students and children succeed. Success is based on the best learning strategies for the new generation and not on tired practices that have prevailed as the educational authority for so long. Though the field of technology in the drama classroom and process art might be somewhat emerging, there are a number of thinkers at the forefront of the research. Beach and O’Brien highlight the importance of teaching popular culture texts in the classroom. They suggest that in educational settings, high culture mixes with popular culture and manifests itself in the form of Digital Media. Current society functions in a world of digital connectivity and the pervading presence of popular culture. It
would be a mistake for any educator to avoid the power of popular culture texts. Researchers note “school sanctioned traditional pedagogies will be increasingly ineffective with students who are adapting more and more to engaging with popular culture pedagogies” and that schools need to be reformulated to teach students the “ability to understand the power of images and sounds, to recognize and to use that power, to manipulate and transform media, to distribute them pervasively and to easily adapt them to new forms” (Beach & O’Brien, 2008).

Though there is certainly some hesitancy for established teachers to incorporate digital media and popular culture texts, there is emerging evidence that social networking sites, such as Facebook, can help students become academically and socially integrated and aid in improving learning outcomes. Researchers in China and Hong Kong found that “The typical social network pattern on Facebook is often in a core-periphery mode: an individual has close relationships with core friends and weak relationships with many others,” the team says. “Online social networking applications such as Facebook offer an efficient platform for students’ socialization by expanding their network scope and maintaining close relationships.” In interviews, students reported that Facebook allowed them to connect with the faculty and other students, “provide comments to peers, share knowledge, share feelings with peers, join groups established for subjects, collaboration: notification, discussion, course schedule, project management calendar and to use educational applications for organizing learning activities” (Tan, Yu, Vogel, Kwok, 2011).

The traditional educator must become the connected educator, searching for better ways to join with the students and engage them in the course material. Educational think-tanks like Edutopia and the Lucas Educational Foundation have noted that technology “changes the way teachers teach, offering educators effective ways to reach different types of learners and assess
student understanding through multiple means. It also enhances the relationship between teacher and student. When technology is effectively integrated into subject areas, teachers grow into roles of adviser, content expert, and coach” (Franklin, 2008). Those shifting roles allow the traditional educational paradigm to shift into a format that encourages co-work with the educator and the students. Further, in their work and classroom observations, researchers found “New technology and tools for visualizing and modeling…” offer students ways to experiment and observe phenomenon and to view results in graphic ways that aid in understanding” (Franklin, 2008).

Technology is of great import in an arts classroom, where students are in a constant state of critical observation, discovery, and creation. Although technological resources might appear a bit limited in many realms of public education, indeed it seems so in a classroom like mine, there is still potential for technology inclusion and growth. In addition to the use of technical theatre equipment like lighting and sound equipment in a drama space, computer technology should be more fully examined and included. Social media websites, digital networking sites, and hobby creation sites such as Pinterest can be utilized in a variety of ways to promote student creation and analysis. Further, many students have such technology at their fingertips with their smart phones and tablets. Professors and drama education researchers Anderson, Cameron, and Carroll, have observed that “Educators need to think seriously about how pedagogy can push technology, rather than technology pushing pedagogy” (2006). They examine how technology can be socially shaped for educational purposes, thus avoiding the learned helplessness that drama teachers sometimes fear. They delve into ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) as a “cultural product consisting of knowledge and social behavior as well as physical tools” (Anderson, Cameron, and Carroll, 2009). The inclusion of these tools, which
will be more fully addressed in the methodology section of this paper, allows for drama teachers to aide students in critical examination of their technical and landscape.

Researchers speak of “authenticity” with in-school activities and lessons, noting that students should “utilize the same tools and contexts as their out-of-school counterparts” (Shaltry, Henriksen, Wu, & Dickson, 2013). Noting the already excessive use of Facebook and other social media and networking sites, teachers could incorporate those same formats, with which their students are already familiar, into their curriculum. This would allow for the “power of online community building” (Shaltry, Henriksen, Wu, & Dickson, 2013). We must reach beyond the supposed hype surrounding new technology and critically examine its place in and influence on media messages, culture, and opportunities within the classroom setting. This interactivity manifests itself in the forms of “Transmissional interactivity (multi-casting, be your own editor, etc.), Consultation Interactivity (Video on demand, online information systems, etc.), Conversational Interactivity (video conferencing, email, etc.) and Registrational Interactivity (surveillance systems, intelligence interfaces, etc.)” (Jensen, 1998). Each of these interactive formats can and should be utilized in the classroom space.

Educational drama researcher and practitioner Susan Davis further examines the impact of the digital revolution that could be used in drama education. She pays particular focus to the pedagogical and process applications inside the drama classroom. Citing several case studies, in her article *Cyberdrama, Creativity and Engagement: Supporting young people’s creative practice in a digital age*, Davis looks at process, conventions, and interactions for creating drama online. She notes: “the possibilities for extending on live and face-to-face drama processes [include] the provision of additional spaces for building and realizing the drama, the possibility of having a wider audience for student work, more immediate returns for effort expended,
enhanced multi-media skills and creative practice and opportunities for different communication and collaboration than may exist in the classroom context” (Davis, 2009). By embracing and utilizing the technology that students have readily available in their pocket, the drama educator can open a new world of creative process to her students. Ideally, she can also get them to think beyond the mere creation of media and look into the implications, meanings and responses to student created media like wall posts, image files, and video submissions. Utilization of mobile technology allows for an audience beyond a high school auditorium and larger access for students to theatre spaces generally considered beyond their reach. Moreover, Davis examines the creative processes of young people using Information and Communication Technologies as an online space in which the educator can implement co-curricular performance and utilize technology. She emphasizes that this type of dramatic practice “offers young people opportunities to explore drama through new modes and the use of ICTs can be seen as contributing different tools, spaces and communities for creative activity” (Davis, 2010). This creative activity can be extended to include the utilization of a variety of technologies, like digital social media, in empowering students to understand and analyze the media messages they encounter.

Influences of Digital Social Media

If it is true that we cannot avoid the media messages students encounter, then we must educate these young people on how to objectively encounter the messages and decide their validity. Lippman asks, “What is propaganda, if not the effort to alter the picture to which men respond, to substitute one social pattern for another” (1929). He encourages man to see the vast
portions of the world and “make a trustworthy picture inside of his head of the world beyond his reach.” The images from these vast portions of which he speaks bombard students daily in the form of digital social media.

There has been significant development in the amount and accessibility of digital social media within the past few years. In fact, in many ways it has changed the way each culture has chosen to communicate with each other. Our most recent form of communication, this type of media is vast and varied in its scope, purpose and audience. Likewise, it is also varied in its potential. An understanding, therefore, of the forms of digital social media and its outreach is imperative in learning to read this form of communication.

Digital social media focuses on the virtual interactions of user-generated content. It centers on communications between individuals and communities in which they create, share, and comment on information. It is found in a number of internet-based applications including, but not limited to network-based applications like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr; video and picture applications like Vine, YouTube, and Snap Chat; news-based applications such as Weather, breaking news, or traffic alerts on a mobile device; opinion-based applications like podcasts and blogs; and interest-based applications like Pintrest, virtual game worlds and virtual social worlds. As one can clearly see the world of digital social media is extensive and in many cases free-of-charge, thus opening it to access by any user with the proper technological equipment.

In this new age of “Web 2.0” there is an escalation of sharing and interacting on the world wide web, including blogs, video and photo sharing sites, social bookmarking, social media, microblogging sites and social networks. This growth in sharing, connecting and collaboration has increased exponentially with the availability and relatively low cost of smart
phones and Internet connectivity. In a contemporary classroom like mine, the majority of student have ready access to these technologies and use them frequently to update profiles and construct aspects of self while also making judgments based on the updated statuses, pictures and profiles of others they encounter daily online.

Researchers Christina Jaschinski and Piet Kommers found that “People meet, connect and interact in these online communities by using a profile as a representation of their identity” (2012). They found that the impressions that users formulate about the online profiles of others they encounter lack the non-verbal cues that are imperative to an understanding of intent. Unfortunately, users can choose to control aspects of their identity in the creation of their profile, like photo and status updates, but cannot control how those messages and images are perceived by their online friends and other users. Despite these failings, the use of social networking and photo sharing sites is pervasive among this age group of early adolescence through the teen years. Researchers found that about seventy-three percent of online American teens use social networking sites to share “photos, interests and experiences with others… teens turn to the Internet to express their identities and share their stories” (Fitch, 2012). Teens’ online connections seem to be an extension of the relationships they have offline as well.

As this form of communication is so readily available and frequently utilized, it becomes imperative for the educational researcher and contemporary teacher to make an effort to understand these communication technologies and their appeal to young people. Theorist Janice Radway believes in empowering readers and consumers of media by giving their beliefs, questions, and feelings a space in which to operate in their media landscape. She encourages theorists to make an attempt to understand why people do what they do by discovering the “constructions they place on their behavior, the interpretations they make of their actions…A
shift in focus from the text itself to the complex social event of viewing or interacting” (1991). Radway discusses signification, construction of behavior, and the active process of consuming media and culture. Her work with adults can and should be extended to pedagogical practice.

Students need the opportunity to reflect on how they are influenced by media messages and give their impulses a space to reflect and create. The very act of interacting with media that appears on their online profiles or creating media to be posted to their “walls,” allows for introspection into the process and outcome of such postings. Within the past few years and with the massive growth of digital social networking sites like Facebook, research has found that what people really “like” about social networking might actually be themselves. “Despite the name ‘social networks,’ much user activity on networking sites is self-focused,” said Brittany Gentile, a researcher from the University of Georgia. She notes that “editing yourself and constructing yourself on these social networking sites, even for a short period of time, seems to have an effect on how you see yourself” (University of Georgia, 2012). This continual process of editing and updating one’s identity online necessitates inquiry and analysis into this new online world.

Contemporary students cultivate their lives online. They choose how to construct the version of themselves presented on their social media “walls.” Researcher and interactive media expert Victoria Mapplebeck, in examining the generation of digital natives, questions how we choose to “curate” our lives online? Further she wonders how honest are we about our lives on social media? She notes: “Facebook profiles and postings often seem relentlessly upbeat. We create an avatar of our lives, an avatar who is slimmer, has more friends, a better love life and a better job than we do.” Further, she observes: “We have become our own spin doctors and constantly want people to find out what is going on in our lives, from the incredibly mundane to personal decisions and choices that would have otherwise been private.” It appears that the
constant spotlight phenomenon and permanence of digital social media fundamentally changes the experience of growing up and how we represent ourselves. She states: “There is only a ‘like’ button on Facebook, there is no place to describe our deficiencies, only space to paint a rather superficial and idealized portrait of our digital lives” (University of Royal Holloway London, 2014).

This phenomenology demonstrates that not only are students constructing their own identity by what they post online, these young people are also forming opinions and assumptions about themselves and others based on the content or comments generated by others in their circles of influence. Therefore, critical pedagogy necessitates that students must be taught to encounter the digital social media posted on their “walls” with a critical eye and understand the evolving role of authorship in how we receive meaning from a media message. Barthes notes that meaning is derived from every person’s experience with a text, and that although the author was involved with the initial creation of the text and the thoughts and intentions behind it, once it has been released into the world, it is the readers’ interaction with and reception of the text that matters most. He places the responsibility for the meaning within the hands of the reader (Barthes, 1977).

This theory is specifically interesting with its stakes in identity construction based on digital social media. While the intent of the author in posting something on his or her “wall” or the “wall” of another may be innocent, it is in the receiving and processing of that message that meaning really takes place. That is where communication seems to fail us within a digital world, where the author is distanced by technology, the non-verbal cues of traditional communication are absent and the recipient determines meaning and intent.
Although it seems the recipient becomes the decisive factor in the meaning of the message, the initial author still determines the need to construct and express self online. Social networking sites are used as spaces not only for the presentation of self and construction of identity, but also for connection and response within what seems to be a safe zone. This safe zone tends to be used by teens and adolescents as a place wherein they can explore and express feelings and experiences and find ways to cope online with the problems they are facing offline.

A number of additional researchers today have examined the role of digital social media and coping strategies. Two recent studies examining the role of digital networking sites noted both negative and positive effects of such technology, stating that although the use of social networking sites, such as Facebook, may “provide new means of triggering and prolonging preservative thinking, exacerbating negative mood and negatively affecting adjustment,” (Tran, 2013) there is, indeed, an alternate side wherein “popular online social networks such as Facebook may offer an innovative strategy for addressing student stress and supporting coping” (George, Dellasega, Whitehead, & Bordon, 2013). The ever-evolving realm of interconnectivity through social and digital networking sites seems to have an impact on how people encounter, engage with, and express emotion. Further, this engagement seems to have communicable qualities as others are affected by online posts.

Kramer, Guillory and Hancock set out to test whether emotional contagion – the tendency for individuals to emotionally converge – occurs outside of in-person interaction between individuals by reducing the amount of emotional content in the online News Feed. While ample evidence has been found for this spread of emotions in a real world situation, looking at people who closely associate with each other in work, school and familial settings, this was the first time such a study attempted to see if the same singularity could exist and have such powerful affects.
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in the online world. The researchers found that when “positive expressions were reduced, people produced fewer positive posts and more negative posts; when negative expressions were reduced, the opposite pattern occurred.” These results demonstrate that the various emotions expressed by others on digital networking sites like Facebook influence our own emotions, “constituting experimental evidence for massive-scale contagion via social networks” (2014).

Their results seem to suggest that when an online “friend” expresses emotions on their digital walls, an “emotional contagion” occurs, spreading that sentiment to others who read and interpret the expressed emotion and influencing their mood patterns in the real world (Kramer, Guillory, & Hancock, 2014). Therefore, students’ moods and perception of a situation can clearly be influenced by their online friends and can translate into how they experience and deal with situations and eventualities in an offline setting as well. As an educator, I have seen such “massive-scale emotional contagion” in the everyday interactions in my classroom. In recent years, it has become apparent, through the discussions in which my students participate and observations that they input, that much of this shared sense of emotion has been occurring online and translating into the physical world.

As an educator who functions, for the most part, in the offline physical world, I have often found a disconnect with my students as I attempt to understand how and why they tend to be so drawn to the online world. Indeed, I feel an increasing need to understand how my students are communicating with technology and how and why they are being emotionally affected by online content posted by their peers and acquaintances. I have discovered, as an educational researcher and teacher, that it is imperative for me to make an effort to incorporate technology and popular culture tools like digital social media into my practice and curriculum in
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an effort to assist my students and provide them with the tools to critically engage with these technologies and think more deeply about their online interactions.

Ian Bogost noted, “Technology neither saves us nor condemns us. It influences us, of course, changing how we perceive, conceive of, and interact with our world. It’s an extension of ourselves.” Bogost further notes that technology is imperative to the student of identity construction as it “structures and informs our understanding and behavior” (2011). I find that I must embrace the possibilities of technology inclusion in my contemporary theatre arts classroom and help my students use it in ways that will promote lifelong learning and critical thinking. This inclusion can be attempted in a contemporary drama classroom through a variety of tools that enhance dramatic study and practice. The incorporation into a drama curriculum of digital storytelling, documentary film and creative participation in the form of devised theatre are ideal starting points from which to explore adolescent identity construction through and using digital social media, its implications and place within a larger study of the influence of media messages on our perception of self and others.

Digital Storytelling and Documentary Film

As it is the primary goal of an actor or director to be a storyteller, perhaps one of the best methods for bridging this gap between contemporary student learning and traditional pedagogy is the incorporation of digital storytelling into the curriculum. Forbes discussed the need for story and the conflicted relationship we, as humans, have with it. He states that the costs of healthy human experience are at risk, like acceptance, belonging, tolerance, the ability to judge real from
artificial, etc. when we get lost in fact and progress, noting that: “we need stories to help us rethink what it means to be human today” (Forbes, 2008).

The Center for Digital Storytelling partners with organizations around the world to help users learn to listen and share. Their goal is to create a space for digital stories that promotes change and causes community action. They observe: “being heard meets a deep-seated human need for connection. The simple yet critically important act of being acknowledged, being listened to – truly being heard – changes everything. It changes the person being listened to and therefore everything connected to that person” (1998). In my simple classroom observations, I have found that when students feel that they have been heard and that their opinion is valued, the impact far exceeds that of any lecture on the part of the teacher. Their experiences have significance and depth, and their contribution to the dialogue regarding media and identity development must be realized.

Adolescents, teens, and young adults seem to be in a constant state of identity construction. Jenkins observes: “Each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow and transformed into resources through which we make sense of our everyday lives” (2006). From Facebook, to Instagram, Twitter to Tumblr, adults and children alike are searching for ways to tell their stories in a digital format. “Transmedia storytelling is the art of world making. To fully experience any fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of storyline across media channels, comparing notes with each other via online discussion groups, and collaborating to insure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience” (Jenkins, 2006). This observation accurately describes the way in which media is being consumed and identity constructed.
There are a number of pedagogical and process applications in drama which can be ideal for the conventions and interactions of drama to manifest themselves in the online world. Leading drama education researchers have found that the possibilities for building on live and face-to-face drama processes with technology inclusion like digital storytelling, docudrama and documentary film provide additional spaces for building and realizing dramatic expression (Davis, 2009, Dogan, 2010, Shaw, 2012). Further, there is a desperate need for narrative, as people see and perceive the world differently, but also the necessity of technological inclusion. “New media and digital video technologies will not in and of themselves make a better world. Developing thoughtful, participatory approaches to how and why these technologies are being used is essential” (Center for Digital Storytelling, 1998). The center finds that personal narratives affect their audiences. Stories can move people to reflect, to change, to treat others with greater compassion, and become involved in civic life.

Digital storytelling, the opportunity to record or document personal stories to be shared, allows for students to critically examine their created texts. Using the digital storytelling and borrowing from the documentary modes, students can tell and create personal stories utilizing image, sound, the body and the voice. This inclusion of technology allows for students to become true documentarians, who, as Barnouw so wisely states, “have a passion for what they find in images and sounds – which always seem more meaningful to them than anything they can invent, [and with which] they present their vision of the world” (1993). Documentary film theorist Bill Nichols discusses the desperate need to tell true stories and use media to cause change. He notes, “We need understanding, with its qualities of empathy and insight, to grasp the implications and consequences of what we do….Lives are at stake. Social actors are not pawns, but people” (2010). He discusses using performance and film to draw attention to people
and policies that need changing. Nichols further advocates putting the representational power in the hands of the people the production or film is representing. Barnouw observes that media has an inherent ability to enlighten or deceive an audience. It is up to the documentary filmmaker to find out how the world can be opened up to participants as they learn to record it (1993).

It is vital that educators incorporate technology and critical examination of media into everyday pedagogical practice, and digital storytelling is one significant means for doing so. As I formulated my research study, it was my desire to teach students the methods involved with digital storytelling and then to create various performative spaces where they could tell their personal stories. The Center for Digital Storytelling has found “personal narratives can touch viewers deeply, moving them to reflect on their own experiences, modify their behavior, treat others with greater compassion, speak out about injustice, and become involved in civic and political life. Whether online, in social media or local communities, or at the institutional/policy level, the sharing of stories has the power to make a real difference” (1998). This is the very quest for so many educators, myself included, and by creating a curriculum that encourages observation and sharing, we open the door for critical thought and introspection.

Art and Creative Participation

Creative participation is at the core of theatrical classroom practice. The inclusion of digital media in art and creative performance could allow for an increased level of participation and enthusiasm on the part of the student. Students who are accustomed to digital media in their daily lives can be introduced to concept drama, an art form that highlights thematic material and social need.
Theatre director, teacher, and activist Augusto Boal found that theatre, especially concept drama and the early foundations for devised theatre, can allow for social change through a group of co-creators and collaborators. Therein lies the ultimate and timely power of the theatrical arts – the ability to change lives both internally and externally. Boal states, “Theatre is the capacity which allows man to observe himself in action. The self-knowledge thus acquired allows him to be the subject (the one who observes) of another subject (the one who acts). It allows him to imagine variations of his action, to study alternatives. Man can see himself in the act of seeing, in the act of acting, in the act of feeling, the act of thinking” (1995).

Drama teachers can begin to incorporate these same techniques in the way they instruct and assess their students. In drama classrooms, formative assessments are centered on students interacting with text and image in a critical manner. In this process, the teacher is giving constant feedback on the work created by the students in the moment, encouraging further depth in engagement.

Devised theatre practices are instrumental in providing a discussion about the creativity that can be produced through process, instead of an overt focus solely on intended outcomes. David Gauntlett states, “Everyday creativity refers to a process which brings together at least one active human mind, and the material or digital world, in the activity of making something” (Jenkins, 2011). Students become an active participant in the world when they perform acts of everyday creativity, allowing them to move past simple artistic observation and into a true creative process.

Art surrounds us and we all use it in some form; we just have to open our eyes and decide to notice. Although creativity is inherent and even assists in the development of survival skills for the weak, creativity can and should be practiced. We become creative to overcome the
myriad of obstacles that come our way; as communities, we have signs, symbols, rituals, and stories that utilize or exhibit art skills. The transformative power of the arts is to “unleash our social imagination and help us envision the world differently” (Knight and Schwarzman, 2005).

Throughout his practice, writings, and performance, Boal advocated participatory theatre and the inclusion of the audience in decision making, especially through the foundation of devised theatre. In this practice, he coins the term “spect-actors” and his actors invite the “spect-actors,” the members of the audience, to take part in the creation of theatrical pieces geared toward social change. He observes, “Wouldn’t it be wonderful to see a dance piece where the dancers danced in the first act and in the second showed the audience how to dance? Wouldn’t it be wonderful to see a musical where in the first act the actors sang and in the second we all sang together?...This is...how artists should be—we should be creators and also teach the public how to be creators, how to make art, so that we may all use that art together” (Boal, 2002).

Boal’s practice was indeed participatory. He encouraged the audience to critically think about the social injustice that was occurring around them and then actively take part in facilitating change. Inside of a drama classroom, this collaborative environment stimulates critical thinking, analysis, and communication, life-long skills that are imperative for students to fully function in the school community, the public education system, and beyond. Further, they are at the core of media literacy education and a necessary inclusion in an arts classroom. These two entities—creative participation in art and media literacy education—go hand in hand; together they stimulate thought, contribution, and practical analysis.
Media Literacy Education and Critical Thinking Skills

A collaborative approach can best be utilized in a classroom or performance space where the media literacy skills of Access, Analysis, Evaluation, and Communication (NAMLE, 2007) are at the forefront of everyday discussion and standard practice. Students today function in a world of technological communication. I post notices and cast lists on my blog. The students sign up for a texting service that reminds them of when assignments are due, and they can rarely be seen without their phones. They exist in a world of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter posts and have the screenshot capabilities ever ready on their smart phones when a Snapchat is sent to them. Their world is a digital world and it becomes an authentic space in which they operate. The things posted by them or for them on their digital walls influence their identity every day. Their reactions to those posts help to construct their thoughts of self, perception of the world, coping strategies in the face of stress and depression, and identity. Jenkins notes, “Because there is more information on any given topic than anyone can store in their head, there is an added incentive for us to talk among ourselves about the media we consume” (2006). In order to better help students cope with the digital world they inhabit, teachers must begin to incorporate discussion and use of these digital technologies in their classrooms.

Indeed, in any teaching situation, it is imperative to interact with students using a variety of modes and methods. But, perhaps, it is most advantageous to begin with critical questioning and reflection. It has been observed, “the twenty-first century is a media-saturated, technologically dependent, and globally connected world” where it is essential to develop critical media literacy to “empower students and citizens to adequately read media messages and produce media themselves” (Kellner & Share, 2007).
It is imperative, therefore, to understand and accept this extension of ourselves found in technology. The inclusion of media literacy education into drama and other classrooms allows for “audiences (students), empowered by these new technologies, [to] occupy a space at the intersection between old and new media, [and] demand the right to participate within the culture” (Jenkins, 2006).

Kellner and Share discuss the positive and negative outcomes of a number of approaches to incorporating media literacy, focusing on giving the oppressed a voice, the construction of all media, the role of the audience and process of representation. Students must be encouraged to produce their own reading and meanings for a piece of media. They found that “if we combine critical autonomy with critical solidarity, we can teach students to be independent and interdependent critical thinkers, who will be less dependent on media framing and representation” (2007).

Media literacy education is a fast-growing field of educational research and practice. The Center for Media Literacy has established a Media Literacy Kit to assist teachers in implementing this important field of study into their classroom curriculum. In it we read,

Today information about the world around us comes to us not only by words on a piece of paper but more and more through the powerful images and sounds of our multi-media culture. Although mediated messages appear to be self-evident, in truth, they use a complex audio/visual ‘language’ which has its own rules (grammar) and which can be used to express many-layered concepts and ideas about the world (Thoman & Jolls, 2005).

For far too long, centuries in fact, students have learned facts through the process of rote memorization and regurgitation. Technological advancements have enabled users to access any
fact at the touch of a button. Relevant education must, therefore, embrace higher thinking skills of analysis and evaluation, instead of standardized testing; essentially those skills found within media literacy education. Additionally, Thoman and Jolls note that for children and students to “navigate their lives through this multi-media culture, they need to be fluent in ‘reading’ and ‘writing’ the language of images and sounds just as we have always taught them to ‘read’ and ‘write’ the language of printed communications” (2005).

Media literacy is about helping students become competent, critical and literate in all media forms so that they control the interpretation of what they see or hear rather than letting the interpretation control them. To become media literate is not to memorize facts or statistics about the media, but rather to learn to raise the right questions about what one is watching, reading or listening to. (Thoman & Jolls, 2005)

That ability to think for oneself allows for the goals presented by the Center for Media Literacy in their teaching kit. They advocate that Media Literacy Education is imperative because:

- It strengthens observation and interpretation.
- It deepens understanding and appreciation.
- It challenges stereotyping – both misrepresentations and/or underrepresentations.
- It illuminates bias and point of view.
- It uncovers motivations.
- It exposes implicit messages that are less obvious.
- It gives perspective and meaning to the media creators.
- It enlightens society about the effects and implications of a message (Thoman & Jolls, 2005).
Flores-Koulish found that teachers must have a core understanding of media literacy in order to engage the students in their learning and help them to critically examine the media they view and consume (2005). In her report on media literacy education, Hobbs highlights the competencies of digital and media literacy, including the necessary methods of: “access, analyze and evaluate, create, reflect, and act” (2010). These methods allow students to encounter a variety of texts and take responsibility for their own learning. Hobbs notes that as the Common Core State Standards Initiative states, “To be ready for college, workforce training, and life in a technological society, students need the ability to gather, comprehend, evaluate, synthesize, report on, and create a high volume and extensive range of print and non-print texts in media forms old and new. The need to research and to consume and produce media is embedded into every element of today’s curriculum” (Hobbs, 2010).

Clearly this dialogue is coming to the forefront in an effort to promote necessary change. No longer can educators expect rote memorization to fit the bill for the skill set required for student success. “Only through communication can human life hold meaning. The teacher’s thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students’ thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them. Authentic thinking...[takes place] only in communication” (Freire, 2000). It is essential, therefore, for the teacher to open up an atmosphere of inquiry and discussion. Further, this practice can lead to the development of more informed participants in society and in their own educational process.

Action Research Project and Research Questions

Creative power is at the heart of dramatic practice. However, it is in the process of creation, the carpentry itself, where true critical thinking takes place. Technology theorist Ian
Bogost discusses the process of carpentry and creation. He notes: “Carpentry entails making things that explain how things make their world” (2012). He says that ideas inform creating, and creation states something about the world. Bogost notes that when we are presented with media artifacts, we create meaning, and those objects affect how we perceive the world. This is the very concept that I attempted to instill in my students this year as we crafted a theatre/media piece to present to the community and at competition. Utilizing my intermediate drama class, I created a unit that examined this concept of identity development, focusing particularly on how students construct their identity online, how they allow digital media to impact their perceptions of themselves or the world around them, how digital media influences them, and what they choose to post or share online. This project and the lesson plans and activities will be discussed at length later in this thesis. The goal of the unit was to encourage students to critically think about the media they encounter online and who authors it. Using a variety of activities, media artifacts, class discussions, journal entries and blog posts, students collaboratively created a devised theatre piece that discusses the technology in their lives and their engagement with this technology.

My goal as a theatre educator is to create a space where students can learn to be active participants in the world and be creatively productive each day. We can do so in so many ways, whether onstage, in writing, in a video, on a blog, or through posting thoughts, art, songs on digital social media, etc. When these responses, posts, creations, etc. are authentic, we are promoting creativity and fostering creation. Therein, as Jenkins reports, students can be “empowered by these new technologies” (2006).

It is evident that community, creativity, and culture are essential in a theatre arts classroom. Theatre arts curriculum finds its identity in artistic expression, technique, and
practice. Knight and Schwarzman found that “through art, human beings can acquire a more dynamic understanding of our world, plus important analytical, communication and vocational skills” (2005). Using the process of contact, research, action, feedback, and teaching, these theatre practitioners have attempted to understand the workings of the creative process that can and should be utilized within a high school classroom like mine.

My research in this field led me to the creation of my action research project. I determined that it would be advantageous to help my students understand the influence of digital social media on their identity construction. Using survey, reflexive journals, class discussions and student written work, I chose to look at the type and rate of the digital social media they consumed and to teach them about and provide them with the tools and verbiage necessary to critically analyze their usage and its impact on how they felt about themselves and the world in which they function.

Thoman and Jolls note that one of the best ways to understand how media is put together is to create media oneself about a community issue (2005). It is in this vein that I created an intermediate drama curriculum unit that analyzes how and why students are expressing and constructing self through digital social media. As the Internet is a contested site of identity performance and creation, we began by examining the representations of people, media, self, and culture there. In the next chapter, I will discuss my methodology for this action research project, including an examination of the grounded research theory, participants and environs, the methods and procedures used as well as the plan for data collection and analysis research questions, which include the following:

- How does digital social media influence construction and expression of self and identity?
- Can digital storytelling in theatre settings express identity and constructed identity?
Chapter three will scrutinize the results of the study participants and focus groups. This will include data gathered from assignments, survey and interview responses and participant generated creations. It will look at student responses to media and digital social media stimuli and how their responses changed over the course of the project. Further, emphasis will be placed on the elements and techniques found within digital storytelling and the role of theatre performance in the expression of digital social media influences.

The fourth and final chapter will discuss the findings to the research questions, as well as a review of the project outcomes and the final performative piece the students will have created and shared. Finally this chapter will outline where this study can and should go beyond my theatre arts classroom. In addition to the bibliography, the appendices consists of unit lesson plans, collection of the approved IRB documents, surveys, assignments and writing prompts, focus group materials and the final performance script. At the end of the study, it is proposed that this research will be shared with other educators in conference setting and as a published thesis. There is an inherent benefit to society and culture when young people begin to critically think about and examine the world in which they operate. The goal with a project like this is to allow students the opportunity to become more media literate and aware of the role of technology and communication in their lives. As this research is shared with other educators who take a concept like this and incorporate it in their own classrooms, there is potential for those benefits to be exponentially multiplied. Although theatre is a discipline that has existed for thousands of years, there is a shift into devised and communal theatre that must be explored. It is my hope that the results of this study will allow a space for students and educators to be more fully aware as observers, better communicators, and creative partners in the art of representation and identity expression.
Qualitative Educational Research

Oftentimes, within a secondary education classroom, and much to the chagrin of school district professional-development specialists, it is difficult to identify quantifiable data that really means anything. This is almost always true in an arts classroom. In a recent study commissioned by Center for Educational Governance, researchers found that “At the classroom level, teachers used data because they believed that doing so allowed them to do a better job meeting their students’ learning needs. Ultimately, how educators defined ‘data’ informed how they defined learning, just as how they defined learning influenced the type of data they valued.” However, this same study theorized “because numeric data fell short of capturing some affective dimensions of student learning, teachers often relied on their intuition and relationship-building efforts with students to help guide instructional decisions” (Datnow, Park, & Kennedy, 2008).

Frequently, in any classroom setting, it is impossible to simply manipulate and control variables in order to arrive at a pre-determined hypothesis. Indeed, much educational research has “relied too much on the researcher’s view of education and less on the research participant’s view” (Cresswell, 2008). Beach and O’Brien further observed that “school sanctioned traditional pedagogies will be increasingly ineffective with students who are adapting more and more to engaging with popular culture pedagogies” and that schools need to be reformulated to teach students the “ability to understand the power of images and sounds, to recognize and to use that power, to manipulate and transform media, to distribute them pervasively and to easily adapt them to new forms” (2008). This deficiency creates the need for qualitative research, which allows the subjects of the research to have a voice in their representation and experience. To
make educational research and lasting reform mean something, the rote memorization and statistical analysis often found in traditional educational data must be augmented in the pursuit of long-term methodology that actually allows for the complexity of the individual and the community. Educational practice built within the understanding and boundaries of qualitative research can aid the primary researcher/teacher in devising impactful lessons and activities.

Qualitative research, like that practiced and advocated by Berg (2009), sets out to examine social settings and the individuals therein. A theatre arts classroom provides a rich social setting in which to conduct this type of qualitative research, specifically action research. Further, though my focus is on students in the controlled environment that is my classroom, what these students experienced in this unit might, hopefully, encourage other drama educators to include contemporary technology and popular culture texts in their own classrooms. Below I will describe action research as a methodology and intimate how its structure will aid my research.

Action Research

Action research may be thought of as a method of research carried out with a team approach that includes a researcher and members of some organization, community, or network (those who may be thought of as a stakeholder in the research effort), who are collectively seeking to improve the organization or situation of the participants – in effect, where the goal of the research is not simply research for the sake of research or theory, but is an effort to create a positive change in the lives of the stakeholders (Berg& Lune, 2012).

My purpose in undertaking an action research project is to help my students and to empower this community of teenagers to process and use the information we gathered together in changing
how they look at authorship within digital media environs, commercialized media, and digital social media. It has been noted that action research works well in the realm of education because it is “not a set of concrete steps, but a process of learning from experience, a dialectical interplay between practice, reflection, and learning” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002). It is within this qualitative process of educational practice, reflection, and instrumental revision that I choose to center my action research thesis.

My research looked at the practices, motivations, and emotions of intermediate drama students as they interacted with media and digital social media. I achieved this by means of a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory combines inductive and deductive reasoning through observing the data minutely, counting words, noting terms, finding the themes and relationships through open coding, and linking or grounding the data to “ascertain some of the variations and nuances of these ways in which the parties in an exchange create their social worlds” (Berg & Lune, 2012).

The diagram (Figure 2.1), created by Berg and Lune, shows the flow of thought in grounded research theory. The process, which is featured in the figure on the following page, begins with a research idea, which leads to a design, collection and analysis of data, reflection on that analysis and then the formation of the theory. It is upon this model of grounded research that I chose to format the plan of action for my thesis work.

A different approach from a standard quantitative approach, grounded theory works particularly well in Qualitative Research and very well in an educational format. The students are not mere research subjects but rather participants in the discovery of the theory. This approach led me to use various forms of data collection, including qualitative research interviews, recorded class discussions, observational notes and student work.
Figure 2.1
(Berg & Lune, 2012)
My goal in gathering the data was to improve instructional practices in my intermediate drama class and to create a space where my students could freely and critically dialogue about a contemporary subject that affects their lives. As previously mentioned, action research works well in the field of education and teaching practice as it allows ordinary people to join together and discuss common questions and issues (Berg & Lune, 2012). As it is reflective and interpretive, and requires the active engagement of individuals traditionally known as subjects, it has a wide range of applications in classrooms and truly is at the heart of good teaching practice. Allowing my students to be active research participants rather than passive research subjects opened up the path for the practical outcomes that action research requires.

Berg noted that the design for a research project is “literally the plan for how the study will be conducted.” This is done best through a spiraling of steps, “each of which is composed of some type of planning, action, and evaluation” (2012). In the case of the qualitative research that took place in my classroom, initial stages of planning included the creation and subsequent revision of the lesson plans, gauging the needs and specifications of the students, as well as the preparation of the interview questions. The action portion of the study came from the implementation of the lesson plans and devised theatre pieces as well as the focus groups and the interviews. Finally, an evaluation of the data was conducted in which to find patterns, themes, and relationships and to aid the student research participants in critically thinking about and analyzing digital social media.

This application was grounded in the data generated by students in my class, who I collected and grouped to first assist me, as the researcher, in understanding how the students generally interact with networking technology and digital social media. I then created lesson plans and short devised theatre performances designed to allow students to critically engage with
media and digital social media. Though it is not the intention to extrapolate larger claims on students or classrooms out of my jurisdiction, this study and practice could be helpful in improving teaching practices and students’ ability to critically think and apply their newfound knowledge. This will be discussed further in Chapter Four, and will be greatly aided by the inclusion of digital technologies and popular culture texts.

Data collection and assessment through qualitative research works particularly well in arts-based classrooms, as the core curriculum in these spaces is founded in an investigation of the power of image and sound. Arts students of all kinds are encouraged, on a daily basis, to not merely repeat facts and figures but rather to break apart and rebuild, to critically examine a text, image, sound, and movement and test it out, to create and engage. The world of the arts is one of reader-response, of artist and audience empowerment, allowing for formative assessments to happen simultaneously with the curriculum instruction. As a drama teacher, I find the method of data collection and analysis within action research to fit well in complex social settings, like an intermediate drama classroom.

Context of Study and Project

As an educational practitioner, I set out to understand how students engage with digital social media and use those interactions to construct their identity and views of the world and themselves within that world. These strategies will be discussed later in this chapter. The theoretical paradigm through which I structured my study centers on a practical approach to engage drama students in a critical discussion. “Drama educators are uniquely placed to offer the possibility of engaging students in culturally framed exploration using technology to create new learning” (Anderson, Cameron, & Carroll, 2009). I find the essential practice of gathering
data and personal media artifacts through an action research project that can be used in one classroom and then shared with other educators to be of particular importance as it “gives credence to the development of powers of reflective thought, discussion, decision, and action by ordinary people participating in collective research on private troubles that they have in common” (Adelman, 2003).

The artifacts and observations were gathered and shared by the student participants in the participatory research study and the observations were made and collected by the primary researcher/teacher and the student participants. At the inception of this project, it was my hope that the methodology I chose to pursue within this project would primarily aid students in understanding how their creation and consumption of digital social media affects their own identity construction. Further, it was my belief that research like this could also address the problem of the technological disconnect between teachers and students.

Developing Research Questions

My own desire to more deeply examine how students are choosing to construct their identity came from my experience with my own graduate work in media literacy education. I returned to get my Master’s degree nine years after graduating from Brigham Young University. I had been teaching Drama and Film at Lehi High School for eight years and felt like I wanted to pursue a higher degree. I immersed myself in the study of media literacy education and found new possibilities for classroom practices and an emerging dialogue with my students. Instead of relying on the units I had taught for years as a full-time teacher, I found myself asking the students about the concerns facing them in their day-to-day lives. I began, almost subconsciously, to alter planned activities and unit lessons to approach these topics of interest for
these students. I found myself using more technology and popular culture texts as I attempted to bridge the gap in what I was accustomed to doing versus what interested the students and opened doors for critical thought and examination.

In my classroom, we had already begun brown-bag lunch sessions prior to this study, in the spring of 2014, when a group of students would come into my room during lunch and talk about the issues and concerns they saw within their school and community environment. During these conversations, I simply sat back and listened, and I was surprised with how readily these students shared information. The conversation often seemed to center on their lives online; they spoke of their “addiction” to Facebook and other networking sites, of cyber bullying, of websites like Tinder and Hot or Not. They talked about digital social media as more than a tool; it was a daily companion.

These conversations and the parallels I found with their feelings and behavior when they were talking about certain posts caused me to think about the relationship between student identity and digital social media. The students talked about what they would post on their social media walls and why. They noted how what other people posted could sometimes affect how they felt about themselves. But the conversation ended there; there was no further analysis or evaluation of these things, and I began to wonder how I could help my students take that final step to critically examine the impact of the content authored by them or others and distributed through digital social media.

This thought led me to the research questions I have chosen to examine in this thesis and accompanying action research project:

• Research Question #1: How does digital social media influence construction and expression of self and identity?
Research Question #2: Can digital storytelling in theatre settings express identity and constructed identity?

Selecting those two questions helped me lay the foundation for my proposed project and the direction I was interested in taking, although it seemed daunting. How might one tackle the enormity of the effect of digital social media? Or even that of identity? As I pondered these questions, I remembered the observation made by Jenkins as cited in chapter one. “Because there is more information on any given topic than anyone can store in their head, there is an added incentive for us to talk among ourselves about the media we consume” (2006). I realized then, though, that the door for such discussion must be opened and dialogue must be incited.

Clearly, contemporary students are digital natives who are engaging on a daily basis with teachers, like myself, who appear as digital immigrants. The terminology and phrasing used by each group are different and often difficult to connect, consequently, creating a bias and divide within the classroom. Because it is largely the one teacher in a room with many students, this disconnect necessitates a change on the part of the minority: the teacher. A practical and thorough approach to analyzing the problems with this technological disconnect between the teacher and the students allows for the creation of a project that can constantly evolve along with the continually changing dynamic of the classroom. There are a number of useful methods of data gathering and qualitative analysis that are essential in establishing a framework through which to support the thesis research and analysis.

Study Participants and Classroom Environ

In the “unique placement” of my drama classroom (Anderson, Cameron, & Carroll, 2009), I have a number of factors that add to this line of inquiry and critical thought. Most of my
students come from a middle-class upbringing and have ready access to digital technology. The intermediate drama class, in which the study was conducted, consisted of forty-eight students, male and female, between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. Most were sophomores, totaling thirty-two students, who were taking part in their first year of high school and came from three different junior high feeder schools. There were fourteen juniors and only two seniors in the class. The class met every other day during the second class period slot.

While not all forty-eight students were participants in the study, I was required to get approval for the students to participate in connection with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Brigham Young University. As a part of the application and approval process, I created the necessary consent forms for Research on a Human Subject. Additionally, I received approval for the project through Alpine School District and Lehi High School Administration. These forms, consisting of the Consent to be a Research Subject, Parental Permission for a Minor, Photographic Release Form and the Video Release Form, can be found in Appendix A of this thesis. Both students and their parents could choose to either opt-in or opt-out of participation in the research without impacting their grades in any way. The forms outlined the proposed project and discussed the limited risks, possible benefits, and ensured confidentiality of the students. Forty-six of the students expressed an interest in taking part in the study, with their parents’ accompanied permission, and brought back the signed forms. The two students whose parents did not want them to take part returned the paperwork unsigned. While they participated in the curriculum and activities, none of their classwork was analyzed as data in the study.

Toward the beginning of the unit, the students took part in a media exposure survey, which I, as the teacher/researcher, designed for the purposes of this study and can be found in the appendix of this document. In an effort to achieve ideal conditions, representatives from each
age group and gender were initially selected for the focus group. The objective of this survey was to use the responses to identify students who could provide insight on a wide spectrum of media consumption. Further factors for inclusion into the research focus group included: participants’ interest in participation, willingness to have their student work analyzed for data, as well as parental support. In the end, seven students joined the focus group: Rylie, Zach, Abby, Jennifer, Candace, Lee, and Scott. All names are pseudonyms, used throughout this thesis to protect the identity of the students participating in the project.

Student Focus Group Participants

For the most part, students enrolled in the intermediate drama class because they like to perform and explore the possibilities of character and self. Students in my classes are accustomed to sharing their thoughts, challenging each other, and reflecting on self and character. As previously stated, seven students, with varied responses to the media exposure survey, interest in participating, and parental support were selected to be a part of the small focus group. The survey was an attempt to exhibit a sampling of students who fit across the media usage spectrum. Working in a smaller focus group created an opportunity to collect data from students with varied backgrounds and diverse present circumstances, opening up a path for the correlation of themes and sharing of ideas. Because of the nature of the selection process, those selected demonstrated an adequate sample of an intermediate drama class. The descriptions of each focus group student below are, of course, from my observations as a teacher/researcher:

- Rylie is an outspoken young woman who often shows up late to class and tends to want to work only with her friends who share similar viewpoints. She is never without
constant technology access but doesn’t believe that her younger siblings should have the same privileges.

- Zach is a popular young man who is usually surrounded by a group of girls and considers himself versed with technology but not dependent on it.

- Abby is a recent transfer student who uses her phone as an escape. She has had difficulty making friends here and rarely shares her opinion. However, on the rare occasions that she does, she is thoughtful, eloquent, and educated.

- Jennifer is an ESL student who speaks both English and Spanish proficiently. She loves constant technology access but states that she has been the recipient of cyber-bullying.

- Candace is a strong young woman who is likely the least versed in technology and digital social media. She uses it sparingly and sees it as a bit of a hindrance to the life she wants to lead. She is intelligent and compassionate and has highly conservative views.

- Lee is a kind and soft-spoken young man who regularly uses technology like digital social media but far prefers in-person conversation.

- Finally, Scott is an animated and oftentimes out-spoken young man who loves online games and constant connection. He appreciates eliciting a response and sharing views.

Classroom Environment

The classroom is unique in that it is a safe space of peers wherein it is commonplace and expected for students to write and share their observations, and the same atmosphere was fostered in the focus group sessions. Although the normal observations in a drama classroom tend to focus on in-depth characters studies and performance, there was a need for extended critical thought, introspection, access, and analysis. Up to this point, the student-produced
performances and writings in my intermediate drama class have failed to fully incorporate technology and media literacy into the study. That is, again, a motivating factor in focusing my project research and creation of the lesson plans on the inclusion of technology and critical thought about authorship and effect. While I certainly want my students to hone their habits of inquiry, I have found the best way for them to critically examine both in and beyond the classroom is with the inclusion of media literacy skills.

Methods and Procedures

The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) is an organization dedicated to providing students with the media literacy skills necessary to develop habits of critical thinking and inquiry. They define Media Literacy as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information in a variety of forms” (2007). The principles that NAMLE has set forth assist the teacher/researcher in focusing her classroom practice as well as research goals and approach. My study centered on several of NAMLE’s core principles, which determine that:

- “Media Literacy Education requires active inquiry and critical thinking about the media messages that we receive and create.
- Media Literacy Education develops informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society.
- Media Literacy Education recognizes that media are part of culture and function as agents of socialization.
- Media Literacy Education affirms that people use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meanings from media
messages” (National Association for Media Literacy Education, 2007 Principles 1, 4, 5, & 6).

Using those determinations as a springboard, I incorporated several of the previously mentioned standard methods of qualitative analysis in my action-research project.

In addition to being used to determine focus groups, the initial Media Exposure Survey was used as a springboard for student discussions about media exposure and consumption. As a class, students discussed their collective responses and the practices, motivations, and emotions that accompany the varied media experiences. Additionally, the students completed twelve narrative analyses of media consumption and emotional response as a part of a reflective journal and four wiki entries and responses, which were also discussed with the entire class. During this and other class discussions, I gathered observational notes about what the students shared as they discussed their interaction with media. Additionally I gathered field notes of some of the responses from students who consented to be a part of the study.

From this initial discussion and further observations throughout the early days of the planned curriculum, a focus group of students, as noted earlier in this chapter, was selected to participate in additional small group discussions and interviews. It is my hope that these tried and tested practices will allow for my students to have a voice in the study, to be listened to and given the freedom to reflect on and express how digital social media influences their lives.

The incorporation of digital technology in practice and critical theory necessitates gathering additional evidence and media artifacts in the form of classroom assignments and activities performed and completed by the students and evaluated by the teacher/educator. As stated initially, I planned to integrate the unit lesson plans with a variety of assignments to use for evidence: blogging, digital peer responding, collaging, and photo voicing.
While many different activities and assignments were used in the unit lesson plans, in order for the teacher to reach students individually through the method best suited to their learning style, only a select number of critical thinking and data measuring artifacts were selected for inclusion into the actual research project and data analysis. Each member of the class had the opportunity to participate in projects that utilize these methods and to analyze their work and the work of others. Further, the action research project included a live theatrical performance created by the intermediate drama students throughout the unit, in an effort to embrace what Susan Davis expresses as an opportunity for larger audiences and theatrical online space. This performance utilized a variety of media and was created using digital storytelling methods.

Data Collection

Collection of data for this research project was done during the second and third term of the 2014-2015 school year. In order to cover all necessary material in a class that meets every other day, the lesson plans for the unit started mid November and concluded with the presentation of the class performance at the region drama competition in the second week of March and a final two class periods where students participated in a Socratic seminar. Though student assignments were collected and graded in order to provide academic grades for the terms, the analysis of the collected data was postponed until after the grades had been posted in January and again in March. This was done in an effort to abide by the IRB qualifications with the research project and to protect student academic interest.

As the researcher/teacher, I collected four different types of artifacts for analysis for the research study:
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- Artifact One: reflective journal responses
- Artifact Two: student-posted blog responses (wiki entries)
- Artifact Three: focus group interview responses which were audio recorded and transcribed
- Artifact Four: student assignments (including media exposure survey, photo voice, and media artifacts) that were used in the final performance

Artifact One: Reflective Journal Responses

The first of the data artifacts, reflective journal responses, was an actual collection of student work over the course of the unit. Students were required to bring a notebook/journal with them to class daily for free-write assignments that took place once a week. Students were given approximately seven to ten minutes to write their responses to the prompt question and then an additional ten minutes to share their responses in peer groups or with the entire class. The journals were handed in for grading on a bi-weekly schedule. The question prompts for each reflective journal entry focused on student interaction with digital social media. Though the students responded to twelve different prompts, the researcher only gathered data from four key responses. These were determined after the discussions following the free-write reflective journal entries. The four journal entries selected comprise the following prompts:
  - Does digital social media affect the way you feel about yourself? Why or why not?
  - What was the last thing you posted on your digital “wall” (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) and in what context did you write it? What was going on at the moment?
Digital Identity and Performance

- Have you ever changed something about yourself or seen someone change something about themselves because of something that was posted online? Write about your experience.
- Have you ever posted something that has received a negative reaction, was misunderstood, or you wish you wouldn’t have posted? Write about your experience.

Only the responses from those who had opted to be included in the research project were retained for analysis. In creating a space for students to critically think about their interactions with and construction of digital social media, it became necessary to engage them first in reflective writing, then in critical discussion. Therein they could first process their own observations and then listen to and respond to other students’ responses. These reflective journals served as a facilitator for the critical thought that was expected throughout the lessons.

Artifact Two: Student Posted Blog Responses (Wiki Entries)

The second form of data I analyzed was the student posted blog responses, or class website wiki entries. Four wiki postings were completed and posted throughout the unit, occurring once per month. Responses were expected to be approximately two hundred to three hundred words in length. These writing responses were used later to create the class performance script and fall under the Utah State Office of Education Theatre Foundations III Core Standards which focuses on the necessity of student writing and constructed meaning. Those standards note that the objectives for an intermediate drama class include student’s ability to “integrate unity, character, and plot in scripting dramatic presentations,” writing descriptions for characters, writing peer critiques, developing “critical thinking skills to construct meaning,”
Digital Identity and Performance

and explaining how “dramatic presentation is similar to and different from ones own life” (USOE, 2001).

The actual artifacts comprised of student responses and images created in class and then posted on the class wiki site. Students wrote the required responses and posted media examples that highlighted or inspired their point of view. I used the guidelines outlined in the NAMLE principles to guide the formation of these questions. The framing questions included:


- What misconceptions of how men/women are “supposed” to look and act are most prominent in the media? Are they realistic? Why or why not? Post some media examples that highlight your point of view on the topic.

- How does it affect you in your daily life to have instant access to media with your cell phones, iPods, iPads, etc.? How would your life change if you could only access it for a limited amount of time each day? Or each week? Create a meme that represents your point of view on this.

- What is the use for digital social media? For whom is it (or should it be) a platform? If you could change or improve one thing about the media and especially digital social media, what would you change and why? Create and post a collage of three to five media artifacts that demonstrate your views on how digital social media can and should change.

In addition to student postings on the class wiki, they chose two of their classmates’ posts and responded to peers’ media artifacts responses to the prompts. These responses were
expected to be one hundred to two hundred words in length and served as an opportunity to deepen thought, ask additional questions, or provide insights for the class performance script. Though the responses were utilized for the digital storytelling and theatrical performance, only a small number of these responses from research participants were included in the study analysis.

Artifact Three: Focus Group Interview Responses

The third artifact included the data gathered through the additional focus group interviews and discussion sessions, which was utilized specifically for the purpose of this research project. As previously stated, the focus group consisted of seven students who met three times throughout the project: at the beginning of the planned unit, midway through the project, and at the completion of the unit. Data gathered in these sessions was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for the project. Examples of focus group discussion questions can be found in Appendix E.

In addition to the group discussions, each student participant in the focus group met with the researcher/teacher to discuss the project, their observations, and how their perceptions of digital social media might have changed or solidified throughout this experience. In the focus group and the individual interviews, I was looking to understand how students perceive the impact of digital social media on their construction of identity and perception of self. Specifically, I was interested to see how an opportunity to engage critically with media and digital social media and to respond to it through their own form of media creation influenced their understanding of audience and authorship as well as how they chose to express their perceptions through writing, discussion, and performance.
Artifact Four: Student Assignments

The fourth and final form of data artifact I collected centered on student creative work (including media exposure survey, collage and media artifacts) that were used, in part, to create the final performance. Incorporating The National Association for Media Literacy Education’s “Key Questions to ask when analyzing Media Messages” (2007) and the Utah State Office of Education’s Core Standards for Theatre Foundations III, I first collected, via class assignments, data artifacts created by the students for the purpose of the study and the class unit. Responses to the initial media exposure survey, as well as interest to participate in the research project and parent consent for participation aided in determining which data was analyzed and which students would form the focus group, so a thorough sampling of students is examined.

The USOE core specifies that in an intermediate drama class, it is imperative to assist the students in applying life skills to the lessons they learn in and through theatrical work. The objectives stated in the core encourage students to “connect personal experiences with dramatic presentations to [their] own life” by explaining how theatre:

- Can contribute to lifelong learning
- can enhance and maintain complex thinking skills
- builds effective communication skills
- develops the ability to collaborate with others, and
- promotes responsible citizenship (USOE, 2001).

As a part of the students’ projects throughout the unit, they were required and encouraged to bring in media artifacts, conduct interviews with their peers and fellow classmates to create a dialogue base for the final performance script, create a photo voice collage project wherein they visually created their personal media landscape, and participate in
devised theatre activities. All of these experiences were utilized in creating the scripts for the piece performed for an invited audience and for the one-act play performed at the region drama competition. While only a select number of the total pieces created and presented by the students appeared in some part in the final performance, only those opting to be a part of the research project were used in the piece as the entire performance and final script were analyzed as data for the research study. This formal analysis took place after the completion of the project and led to the development of my research theory.

Data Analysis: Grounded Research Theory

It is most advantageous to approach this research project analysis with grounded theory research. Developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, this theory allows for the researcher/teacher to be sensitive to the individual participants, her students, and allow for the complexities that are often found within the classroom setting. In grounded research theory, the researcher develops as a direct result of the data she collects and analyzes offers what Berg calls a “step-by-step, systematic procedure for analyzing data” (2009). Cresswell notes that: “grounded theory designs are systematic, qualitative procedures that researchers use to generate a general explanation or grounded view of participants, that explains a process, action, or interaction among people” (2008). An approach such as this inside of a high school drama classroom and working with teenage students who are daily interacting with their world and the media in this world is necessary in attempting to understand the factors that lead them to individual identity construction. Cresswell further expounds upon the procedures that allow the researcher to develop the theory, including the collection of “interview data, developing
and relating categories (or themes) of information and composing a figure or visual model that portrays the general explanation” (2008).

In this project, it was my goal to collect and analyze data gathered from interview transcripts, surveys, student writing samples like reflective journal entries and blog posts, and observational field notes taken from class and focus group discussions. This process required both inductive and deductive reasoning. “The relationship between a theoretical perspective and certain messages involves both inductive and deductive approaches. However, in order to present the perceptions of others (the producers of messages) in the most forthright manner, a greater reliance on induction is necessary. The development of inductive categories allows researchers to link or ground these categories to the data from which they derive” (Berg, 2009).

In grounded theory, where concepts and hypotheses should be based on actual field data, the researcher/teacher is able to observe and interact with the subject/participants in a field setting, wherein she will have the opportunity to inductively observe and deeply analyze a collection of a class of facts from a small population as evidence for the greater whole. Further, the use of deduction allows for the facts gathered to point to a logical conclusion that must be true, given the premises presented in the study. However, Berg warns, “researchers need not limit their procedures to induction alone in order to ground their research in the cases. Both inductive and deductive reasoning may provide fruitful findings. If they have begun with specific empirical observations, they should attempt to develop explanations grounded in the data (grounded theory) and apply these theories to other empirical observations (inductive reasoning)” (2009).
In this grounded research method, it is necessary to apply an open coding model to data analysis. Berg discusses this procedure of unrestricted coding of data, noting,

With open coding, you carefully and minutely read the document line by line and word by word to determine the concepts and categories that fit the data. As you continue working with and thinking about the data, questions and even some possible answers also begin to emerge. These questions should lead you to other issues and further questions concerning various conditions, strategies, interactions, and consequences of the data (2009).

I find that this method was most advantageous in the data analysis of this project, where students’ subtleties and variations or written and observational response must be minutely analyzed and processed.

In 1987, Strauss suggested four basic guidelines when conducting open coding. He noted that the researcher must:

- ask the data a specific question
- analyze the data minutely
- frequently interrupt the coding to write theoretical notes
- never assume the analytic relevance of any traditional variable such as age, sex, social class, and so forth until the data show it to be relevant (Berg, 2009).

This open coding further allows for the researcher to break down information and create categories or themes in the acquired data. Moving through the open coding process of identification, naming, categorizing, and describing data collected, the researcher may begin to see patterns, or subcategories develop (Cresswell, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). It was my hope, that as students began to interact with, analyze, critically discuss and create media and
digital social media, those patterns would begin to emerge and allow for a better understanding of the possible responses to the research questions of in and how student expression and construction of self and identity can be influenced by digital social media and how identity and constructed identity can be expressed through digital storytelling in theatre settings.

Utilizing this method of open-coding through grounded theory design allows the researcher the opportunity to process through data, not merely observe whether information is correct or incorrect, and examine the specificity and nuances of the research participants’ responses while refraining from placing assumptions on the participants without the relevant data to support such claims. In order to thoroughly do such in an action research project, content analysis must do as Berg suggests and examine a discourse by “looking at patterns of the language used in this communications change, as well as the social and cultural context in which these communications occur. This includes how, where, and when the discourse arises in a given social and cultural situation. Counting terms, words, themes, and so on allows the researcher to ascertain some of the variations and nuances of these ways in which parties in an exchange create their social worlds” (2009). In order to find the correlation between the theoretical perspective and the messages produced by the research participants that emerged through inductive and deductive reasoning, it becomes necessary to ground or link the data gathered.

As a researcher, I collected and analyzed student participant’s responses using a variety of methods and observations. This approach is founded in grounded theory. Berg further notes that: “Seven major elements in the written messages can be counted in textual content analysis: words or terms, themes, characters, paragraph, items, concepts, and semantics. Most of these elements have corresponding versions for visual content analysis, such as visual themes, items, or concepts, or variations such as recurring color patterns or paired images” (2009).
After the open coding process has commenced and patterns or subcategories have started to emerge, the axial coding process can begin. Axial coding allows for the researcher to relate codes (categories or properties) to one another. After placing once central theme or category at the center of one’s study, the researcher can find ways in which the other categories can relate to the principal category. This was done first through observation and collection of the data, followed by an observation of those relationships conditions, contexts, strategies, and consequences. Once relationships have manifest themselves, selective coding can allow the researcher to develops theories based on those relationships that have come to the forefront through the open and axial coding process. This selective coding enables the researcher to create a through-line of data that expresses the response to the data and from which she can begin to refine her theories (Cresswell, 2012).

Throughout the collection and analysis of this data, a number of relationships, themes, and parallels emerged which will be discussed in the results chapter of this thesis. The process of collecting this data was intensive and involved. For that reason, as previously stated, only key responses were collected from the student participants to be analyzed for data. As this project was expected to last over three months, from initial instruction to final performance, it became necessary to be selective in the data processed so as not to get too fully encumbered with the massive amount of assignments and observations collected from the forty-six students in the class. I hope, in this way, the approach will be both thorough and informative as a representation of the whole body of students, in this one particular class, while still giving them a voice as research participants in a study about their own choices for identity construction.
As their teacher, I planned to help my students determine their own tactics for how they can analyze the technology, media, and digital social media they encounter. Though I did not use these practices directly to analyze my collected data, I found that teaching students the cursory principles of ethnography in this study of classroom culture, netnography in the study of the online elements of their chosen digital culture, and ethnomethodology, focusing on the way in which they construct their digital social world, was most advantageous to student development of critical thinking skills. Perhaps in this realm new media and technology can intersect and the digital natives (students) and the digital immigrants (teacher/researcher) alike can observe and begin to explain behavior and responses.

Each student in the intermediate drama class participated in all the activities as a part of the normal curriculum instruction, including submitting twelve journal entries and four wiki postings. Further, they responded to two of their peers’ wiki postings. Additionally, students attended class two to three times each week, where the curriculum centered around what students had learned, discovered, or had questions or concerns about while interacting with digital social media. This data was gathered through observational notes taken by the teacher/researcher during class discussion and students’ responses to the writing prompts in the reflective journals and class wiki blogs. These written assignments and observations were used as foundation in the creation of a devised theatre piece and accompanying digital storytelling film work. Throughout the unit, students participated in teacher-led large and small group class discussions as part of the standard program of study. Although all students enrolled in the class participated in the required assignments, they self-selected into actual participation in the study.
Initially, the focus group was to comprise six to eight students from the sophomore, junior, and senior classes who, according to their responses on the media usage survey, have varying ties with and experience in technology and digital social media. Unfortunately, the senior student selected for the project had to transfer out of the class and therefore, could no longer be a part of the study. The remaining group of seven students included three juniors and four sophomore students. The focus group participated in three separate discussions over the course of the project, conducted for the sole purpose of this study. As a part of the focus group, these seven students were also individually interviewed by the myself, as the teacher/researcher, with the interviews conducted for the purpose of this study. Actual data results from their participants will be included in the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE

Results

Introduction to the Results

The action research project was completed on March 18, 2015. The purpose of this chapter is to report on the findings gathered throughout the research study. Data, which had been compiled throughout the duration of the project, was then analyzed using the grounded theory method, as stated in the previous chapter. Further analysis was approached through Spiraling Research Design, which connects ideas, theory, design, data collection, analysis and dissemination. This method is visually demonstrated in Figure 3.1 below:

![Figure 3.1](Berg & Lune, 2012)

This spiraling approach is most advantageous as the progression is rarely sequential. This is the very outcome that presented itself throughout this action research project. Often, the data collection and its analysis led to a change in the theory, which, in turn, changed an idea and how the information and results were disseminated to the students, leading to a new design and the necessity for further data collection. At the completion of the project, the data was compiled
and analyzed for themes and relationships found in student responses and reactions.
Specifically, I chose to look at how students perceived the influence of digital social media at the
onset of the unit of instruction and how that perception might have changed as their awareness
grew and critical thinking skills were engaged.

In presenting the results of the study, I will be using direct quotes and responses from
students who participated in the study to describe the themes that became evident in my analysis.
I will be using their work and phraseology in its original form and will only alter students’
statements as a means of clarification. Those changes will be clearly marked in brackets.

The work included in the chapter is a collection of evidence gathered in an attempt to
answer the two overarching research questions present in the study: How can student expression
and construction of self and identity be influenced by digital social media and how can identity
and constructed identity be expressed through digital storytelling in theatre settings? The
information in this chapter is an attempt to analyze those questions and present evidence
collected in the data research. It will feature results from the Media Exposure Survey, research
participant responses to interview, class discussions, and focus group questions as well as a
selection of student work from the final devised theatre piece and the photo voice project. It will
be organized to feature the following topics:

- Presence, consumption and impact of digital social media.
- The connections between student identity and digital social media.
- How students engage with other digital natives.
- How student participants learn to negotiate virtual online spaces, landscapes and
  environments.
- The creation of the digital and theatrical storytelling text, and
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- Proposals for moving beyond the classroom.

It is my hope that this evidentiary sampling will provide the context and data necessary to begin to respond to the research questions upon which this project is founded.

Presence, Consumption, and Impact in Digital Social Media

Initially, the unit began with an introduction to a variety of media and a discussion of its influences on adolescents and teens. Together as a class we watched commercials, music videos, and even a conceptual full-length theatre production and a feature length film. At the conclusion of each theatre and media example, students were asked to analyze and share their findings with the other members of the class. These responses were shared both in small groups and large class discussions. Further, small devised theatre pieces were constructed, which dealt with the themes and relationships present in each media artifact. This was also done in an attempt to help students understand the practical and instructive approach to devised theatre.

Approximately a third of the way into the unit, the students were given a Media Exposure Survey about their media exposure and consumption, which can be found in Appendix B of this thesis. Throughout the previous weeks, and in preparation for this survey, students were asked to pay particular attention to their digital social media usage. These survey responses, when analyzed, demonstrated a much broader spectrum of usage than I initially thought I would encounter. I have compiled and discussed select results from the Media Exposure Survey throughout this chapter.

When students considered how long they believe they have been a consumer of media, the majority of them stated that they have been well-versed in digital technology for more than ten years. This echoes the notion that these students, whose median age is fifteen, are digital
natives, accustomed to having access to media and technology for a number of years. The graph for their responses can be found in figure 3.2 featured below.

![Figure 3.2](image)

For how long do you think you have been a user/consumer of media?

After having closely associated with media for so many of their formative years, it became important to find out how advanced they thought themselves to be regarding digital social media usage. Students were asked to rank themselves on a scale from skepticism to an expert level. Results from this query can be found in figure 3.3 below:

![Figure 3.3](image)

Which statement most closely describes you:

- I am skeptical of or curious about social media and do not use it at all
- I have tried social media but am not comfortable with it
- I am using social media and consider myself a "beginner"
- I am using social media more often now and am comfortable with it
- I use social media tools and consider myself an "advanced" user
- I consider myself an "expert" when it comes to social media

Figure 3.3
Evidence gathered in the Media Exposure Survey demonstrates that although the majority of students in this intermediate drama class consider themselves comfortable with digital social media, there are still a few who are not as versed and perhaps a bit skeptical. Others who did not use it often or were still in the “beginner” stage shared that they had parents who were hesitant for them to get involved with digital social media. One student noted that she believes “teenagers deserve some degree of privacy,” which can’t be achieved if their parents are too invested in or attentive of their digital social media usage.

Seven students also shared that they have secret digital social media accounts of which their parents are unaware. In this survey they describe that it was difficult to talk with their parents about what they encounter on digital social media or with many forms of technology and how they feel about it. Student participants said that it seemed like they were on completely different pages, that their parents were unfamiliar with what they were talking about, or just far too invasive in what they thought should be their individual or private community. Indeed, 79% of the students surveyed reported that they highly valued these various communities and used an assortment of them on a frequent basis. These same students expressed a desired autonomy in their choice of digital social community and consumption therein.

Further, they mentioned loving the immediacy of digital social media and expressing frustration when their time or access to it was limited. The fact that they could check it multiple times a day, from their mobile phones or iPads (see Figures 3.4-3.6 for exact response statistics), made them feel empowered. One focus group student, Rylie, suggested that:

To perform all of my personal stuff though at a touch of my fingers is amazing, and I love it. But at the same time I am frightened that if it is that easy for me how easy is it for someone else to come and ruin it on this media life. If I could only be
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on my phone a certain amount of time I will be honest, I would die. I love YouTube and Tumblr. If [they were to be taken away from me] I would not be okay inside. Because to me it is my relaxation time—the time to listen and laugh to someone else’s story or day. But at the same time I understand how people can see that it is taking over my life. Because in all reality it is.

Another focus group participant, Abby, stated:

I use Instagram and Tumblr. I choose these two for completely opposite reasons. I love Tumblr because nobody I know is on there to see what I post and I can have a blog that reflects my personality: my likes and what comes up in my head. And I also use it as a kind of journal. I use Instagram because I want my friends to see what I am doing and follow me.

Throughout the survey responses and the accompanied class discussions, students in the class suggested that they depended on their connection to technology and networking with their online friends to provide emotional support, stability, daily companionship, and occupation of their time. These formative years, from ages fourteen to eighteen, are pivotal for identity construction and heavily influenced by students’ immediate surroundings. Students in this intermediate drama class spoke of how this dependence often impacts the decisions they make. Scott noted, “When I see an [online] friend has invited me to play a game or take one of those quizzes, I drop everything else I’m doing and play right then. That’s why I don’t get my homework done sometimes.”

This impulsive behavior is visible outside of my classroom as well. A recent study published in the Harvard Magazine noted, “Research during the past 10 years, powered by functional magnetic resonance imaging, has revealed that young brains have both fast-growing
synapses and sections that remain unconnected. This leaves teens easily influenced by their environment and more prone to impulsive behavior, even without the impact of souped-up hormones and any genetic or family predispositions” (Ruder, 2008). These young people can be highly influenced by the images and texts that they encounter on their digital walls.

In one of the journal responses, students were asked to free-write about what, if any, affect digital social media had on how they felt about themselves. Of the forty-six responses, which were included in the study, twelve of the students said that they didn’t feel a large impact from digital social media. Of these twelve students, eight of them do not have smart phones or frequent online access. The remaining thirty-four students stated that digital social media affected them to various degrees. This affect can be seen in a selection of their written reflexive journal responses. These responses below are direct quotes from student participants’ reflexive journals and demonstrate a common sampling of student thought from the thirty-six students who claimed an impact from digital social media. They wrote:

- Yes, of course it makes me feel like I need to be way better than myself.
- Yes. I mean my wish it didn’t, but it does. From how many likes I get compared to others, all the way to whether or not I look like the hot model portrayed on my feed. It also affects me by validating feelings I have and lets me know I’m not alone in certain things. This also happens vice versa. Sometimes I don’t relate to others and I do feel alone. Sometimes digital social media helps me relate to others and feel like I belong.
- Yeah it definitely affects the way I feel about myself. Like I try not to post often because I don’t want to annoy people. I’m self conscious about how many likes I get or how many followers I have compared to other people. It’s ridiculous! I hate that it affects me but it does.
• Even though I don’t want to say that social media affects how I feel about myself, I think it does. I feel good about myself if: lots of people like something I post, certain people like my post, or I have a lot of friends. It’s stupid, I know, but it’s the truth.

• Social media affects how I feel about myself so much. If I don’t get enough likes on Instagram, I’ll feel embarrassed and delete my post. When I get a new follower on tumblr, I became really excited. The contents inside it affect me as well. I follow a bunch of depressing blogs on tumblr for some reason, and when I expose myself to that stuff it can affect me as well. On Instagram I follow pretty people simply for the fact that they are pretty. I don’t understand it. I want so badly to look like them and to have their lives and it affects the way I feel about myself. It’s ridiculous that I do this to myself, but it’s a part of society’s culture.

Though nearly all of those thirty-four student responses being examined here expressed displeasure about the emphasis they put on digital social media and the space they allowed for it in their lives, none of them stated that this realization made them want to change their consumption habits.

Digital Social Media Sites

There are a number of digital social media sites that are frequently accessed by students in my class. Each of these sites were examined both in the data analysis of the study as well as with the students in class and focus group discussions. Each site is a part of the digital media landscape that the students inhabit. Their frequency of usage reflects what the students categorized as a “necessary part of [their] daily life” and interactions prior to our class and focus group discussions. Some of these are exhibited in the following graph: (see figure 3.4)
Over the course of the unit, students in the class reported that they believed that their initial responses to some of the survey questions, like those listed above, might have been a bit off. After spending several weeks discussing digital social media usage, fifty-three percent of the students found that they accessed digital social media more often than they originally thought. They thought that because they didn’t spend long hours on the sites once they first
logged on, that the dependency wasn’t as prevalent. However, they started noting the frequency with which they visited the sites and changed their responses. Such a result can be seen in the next three graphs, which highlight the frequency with which they visit these online sites or perform certain functions:

![How often do you visit Facebook?](image1)

![How often do you visit YouTube?](image2)

How often do you send or receive links for other videos or websites from other people?

![How often do you send or receive links](image3)

However, many of the students found it difficult to quantify the number of times they used mobile technology throughout the day. All focus group participants, except Lee, thought
they would feel helpless without their phones and Internet access. Lee doesn’t have a smart phone or see a need for one. He echoes his parents’ sentiments that conversations should happen in person. Scott, conversely, said that being on digital social media websites felt like “an addiction” to him. In talking with his classmates and friends, he observed that adolescents and teens “log on” when they are bored, or stressed, or feeling lonely. The frequency of that logging on becomes a habit. Scott added: “Now it’s awkward to go up to someone and talk in person because we depend too much on technology. We revolve around a little bright screen.”

However, not all students were so quick to blame the lack of standard face-to-face connection of digital social media. They also thought it important to note the benefits of digital social media. Jennifer commented:

I can honestly say that I’m addicted to social media, or media in general. Many people could look at this as a bad thing or “time consuming” yet, in all reality, it is great! There are so many opportunities when it comes to media. I too cannot imagine my life without any bit of it. However, we need to track ourselves with it and make sure that we are not getting too attached.

Students noticed a clear presence of digital social media in their lives as well as the lives of their friends or family. While the digital immigrants might seem ready to polarize sides and either demonize it or romanticize its power, these students chose to critically analyze all sides to discuss its influence and impact on identity construction.

Connections between Student Identity and Digital Social Media

Initially, the focus group students were invited to discuss the positive and negative impact of digital social media in their lives. This was done through a variety of formal interviews; both
in groups and on an individual basis. According to Berg, the purpose of the interviews in an action research project is to “elicit information using a set of predetermined questions that are expected to elicit the subjects’ thoughts, opinions, and attitudes about study-related issues” (2012).

During the course of the study, I conducted standardized interviews with a schedule of questions in the class-wide Socratic seminars as well as the reflexive student journal responses. Semi-standardized interviews came from individual interviews with the focus group. As a student would expound on something, I was free to ask follow up questions. The final form of interview, unstandardized, took place mainly in the focus group sessions. Here, students would be asked a few prepared questions to get them critically thinking and prepared to discourse with one another, and then I would allow for the discussion to follow the path that the students/research participants wanted to take it. Though there wasn’t a formal structure, clarifications were made as deemed necessary. It is in this final technique that I found students much more open to sharing their opinions as they built on those of their classmates. These interviews were all recorded, transcribed, and analyzed as part of the data collection and analysis for the action research project.

Jennifer noted that whether digital social media is a positive force or a negative one depends on the person and how it’s used. She admitted that she looked up what time a day most people tend to be on Facebook and Instagram so she can post at those times and get the most likes. She states that: “there is this thing where if [I] don’t have enough likes or favorites on the internet, then I’m no good. But some people use it to show off their accomplishments for a positive effect.” She spoke of how comments on a picture deeply impacted how she felt in the moment. When asked, the remaining members of the focus group agreed with her statement.
Abby followed up her remark stating, “But even then it still depends on the person. Someone else might read that comment and think that they are worthless or the other person is better than you.”

Throughout the class discussions as well as the focus group sessions, the number of likes, favorites and comments was frequently addressed. It became a major theme throughout the course of the study. In one of the recorded focus groups sessions, the “like” function on Facebook was referenced thirty-four times in a forty-five minute period. It was also addressed in every single interview session, class discussions, and focus group discussion. Because of this frequency, the students were asked how important the “like” and “fan” functions are on websites like Facebook.

![Figure 3.8](image)

The majority of the students in this class stated that they appreciate those tools (see Figure 3.8) and frequently open the app to see if the number of the likes or comments has changed on their wall over a short period of time. Students mentioned that there is a direct correlation between the number of likes you get and how you feel about yourself. Scott added that: “sometimes it’s the absence of likes that makes you feel like no one cares.” He stated that while he tries not to jump to conclusions when his post doesn’t receive the reaction he wanted, it
is difficult to stay positive. There is clearly an emotional contagion spreading in the minds of these young people. The query is how an educator can begin to approach this lofty and varied subject.

In order to facilitate this inquiry into critical thinking and analysis, students were asked to share their perception of the effect of digital social media. While all focus group participants agreed that digital social media does have an effect on how they thought about themselves, they seemed to view that effect in different ways. Rylie stated:

> Nowadays most people use social media for illogical or ridiculous things. Very often you will see someone posting a selfie or describe what they have done within the past half hour. It has evolved into something that is somewhat similar to a popularity contest. People no longer care that social media was meant for communicating with other human beings, because they are far too busy trying to obtain more followers.

She spoke about how people change based on what they encounter online. Abby observed that the most obvious way you see the change in other people is to “see the trends on the Internet. Like on Tumblr, things you find funny, hashtags, even how people talk now, shifts to fit what is popular out there on the Internet. We change all the time to fit the moment.” Candace chimed in with her fear that: “It’s scary because we don’t know that we are changing. We do it without thinking about it.”

Students were asked if they, or someone with whom they are close, has ever changed something about themselves because of something they saw posted online. Jennifer said that she “started wearing makeup and nice clothes when I started using social media. I started caring what people thought of me. And how many likes I might get.” Abby also observed that her
opinions have changed because of the Internet and access to other people’s opinions, facts, and stories found on digital social media.

Outside of the focus group, all students in the class were given the same writing prompt for their reflexive journals. A selection of the intermediate drama classes journal entries include:

- Yes, my hair, my body, my way of thinking. My clothes. Practically everything. Because I’m never good enough.

- I think most of the things I’ve changed about myself from posts online has been, like, wardrobe and makeup changes. I started wearing winged eyeliner because of something I saw on Pinterest! I wish I could use weight loss products I find online and stuff but my mom would never let me. I change the way I talk the way I act a lot of the time in the way I treat other people. If they post something I disagree with or find offensive, I often am not as nice to them in real life.

- I think that people’s language changes. My personality has slowly changed because of what people post. What I wear also changes depending on what I see people I look up to wear when they post pictures online. Sometimes post change how I am that day. If I see a pretty makeup job, outfit idea, etc. I’ll often adapt it. Posts can motivate me and I usually become more courageous that day.

- I’ve wanted to before. I wanted to and thought about it, but I always back out in the end. My own trends usually come from the things I already have, things that can make me different than what we always see.

- I don’t know if I could change something about myself consciously, but if i [sic] can think of anything it would be that my personality slowly becomes whatever I expose myself to. The way I talk is influenced by what I see on the Internet in that I say “hella”
or “like” or use hash tags a lot. My personality and sense of humor has become completely influenced by Tumblr and Internet culture in general. But I don’t think I’ve tried to change myself on purpose.

Of the forty-six students who responded to that journal entry, only three claimed that they had never changed anything about themselves because of something posted online. Those three students were all male. While many of the other students’ responses dealt with physical changes, there were a number of them that touched, albeit briefly, on emotional, verbal, and psychological changes as well. This was discussed in more detail inside of the focus group.

Focus group participants were quick to counter any negative aspects with the overwhelming positive empowerment of the ability of social media to spread a message. Lee shared that one of his favorite aspects of social media is that it “gives people the chance to have their opinion heard and everyone needs to have their opinion heard. It’s the access to digital social media that gives you power and a voice that teenagers have never had before.” Zach also noted, “What I like about social media is that you are heard. When you say something, people listen. In real life, they don’t always listen, but online you can he heard.”

According to this focus group of teenagers, in “real life” their opinions don’t feel as important to other people because of their age; but digital social media is ageless. Students observed that online, there are no age restrictions to opinion. However, the focus group participants noted that though you are given a voice and a platform online, there are problematic features as well. Lee stated, “Sometimes, the consequences [for what you post online] are at the expense of others. You don’t see how what you post affects them.” Each expressed concern about messages they had posted or come across and how they want to protect younger siblings or friends from encountering those same messages.
Another class journal prompt asked students if they had ever posted anything online that received a negative reaction or that, upon retrospect, they wish they wouldn’t have posted. Of the forty-six responses, only five students couldn’t recall posting or sharing something they later regretted. However, two of these five could readily recall sending text massages they later wished they wouldn’t have sent. Of the remaining forty-three students, most of them stated that the post started out seemingly harmless or was done without thought. One student, Candace, wrote:

One time, I had this crush on this cute guy and I posted something on his Facebook page. I can’t remember what I said, but it was really suggestive. He commented and we had this horrible, embarrassing, and very very public display. I wanted to like, crawl in a hole and die. I’ve learned a lot from that experience. Don’t post things that you wouldn’t say to their face or in front of your mom.

Another student shared, “Yes. I feel really bad about what I posted. It screwed with people and caused issues.” Zach noted the self-conscious aspect that can emerge on self-reflection. He spoke first of not posting anything that hurt someone, but instead what he posted ended up hurting him because it didn’t provide him with the emotional support he needed from sharing a part of himself online. He stated: “The interesting thing is that often in social media, the lack of good response or response at all is sometimes used as having a negative reaction. Sometimes when nobody likes something I posted, it feels like they do not like me at all.”

Many students agreed that Zach’s reaction was a common one, but yet another reason for misgivings about posts emerged. A few students noted the vindictive nature of their post as a form of retribution for something that someone else has posted first. One student even mentioned that she didn’t realize how some of the things that she had been posting might have a
negative effect because it seemed so far removed from her after it was sent off to cyberspace. She wrote:

Well, we all have regrets and make mistakes. I’ve gotten in Twitter fights and I said things that were pointless and unnecessary. I will admit that I have said some mean and offensive things about me and others but I wasn’t aware of the damage at the time. My parents are the ones that pointed it out to me. They labeled me as a bully. That is when I decided to switch my life around and change my ways. I deleted my social media accounts, Twitter and Instagram. And decided to just be a real person not one on a screen.

It took her parents pointing out that her comments on a friend’s profile were insensitive and not very kind for her to start to notice that online posts affected other people just as much as they affected her. Later, in the class discussion she added: “Honestly, I hadn’t ever thought of it being mean. It was just words that I typed. I didn’t say it to her face, so I think I forgot she would actually be receiving them.” Rylie noted that teenagers often look at digital social media as a platform for free speech without the consequences. Scott joined in, stating, “The trade off is that [while] you are heard, if you are misunderstood or feel like you weren’t heard, it makes things worse."

As a part of the unit lesson plans, students were asked to create a photovoice project. They were to find a variety of images and recent online posts that they felt represented their individual media landscape. After sharing and discussing these images/media artifacts in small groups, students were asked to create a visual representation of their own media landscape. Eight of the forty-eight drawings have been selected and featured below as an evidentiary sampling of student work (see figures 3.9-3.16).
As will be demonstrated in the images of classroom work, students found their individual media landscapes to be inundated with influences coming constantly at them. Additionally, their work demonstrates a theme of choice, where the students are invited to partake in the media messages available, but they must choose if they want to take part. The first drawing indicates invitation and enticement:

![Figure 3.9]

Figures 3.10 and 3.11 demonstrate the plethora and variety of messages offered daily to students:

![Figure 3.10]
Figures 3.12 and 3.13 highlight the social component of digital social media usage:
While Figure 3.14 discusses the isolation that can occur with digital social media dependence:

Figure 3.14

Finally, figures 3.15-3.16 note the power of digital social media, warning against losing oneself:

Figure 3.15
These images were all collected and posted in the hallway outside of the drama classroom for a “gallery walk”. With notebook and pen in hand, the students observed the drawings and made short notes about their individual observations on each piece, how the pieces made them feel, what each made them think of or how it prompted further questioning. These observation notes were turned in for grading purposes and then redistributed in groups. These new groups used the peer observations in creating the context and dialogue for one of the short devised theatre pieces. Three of these constructed short plays were used in the final devised theatre performance.
Engaging with other Digital Natives

Creating and sharing these visual representations of their media landscape helped these students more fully analyze the place of digital social media in their lives. Perhaps, for this select group of students, the ultimate power of digital social media for good or ill is the impact it can have on their own lives or the lives of others. Abby noted:

My daily life is affected by having instant access to social media in many ways. First, it almost becomes a habit to check it. Every time I’m sitting alone, or there is an awkward silence, I pull out my phone. Second, I like feeling connected to people I know. I have many relatives that live far away. Because of social media, I can have small glimpses of what is going on. I can see a bit of little cousin’s childhood I have never met grow up, major events in their lives, etc. I like seeing what is going on in friends [sic] and families [sic] lives. Before I had access to social media, let alone any social media at all, I didn’t see the need for it. I didn’t see what why anyone would want a smart phone or social media. But, once I did get it, I found that I could never go back. If I ever leave the house without my phone, I feel empty and awkward. Looking back, I can’t imagine how I could ever live without my phone. I use it for everything. I may not realize it, but use social media for more things than just liking selfies. Social media has become part of my life.

Evidence collected through all class and focus group discussions found that most students feel like they are greatly impacted by digital social media in some way. They suggest that it has helped to create new friendships, foster growing ones and even reconnect with friends and
acquaintances from the past. In an online relationship, a “like” or positive comment can calm a bit of the teenage angst that comes from not know where you fit in.

In one of the final journal entries, students were asked to identify who they are, their own version of their identity, and what factors constructed that view of self. Scott stated:

Honestly, I don’t know. I have no idea who I am. All I know is what I want to be. I just want to be a good person. I want to help people, because I see pain. And I feel it. And I hate it. Because I want I know what it’s like. In a whole world where you care so little about your own life, all that’s left to care about is others. So the answer is no. I have no idea who I am. What I know is what I want to be and what I’m trying to be.

Scott went on to facilitate a discussion with the focus group on this subject. He noted that what he wants to be is influenced by what he sees presented by others. Candace echoed that sentiment:

Right now, I am what other people need me to be. That’s not what I want to be. I want to be myself, but sometimes it’s hard for me to know who exactly that is. I guess the reason I’m this way is because I care too much about what others think. I could compare myself to a piece of clay, I guess, molded by the people around me and the things I see online. Who I am and who I want to be are not the same person. I’m a bunch of other people mixed into one.

While adolescents and teenagers are constantly trying to find themselves, students observed that it seems as though digital social media provides the perfect meeting place for diverse peoples. Everyone fits in on the Internet. Everyone “belongs” on Facebook. Students interviewed felt
that this sense of belonging afforded a feeling of security and importance in their online world, and that and it spilled over into their offline worlds as well.

However, credence must be paid to the fact that one of the greatest powers of digital social media is the façade of anonymity. Focus group participants and class discussions revealed that students often feel like they are removed from the consequences of what they post online. Zach expounded on this when he stated, “You really can’t say anything you want on the internet. I mean really you can, but when you want to write things on social media you must realize that if you say it you must accept the consequences.” Another class member added, “Sometimes, we just need realize we might hurt people with what we put on there. Ourselves or others. If you post something you wouldn’t share in real life should you really post on the internet? Words can really hurt: it is not just the physical that can scar a person for life.”

It is that very fear which fuels the concern for cyber-bullying and often a protectionist view from parents and educators. During one of the Socratic seminar class periods, a few students said that they have had people online personally call them a slut or tell them that they should go kill themselves. In that same class discussion, students said that this type of behavior happens quite often. They noted that it often it starts as a joke, or something that someone does goes viral, and it spreads online faster than expected. One like or share spreads to people the originator doesn’t know. Abby expounded, “Sometimes this cyber-bullying is happening anonymously, it’s done through their actual profile. On tumblr, they can post without you ever knowing who was doing it.” Rylie noted that the online world and the behaviors of the people in it are just an extension of the real world. She states: “People in real life join bandwagons too. Online it’s just a bigger one.”
In the accompanying focus group discussion, participants discussed the rampant spread of cyber-bullying. One student even stated that he chooses not to get involved when he sees bullying or ridicule in real life because he is more tolerant of it after being inundated by digital social media. However, students report that there is an effort, also online, to combat the negative effects of cyber-bullying. Confession videos emerge and are shared, highlighting the problem. Further, students noted a conscious movement to make a global change and to reach out to people who are struggling. When questioned, the focus group students stated that this awareness of cyber bullying is happening on digital social media all the time as well. When asked what this conscious effort does for their understanding of identity construction, their responses were thoughtful and positive. They included:

- Zach: “This knowledge changes how I view myself. Is anything I’m saying affecting or hurting someone? If it is, then I need to change.”
- Jennifer: “Seeing how people are affected online changes how I talk to people offline also.”
- Candace: “You can do positive things to try to cancel out the negative.”
- Scott: Digital social media makes us more conscious of what we are saying in real life and online.”
- Lee: “If we say it’s so bad, why do we keep doing it? We need to change.”

Candace concludes, “You know, I have always compared myself to other people. And the bad thing is that I compare the bad things in myself to the good things in everybody else, so it’s not even fair. I think everyone does that at one point or another during their lives.” She goes on to note that the quest now becomes to make sure that what you feel about yourself is based on real
identity choices and not by what might be posted by others that you don’t know or who shouldn’t affect you.

Presentation of the Evidence: Finding Reality in a Virtual Space

Throughout the collection and analysis of this data, a number of relationships, themes, and parallels have emerged which will be discussed in the results chapter of this thesis and the unit lesson plans. One such theme was the students’ desire to find reality in virtual spaces. When tangible items like “walls,” “friends,” and “groups” don’t have physical boundaries, focus group students brought up the following inquiries: What constitutes the real? What is the version of ourselves that we create online? Can a constructed identity become the real, or perhaps only skew our idea of ourselves or others? These are the very questions that influenced the flow and direction of this action research project.

When looking at the influence of a digital world on a real life person in a real life situation, it is important to note that the online influences can and do affect the inner psyche of adolescents and teens. The participants in the focus group marveled over how quickly things spread over digital social media. They stated that they could post a picture or a quote online and have a number of likes or favorites in a matter of moments. Likewise, an image or thought about them, posted by another user, could spread equally fast and without the consent of the person about whom the image or text is concerning. Candace notes, “On the internet, rumors become reality.” She expressed concern over this phenomenon, sharing a story of someone close to her who was targeted on her digital social media walls. Abby adds, “We base what we feel on what people say about us on social media. We are chameleons and morph ourselves into what we think people want us to be. We are lost and there is no more real me.”
Several participants in the class discussion spoke at length about how they choose to only present one version of themselves online. This is usually, in their words, “the glossy, perfect image.” They select pictures and/or phrasing that either demonstrate the user in the best light or is uploaded with the intent to get a reaction. But this version of the person is not the real person. It’s a constructed view, a planned portrayal. Zach noted the discrepancy between real life and the façade of online profiles in a class discussion. He said, “What really gets to me is that people on social media become brainwashed. They only get the one side of the story and they don’t ever think about the other side. This is everything from biased posts to the most recent profile pic. They are just showing us what they want us to see, not the reality.”

Though this research project began as an examination of how students were affected by digital social media with the creation of a devised theatre and digital storytelling piece that expressed those concerns, the research and accompanying unit lesson plans themselves morphed to address the concerns brought up in the class discussions following the journal responses. When asked how often they think about who authored the material they find online, only one of the forty-six students said she does think about it often, and this is due to a lesson she had in her honors English classes about finding reliable sources. Most of the students, however, acknowledge that a lot of the information that they encounter online isn’t completely true, but rarely do they think about it or further investigate. They simply accept a fiction or altered reality as truth when it is presented in a virtual space.

As the goal of an action research project is to aid a particular group of people with knowledge and skills to discuss and analyze the issues facing their community, likewise, it is the unique placement of the teacher/researcher to equip and empower students with the tools to better understand and speak about how their identities are altered or influenced through the tool
of digital social media. During this project, it became imperative for students to understand that digital social media in itself was not alive, not something with its own intentions that could be vilified. Instead it is merely a tool, a communication application that connects groups of people on a mass scale. It is the person behind the post that controls how the message is presented and the recipients’ decision on how to use the message they view or receive. Rylie noted: “Media doesn’t care about us. It changes us subconsciously. We begin changing for people that we have never met online and never will.” Therefore, in an effort to help students make the connection and critically encounter digital social media, I did what I know how to do best: I helped them create theatre.

Performative Approach: The Creation of the Digital and Theatrical Storytelling Text

The stage can provide a safe space for students to explore and create. Armed with the tools and understanding of the goal at hand, intermediate drama students are fully able to create moving pieces of theatre. As stated earlier, my students generated original writings through their reflexive student journal responses, wiki responses, the soundtrack to their lives, and in the small performance activities. The goal was to get them to connect in new ways with media literacy and critically think about the online texts and images they encounter. This was done daily through activities featured in the lesson plans, which are found in Appendix B of this thesis.

Throughout the unit, students created short devised theatre pieces. These ranged from a thirty second sequence of pictures and sound to a ten to fifteen minute one act; all created in various groups where they had the opportunities to work will almost all members of the class. One such activity was discussed earlier in the chapter, which dealt with students’ vision of their own media landscape. After each performance, scripts were collected and outcome was
discussed. Together as a class we decided what parts of the pieces we had seen should be included in the final devised theatre piece that was to be used in competition. I wanted my students to explore how identity and identity construction could be examined through theatre and digital storytelling.

The final culminating project, the script of which is featured in Appendix D, resulted in a thirty-five minute devised theatre piece, written entirely by members of the intermediate drama class and featuring forty-six of the students. Two of the original forty-eight didn’t maintain the grades necessary to compete under Utah High School Activity Association regulations. However, they did contribute dialogue for the piece as well as assist in creating and finalizing moments throughout. The production was entitled, “I Am,” and featured at least one piece of writing and/or conceptual idea from each participant. All of the dialogue used came from the short devised theatre pieces that had been recorded, reflexive journal responses, their “I am” poems, and wiki responses.

Some of these pieces discussed the fragility of identity construction and how easily it is to be influenced through outside forces like digital social media. Using dialogue, like the selected excerpt below, students expressed their trepidation for the present and the future. In the final devised theatre piece, one character states:

The future terrified me, who am I kidding? I was terrified of everything, nervous and worried about everything. I knew that somebody wasn’t going to like the way I look. I knew that I was going mess something up, just like I usually did. Always worried about how things would turn out, scared I was annoying. Just scared. I didn’t think I could be the person I needed to be. The harder I tried, the more I
knew I would never be good enough, pretty enough, skinny enough. I would
never be enough, period.

A few moments later, as the character who spoke the words above is bound in thick red ribbon,
another character attempts to untie her and the other bound characters, stating:

They try to tear me down but they can’t. Instead of spreading the hurt, I try to turn it around and spread positivity. I try to help the people realize that words only affect them if they let them. Sure the words they say hurt but I know who I am and nothing they say can take that away. I try to help them see that too.

These featured writings came directly from the students and highlight their immediate and predominate concerns with digital identity construction and social media influence. Later in the devised theatre piece, one character, who has been witnessing the bound nature of the other characters observes:

We look at stories from history, the events of actual people, and think that there is no way things like that could possibly happen. They are happening as we speak, and not just in Chad, or Nigeria, but also in our own homes and schools. Bullies, cruel tormentors, can rule the Internet, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. These things are still happening; personal holocausts of the soul, and of self worth and image.

As the teacher, I combined the pieces that the students selected and attempted to form a cohesive piece and relatively well-formatted story. All of the dialogue examples featured in this chapter and the final script found in Appendix D are the actual words and phrasing of the student participants. The context and the staging images were theirs as well. As a class we read the combination and then the students offered suggestions and changes, so it was truly a
Digital Identity and Performance

collaborative piece that these students themselves wrote, blocked, and created. My role was to observe, to help create pictures and to aid in acting technique.

For the final digital storytelling component of the devised theatre piece, I filmed my students. I asked them to create an individual ten to twenty second task or moment that truly represented who they believe they are and how they wish to represent themselves on film. While this was also a construction, I did request that they be honest in their portrayal. They were able to select camera angle and proximity, as well as what they chose to have filmed and what they chose to wear. I chose the order in which to feature them and which moments from the clips told the clearest story. I then complied and edited the clips, which were projected at the end of the theatrical production, as the students said their final lines and exited the stage. Rehearsal processes were a time of work and revision where each participant was asked to share his or her opinion and work to make moments function.

Further, technology and digital social media were heavily ingrained into the performance text. Through the dialogue selected, the students chose to tell the story of their day-to-day encounters and how often we, as users of digital social media, are hiding behind a mask. Inside of the theatrical piece one character states, “After a while, I started to believe the things they said to me.” Another adds, “Online I pretend to be something I’m not.” He adopts the mask to fit into the supposed ideal. This was demonstrated through the use of actual masks on the actors onstage, masks that they were only able to remove when they stopped following what was told them in a puppet-like fashion. They had to be given light by another person, seen for who they really were, and then they could, in turn, spread that light.

Additionally, they addressed subjects like the plethora of available networking sites online and our connection to the phone and the ads we encounter. One moment from the piece
finds a young woman and a young man scrolling through the digital social media news feeds on their phones. The young man states, “It’s hard to be me with an identity when all I see is what I am suppose to be.” The young woman adds, “I often wish I could be this, or be that, but in reality we are who we are. I don’t want to be this way anymore. But I am kinda afraid this is who I may be. And to tell you honestly I don’t really have any plans on stopping.” Then the ads start popping up on their news feed for muscle enhancement, weight loss pills, dating sites, etc. Other actors voice the ads, surround these two, stating:

    AD: Do you love the way you are today?
    ALL: OF COURSE NOT
    AD: of course not.

The actors are then surrounded by the noise of swirling messages, beeps, and movement. Another moment sheds light on the insecurities prevalent in what some teens tend to post online. This character says: “I heard that a secret to get a lot of likes and comments [you need to] say you look horrible, and you hate yourself, so others will pamper you, and say, ‘oh no you are so gorgeous.’ I’ve done it and it got me a lot of attention.”

The piece concluded with each student self-selecting one line from their individual “I am” poem to tell the audience what they truly believed about themselves and who they are, without contextualization or pretense. They stepped forward, claimed their space, and shared a piece of their identity with the world, to be accepted or rejected, much like in an online space and with just as much immediacy for a reaction. The final line of the piece featured all of the participants joining together physically and verbally to proclaim: “I am me.”
Moving Beyond the Classroom

Though the experience of the action research project was, in itself, both positive and rewarding, there were still moments shared with my students that caused me concern beyond my classroom. While I believe that theatre has the power to change the individual, and therefore the world, its scope can, at times, be somewhat limited. After two performances of the piece, we reached an audience of about three hundred high school students and community members. While this is a great start, the question of and concern about the influence of digital social media on adolescent identity construction must be spread.

The implications of the study can and should have long-term effects. My observational and field notes gleaned from our class discussions, focus group sessions, and performance pieces express a concern for these young people who are inundated with so much information online that it becomes difficult to separate the truth from the reality and the good from the bad. Students expressed concern over current trends, but a hesitancy to do anything to change them or their habits.

Throughout the unit lesson plans, students often expressed their concerns about depression and anxiety, sitting in two camps where one believes that students need an outlet and a voice for the hard trials they are facing and the positive reinforcement that can come from online friends’ encouragement. These well wishes and positive emotional contagion can strengthen them. However, the other side believes that this over-sharing of seemingly private information leads students, as Jennifer quoted, to “be addicted to a certain kind of sadness.”

Two students in the class shared that they learned how to cut themselves online, but also received support from others across the world going through similar trials. It becomes, as Zach observed, the notion that “Social media is screwed up. It is good. It’s bad. It changes you and it
makes you stay the same. It’s consuming our lives. Think about it. There are people who can’t put their phones down to do something like drive. It kills people. It makes us do stupid things.” However, Rylie concludes, “There is nothing inherently good or bad about social media. It’s how we use it.” Being equipped with a clear understanding of these tools allows students to make active decisions and more accurate assumptions about the digital social media they encounter and author.

Chapter four will be an attempt to analyze the findings from the evidence gathered in this chapter and theorize how to move beyond this study and into other classroom spaces and educational practices. Further, the chapter will feature the key findings for each research question. These findings, which focus on the application of the skills that students learned and applied through media literacy education, feature students’ connection to digital social media and their understanding of authorship, personal landscape, the tools necessary for analyzing media, as well as an analysis of the final performance piece and its theoretical implications. Certainly, students must learn to decode the messages they receive through media and digital social media. Giving student research participants the necessary tools for an understanding of media literacy education will, hopefully, aid them in their long-term endeavors as they take what they experience in the public school setting out into the world.
At the onset of the action research project, I had a fairly clear idea of where I thought this research would go. I believed myself to have a clear understanding of how students constructed their online identity and how they allowed what they felt about themselves to be influenced by the digital social media around them. I thought I was privy to this understanding due to the brown-bag lunch sessions of the previous year. Further, I thought that by creating this unit and encouraging my students to critically examine media, and especially digital social media, I could help them share my own emerging protectionist view of digital social media and its harms and implications.

I centered the lesson plans inside of the curriculum unit on how media can affect students and how dependent they are on the mobile technology that they access every day. The research performed prior to the project and unit lesson plans shaped the methodology and research questions outlined in Chapters One and Two and the data I chose to examine in Chapter Three. Though my approach could have been classified as a protectionist stance at the beginning of the process, the findings opened a much broader range of possibilities for theory and implications within my classroom and other fine arts classroom spaces.

Answering the Research Questions

Throughout the course of this action research project, I have found the study of student identity construction through digital social media to be of the upmost import. Studies have noted that:
Social network sites, online games, video-sharing sites, and gadgets such as iPods and mobile phones are now fixtures of youth culture. They have so permeated young lives that it is hard to believe that less than a decade ago these technologies barely existed. Today’s youth may be coming of age and struggling for autonomy and identity as did their predecessors, but they are doing so amid new worlds for communication, friendship, play, and self-expression. (Ito, Horst, Brittanti, Boyd, Herr-Stephenson, Lange, Pascoe, & Robinson, 2008).

Indeed, I have noted a distinct change over the past nine years of my teaching in a public high school in how students choose to communicate and change their verbiage to reflect online trends. Given these environs, it becomes imperative to find a way to connect this mobile technology medium to the standard practice in my theatre arts classroom.

The approach for this action research project and unit lesson plans centered on an attempt to answer the following two questions:

- How does digital social media influence construction and expression of self and identity in adolescents and teens?
- Can digital storytelling in theatre settings aid students in expressing identity and constructed identity?

The media artifacts and students work examined in Chapter Three, together with the review of literature and theoretical findings in Chapter One, allowed for the formation of my own theories which will be discussed throughout this chapter.

After considering some of the ongoing works of Davis, Anderson, Cameron, and Carroll, whose recent work examines how contemporary drama teachers can bring media literacy education and creative practices in theatre spaces into the digital age, incorporating the
guidelines outlined in NAMLE, and adding observations from my own teaching practice, I focused the design for this study and an approach to answering the research questions on providing students with the skill set to understand a few core principles of media literacy education, which were highlighted in earlier chapters.

These observations and practices, I believe, have significance not only in my classroom, but also in many other classrooms as well. As my own educational theory emerged and solidified, I found that if we, as educators, can learn to really listen to the needs of the students and communicate with them on their level, using the technology that is, quite frankly, designed for their demographic, we can provide a space for them to understand, engage with, examine, and create the media that surrounds them. Then, perhaps, education can move beyond rote understanding and into the realm of critical thinking and analysis. In this way, students are able to take responsibility for their own education.

Dewey noted, “only continuous inquiry, continuous in the sense of being connected as well as persistent, can provide the material of enduring opinion about public matters” (1927). It is my intent, as both teacher and researcher, to create a space wherein drama students are given the tools and assessments to become critical thinkers about the media messages they author and consume. Though this study was merely seen through the lens of one high school drama teacher, the over-arching question of how we really educate students who use digital and mobile technologies more frequently than standard verbal communication has strong implications.

Technology and a new set of methodology, as discussed in Chapter Two, is essential in creating a lasting practice and focus on the “problem-solving education” Freire advocates, wherein students “develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as
a reality in process, in transformation” (2000). Indeed I found that when students were empowered with these tools, they were able to contextualize a developing and changing world and find their place within it. Inclusion of these methods of qualitative research, as well as embracing the opportunity to give students a voice and the tools for this communication will allow for a communal process of learning, reflection, discovery, analysis, and hopefully change.

Aiding my students in acquiring practical semiotic tools also opened up the pathway for an examination of the themes, relationships, and commonalities that presented themselves in the data. Using the process of open coding in this action research project, I developed a model of the patterns I saw emerging from the gathered student work. These influenced the direction of the case study, as well as the unit lesson plan adjustments. The path I took followed the grounded theory method, developed by Berg and featured in Chapter Two of my thesis work. This grounded theory method helped me to gather and analyze the action research questions upon which this project is grounded. As is clear, my path followed from the idea stage, through the design and data collection, into an analysis of the student work and interview responses to the final stages of reflection, revision, and the development of a theory. Further, this path allowed for certain key findings from the research and data collection to emerge into the forefront of the study.

Research Question 1: How can student expression and construction of self and identity be influenced by digital social media?

Approaching this question, I found that I needed to look not only at what my students had to say on the subject, but also at the other research happening globally on this front. The
MacArthur Foundation Study on new media found that:

What is generally lacking in the research literature overall, and in the United States in particular, is an understanding of how new media practices are embedded in a broader social and cultural ecology. Although we have a picture of technology trends on the one hand, and spotlights on specific youth populations and practices on the other, we need more work that brings these two pieces of the puzzle together (Ito, Horst, Brittanti, Boyd, Herr-Stephenson, Lange, Pascoe, & Robinson, 2008).

The descriptive goal of my qualitative research approach was through a youth-centered focus, an active attempt to both understand how student identity is influenced by and through online digital social media and, to help students recognize and actively address that influence. The lesson plans, devised theatre projects which were created, shared, and analyzed throughout the unit, and performances were designed to engage students in critical thinking and creation. Practices and research methods ranging from interviews, observation, surveys, journal responses and performances were utilized in data collection and analysis as well as a means to stimulate student thought and discovery. Central to this project was the incorporation of ethnography, working to understand how digital social media and media artifacts are meaningful to high school students in their everyday lives and construction of their identity.

Researchers have found that:

Online spaces enable youth to connect with peers in new ways. They can be ‘always on,’ in constant contact with their friends via texting, instant messaging, mobile phones, and Internet connections. This continuous presence requires ongoing maintenance and negotiation, through private communications like
instant messaging or mobile phones, as well as in public ways through social network sites (Ito, Horst, Brittanti, Boyd, Herr-Stephenson, Lange, Pascoe, & Robinson, 2008).

Key Findings for Research Question #1

After reviewing the collected data, I have discovered students are indeed affected by and influenced through their interaction with digital social media. This influence is manifest in three key findings to this research question. The evidence from my study reveals that:

- When given the tools to promote critical thinking and analysis about the digital social media and other media messages they encounter, students are led to further self-introspection and additional questioning about the media they consume and author. This skill set leads students to correlation and comparison with other media texts and other user profiles that they encounter online.

- Individual authorship has significant implications on student reception of media messages.

- While digital social media creates a place of belonging or of distance, all application of its influence is received on an individual and/or personal level.

I initially asked, “How can student expression and construction of self and identity be influenced by digital social media?” Through this study I discovered a more crucial question: “How can we help students recognize the influence of digital social media in their lives and empower them with the tools to negotiate their relationship with identity construction and the constructed online world?” My educational theory denotes the necessity of creating opportunities where students can learn to operate and negotiate within a mediated world.
Key Finding One: Student skill set led to understanding of response and further self-introspection and questioning, as well as correlation and comparison with other media texts and other users.

As an educational researcher, my quest was to enable students to access and critically think about the media and the digital social media that they consume. As a teacher, my goal was to teach them the Core Principles of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE, 2012) and find opportunities for practical application of these principles in classroom activities and assignments. Students needed to look at audience and authorship, at the content of the messages and the meaning behind those messages, and the representations of truth they received versus the reality of those same messages and the context in which they were written. I found that by incorporating these key questions into our daily practice, the students started to self-recognize and critically analyze the digital social media messages they encountered more readily and out of choice instead of classroom assignment or teacher prompted questioning.

Further, they were able to use these questions and the skills acquired to use digital social media as a tool. In online responses and class discussions, students shared that they began to think more critically about the media messages they encountered authored by their friends or others. In their journals, they began to note how they received these messages and when it affected how they felt about themselves or others.

The focus group participants found that they were, at times, deeply affected by online posts. The emotional contagion discussed in Chapter One was clearly present in an analysis of the data. Student participants noted, most often in journal entries and focus group discussions, how they were affected by negative and positive online posts, almost making them experience
the sentiments or feelings expressed in the majority of the posts they encountered in one sitting. Utilizing a method in which they can vent or process their feelings and interact with peers in similar circumstances, students often post an emotionally charged statement and encounter other’s emotionally-based posts. Given their responses and examples, I found that if the news feed of posts or images was overwhelmingly positive or negative, it affected their mood and response to their offline circumstances as well.

This theory is also backed up by current studies. Research performed by J. M. Arseneault exploring the relations among attachment, offline coping, online coping, and adjustment, found that both young adults with social weaknesses and those with social strengths can benefit from using the Internet as a coping mechanism (Arseneault, 2013). He and other researchers have noted that there may be several positive outcomes that counterbalance most negative effects. An additional recent study saw that though student anxiety in multiple stages has been dealt with in a number of ever-changing ways, “popular online social networks such as Facebook may offer an innovative strategy for addressing student stress and supporting coping” (George, Dellasega, Whitehead, Bordon, & Cheryl, 2013). This is due largely to the connection that young people feel with their online counterparts. As someone reaches out to like, favorite, or comment, the gesture registers something positive in the person’s psyche.

Perhaps it is important at this juncture to note that Facebook “presents an off-line and on-line trend; meaning the majority of friends are met offline and then added later to the online profile” (Ross, Orr, Sisic, Arseneault, Simmering, & Orr, 2009). When students see posts put up by their online friends, there is a large possibility that they will encounter that same person in their offline life, at school or work. What was once a purely in-person communication now
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includes an online exposure to the sometimes more personal aspects of “friends” lives. These interactions can provide both positive and negative outcomes.

Students need to be aware of the emotional shifts that occur based on posts from their networking sites. Each student, it seemed, manifest this shift on a very personal and very individual basis. Again, key findings in this research show that when students are given the tools to promote critical thinking, their level of introspection and connection to other media texts increases. One such student quoted the Nine Inch Nails song “Copy of a Copy” and added her own integration of that dialogue into her personal feelings about her self worth as she encounters media messages and tries to find her place in this online public forum. She wrote:

“I am just a copy of a copy of a copy. Everything I say has come before. Assembled into something into something into something. I am never certain anymore.” I was told since I was young to be myself, but how am I to be myself if the world is crushing me to the ground? You’re listening to someone cry for help, but all you do is make them cry harder with your words. “Why all the change of heart? You need to play your part.” I say this to myself all the time: “Look at you, you’re pathetic. Who could ever love and accept you? You need to play your part. You need to be perfect. You won’t ever fit in looking like that. You’re worthless, and no one can change that! Who are you really?” And I answer: “I am just a shadow, just an echo. I am little pieces, just doing everything you tell me to.”

Conversely, another student wrote that online she feels she has found her place in the world. She said:

The Internet and the sites I go to all the time to post or chat kind of create a place
where we don’t have to be afraid of who we are. It’s like those Dove commercials that are always on Facebook or those other videos with like moms and kids that make you feel good no matter what you look like. Everyone has a place in this world. This new place lets me know that I’m never alone. This place has changed my life, and possibly my personality. It’s ok to state your opinion! But remember, it’s easy to forget that different isn’t bad! If people weren’t different, then the world wouldn’t be the way it is.

These students state that they use the new community that they create online to both make conclusions about self and others and to find commonality with friends and with media.

Students assume more “adult roles” as they learn to make judgments about peers and online friends based on digital social media posts and public profiles of other users. My students noted that much of what they think about the identity of another online is based on their posts. If they don’t have an inter-personal connection with the other individual, their assumption is based on that, which is constructed online. As a follow up to the class discussion, students in the focus group were asked how they thought it affected them to see other people post messages that are intended to elicit a reaction.

Zach stated that this practice was all too common with his online friends and that “It makes me want to judge people harsher than I probably should. Because there might be someone who is honestly posting their opinion, but because there are so many of each, you don’t know who’s who, so you automatically want to judge them as, ‘Oh, he’s a troll person, I should not listen to him.’” (It should be noted that I had to ask for clarification on the definition of a troll. According to the students, it’s someone lurking around online just trying to rile people up and cause multiple comments on a single post.) Lee noted, “There’s a little bit of bias in everything
we read, everything we do” and therefore, he decided, we cannot assume meaning if we don’t now the intentions behind something. He continued, “A lot of the time, I think it’s just a communication misinterpretation, because, like, people could be posting their honest opinion and someone could take it completely the opposite direction. That’s one of the downsides to social media, I guess, because you lose some communication abilities with just the text.”

Many of the focus group students shared stories of miscommunication through digital social media. They expressed that from a young age, they were taught to read people’s physical and verbal cues. They referenced knowing when your mother is mad or proud or sarcastic based on the tone of her voice. Digital social media, and indeed much of technology, however, doesn’t allow us that interpersonal connection and communication. Zach added, “Because you can understand a person more with body language, and their expressions, and everything, and on social media, you don’t have that. You just have words.”

Some students noted the danger of the removal of an inter-personal connection. They stated that the distance created online almost makes people forget about or dismiss the consequences. Candace expressed:

I think it’s important that they realize that there are consequences, and that opinions aren’t facts. I think one of the main reasons why people will attack those other people is because they feel like they’re claiming it as truth. But they’re really not. Like it matters what they think, but they’re not necessarily true in every single case, and I think people need to realize that.

Through being empowered with the skills to critically encounter and analyze media and digital social media, students began to see the power and impact of this medium on how they felt about themselves and interacted with others. There is not a clear answer to just how identity
construction is affected by digital social media. But there is abundant evidence that it does have an effect.

*Key Finding Two: Authorship has significant implications on student reception of media messages*

Another key finding centered on how students began to note and make judgments based on Internet authorship. At the beginning of the project, students were asked how often they considered authorship when encountering media messages and posts on digital social media. They were asked to consider the credence they allocate to the messages posted online and how frequently they thought about the source or author of an online post or re-share. Initially, only one student of the forty-eight in the class said that she considered it once in a while. The chart featured below, Figure 4.2, is a sampling taken from mid-way through the project. While the evidence clearly demonstrates that not 100% of the students spend time considering the source, the growth in their analysis of media messages is promising.

![Figure 4.2](image)

*How often do you look at these videos or websites closer to find out more about the persons or company that made the video or website?*
This theme of authorship has two distinctive parts to it. Primarily, when students encountered a post of a commercial or controversial nature, they rarely put a lot of time into thinking about or finding out who the author might be. Much of the time, they accepted these posts, which were usually in the form of a re-share, as either pure fact or straight fiction. However, the implications of this unit more fully inspired students with the desire to look a bit further from time to time into who wrote the post or created the video and why they might have done so.

On the alternative side of authorship, students found that when they knew the author of a post, it, for the most part, affected how they received the post. Students found that they could easily gloss over posts from people who were not close friends, family, or opinion leaders. They stated that they allowed the statements, posts, or images of people close to them or in a power position over them to have a deeper impact than those who they simply knew solely from online or an acquaintance-based relationship. The exception noted was on anonymous and hurtful posts. Those tended to affect the student response in every case discussed in class or the focus group, regardless of the source.

Indeed authorship was a recurring theme throughout the research. Students wondered about the responsibility of themselves and others when posting online. Riley stated, “You can’t always censor yourself, because there are tons of people out there who disagree with people, and go ahead and go online and say their opinion, and then you [are] like, ‘well you can’t say that opinion, because it offends somebody.’” Students found that, in many ways, the posts of others either connected or isolated them from the greater online social networking community.
Key Finding Three: The individual place of belonging or of distance created through digital social media

Throughout this action research project, I found that the students tended to negotiate the majority of their day-to-day interactions online. While they did participate in face-to-face discourse while at school, that practice was still peppered with online interactions with their friends in other classes, and even sometimes, on the other side of the room. Students suggested that they needed and even craved this online communication as a means to connect with their peers on a more personal level.

A study from the University of Washington shows that digital media helps teens foster a sense of belonging and sharing personal problems. This digital connectedness, known as “Friendship 2.0,” creates a space where, as Davis notes, “what they’re doing is different from generations of teenagers from before the digital era, but it comes from the same place of basic developmental needs. It’s just that they’re using different tools to satisfy these needs.” Her research found that those youth who self-describe as shy or quiet found it easier to share their feelings and thoughts digitally than in person. This same discovery was manifest on the evidentiary data gathered throughout this study. Students noted in their reflexive journals, class discussions, and on the survey that they felt they had a voice online that didn’t exist in the real world setting.

Further, participants in Davis’ study noted that having the ability to connect anytime and anywhere with their friends helped lessen feelings of isolation, an observation also echoed by the student participants in this research study. The study discusses the development of an “outward-looking self,” where one looks to others for affirmation rather than relying on an internal sense of worth. While it is still early to determine the full scope and outcome of digital social media,
Davis observed that “adolescents are using digital media to promote their sense of belonging and self-disclosure of personal problems, two important peer processes that support identity development” (2012).

These are the very patterns that emerged from coding the data gathered and analyzed throughout the research project. A breakdown of student reflexive journal responses and class and focus group discussions found a reoccurrence of the themes including connection to others, friendship, support, feeling good about themselves because of the amount of likes they received, etc. Evidence also revealed the converse sentiment of feeling less-than because of the lack of online response. Further, coding the data revealed that students felt like they could often relate better with their peers online and desired the continual support they received while participating in digital social media networks like Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram and Snapchat.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, student participants in the action research project expressed that they did indeed allow digital social media to influence the way they felt about themselves. Likewise, they chose to construct a version of themselves online that portrayed them in the best light. In interviews and class discussions, students observed that although they were fully cognizant of this choice of constructed identity, they didn’t often consider the possibility that other people within their social networking groups were likely doing the same thing. This lack of connection led to students often comparing the real version of themselves to the created version of someone else found on digital social media. As a researcher, I found that the integration of media literacy skills helped students to negotiate their place more fully within new technology tools and practices as well as their online social networks. These skills provided students with the tools to access, analyze and evaluate their received meaning from the messages that surround them.
Educators like myself who plan to integrate media literacy education into their curriculum can gain an appreciation for the technology that they and the students are able to access and utilize in order to create co-learning curriculum like that used in this action research project. Nick Couldry notes that media and the Internet have created a society without boundaries or borders (2012). Focus group students noted that those realms of geographical or socio-economic separation seem to be minimal when it comes to online networking. Further, they recognized that their profile becomes a representation of self, a negotiation with this online societal group. Current researchers support this notion and notice the formation of more “adult roles” in the negotiation of self representation and view of the other:

When these peer negotiations occur in a context of public scrutiny, youth are motivated to develop their identities and reputations through these peer-based networks, exchanging comments and links and jockeying for visibility. These efforts at gaining recognition are directed at a network of respected peers rather than formal evaluations of teachers or tests…. With peer-based learning we see youth taking on more “grown-up” roles and ownership of their own self-presentation, learning, and evaluation of others (Ito, Horst, Brittanti, Boyd, Herr-Stephenson, Lange, Pascoe, & Robinson, 2008).

These “adult” roles help to shape their identity and the view of that same identity that they want to appear in a public forum.

Though I employed a variety of techniques: surveys, reflective journal entries, photovoice projects, and interviews, which were utilized as a means to understand the patterns present in daily use of digital social media, I found that there is no clear answer to the first research question. There is no singular way in which students are influenced through digital
social media. In fact, there are not only five or ten ways; the evidence from the research found that there are any number of ways in which students allow digital social media to influence their construction of identity and expression of self. During our final focus group session, I believe that Abbey succinctly described how students begin to be affected by digital social media. She shared:

I don’t think directly I see myself as being affected, but over time, the ideals that I hear online slowly become my own, I guess? I just take it in and that becomes my own opinion. For a lot of political issues, my parents have totally prejudiced, really, really mean opinions, and they say mean stuff all the time, and because I’m on Tumblr and stuff, and [it’s] really liberal, I guess I have completely different opinions than them now, and it’s not because of the environment I’m in my everyday life, it’s because of the environment I’m in through the internet, and what I’ve learned through there.

The effects and influences of digital social media are unpredictable. As they are ever-changing and have an unlimited amount of potential authors and posts, it is difficult to ascertain the precise results required in the initial research question of how student representation of self is influenced by digital social media, and impossible to formulate an exact answer to the query. Nor is it something students tend to spend a lot of time thinking about during the process of identity construction. It seems that results of the findings manifest themselves only after the process is complete and the person is changed.

Clearly, students are influenced by both the positive and negative messages they encounter, but they must begin to consider authorship, source, context, and intent. Only this empowerment will begin to combat and perhaps enlighten the protective views that want to keep
the influences of the Internet at bay. This is a distinctive shift from the earlier protectionist mind frame I held at the beginning of this action research study. Student participants in my class and in the focus group helped create an understanding that digital social media is just a tool, a means for communication and expression. It can help us if we open that door or hurt us if we let the consequences of the negative messages created by others take up space in us.

As a teacher/researcher, my fluency within this community evolved. I was able to see the vital communication skills and tools my students were able to utilize through digital social media that helped them to negotiate their on and offline world and start to find their place within it. As we worked together as a class in our attempt to understand and contextualize the role of digital social media in identity construction and view of self throughout the project, many more students started to take notice of the mass influence digital social media could have on their lives if they chose to allow it. This realization was essential and productive in the creation of the devised theatre piece.

Research Question 2: How can identity and constructed identity be expressed through digital storytelling in theatre settings?

As an educational researcher and theatre teacher, I wanted to find a way to incorporate the drama foundation’s core curriculum into the study of media literacy and technology. Leading theatre teacher and practitioner Anne Bogart has found that “In the theatre we reach out and touch the past through literature, history and memory so that we might receive and relive significant and relevant human qualities in the present and then pass them on to future generations” (Bogart & Landau, 2004). Many theatre educators, like myself, tend to rely on classic texts in order to do this job. While those texts are at the core of theatrical study, there are
new movements, like devised theatre and digital storytelling, within theatrical practice that allow for and embrace the use of media literacy, technology, and popular culture.

The study, referenced earlier, done through the MacArthur Foundation noted, “Adults often view children in terms of developmental ‘ages and stages,’ focusing on what they will become rather than seeing them as complete beings ‘with ongoing lives, needs and desires’” (Ito, Horst, Brittanti, Boyd, Herr-Stephenson, Lange, Pascoe, & Robinson, 2008). These researchers suggest overcoming the generational gap by taking youths seriously as actors in their own social worlds and realizing the presence and power of interactive media and media for social communication. After all, these students are the ones experiencing the phenomenon of technological growth and online digital communication first-hand in their formative years. This attempt to connect with students through the mediums of technology and pop culture allow for students to take accountability for their own educational practices. With an added interest in the subject matter and the tools utilized to connect with that same material, students in my class have gained a responsibility for role of their own education in my class and their contribution to the overall dialogue therein. They have done this through the class discussions, performances and connection to digital storytelling.

The use of digital storytelling in a drama classroom can open up a path for qualitative research. As Berg states, “Qualitative research properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit those settings” (2009). In order to create a devised theatre project that really delved into student identity construction and expression of self through digital social media, it was necessary to make sure that the voice heard was that of the students, not the teacher/researcher. They are those who inhabit the social settings in question. It was entirely their dialogue and conceptual choices that framed the script.
for the devised theatre piece. It became clear through the research, that each of the forty-eight students in the class had something to add to the discussion. I realized that as a teacher, I cannot possibly know everything. Instead, by creating a space for contribution, my students were able to formulate their own discussion about the topics that directly affected them in these formative years. The assignments, therefore, became imperative in helping the students to develop their own unique voice. The journal prompts, which were initially geared toward merely answering the research questions, were embraced by the students as an opportunity to discuss, to write, to respond, and even to challenge each other and the teacher/researcher’s assumptions.

Key Findings for Research Question #2

In response to this second research question, three key findings emerged at the forefront of the data analysis and will be discussed in this section. When looking at how identity and constructed identity can be expressed through digital storytelling and theatre settings, I found that:

• The media literacy educational tools and skills developed throughout the unit helped students to share their own research findings on stage and construct a public identity through digital storytelling in theatre settings.

• Opinion leaders emerged and their role become solidified in the distribution of media and media messages. Digital storytelling as well as theatrical practice and performance can assume the role of opinion leader (person or people in a position of influence through whom media messages is disseminated and shared) to a larger community.

• Really listening to students in how they wish to represent their experience will empower them and more fully dedicate them to the task of telling their story.
Key Finding One: Sharing students skills and findings on stage

The devised theatrical piece, which was highlighted more fully in Chapter Three, was created by the students and utilized a variety of technology, multimedia and live performance, as well as reflection-based assessments to create an impactful performance and creation process. A complete copy of the final performance script can be found in Appendix D of this thesis. In this section I will briefly describe how it was received and how the key findings came into play.

Theatre has great ability to cause people to think and reflect, but also to induce them into action. The core concepts of drama encourage discourse, collaboration, and full use of body, voice and inclusion of technology. Therefore, it seems the perfect platform for a discussion of the effect of media messages and influence of digital social media. Thoman and Jolls found that: “Since media messages are transmitted through so many different mental processes, the combination of analysis with production also incorporates multiple intelligences in the learning process (linguistic/verbal, logical/mathematical, musical/rhythmic, visual/spatial, body/kinesthetic, intrapersonal and interpersonal)” (2005). As a teacher/researcher, I found that the incorporation of media literacy education and the opportunity for students to readily and practically use these tools and engage these intelligences added a tangible element to theatrical production, where it is the obligation of the actor to take the words of another and create meaning. While these same intelligences Thoman and Jolls noted above are at home on the stage, there are always other factors at play with any message.

The two researchers further noticed that:

The media message we experience was written by someone (or probably several people)...whatever is “constructed” by just a few people then becomes
“normalized” for the rest of us; like the air we breathe, it gets taken for granted and usually goes unquestioned. But as the audience, we don’t get to see or hear the words, pictures or arrangements that were rejected. We only see, hear or read what was accepted!” (Thoman & Jolls, 2005)

This concept of editing and authorship was introduced during the initial stages of the unit lesson plans, and the student participants found it an integral concept to be included and noted throughout the creation of our theatrical piece. I found that this understanding allowed students to access the tools they learned through analysis of the various digital social media messages they received and created and break them down into thematic elements.

Students learned to decipher authorship, context, and audience in their encountering of media messages. Further, they chose to incorporate this concept into their devised theatre piece. This can be seen most specifically in the script in the ad section, where characters are inundated with messages of who they are supposed to be and how they are supposed to look. Additionally it can be seen in the ribbon section where characters are masked and bound by the messages of others. They are only able to shed the mask or break the ribbons binding them as they learn to distinguish between messages and self-select the person they choose to be. These two moments were entirely devised by students in the class and geared toward the message they wanted to share with the larger community.

Key Finding Two: Role of Opinion Leaders

As is the case in any class, there are certain students whose voices are more likely to be heard. Often these students are those with the most passionate ideas or feelings on certain subjects or discussions. As a teacher/researcher, I found that an understanding of this flow of
communication was essential in understanding how and why media messages and opinions within my class were transmitted and given a powerful voice. Katz and Lazearfield discussed the two-step flow of communication, which is to say how ideas flow from the media to opinion leaders within a community, and thence from the opinion leaders to the less active sections of the population. Evidence of this flow is found in class discussions and blog responses and demonstrated in the final devised theatre piece. According to Katz and Lazearfield, the role of the opinion leaders is to affect decisions or behaviors of those within their small group. Researchers find that these opinion leaders play a key communication role in the distribution of information. While students tend to be influenced by initial media messages, the opinion they form has far more affect on their intimate group than does the initial media message (2002).

Throughout the course of the project, and especially in the collaborative creation of the devised theatre production, the opinion leaders of the intermediate drama group emerged. This happened both in the in-person classroom setting and in our online responses and class blog discussions. These leaders had a very clear vision of how student identity should be expressed. Their opinion was valued and rarely questioned, so the initial result and message of the devised theatre script was that of a few select students in the class. In an effort to counter-balance this phenomenon and represent all student participants in the final performance script I attempted to include at least one piece of writing from each student participant into the piece. From our class discussions and the reflexive journal responses, I found that students were engaged in this conversation and that each of the forty-eight participants has a voice and something to add to the discussion. In order to ensure that their voice was heard, each student was invited to choose one line from his or her self-created “I am” poems to share, thereby creating the final moments of the piece.
However, as an educational researcher, I found that the role of opinion leader never fully dissipates. Throughout the creation of the devised theatre performance and the research and data collection, it became evident that the theatre and digital storytelling productions can also assume the role of an opinion leader and function as such in sharing a media message to a larger community. This group of students, in essence, became opinion leaders with a message to share with their peers. Each of their selections for the devised theatre piece was geared toward helping the larger community found within the two diverse audiences to understand what they saw as an important and essential message about the power of digital social media and identity construction.

Students stated that they learned how important it is to consider authorship and the voice of those opinion leaders. Evidence gleaned through my observations in the creation of the piece as well as class discussions during and after the project found that it is necessary to explore how student identity construction and the influence of digital social media can be expressed in theatrical settings. I believe that our final piece did just that, creating a space where youth voice could be heard, recognized, validated and shared.

*Key Finding Three: Empowering students to tell their own story*

As previously stated, students submitted a large quantity of student creative work, which was used to create the final piece, as compiled by the teacher/researcher. Prior to the compilation of the data and literature submitted, the class wrote down the message they believed most pertinent to be shared through the theatrical piece. After each theme entry was submitted, it was reviewed and discussed as a class. Then the class voted to decide on the centralized message they collectively wanted to share with our two different audiences. The first audience
was with their parents and families, the second with their peers from all around the region. The students stated that they needed to select a theme that made a social impact and they felt to be important.

Collectively, the class decided that the theme should center on a Goethe quote they encountered earlier in the unit: “We owe our development to a thousand influences of our great world” (Cooley, 2004). Students stated they wanted the piece to visually and verbally demonstrate those influences, but leave the overarching message that each individual gets to accept or reject those influences and ultimately decide who they are and who they want to be.

After the students decided on the meaning of their piece, they joined with the teacher to discuss and finalize concept and flow. While making every attempt in a collaborative devised theatre practice to utilize the students’ ideas and give them creative control, it is important to note that the student/teacher hierarchy still existed. It was at this point that I, as the teacher, chose to edit out writings that did not directly correlate with the student-chosen theme. While acknowledging the students’ voice in the piece, I created the final performance script using only their writings and the two songs they believed captured their story best (Nine Inch Nails’ “Copy of a Copy” and Michael Jackson’s “Man in the Mirror”) for the dialogue. It is also important to note that because of time the I, as the teacher, initially decided the structure of the piece. After the final script was compiled, the class read it through and made the appropriate changes and assigned out parts. The next three weeks were used for blocking and memorization, leading to the two sequential performances. The students stated that they found the parent reception was positive and supportive. However, they noted in retrospect that it was in the peer and judge reception that they felt the most successful in capturing the power of the piece and sharing the essence of their story.
During the post-mortem discussion after the performance, student participants indicated that they walked off the stage feeling like they had done their best and that they had shared their story, the one they collectively created, in the best way. The piece ended up centering on all the influences in our lives that get in the way of us being who we really are. Their piece made clear that only by examining all of these influences and deciding on what and who we want to be can we take off the masks we hide behind or break the bonds that tie us up. The region drama competition adjudicators were very complementary; they noted in a feedback session with the students immediately following their performance that the piece was a powerful example of student feelings and teenage voices that are rarely heard, as most theatrical pieces in competition are performed works written by adults. The adjudicators noted that the production touched them as these students were real, humble, and thoughtful onstage. Their peers from other schools were very receptive of the message, telling students that many of the thoughts and fears expressed onstage were very familiar.

At the end of the unit, the students joined together for a final Socratic seminar where they were able to discuss the piece, the unit, and what they learned from it. Students stated they gained an understanding of media influence and the tools to start seeking out that influence and contesting its place within their lives. Further, they gained an appreciation for others’ stories and struggles. As an educational researcher and teacher, I found an appreciation for technology and popular culture texts, without which I would have never been able to connect with my students on this level. My digital immigrant status began to change as I accessed media literacy tools and technologies myself and became proficient with a number of the networking sites my students frequent.
As previously stated, the final devised theatre piece explored in Chapter Three included samplings of student writing. Based on the evidence presented there, I found that the overall experience of creating the devised theatre piece caused students in the class to reflect more fully on the role of digital social media. Students voiced their hypotheses throughout the process, about how and why they were affected and influenced through digital social media. This reflection became a catalyst for further questioning on their part. In one focus group session, Candice posed the question, “How exactly do we become the things we post or see posted online, both positive and negative?” Focus group students talked about being constantly surrounded by narratives in many formats: television, advertisements, images, online posts, and music. This line of questioning falls into one of the key findings discussed earlier: Empowering students with the tools to analyze media leads to further questioning and introspection. Students in the focus group wondered: “What do we allow to influence us and what do we allow ourselves to create? What does this process say about us as a culture and as people?”

There was never a clear answer discovered in the discussion or the interviews to resolve those questions. Nor was there necessarily a need to fully resolve them. Merely creating a space that encouraged further questioning and reflection is at the heart of this action research project. Bogart notes, “You cannot create results. You can only create conditions in which something might happen” (Bogart and Landau, 2004). It was the intent of this study to utilize the research questions in creating circumstances that would empower students with tools and terms to express the influence of digital social media and then use the skills learned throughout the year in our intermediate drama class. Additionally, students were encouraged to spread a message to an audience through the medium of theatre. While the ending results might not have been what was
initially contemplated, and the theatrical piece became far more didactic, the conditions created allowed my students to explore and perform just how that influence is manifest and can spread.

Implications in other Contemporary Classroom Settings

It is my hope that the things my students and I learned from this process will not stop at the doors of my classroom. My involvement has certainly strengthened my connection with my students, my understanding of their connection with technology and digital social media and improved my teaching practices. Where first I showed hesitation in the inclusion of technology in a drama classroom, I found media literacy education to be an ideal springboard for creating contemporary drama and forging a connection between the social and technical skills with which my students are familiar and my own ancient craft of theatrical production. Additionally, where I was wary of relinquishing control as an educator, I found that accepting the truth that these students, these digital natives, had a much better and more thorough understanding of my initial research than I did. By accepting this fact, I was able to create a co-learning atmosphere within my classroom. Further, I was able to engage my students in a discussion that went beyond a simple intermediate drama unit. Instead it bridged the gap between education and real world situations, creating a new educational method of instruction that focused more on life skills and analysis than on technique and memorization.

It is the purpose of a good educational system and its teachers to provide an opportunity for the growth and application of skills that reach beyond the classroom. In their report, *Learning for the 21st Century*, Thoman and Jolls found that:

People need to know more than core subjects. They need to know how to use their knowledge and skills – by thinking critically, applying knowledge to new
situations, analyzing information, communicating, collaborating, solving problems, making decisions. [Students] need to become lifelong learners, updating their knowledge and skills continually and independently (2005).

I found that within my classroom as a theatre educator, allowing my students more autonomy in their education and especially within the material access, the students embraced the opportunity to learn. When equipped with the skills of access, analysis, evaluation and creation, they were able to apply the experiences within the classroom to the outside world. This is a practice that must continue in my classroom and inside of other educational settings. I found as a researcher that when students take responsibility over their own learning and when the teacher creates an atmosphere of co-learning and co-instruction, there is the opportunity for personal growth, application and integration of problem solving skills.

Clearly, there is something to be noticed and analyzed about the medium of digital social media and its connection to real-world and authentic communication. It has been noticed that, “Contrary to adult perceptions, while hanging out online, youth are picking up basic social and technological skills they need to fully participate in contemporary society” (Ito, Horst, Brittanti, Boyd, Herr-Stephenson, Lange, Pascoe, & Robinson, 2008). If educators and educational researchers erect barriers to this style of communication, we will deprive students of access to a form of learning and connection that might be the most ideal of their individual learning style. Further, we prevent them from using the tools with which they are already accustomed to operating to engage in a world that is fast moving and vast in its technological approach. Researchers have found that, “Participation in the digital age means more than being able to access “serious” online information and culture. Youth could benefit from educators being more open to forms of experimentation and social exploration that are generally not characteristic of
educational institutions” (Ito, Horst, Brittanti, Boyd, Herr-Stephenson, Lange, Pascoe, & Robinson, 2008). Clearly there is a need for educational researchers and fine arts teachers to break from the generational gap and to formulate lesson plans and activities that encourage youth participation and application.

As teacher/researcher, I found that I had the distinct opportunity within my classroom to not only ask questions of my students in order to open them up to learning on a new level, but also the importance of asking myself some very difficult questions. The Center for Media Literacy poses some essential questions for teachers: “Am I trying to tell the students what the message is? Or am I giving the students the skills to determine what they think the message(s) might be” (Thoman & Jolls, 2005)? At times throughout this process, it was difficult to see that my teaching practices needed to change to fit the contemporary style of learning that allowed my students the most opportunity to learn and apply that knowledge to real world situations. I needed to be not only willing, but also eager to incorporate popular culture texts and networking technology in order to optimize my students’ ability to learn. This practice must indeed change the course of education in my classroom and in others. It can extend well beyond arts classrooms and spread throughout the entire system, encouraging critical thought that creates life-long learners and productive participants in society.

Ito and her fellow researchers found that the opportunity to have students participate in a networked world will suggest new ways of thinking and exploring the role of contemporary education and its role within society. They suggest that teachers and educational researchers have the opportunity to exploit the potential learning opportunities that are available online and through networking technologies. They suggest that, “Rather than assuming that education is primarily about preparing for jobs and careers, what would it mean to think of it as a process
guiding youths’ participation in public life more generally” (Ito, Horst, Brittanti, Boyd, Herr-Stephenson, Lange, Pascoe, & Robinson, 2008)? As educational practitioners and teachers interested in critical pedagogy, we have the opportunity to answer that question and put it into real world practice, aiding our students in real world pursuits and participation. This returns us to the discussion of theatrical practice and why drama education blends so well with media literacy education. Both seek to improve the overall person in an effort to engage in a lasting lesson and the skills to function within a world built upon these necessities.

Critical Literacies and Incorporation of Media Literacy

One of the most important aspects in this study was to figure out how arts teachers could incorporate more media literacy education into a drama classroom and open students up to new storytelling possibilities. In my classroom and throughout this action research project, I found that it made complete sense to meld drama practices and media literacy education skills. As drama looks intricately at the implications of the words and actions of one individual over the course of a plot, media literacy opens that practice up to real life people as well. Both encourage students to go beyond themselves and look first at the message being presented and then analyze what it means and why. This skill is imperative for students as they make their way out into the world to function in a normal and productive society. They must learn to go beyond themselves and to read the messages being received on a personal level, as well as a technological one.

This understanding and practice will hopefully help them as they emerge into the world and pursue their life’s goals. More so, however, it could provide a means and skill set for students as they go out and help others understand the influence of media messages on identity and perception. These implications and opportunities extend far beyond my own classroom and
small research study. As performing arts teachers, indeed as a broad educational research community, we can and must teach the skills of media literacy education. While myself and others in the field can help students know what to look for when analyzing a piece of media (NAMLE, 2009) or help them to create new media, until they use that media or that analysis to change something about themselves, or help others in some way, then the job is not fully complete. Thoman and Jolls noted that traditional literacy skills were used to help ensure that people could function as adults and engaged citizens in society. However, those traditional skills fall short in the age of technology and new media. Therefore, a new direction must be taken in the field of education. They surmised:

"Today families, schools and all community institutions share the responsibility for preparing young people for living and learning in a global culture that is increasingly connected through multi-media and influenced by powerful images, words and sounds (2005)."

This sentiment includes all of us within the educational paradigm but puts a special focus on those operating within schools. Throughout the research exhibited in the review of literature found in Chapter One, I was able to take what I learned from the various theorists and use those ideas and methods in writing my unit curriculum. Further, creating this action research project allowed me to establish lesson plans that focused on media literacy skills and the opportunity for my students to practice daily, for months, reading, analyzing, and engaging in and with media messages. Discussing their take-away is what, honestly, made the most impact on this seasoned teacher and relatively new researcher.

In the final focus group session, I took the opportunity to really listen to my students and learn from their experience engaging in critical pedagogy. As we sat in the auditorium, eating
cookies and talking about the process of the last few months, I asked the members of the focus group to think about the application of what they had learned and done throughout the unit and how they can use that understanding to help others they encounter both online and off. This thought led to one final question: “What do you think teenagers should know about media and social media and how it affects you?” Their responses included:

- Lee: “Don’t let it consume too much of your time. Like, it can be a good thing, definitely, but there are some people that are just constantly on it, and it’s rather annoying. Because like, say you’re on a date, and you want to get to know someone, and awkward silence ensues and they pull out their phone and start using Facebook, and now their phone is more important than the person sitting in front of them.”
- Candace: “You can let it be a part of your life, but don’t let it be your life.”
- Zach: “They need to label it as good, but with caution. Just like driving a car. Driving a car is good, but you need to drive it with caution, otherwise you can really hurt yourself or hurt others.”
- Jennifer: “I think it also depends on the social media you might use. Because if you’re like on Instagram and you’re posting super positive things, you know, it’s not a big deal. But if you’re on, like, Hot or Not, and you’re literally, like, rating people and telling them that they’re attractive or not, and destroying their self-esteem.”
- And finally Riley noted: “I think it’s also people. When people are like, ‘oh social media is bad,’ I would, for lack of a better term, say that people are bad, you know, because social media isn’t like a person or a thing that we can go ahead and
blame, because it’s not social media itself. It’s the people who go on this thing called social media, and they’re the ones who give it a bad name. So when everyone is like, ‘oh social media is really bad,’ it’s like no, the really bad part is that you keep letting social media do social media’s thing.”

Clearly, these students were intuitive enough to go beyond the protectionist stance and challenge meaning and assumption. While I ended up incorporating critical thinking and media literacy skills into their daily practice, they recognized the influence on their identity for what it was, just an influence. They could choose to accept the influence or reject it. They could choose to let the posts of others affect their identity or forge a new one. They could choose what version of themselves to create online and decide who their “friends” and “followers” would be. Their network could be relatively small or excessively large, but whatever the size and access, it was their choice. They just needed the skills to help them choose.

Conclusions and Further Inquiry

I realized that my students’ experience online is actually an authentic experience and their online identity is equally real and authentic. My digital immigrant status as a researcher studying this particular group of teenagers in a very specific community changed because of the research participants. Accessing technology alongside them and integrating it into my newly evolving teaching practice allowed for the opportunity for co-learning and critical engagement. The power of the individual to tell their story, either in a digital format through digital social media and digital storytelling or on the stage empowers the participant who creates the message and the audience who receives it in any format.
I hope to use elements of this unit in my future teaching practices and to share it with other educators at conferences and in district collaborations. The results from this particular action research study have helped me to see the power in giving students a voice and autonomy in the telling of their individual story in a classroom, in an assignment, or on the stage. Though I may not choose this exact subject matter in future intermediate drama classes when we discuss media literacy and approach devised theatre, I will incorporate the skills learned throughout the unit into practice. It is indeed possible to take the lesson plans created throughout this unit and to utilize them in a variety of platforms. It would be most advantageous for an educator like myself to engage the students in those topics which are of particular interest to them at the time of the unit and to adapt the lesson plans to address that subject matter. Perhaps a few brown bag lunch sessions and focus groups should be planned throughout the year. Although the research for this thesis has been completed, my educational research practices should and will continue throughout my teaching career.

That is my plan in going forth, to use these methods in my future drama classes and with new emerging groups of students and to share these methods with other progressive theatre teachers. Learning from their experience engaging students in media and critical literacies and incorporating my own will hopefully makes us better overall educators. I can, with confidence, say that I am a better teacher and have a closer connection to my students because of this experience. I am a more refined and direct researcher because I learned to analyze student work and statements more minutely. I am a more aware adult because I took the opportunity to really listen to people younger than me who, quite frankly, have more experience with digital social media than I do.
Further inquiry must always be made in a way that opens up a dialogue with adolescents and teenagers. Though I do not have a definitive answer to my question of how digital social media influences student identity construction, I have a number of examples of how it influences individuals, which is what these students are: individuals. Further, in response to the second research question of how digital storytelling and theatrical production can be used to express identity, I have proof that students joining together to tell a story on stage can be a powerful message which can reach across the generational gap and connect with a variety of people and their individual circumstances.

At the conclusion of the project, I asked my students in the focus group if taking part in this unit and creating the devised theatre piece has caused them to look at media and digital social media in a new or different way. Remarkably all of them admitted that to some degree the unit and performances made them re-think their usage and authorship. Candace stated: “Not only have I started to notice how much time I waste on social media, but I’ve started to notice the people around me that do it too.” She expressed concern for her habits, and those of others in her immediate circle now that she has seen just how frequently she and her family, in particular, were connected to their mobile technology.

Scott added: “Before this unit, I didn’t really think about this whole addiction thing. I was like, ‘I’m not one of those people. I mean, I don’t even have a phone that can do that,’ but then I started thinking about it, and [my iPod] does, and I didn’t even realize. Like, I was so blind to how much I was using it. I had no idea.” Scott believed that media didn’t constantly consume him because of his lack of smart phone. However, he has an iPod that is connected to Wi-Fi on his person at all times, a tablet at home on which he is constantly playing online video and gambling games with people across the nation, and family computer access that he is frequently
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using. He said that although doing this unit didn’t necessarily make him change his consumption habits, it did make him more aware of himself and how he was being influenced and affected by digital social media.

I approached this action research project with nearly equal amounts of trepidation and excitement. I find that I may have wanted initially to help my students change their consumption habits. Instead, I increased my own as I became more fluent within this community and realized the new authentic world of communication that exists online and can then translate into an offline world as well. I found myself excited at the prospect of incorporating new technologies and allowing my students to use the technology that they readily access to aid them in critically engaging with their own education and setting their own methods for learning.

Contrary to my initial opinion on the subject and my first approach, there was a necessity to adapt the flow and form of the lesson plans to fit student needs and the direction they chose to take the opportunities presented in the class. Thereby creating a unit that went far beyond time spent on a smart phone. It is my hope in sharing these lessons online and with other educators that they will stretch others within our field to further inquiry and practice. The opportunity to engage with my students unlike ever before was exciting yet intimidating as it was unchartered territory. Other drama teachers might also hesitate when pursuing this course. Never before have I attempted to let my students dictate the flow of how something will turn out. Perhaps it is the director in me that has the overall picture constantly in mind, a complete plan of action. Of course, there will always be deviations on the stage, nuances that each character brings, but the conclusion is scripted; the plot is sure.

This project was just the opposite. There was no playwright guiding the outcomes, and certainly, there were times I felt afraid that it wouldn’t turn out. This was not a fear for the
project itself, but more a concern that I cared so much about helping students to access, evaluate, analyze and create media, that I wondered if I could really make an impact as a teacher. As a researcher, I wondered if I asked the right questions, collected and analyzed the right data. I spent a very large portion of the year preparing the students, getting their ideas and compiling their words. As both a teacher and a researcher, I wanted them to step on the stage, share their newfound media literacy skill set, and feel proud of what they had done.

Within the context of the classroom, doing this project with my students changed my understanding of media literacy education, the impact of digital social media, and the way that I teach. Throughout my nine years at Lehi High School, my intermediate drama class has been comprised mainly of sophomores, coming from three different schools. Prior to this project, it felt like I spent the majority of the school year teaching technique and trying to get an always large class on the same page. Regretfully, I rarely have gotten to know my students in this class on a personal level because of its sheer size and the fact that I spend far more hours of after school time with my advanced classes. Additionally, I have never before relinquished control of the flow of the daily activities and the production of a final project. However, this project changed all that.

Reading students’ reflexive journal responses and talking with them about their opinions and perceptions created a space of tolerance and support that I have never seen exist inside of this class. As a teacher, I felt much more connected to these students and to the issues facing them everyday. As a researcher, I felt a level of understanding into the community in which these digital natives operate. As both the teacher and the educational researcher, I realized that when you open the door for creativity and don’t limit critical thought or expectations for great work, you can receive more than you imagined. Given the autonomy to dictate their own
education and the topics they wish to address in class, students were able to take responsibility for their own educational practices and way in which they engaged with the material. When they were critically analyzing digital social media and the other media messages they encountered, students spoke of how this application of theory and methodology allowed for critical engagement that opens the door for future processes and issues that can and should be discussed in my class and other performing arts classrooms for years to come.

Certainly there are multiple avenues for further research in my classroom and in others. Given the evidence collected throughout this research, I find that it is imperative that my teaching practices changes to incorporate the use of technology, popular culture, and student driven learning. I have found that equipping students with the media literacy skills necessary to engage with their contemporary culture allows for a space for my teaching to constantly grow and change to fit the needs of each individual group. There will, of course, come a time when I am again an immigrant in some form of media and technology. My current students also may very well fill this immigrant role as technology grows and evolves. But we must always take the opportunity to learn from those digital natives who operate within an authentic world that might seem foreign to us. In this pursuit, great communal education can take place.

Contemporary pedagogy must find a way to integrate new emerging technology and the educational research community must embrace the opportunity to try out these technologies and skill sets inside of a practical classroom space. I plan to use these techniques further in my teaching of the intermediate drama class as well as others on my schedule. I plan to instill in students the knowledge and proficiency to critically engage with media and theatre. I will absolutely continue to give students the autonomy and opportunity to drive their learning in a way that allows them to critically participate with their contemporary world and use the
experiences from inside my drama classroom in their engagement with the real world. Evidence from this action research project has provided me with the means and skills for practical application and evolving teaching practices.

There is much room for research beyond mine. My research led to additional questions, like:

- What other forces exude influence on students’ identity construction?
- How can you teach something of this nature collectively, when the response is so individual?
- How might a better understanding of teen brain function and retention and technology access and usage aid a teacher in connecting better with her students?

These same questions and those in the initial research study could be workshopped with students to identify the affect and influence of a variety of external and internal sources on adolescents and teens. Further investigation could open the door for these types of unit lesson plans in other drama classrooms as well as dance, art, music and core subjects.

Though I can’t take credit for their performances and certainly not for their words or ideas, I do take great pride in that I watched this group pull together and support each other. I saw a group of students who didn’t quite know what to think of the project at its onset joining together to talk about their experience. In the post-mortem following the final performance, I saw diverse individuals hugging and supporting each other. I saw them add their classmates on Facebook and start following them on Instagram and Snapchat. I saw relationships that started offline melt over into online as well.

However, this time I know that students understand the implication of being someone’s friend online. They know the power of a message or an image. They may not be perfect, and
they will make mistakes certainly, type the wrong thing or post something they wish they
wouldn’t have. But I hope that this project will help them to stop and think, to follow the age old
adage that if you don’t have something nice to say, don’t say it at all. Above all, I hope that they
realize the power of those online posts that spread like wildfire, and if they have something nice
to say, I hope the say it, or post it, and spread a positive emotional contagion.
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APPENDIX A

Consent Documents

Digital Identity: The Impact of Digital Social Media on Student Identity Construction

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction
This research study is being conducted by Mindy Nelsen, drama teacher at Lehi High School and graduate student at Brigham Young University, to determine the effect of digital social media on adolescent identity construction. You were invited to participate because you are a member of the Drama 3 class where the majority of the project research and realization will take place.

Procedures
This project will take place during the second and third term of the school year, from November 3rd through, and including a culminating Performance on March 12th at the Region Drama Competition at Pleasant Grove High School. As a part of the regular classroom activities and requirements you will be required to write weekly journal entries and post bi-weekly to the class wiki. Writing prompts will be given for each entry. You will also be asked, as part of the regular classroom assignments, to maintain a 2.0 GPA (as per UHSAA standards), to read and respond to other students’ wiki entries, as well as participate in small and large classroom discussions related to performance of self and media consumption.

Students can choose to volunteer to be a part of the study; however, all students will be required to do the accompanying course work. Students who volunteer for the research study may have their work selected for specific study and incorporation into the project. A selection of six to eight students will be selected from those students who volunteer for the research study to participate in additional focus group discussions and interviews. A student may opt out of being a part of the focus group without any repercussions.

If you agree to participate in the focus group for this research study, the following may occur:

- you will be interviewed for approximately thirty (30) minutes on three occasions throughout the project about the role of digital social media in your life, what is posted by and for you on your digital walls, and your perception of self and others.
- the interview will be audio or video recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your statements
- the interview will take place in the researcher’s office or classroom at a time convenient for you.
- the researcher may contact you later to clarify your interview answers for approximately fifteen (15) minutes.
• total time commitment outside of normal classroom time for each focus group participant will be four and a half hours, over the course of the three month study.

**Risks/Discomforts**

There are minimal risks for participation in this study. You may feel some anxiety knowing that other students will read and respond to your class discussions, wiki and journal entries, however, this is a course requirement and not limited to the volunteers for the study. Further, you might also experience some slight distress at the possibility to performing yourself on stage or film. But performance and critique are drama class requirements, according to state core standards, and expected in every drama class. These expectations are clearly outlined on the disclosure documents signed by you and your parent at the beginning of the school year.

The analysis of the data (written excerpts and media projects) will take place after the term grades have been reported. This will prevent any benefit or penalty based on evidence for the study. Since you know the teacher fairly well, there will be minimal discomfort in the focus group and personal interview situations. The focus groups and interviews may require you to miss another class, stay in for FLEX time or lunch, or meet before or after school. If you choose to miss another class for this project, you will not have an attendance penalty.

For those of you participating in the focus group. You will discuss personal opinions, and therefore, additional measures will be taken to protect your privacy. The teacher will ask participants to agree to the importance of keeping the information discussed in the focus group confidential. She will ask each participant to verbally agree to keep everything discussed in the room confidential, and will remind you at the end of the group not to discuss the material outside.

Only the teacher will have access to the data collected. You will have complete autonomy to choose if your image or video footage of you is used in the digital storytelling project and short documentary film. Any tapes or transcripts of the focus group will be destroyed after one year or at the end of the study.

Risks will be minimal due to the fact that you, as the student, will have control over how your image and work are presented. You will have the opportunity to allow their work and/or comments to be used in the performance, but this is not obligatory. Further, you will perform and work in partners and small groups before doing so in front of the entire group or audience. The teacher will work extensively with students to assure their collaborative piece is one they feel comfortable with presenting to a larger audience of peers and family. Any additional help that might be needed will be provided to assure that the classroom is a safe space.

**Benefits**

There are no specific and direct benefits to you as the volunteer subject, but, the purpose of this experiment is to help students become more media savvy in understanding their connection to the media the surrounds them, and especially to digital social media with all its formats. The goal is to allow space for you to become more media literate, while gaining critical thinking skills as well as added knowledge in the subject matter. It is proposed that as we pursue this project together, you will gain further acting technique and confidence in performing.

At the end of the experiment, it is proposed that this research will be shared with other educators. There is an inherent benefit to society and culture when young people begin to critically think about and examine the world in
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which they operate. The goal with a project like this, is to allow students the opportunity to become more media
literate and aware of the role of technology and communication in their lives. As this research is shared with
other educators, who take a concept like this and incorporate it in their own classrooms, there is potential for
those benefits to be exponentially multiplied. Although theatre is a discipline that has existed for thousands of
years, there is a shift into devised and communal theatre that must be dealt with and explored. Perhaps the results
of this study will allow a space for students and educators to be more fully aware observers and better
communicators.

Confidentiality
All information provided will remain confidential. If background information, interview material, or writing
excerpts are used in the research report, volunteers will be identified with false names. The research data will be
kept in a locked safe and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the
research is completed, all identifiable data will be destroyed.

Compensation
There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

Participation
Participation in this research study is voluntary; although you are expected to complete your normal class
assignments. Refusing to participate or withdrawing from the research project will not affect your grade in this
class or standing at the school.

Questions about the Research
If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Mindy M. Nelsen at 801-610-8805, ext. 144 or
mnelsen@alpinedistrict.org for further information.

Questions about Your Rights as Research Participants
If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant contact IRB Administrator at (801) 422-
1461; A-285 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; irb@byu.edu.

Statement of Consent
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 (Printed):

Signature

Date: ___________________________
Parental Permission for a Minor

Introduction
My name is Mindy Nelsen, and I am a graduate student from Brigham Young University and the Drama Teacher at Lehi High School. I am conducting a research study to determine the effect of digital social media on adolescent identity construction. I am inviting your child to take part in the research because he/she is a member of the Drama 3 class where the majority of the project research and realization will take place.

My faculty mentor is Amy Petersen Jensen, Ph.D.; Associate Professor and Department Chair of Theatre and Media Arts at Brigham Young University. Dr. Jensen has extensive experience working with young theatre students and has been integral in developing the Utah and National Theatre Core Curriculum as well as the Media Literacy National Standards.

Procedures
This project will take place during the second and third term of the school year, from November 3rd through, and including, a culminating Performance on March 12th at the Region Drama Competition at Pleasant Grove High School. As a part of the regular classroom activities and requirements your child will be required to write weekly journal entries and post bi-weekly to the class wiki. Writing prompts will be given for each entry. Your child will also be asked, as part of the regular classroom assignments, to maintain a 2.0 GPA (as per UHSAA standards), to read and respond to other students’ wiki entries, as well as participate in small and large classroom discussions related to performance of self and media consumption.

Students can choose to volunteer to be a part of the study; however, all students will be required to do the accompanying course work. Students who volunteer for the research study may have his/her work selected for specific study and incorporation into the project. A selection of six to eight students will be selected from those students who volunteer for the research study to participate in additional focus group discussions and interviews. A student may opt out of being a part of the focus group without any repercussions.

If you agree to let your child participate in the focus group for this research study, the following may occur:

- Your child will be interviewed for approximately thirty (30) minutes on three occasions throughout the project about the role of digital social media in their life, what is posted by and for them on his/her digital walls, and his/her perception of self and others.
- the interview will be audio or video recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting his/her statements
- the interview will take place in the researcher’s office or classroom at a time convenient for the student.
- the researcher may contact the student later to clarify his/her interview answers for approximately fifteen (15) minutes.
- total time commitment outside of normal classroom for each focus group participant will be four and a half hours, over the course of the three month study.

Risks
There are minimal risks for participation in this study. Your child may feel some anxiety knowing that other students will read and respond to his/her class discussions, wiki and journal entries, however, this is a course
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requirement and not limited to the volunteers for the study. Further, your child might also experience some slight distress at the possibility to performing oneself on stage or film. But performance and critique are drama class requirements, according to state core standards, and expected in every drama class. These expectations are clearly outlined on the disclosure documents signed by you and your child at the beginning of the school year.

The analysis of the data (written excerpts and media projects) will take place after the term grades have been reported. This will prevent any benefit or penalty based on evidence for the study. Since your child knows the teacher fairly well, there will be minimal discomfort in the focus group and personal interview situations. The focus groups and interviews may require your child to miss another class, stay in for FLEX time or lunch, or meet before or after school. If your child chooses to miss another class for this project, he/she will not have an attendance penalty.

For those students participating in the focus group: Your child will discuss personal opinions, and therefore, additional measures will be taken to protect their privacy. The teacher will ask participants to agree to the importance of keeping the information discussed in the focus group confidential. She will ask each participant to verbally agree to keep everything discussed in the room confidential, and will remind students at the end of the group not to discuss the material outside.

Only the teacher will have access to the data collected. Your child will have complete autonomy to choose if his/her image or video footage of him/her is used in the digital storytelling project and short documentary film. Any tapes or transcripts of the focus group will be destroyed after one year or at the end of the study.

Risks will be minimalized due to the fact that your child will have control over how his/her image and work are presented. Your child will have the opportunity to allow his/her work and/or comments to be used in the performance, but this is not obligatory. Further, your child will perform and work in partners and small groups before doing so in front of the entire group or audience. The teacher will work extensively with students to assure their collaborative piece is one he/she feels comfortable with presenting to a larger audience of peers and family. Any additional help that might be needed will be provided to assure that the classroom is a safe space.

Confidentiality
All information provided will remain confidential. If background information, interview material, or writing excerpts are used in the research report, volunteers will be identified with false names. The research data will be kept in a locked safe and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, all identifiable data will be destroyed.

Benefits
There are no specific and direct benefits to your child as the volunteer subject, but, the purpose of this experiment is to help students become more media savvy in understanding their connection to the media the surrounds them, and especially to digital social media with all its formats. The goal is to allow space for your child to become more media literate, while gaining critical thinking skills as well as added knowledge in the subject matter. It is proposed that as we pursue this project together, your child will gain further acting technique and confidence in performing.
At the end of the experiment, it is proposed that this research will be shared with other educators. There is an inherent benefit to society and culture when young people begin to critically think about and examine the world in which they operate. The goal with a project like this is to allow students the opportunity to become more media literate and aware of the role of technology and communication in his/her life. As this research is shared with other educators, who take a concept like this and incorporate it in their own classrooms, there is potential for those benefits to be exponentially multiplied. Although theatre is a discipline that has existed for thousands of years, there is a shift into devised and communal theatre that must be dealt with and explored. Perhaps the results of this study will allow a space for students and educators to be more fully aware observers and better communicators.

**Compensation**
There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

**Questions about the Research**
If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Mindy M. Nelsen at 801-610-8805, ext. 144 or mnelsen@alpinedistrict.org for further information. Additionally, you may also contact the BYU faculty mentor and Thesis Committee Chair: Dr. Amy Petersen Jensen at: amy_p_jensen@byu.edu.

Questions about your child’s rights as a study participant or to submit comment or complaints about the study should be directed to the IRB Administrator, Brigham Young University, A-285 ASB, Provo, UT 84602. Call (801) 422-1461 or send emails to irb@byu.edu.

You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**Participation**
Participation in this research study is voluntary; although your child is expected to complete all his/her normal class assignments. Refusing to participate or withdrawing from the research project will not affect your child’s grade in this class or standing at the school.

Child’s Name: ________________________________________________

Parent Name: ________________________________________________

Signature: __________________________________________________

Date: ____________________________
Photographic Release Form

As part of this project, there may be times that I will be taking photographs of the student during their participation in the research. Additionally, there will be one assignment where a student is required to make and bring a photo collage as a part of our class project. Please indicate what uses of these photographs you are willing to permit, by initialing next to the uses you agree to and signing at the end. This choice is completely up to you. I will only use the photographs in the ways that you agree to. In any use of the photographs, you (or your child) will not be identified by name.

_____ Photographs can be reviewed by the research team.
_____ Photographs can be used for project illustrations.
_____ Photographs can be used for classroom presentations.
_____ Photographs can be used for academic conference presentations.
_____ Photographs can be used for the final multimedia performance.
_____ Photographs can be used for thesis publication
_____ Photographs can be posted to a website.

I have read the above descriptions and give my express written consent for the use of the photographs as indicated by my initials above.

Student Name (Printed): ________________________________
Signature ____________________________________________
Date: ________________________________

Parent Name (Printed): ________________________________
Signature ____________________________________________
Date: ________________________________
Video Release Form

As part of this project, I will be making video recordings of the students during their participation in the research. Please indicate what uses of this video you are willing to permit, by initialing next to the uses you agree to and signing at the end. This choice is completely up to you. I will only use the video in the ways that you and your child agree to. In any use of the video, you (or your child) will not be identified by name.

- Video can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.
- Video can be used for project illustrations.
- Video can be used for classroom presentations.
- Video can be used for academic conference presentations.
- Video can be used for the final multimedia performance.
- Video can be posted to a website (i.e. YouTube)

I have read the above descriptions and give my express written consent for the use of the video as indicated by my initials above.

Student Name (Printed): ________________________________
Signature ________________________________
Date: ________________

Parent Name (Printed): ________________________________
Signature ________________________________
Date: ________________________________
APPENDIX B
Curriculum and Writing Prompts

Media Exposure Survey

Name: _____________________________________________    Age:___________________

1. For how long do you think you have been a user/consumer of or media?   __________________

2. Which statement most closely describes you:
   o I am skeptical about or don’t like social media and do not use it at all.
   o I have tried social media but am not super comfortable with it.
   o I am on social media, but I consider myself a beginner.
   o I am on digital social media often and am comfortable with it.
   o I use social media frequently and consider myself pretty advanced.
   o I consider myself an expert when it comes to digital social media.

3. Which of the following media applications do you use and how frequently? Check the circle if you use it and circle the number according to frequency: (1, rarely…less than once a week through 5, frequently…multiple times a day)
   o Facebook 1  2  3  4  5
   o Twitter  1  2  3  4  5
   o Google+ 1  2  3  4  5
   o YouTube 1  2  3  4  5
   o Instagram 1  2  3  4  5
   o Tumblr  1  2  3  4  5
   o Snap Chat 1  2  3  4  5
   o Blogs  1  2  3  4  5

4. Why do you use digital social media?

5. If ever, on average how often do you create media like a collage or a video to send to someone you know?
   o More than once a week
   o Once a week
   o Once a month
   o Less than once a month
   o Never
6. How often do you send or receive links for other videos or websites from other people?
   - More than once a week
   - Once a week
   - Once a month
   - Less than once a month
   - Never

7. How often do you look at these videos or websites closer to find out more about the persons or company that made the video or website, what the story behind the video or website is, or what the purpose of the video or website is?
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Hardly Ever
   - Never

8. How often do you visit YouTube?
   - Daily
   - More than once a week
   - Once a week
   - Once a month
   - Less than once a month
   - Never

9. Why do you visit YouTube Yourself? (check all that apply)
   - To listen to music or see music videos
   - To see various kinds of home-made videos, vlogs, etc.
   - To watch scenes from television or movies, etc.
   - To look at commercials
   - To follow a particular YouTube Artist (if so, who: _____________________________)

10. How often do you visit Facebook?
    - Daily
    - More than once a week
    - Once a week
    - Once a month
    - Less than once a month
    - Never

11. Do you use the group function on Facebook?
Digital Identity and Performance

12. Do you use the fan/like function on Facebook?

- Yes
- No
- Never heard of it

13. Do you ever download podcasts?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Hardly ever
- Never

14. Do you feel that videos, movies or television shows that you watch are often produced by brands and/or products to promote their product or brand?

- Yes
- No
- I couldn’t tell
- I never think about it

15. Where do you feel most exposed to advertisements? (Check only one answer)

- While watching or listening to movies/television/radio
- On the street
- On the internet
- Other ________________________________

16. If you use Twitter, who do you follow most (Check only one answer)

- Friends
- Celebrities/Politicians
- Interesting companies
- I don’t use Twitter (skip to question 18)
- Other ________________________________

17. What are you hoping to gain out of following these people or institutions? (Check all that apply)
Digital Identity and Performance

- Entertainment
- Information/news
- Premiums such as discounts of special offers
- Insight into the personality of people
- Other ________________________________

18. Please indicate how overwhelmed/oversaturated you feel in general about the following media vehicles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Vehicle</th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Billboards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television Commercials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Radio Commercials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Magazine Ads</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Advertisements</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product Placement</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. Do you feel it is easier to express yourself and your opinions through web 2.0 applications (such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.) than it would be without these social networks?

- Yes (Please specify below)
- No (Please specify below)

Why or why not:

20. How many TVs are in your home: _______________________________________

21. Do you have a TV in your bedroom?   Yes  No

22. On an average school day, how many hours of TV do you watch?

_____________ Hours  ______________ Minutes

23. On an average weekend day, how many hours of TV do you watch?

_____________ Hours  ______________ Minutes

24. How often do you use the internet? (on a computer or other device, like your phone)

_____ Weekly  _____ Daily  _____ Hourly
25. What role do you believe that media plays in your life? How does it affect your actions or views?

Survey was created by M. Nelsen based on questions asked in the Charters, W. W. (1935) *Motion Pictures and Youth: A Summary*. Motion Picture Research Council, The Macmillian Company, New York, the researcher’s own study, and a survey found at: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ht7klkc
Lesson Plans, Corresponding Assignments and Handouts

These 30 lesson plans will cover 37 class periods and take the class through the end of the unit through the final performance at the region drama competition. Many of the final lesson plans will be focused on rehearsal for the performance. The first third of the unit is centered on introducing students to critically thinking about the media they encounter and how concept influences audience perception. The second third is focused on Media Literacy Education and Communication. The remaining third will be used for script writing, devised theatre work, blocking, and rehearsing.

Class Syllabus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lesson #</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Your Verse: Dead Poets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dead Poets continued and rehearsal</td>
<td>Your Verse write up</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Performance of self: Your verse</td>
<td>Performance day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Acting Technique: Intensity, Overlap, and</td>
<td>Contentless Scenes Handout</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wanting Something</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Performances</td>
<td>Perform Contentless Scenes</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Innovative storytelling: Concept driven</td>
<td>Concept Worksheet handout</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>production of Into the Woods</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Point of View: Into the Woods continued</td>
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<td>11/24</td>
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<td>In Your Hands: Into the Woods continued</td>
<td>Concept Worksheet Due</td>
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<td>12/1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>An Introduction to Media Literacy</td>
<td>*Journal Entry 1</td>
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<td>12/3</td>
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<td>What does it mean? Artist vs. Audience</td>
<td>*Journal Entry 2 and 3</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Media Artifacts and Boal</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Media Exposure and Bogost</td>
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<td>Communication by and through media; a little Lasswell</td>
<td>*Journal Entry 4 and 5</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Performing Media Views</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Performing Media Views</td>
<td>*Wiki Entry 1 Due</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Intro into Devising</td>
<td>*Journal Entry 6</td>
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<td>1/8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>A Museum Stroll</td>
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<td>1/12</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>*Journal Entry 7</td>
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<td>1/16</td>
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<td>Curator’s Response</td>
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<td>1/21</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Topic</td>
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<td>Changing Mediums – Lyrics in Performance</td>
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<td>1/27</td>
<td>Lyric Performances</td>
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<td>Wiki Responses to Peers</td>
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<td>2/2</td>
<td>Digital Theatre and Introduction to Devising the Final Performance Piece</td>
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<td>2/4</td>
<td>Write, Write, Write…and a bit of Filmmaking</td>
<td>*Journal Entry 9</td>
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<td>The Performance of Ideas; Creating the Final Project</td>
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<td>2/10</td>
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<td>2/12</td>
<td>Blocking a Devised Piece</td>
<td>*Journal Entry 10</td>
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<td>2/17</td>
<td>Blocking and Working the Piece</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/25</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>*Journal Entry 11</td>
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<td>Rehearsal</td>
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<td>Junior ACT Day</td>
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<td>Dress Rehearsal</td>
<td>*Journal Entry 12</td>
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<td>Dress Rehearsal</td>
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<td>3/12</td>
<td>Region One Act Competition</td>
<td>At Pleasant Grove High School</td>
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Lesson Plan 1

Planning:
Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 1-2 – Your Verse; A study of Dead Poets Society
Objectives:
- Students will be able to connect with the act of storytelling by encountering audio and visual media and responding to their perceptions of their impact on student understanding and expression.

Materials Needed:
- Film copy of Dead Poets Society
- Actor’s journals for observation (student provide)
- “Fight the Dragons” from Big Fish, the Musical Audio track and lyrics hand out.

Performing:
Lesson presentation:
I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. I’m going to play a song for you. It’s relatively new. I just want you to close your eyes and listen to the song and think about how it makes you feel. What’s happening in the song and why is it important for this guy to say these words?
   B. Play audio track: “Fight the Dragons” from Big Fish
   C. Facilitate class discussion. What is happening in this song? Who is he talking to and why? What are the stakes?
      1. As actors, our job is to be storytellers, so I want you to stand up and visually create with your body a still image of what you believe this piece is trying to communicate.
      2. Students will create their sculptures and then the instructor will comment on some.
      3. We need to understand the role of story and what it communicates to us in all the many things we encounter each day.

II. Directing the Learning
   A. Over the next few months, my goal is to introduce you to a wide variety of media. Some of it you may have seen or heard, much of it will be new to you. But I want all of us to use this as an opportunity to really think critically about the media we encounter. When you watch a film I want you to not only critically think about your response to it, but why you have that response and
what it causes you to think, feel, or do. I want you to do that same thing with songs that you hear, television commercials you see, memes you come across, and things people post on your digital walls.

B. Now in order for us to critically examine, we need to encounter. Many of you may have seen this film, but a large group of you have not. This film is one of my favorites when it comes to discussing young people’s identities and the influences that affect how you view and feel about yourself, as well as the choices and actions you might take.

C. Let’s start with a little background into Dead Poets Society:
   a. *Dead Poets Society* is a 1989 American drama film written by Tom Schulman, directed by Peter Weir and starring Robin Williams. Set at the conservative and aristocratic Welton Academy in the northeast United States in 1959, it tells the story of an English teacher who inspires his students through his teaching of poetry.
   b. *Dead Poets Society* won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay (Tom Schulman). Peter Weir received a nomination for Best Director and the film itself was nominated for Best Picture of 1989. Robin Williams received his second Best Actor in a Leading Role nomination and it has since been widely recognized as one of the actor/comedian’s best roles. It also won the BAFTA Award for Best Film.
   c. Director, Peter Weir, chose to shoot the film in chronological order to better capture the development of the relationships between the boys and their growing respect for Mr. Keating. Further, to help them bond, the director made all the boys room together.
   d. (All information was taken from the imdb.com and Wikipedia articles on the film.)

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. Begin film and have students watch and take notes of the impressions and/or questions they have while encountering the film in their actor’s journal.
   B. The film will take two full class periods to watch.
   C. At the completion of the film, the students will be creating a devised theatre piece, so they will need to use their journal notes and observations in the creation of this piece.
Big Fish - Fight the Dragons Lyrics - Broadway Musical (2013)

I’ve never been a man who lived an office life
I’ve never been a man behind a desk
I’ve always been a man who said that staying still was playing dead
The kind who’s looking forward to the challenges ahead

People say that’s irresponsible
People tell me stay at home
But I’m not made for things like mowing lawns or apron strings
I’m my best, when not at rest

So I fight the dragons and I storm the castles
And I win a battle or two
Then comes the day it’s time,
I’m packing up and I am bringing all my stories home to you

All I can see is miles ahead with miles to go
All I can feel is wind and sun and sky
Stop for a coffee, make a friend, and pray the day will never end
‘Cause there’s one more adventure waiting ‘round another bend

Where I fight the dragons and I storm the castles
And I win a battle or two
But then a feeling comes
Like fifty thousand drums all banging, “Bring my stories home to you”

And I wonder as I wander on the road from door to door
Exactly what you think of where I’ve been

Do you know I joined the circus, met a mermaid, fought a war?
Do you know I think of you through thick and thin?
Because even though I’m making deals and bringin’ people joy
I’m usually only thinking of my boy

Out there on the road I pray
You’ll come to my one day
And say, “Let’s fight the dragons and then storm the castles ‘til we win what needs to be won”
So when I’m old and tired, you’ll do the job required
You’ll be there telling stories to your son

And we fight the dragons and we storm the castles
And I do the best that I can
For everybody knows that’s how the story goes
To turn each boy into a bigger man, so I’ll fight the dragons ‘til you can
Lesson Plan 2

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 3 – Performance of Self; Your Verse

Objectives:
- Students will be able to express their verse (their motto for life by filling out a worksheet and creating a short devised theatre piece.

Materials Needed:
- Dead Poets worksheet
- Various materials for their performances
- Audio track of “Goodbye” from Catch Me If You Can, the musical

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. As students enter the classroom, hand out the lyrics to Goodbye, from Catch Me If You Can. Ask them to quietly read through them as everyone finishes filing in. Make sure all the students are seated and have thoroughly read through the lyrics, and then ask student what they thought of the lyrics. What is happening in the piece and why is it important that these words must be said?
   1. Sometimes when we have a side from the script or a piece of dialogue, we get lost in the mechanics of the lines and forget the contextualized story behind the song; the objectives of the characters. Great performances can make those come alive again.
   2. I want to play this song that you just read. I would like you to listen to Aaron Tveit’s performance of these words. How do his vocal choices make the piece come to life? What does he do vocally that helps you as an audience member access the part more thoroughly? What can you take from this performance and incorporate into your own acting choices?
   3. Play the piece for them and then lead a brief discussion on their observations.
   4. Just as we have been watching a group of your teenage boys, people your age, try to find their way in life in dead Poet’s Society, this is the story of a young man who has made a lot of mistakes. These are the last words he plans to speak to the audience and what he wants them to remember about him.
II. Directing the Learning
   A. Let’s go back to Dead Poets for a moment and think about the piece.
      1. In Dead Poets Society, Mr. Keating encourages the students to think for themselves. He asks them to notice that words and ideas can change the world and that there are learned meanings in words and language that must be shared. He asks them to trust that their beliefs are unique and their own and that they have a space and validity. Trying to encourage them to embrace poetry, he states: “We must read and write because we are members of the human race…that the powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse.”
      2. Hand out copies of the Dead Poets Worksheet and ask student to take about 10 minutes to complete the four questions.
      3. Once students have completed the task, let them join into groups of 6-10, with their completed worksheets, as you give further instructions.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. Like I talked about two class periods ago, we are working to encounter new media in critical ways. We are also going to talk about the ways we can share our observations. This is going to come into play through performance in a new and innovative form of theatrical storytelling, called Devised Theatre. Devised theatre is a collaborative creative experience where a group of actors decides a theme or issue upon which they would like to make a comment. Together, they improvise and experiment and create a performance to be shared with an intended audience.
   B. You have just had the opportunity to create your own verse, your “Carpe Diem,” your own life’s motto. I want you to share your responses to question number four with the members of your group. Together, you will be creating a short devised theatre piece that utilizes your verse.
   C. Use dialogue from what you wrote and create a short cohesive piece that expresses your view. You will have the next 40 minutes to create and rehearse your piece. We will be performing these in the last 15 minutes of class.
      a. Give students the required allotment of time and access to the props closet in order to create their pieces. Each piece should be around 2-3 minutes long.
b. After students have performed, use the remainder of the class period to discuss their devised theatre pieces and encourage students to critically examine their responses to others pieces as an audience member as well as their own as a theatre practitioner.
Goodbye from *Catch Me If You Can*, the Musical

It’s my happy ending, now it’s time to say goodnight.
We can stop pretending, tell the spotlight man turn off my light.
Cause the show is done now, and it’s time to leave the stage. Yea!
The good guy won now and the band has no more songs to play.
It’s a happy ending so I’ll say.

Goodbye, Goodbye to all the make believe.
Goodbye there’s no more magic up my sleeve.
There’s nothing left to act up here, I’ll take my bow and disappear.
No questions left for answering.
There’s only one word left to sing, Goodbye.

It’s a happy ending, to the greatest show on earth.
Now the curtains descending and I hope you got your money’s worth.
Gonna stop the show now cause I wanna leave on top.
So get up and go now. Cause there’s nothing left inside my head.
Everything that’s left to says been said

Goodbye, Goodbye to all the song and dance.
Goodbye off stage I stand a better chance.
The show is through the parts been played.
No standing in the wings afraid. No violins or phony tears.
The word that’s music to my ears is goodbye.
Well goodbye, goodbye, GOODBYE!!

I’m not afraid of stopping; this end could be my start.
I wanna live a life and not just play a part.
Ill walk into the sunset, Ill sail across the sea,
the final word the last you’ll hear of me, of me...

Is goodbye, Goodbye to every night alone.
Goodbye, goodbye to lives I don’t own. I’m tired of living on the stage.
A life that’s only on the page.
Empty lies are in the past, I’ve tried before but here’s the last goodbye.
Now goodbye, Goodbye, GOODBYE!!!!
In Dead Poets Society, Mr. Keating encourages the students to think for themselves. He asks them to notice that words and ideas can change the world and that there is learned meanings in words and language that must be shared. He asks them to trust that their beliefs are unique and their own and that they have a space and validity. Trying to encourage them to embrace poetry, he states: “We must read and write because we are members of the human race…that the powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse.”

1. What do you think is the main theme of the film? What do its creators want you to get from it?

2. Do you think it was successful in its approach? Why or why not? Give me specific examples from the film.

3. As stated above, Mr. Keating’s states that words and ideas can change the world. Do you agree? Give me some examples from your life and from history where words and ideas have actually caused world change.

4. “That the powerful play [of life] goes on and you may contribute a verse.” One of the verses contributed in the piece was “carpe diem;” that we have an obligation to seize the day and the moments in the day. If you have one final verse, one more thing to tell the audience before your final goodbye, what would it be? What do you want people to know about you and what you thought, believed, and fought for after you are gone?
Lesson Plan 3

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 4-5 – Acting Technique: Intensity, Overlap, and Wanting Something

Objectives:
- Students will be able to enhance acting technique by creating, rehearsing and performing short dialogue scenes.

Materials Needed:
- Audio track of “Hard to say goodbye” from Violet
- Contentless scenes handout.

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. If time is still needed to perform scenes from the last class period, this would be a great time to finish it. If students have completed the performances, give them some time to respond to what they saw and thought of it in their actor’s journal. Did they have any images or lines stay with them?
   B. Give the class a few moments in groups to share their observations.

II. Directing the Learning
   A. In order to create devised theatre pieces that tell a story, share a message, and make us critically think, we need to make sure that we are incorporating solid acting technique.
   B. Review acting terminology with students, including: objectives, tactics, subtext, motivation, conflict, character relationships, illusion of the first time, diction, projection, etc. If possible, write and define these on the white board and let the students take notes in their actor’s journals.
   C. Sometimes when we cover the basics and forget how essential conflict really is. It’s the engine of drama and without it, we are left with a stagnant, boring scene. Conflict is built upon the following:
      a. A clear understanding of the objectives
      b. A clear understanding of the stakes that are at risk
      c. A focus on intensity
      d. Driven dialogue that contains moments of overlap
      e. A wanting of something from the other person in the scene
III. Reinforcing the Learning

A. Let’s encounter one more media piece that is able to vocally demonstrate all the technique described above.
   a. Play “Hard to say goodbye” from Violet. Have students listen the first time for content purposes. Then point out each of the techniques that they observe being demonstrated in the piece as you play it through a second time.

B. Now you are going to get the chance to incorporate these techniques into your acting. Join with a partner that you haven’t worked with before. I’m going to give you a collection of short dialogue pieces and you and your partner will be building a piece of theatre around that dialogue.
   a. One of you will be assuming the role of A, and one the role of B. You will need to create characters, conflict, atmosphere and environment, given circumstances, etc.
   b. You will have the remainder of the class period to create and rehearse these scenes, which will be performed next time and must be memorized.
   c. The instructor will then hand out the Contentless Scenes Dialogue Handout to each student.

C. As you put together these short plays, I want you to remember what we have been discussing so far in this unit, good theatre is theatre that makes us question and think. Each of the media artifacts that we have encountered thus far has a specific story, theme, and feeling they want to share. What does your partnership want the audience to get out of your piece?

D. Give students the remainder of the class period to work on their pieces.

Note: The following day will be used exclusively for performances of the contentless scenes. Depending on class size, there should be a few moments where they can rehearse prior to performing and do a tension warm up; like the one below:

A. Have students pair up and practice releasing all the tension in their bodies while the other partner observes and assists. When they are able to go to a 1 on the tension scale, all parts of their body should be relaxed and unresponsive – catatonic like. Most likely, the student will be lying on the floor at this point. Then as the instructor counts to 10, they need to start adding tension by flexing muscles and tightening the body, bit by bit. Once they reach 10, they should be in a heightened state of tension and should only hold this pose for a few seconds before being able to release it. Have students participating and those observing note what happens to the body as tension is added and taken away. Give each student a chance to participate in the activity.
B. After they have completed the warm up, have them stretch out their bodies and get ready to perform.
C. The remainder of the class period should be spent watching the performances and giving feedback.
Choose one of the following dialogue pieces to create a scene with your partner:

A: What was that?
B: Don’t look.
A: I’m only human.
B: Maybe that’s not enough.
A: I don’t understand.
B: It makes me sick.
A: Perhaps I could help.
B: Don’t get involved.
A: Don’t you care?
B: Yes, I do.
A: So?
B: Look—there’s another one. No, don’t look.
A: What do you want?
B: World peace.

A: So…
B: So…
A: It’s up to you.
B: Never again.
A: O.K.
B: That’s it?
A: That’s it.
B: From now on?
A: As you say.
B: Reconsider.
A: Not this time.
B: Ever?
A: (A look—then walks off).
A: Finally!
B: What?
A: Let’s not pretend.
B: Who’s pretending?
A: It’s always the same.
B: Only when you insist.
A: Is it that bad?
B: (No answer—pause—a look).
A: Really. Well that certainly says it.
B: Says what?
A: Don’t make me say it in front of you.
B: Let’s start over.
A: If you’re sure.
B: Finally!

A: We can’t stay here.
B: Why not?
A: It’s not safe.
B: You keep saying that.
A: Because it’s true.
B: You’re overreacting.
A: Not this time.
B: It seems quiet enough.
A: Don’t kid yourself.
B: When do you think it will happen?
A: Could be any moment.
B: Or maybe never.
A: I doubt that.
B: Are you afraid?
A: Even more than yesterday.
B: At least we’re together.
A: But for how long?
B: Does anyone know we’re here?
A: I’m sure of it.
B: Did you just hear something?

A: Where have you been?
B: Didn’t you get my message?
A: What did it say?
B: Does it matter now?
A: Why shouldn’t it?
B: How good are you at keeping a secret?
A: Have I ever let you down before?
B: How would I know if you did?
A: Are you going to tell me?
B: Do you swear not to tell anyone else?
A: What are you getting at?
B: Can I trust you?
A: Who can you trust?
B: What does that mean?
A: You can’t figure it out?
B: Are you insulting me?
A: Why would I do that?
B: Can we talk about this later?
A: Why not right now?
B: Why are you pressuring me?
A: Hi!
B: Hello.
A: How’s everything?
B: Fine. I guess.
A: Do you know what time it is?
B: No. Not exactly.
A: Don’t you have a watch?
B: Not on me.
A: Well?
B: Well what?
A: What did you do last night?
B: What do you mean?
A: What did you do last night?
B: Nothing.
A: Nothing?
B: I said, nothing!
A: I’m sorry I asked.
B: That’s all right.

A: You all right?
B: Yes.
A: Are you sure?
B: Yes, I’m sure. A little headache, that’s all.
A: Oh good. You want some aspirin?
B: No. Don’t be so helpful, OK?
A: You are upset.
B: Good Lord!
A: OK, OK. I thought you might want to talk.
B: About what?
A: About anything.
B: I’m going away.
A: What do you mean?
B: I’m going away, that’s all.
A: Where?
B: Not far. Don’t get excited.
A: When?
B: Now. [Starts to leave]

A: Hey good morning.
B: What’s good about it?
A: Sleep well?
B: What?
A: Did you sleep well?
B: No I didn’t. Do you have the paper?
A: No I don’t.
B: I see.
A: Have you had breakfast?
B: No.
A: Are you going to make any?
B: Breakfast?
A: Do we need to talk?
B: Yes I think we do.
A: Where should we start?
B: At the beginning.
A: After breakfast?
B: After breakfast.

A: It’s been a long time.
B: Yes.
A: Any luck these days?
B: With what?
A: Uh, the world?
B: Oh. Yes.
A: Yes what?
B: Yes I have had luck with the world. You?
A: I have not had luck with the world.
B: Down about it?
A: Hm?
B: You doin’ alright?
A: I’m fine. Things have been looking up.
B: Good to hear.
A: Don’t you want to know what thing or things have been looking up lately?
B: No.
A: I wish I knew you.
B: What do you mean?
A: Just that. I wish I knew you?
B: You do.
A: You hide.
B: So do you.
A: Not like you. Not all the time.
B: Wanna get a drink?
Lesson Plan 4

Planning:
Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 6-8 – Innovative storytelling: Concept driven production of Into the Woods
Objectives:
• Students will be able to understand concept musicals by Viewing an innovative production of *Into the Woods* and responding to questions on a worksheet.

Materials Needed:
• Original Broadway cast recording of *Morning Glow* from *Pippin* (1972)
• Broadway revival cast recording of *Morning Glow* from *Pippin* (2013)
• Digital Theatre Broadcast of Regent’s Park Open Air Theatre in London’s Production of *Into the Woods*. Directed by Timothy Sheadner and Liam Steel, 2010
• Concept and Concept Musicals Worksheet

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. Time period has a lot to do with how an audience consumes media and responds to it. Sometimes we don’t recognize how much our perception of something can change based on it’s time period.
   B. I’m going to play 2 versions of the same song – “Morning Glow” from Pippin - for you. The first is the version is from the original broadways cast recording.
      1. Play the piece and have the students respond with their feelings on the number. That piece was from 1972, when the play first opened to large success on Broadway.
   C. The next version is from the Broadway revival cast in 2013. Though it’s the same song, you will hear some slight variations in tempo, style, instrumentation, and vocal tonality. I want you to pay attention to the differences and which you appreciate more.
      1. Play the second piece and have students respond. Many will like the second version more as it feels more contemporary to them. His, again is about a young boy your age trying to find his way in the world. The original Broadway production sought to make his story an everyman story accessible for people of the time. Likewise, the production team from the revival sought to do the same for the 21st century.
II. Directing the Learning

A. A concept musical is a musical where the show’s metaphor or statement is sometimes more important than the actual narrative. It is generally agreed that the concept musical’s theme often provides social commentary and further room for exploration of form and structure. Characters may be isolated from one another, reflecting and commenting upon themselves through song. There is a strong focus on visual presentation, representation, and imagery when staging a concept musical. The concept musical embodies a theme [that is] developed as the musical is written.

B. Sondheim is considered by a number of critics to be the leading musical theatre composer of his time. His contributions to the concept musical as a genre are undisputed. Sondheim believes that every show, concept musical or not, should contain “a secret metaphor that nobody knows except the authors.” The themes and issues presented in his concept musicals are intended to confront the audience rather than provide them with a means of escape. Sondheim has stated that his primary principle when writing is that “content dictates form,” meaning that the true heart of any issue must be presented in a similar fashion. This approach has often led him to embrace the concept musical.

C. (See handout for additional info and sources cited.)

III. Reinforcing the Learning

A. Many of you are probably familiar with Sondheim and Into the Woods, especially with the new production coming out soon. Into the Woods has been produced many times and is beloved in the musical theatre world. But it is often done in the same way, the way it was originally staged on Broadway. In 2010, acclaimed British director Timothy Sheader decided to stage Into the Woods in a new and innovative way. Instead of the mysterious man also playing the narrator, his concept was that the play all took place in the mind of a young boy, who was trying to find his place in the world of people he doesn’t understand. The characters, initially represented through a variety of toys in the boy’s backpack as he reenacts the story in an abandoned and decrepit playground, become visually manifested as skewed fairytale versions of the people in his life and neighborhood.

B. As you watch the piece, I want you to note specific images that the director chooses to exhibit. Further, I want you to look for his Point of View, what he wants the theme to be that drives his concept far beyond the initial dialogue and plot of the piece. We will be building a concept driven devised theatre piece at the end of this unit, so think about how you can take what you witness here and use it for our storytelling purposes.
C. As you watch the piece, you will fill out the following worksheet to be handed in the class period after we are done viewing the production.

D. The instructor should then hand out the worksheet and start the film.

Note: Because of the length of this production, it will take three class periods to complete. If they finish early, the remainder of the last class period should be spent completing the worksheet to hand in. If there isn’t time, it can be completed as homework.

Each teacher is different, but I did a warm up with my students each day prior to watching to get them ready. These warm ups were geared toward helping them understand what goes into creating a concept.

Day 2 Warm-up: Tape out small squares – about 10’x10’ in the room. There should be four of them; so this activity can be done with four groups at the same time. Put a variety of different objects (blanket, chair, book, table, plant, cup, box, ball, etc.) outside of the squares and tell a few students to create an environment inside of the space. They do not need to use every object. Then tell them to put people inside of that space in a shape of existence. Have another class member then recreate the same space, but knowing that there would be an audience watching and accessing the piece. There should be subtle changes that open the space and the characters up to the audience. Have a third and final student talk about how an audience member might retrieve, contextualize, understand this set of images and objects within the created space. Help students to see how each element of a production communicates something to the audience and it is imperative that all elements and design partners are working together toward the grand theme.

Day 3 Warm-up: Have student get into groups of four and come up with one theme that they have seen exhibited in the production thus far. Have them stage a picture with their bodies as sculpture that exhibits how they as actors communicate this theme. Share these images with the other class members and briefly discuss each.
A concept musical is a musical where the show’s metaphor or statement is more important than the actual narrative. Also known as a deconstructed or bookless musical, the concept musical has its roots in the plays with music that Bertolt Brecht wrote with Kurt Weill and other composers. While the genre’s exact definition is debated, it is generally agreed that the concept musical’s theme often provides social commentary and further room for exploration of form and structure. Characters may be isolated from one another, reflecting and commenting upon themselves through song. There is a strong focus on visual presentation, representation, and imagery when staging a concept musical.

It is generally agreed upon that in a concept musical, emphasis is placed upon style, message, and thematic metaphor rather than on the plot itself. Thus, the show’s structure is rarely cohesive or linear. Critics agree that the most defining aspect of a concept musical is its use of theme. This holistic approach to each show, which focuses on the truthful representation of the theme in every aspect of the final production, sets it apart from other musical theatre forms. Young-Gerber states: “In musical comedy there is no theme. The revue uses a theme to unify disparate musical numbers and specialty acts. The integrated musical contains a theme. In contrast, the concept musical embodies a theme [that is] developed as the musical is written.”

Thus, the concept musical can also be defined by its structural characteristics and common staging techniques. Its songs “punctuate rather than flow out from the story,” serving as a means of self-reflection for the character and acting as commentary upon the theme. The message of the show often spurs within its director a “renewed emphasis on the visual aspects of the performance... [leading] to a more abstract, unrealistic, non-representational staging, as the director has to free himself/herself from the confines of scenic verisimilitude in order to explore the visual dynamics of the stage.” The attention paid to visual presentation has led many critics to recognize the concept musical as the most expressive and imagistic form of musical theatre. Theatre historian Vagelis Siropoulos writes: “A sense of aesthetic totality is provided not by the linear unfolding of a narrative but by the overarching staging concept, which turns the spectator’s attention to the overall principle of organization in the same way that an abstract painting does.”

Stephen Sondheim

Sondheim is considered by a number of critics to be the leading musical theatre composer of his time. His contributions to the concept musical as a genre are undisputed. Sondheim believes that every show, concept musical or not, should contain “a secret metaphor that nobody knows except the authors.” The themes and issues presented
in his concept musicals are intended to confront the audience rather than provide them with a means of escape. Sondheim has stated that his primary principle when writing is that “content dictates form,” meaning that the true heart of any issue must be presented in a similar fashion. This approach has often led him to embrace the concept musical.

References:

Excerpts from: **The Major Dramatic Question, by Daniel Noah**

At the center of every good movie there is a single driving force around which all other elements gather.

It’s a question.

Sure, a good story raises lots of intriguing questions, but there is one question at the white hot center of all the others. This is the “Major Dramatic Question,” or MDQ for short. Every good story has its unique MDQ. Think of it as the story’s nucleus. It’s a centrifugal force that propels the story along its path of action, accelerating it steadily and breathlessly toward a climactic conclusion. And once the MDQ is answered… the story is over.

The MDQ is comprised of three primary parts:
**Protagonist**
Most stories revolve around a single character, known as the protagonist. Your protagonist is the primary player, the one whose story it is, whose desires, actions, and predicaments drive the plot. He or she is at the center of the events, the most important person. A protagonist helps the audience to have a single character whom they can follow and identify with. To share his burdens. To invest in her dreams. But the visual nature of movies and theatre means that the writer’s job is to take all those thoughts and feelings and externalize them into forms that can be seen and heard. Your protagonist’s thoughts and feelings must be represented as action. And that action needs direction.

**Goal**
A clear goal keeps the protagonist—and the story itself—on a directed path. The audience needs to have a sense of what the protagonist is after and to be able to follow how well he or she is progressing in pursuit of the goal. The goal should also be tangible, meaning something external and specific. Although the goal itself should be simple, there may be a world of complexity beneath it. In fact, often there is a deeper desire underlying the goal. Something more abstract
and internal. The MDQ is the thing that keeps us watching, wondering how things will turn out. By the end of the piece, there will be—there must be—an answer to the MDQ. A “yes” or “no.”

Conflict
The protagonist acts to achieve the goal. But he or she should come up against obstacles, opposing forces that block the fulfillment of that goal. When obstacles get in your protagonist’s way, there is conflict. Conflict is an essential part of the MDQ equation because it’s what makes a story dramatic. The primary obstacle often comes in the form of a person, an antagonist. Although there is only one goal, there may be a multitude of obstacles. In fact, the more obstacles, the better. Many of these obstacles will come from an antagonist but some may come from elsewhere.

Conflict comes in two forms—external and internal. External conflicts come from obstacles exterior to the protagonist. Internal conflicts refer to struggles within the protagonist’s own mind.

Conflict is the most indispensable element of a good story. It’s what happens when the unstoppable force meets the immovable object. A crashing together of contrary intentions that rivets us and keeps our eyes locked on the screen. Remember this: movies are not about casual events in a life. They are about the most crucial, challenging, earth-shaking events.

Excerpts found at:
http://www.writingclasses.com/FacultyBios/facultyArticleByInstructor.php/ArticleID/66

How to come up with a concept:

1. Evoke a Moment from the Piece to Create a Sense of Atmosphere
Find an image or group of images that communicate themes from the piece.

2. Form an opinion about the intention of theatre as influenced by your particular theatrical style. Write a statement expressing that.
Ask yourself, what is this piece really saying? What do I get from it? What do I want others to get from it?

3. Figure out the style with which you would like to approach the piece and decide how that style can influence your concept.
Start thinking about your own process and make connections between what you know about the style and how it can be applied in performance. Why does this interest you?

4. Outline the structure of your piece. What happens? What is the key theme, dramatic question that you wish to explore? Why is this piece relevant to your audience now? What do you want your audience to think, feel, or do?
These are such key questions when devising any sort of drama. You should be able to clearly articulate your dramatic question in no more than one or two sentences.

So…looking at *Into the Woods*… Using specific evidences from the film, identify the following:

1. What could have been an image or group of images that the director chose to create a sense of atmosphere?

2. What is this production of *Into the Woods* really saying?

3. Identify (or describe) the style the director chose to use in this particular production.

4. What is the key theme of the piece?

5. What is the major dramatic question?

6. What about the concept makes it relevant to audiences now?
7. As an audience member, how does the piece make you feel? What does it make you think of or reflect on?

Now for some creative process of your own:

8. If you were to design a concept play or concept musical, what metaphor or statement would you like to make and share with an audience? What do you want them to learn or take from it? Why is this theme or concept relevant to audiences now?

9. What visual image or group of images could you use to frame your work? How would this image/these images reflect the theme of your piece? Give examples of how you could incorporate that image into your piece.

10. What style or time period would you use to tell the story of your piece? How can you use that style to promote a social commentary?
Lesson Plan 5

Planning:
Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 9 – An Introduction to Media Literacy
Objectives:
• Students will be encounter and identify media, media messages, and Digital Social Media by viewing and responding to media examples and discussions in the class.

Materials Needed:
• YouTube Clip: “iPad Air, Your Verse”, 2013
• YouTube Clip: “Social Media Guard” By Coca Cola, 2014
• Paper for student responses
• Actor’s Journals (students will provide)
• Media Meaning PowerPoint (included)
• Media Literacy PowerPoint (included)
• Media Literacy Handout
• Cell phones, iPods, iPads, Tablets, or other device that will connect to digital social media

Performing:
Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. In class thus far, we have discussed how we communicate messages as actors and directors through our medium, our vision, and our concept. We have been looking at media as creators, but to really understand its power and influence, perhaps we should look at it through the lens of audience members. What does that media mean to us as audience members, spectators, students, members of the community, theatre practitioners, and artists?
      1. I want to show you some media examples, after each one, I would like you to identify what you think that piece of media or art means.
      2. I need you to note that these are also media artifacts. We have to work to read the text and produce meaning, as it is not fixed. How is the meaning of each piece produced by all those who interact with it?
   2. Show Media Meaning PowerPoint and discuss after each image. Focus on the following questions: Can all media mean something? Does it mean something generally or is it more personal? Remember how we talked about how people receive and perceive media meanings and messages
differently? I want you to think about the role of the author vs. the spectator. How does media communicate or transmit information? Invite the students to simply view the images and think about their content, target audience and message. Invite students to share their perceptions.

II. Directing the Learning
A. One of the most important parts of understanding media and how it affects us, if for us to ask critical questions and then write our thoughts, impressions, responses, etc. down to be shared with others later. The purpose of the free write is to get everything going through your head about the given subject matter down on paper and out of your head so you can better process it. Students will be asked to take out their actor’s journals. They will then be given 7-10 minutes to free write about the first of twelve journal prompts:
   1. What was the primary form of digital social media that you choose to use and why? What do you like or dislike about it? Why do you use it?

B. After students have been given the appropriate amount of time to get their thoughts and impressions out on paper, the instructor will give the students 3-5 minutes to share their thoughts and impressions with 3-4 people who are seated in their groups. They should look for similarities and differences in their responses and impressions.
   1. What commonalities do you see and why?
   2. What differences? Why?

C. Then the instructor will ask for volunteers or call on individual class members to share their personal and group observations.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
A. So, what is the point of digital social media? Where does it fit in our lives?

B. Students will be encouraged to pull out their phones, iPods, etc. and write down or draw (on a piece of paper that is provided by the teacher) the first post that they see on any of their digital walls. They will then turn them in and the teacher will go through them one by one with the class. Together, the class will visually create a media landscape (with the pictures and writing samples) of what is most recently creating their digital space; as created by others. These will be written and/or drawn out and then mounted onto the whiteboard in the classroom for a large visual example. They will discuss what it looks like and why, including trending and commerciality.
C. What was the majority of the posts you guys saw at the top of the page? How many of these were links to other media?

D. Why do you think digital social media is embedded with other forms of media? What is media exactly?

E: Media surrounds many aspects of our lives, at school, home, work, in the car, and in the businesses we frequent. We need to recognize that media communicates to and through us. Though media includes every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, billboards, direct mail, telephone, fax, and internet, media enhances communication through which news, entertainment, education, data, or promotional messages are disseminated.
   1. Let’s look at the core concepts of media literacy on your handout and review and talk about those and what they mean to our studies.
      a. All media messages are ‘constructed.’
      b. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
      c. Different people experience the same media message differently.
      d. Media have embedded values and points of view.
      e. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.
   2. Media is a way to tell stories about ourselves and gather stories about others.
   3. But what do you define as media? Give me some examples.

F. What is Media Literacy and why should we even worry about it?
   1. Definition of Media Literacy:
      a) Media Literacy is a 21st century approach to education.
      b) It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms - from print to video to the Internet.
      c) Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy
(http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/what-media-literacy-definitionand-more)
Using the attached handout with MLC Questions and Concepts and the prepared Media Literacy PowerPoint (created with information from:
http://www.medialit.org/sites/default/files/mlk/01_MLKorientation.pdf), the teacher will review media literacy core principles and concepts and how to ask
media literacy questions. She will then show the following two commercials and discuss the students’ responses to the media literacy questions.

- YouTube Clip: “iPad Air, Your Verse”, 2013
  Found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiyIcz7wUH0
- YouTube Clip: “Social Media Guard” By Coca Cola, 2014
  Found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_u3BRY2RF5I

As time permits, the teacher will discuss how media and media literacy will fit into the discussion for the next few months, as time permits, giving an overview of what the students can expect and look forward to.
Media Literacy Handout

Five Key Questions of Media Literacy

1. Who created this message?

2. What techniques are used to attract my attention?

3. How might different people understand this message differently from me?

4. What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?

5. Why was this message sent?

Five Core Concepts

1. All media messages are ‘constructed.’

2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

3. Different people experience the same media message differently.

4. Media have embedded values and points of view.

5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.
Lesson Plan 6

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media

Title: Day 10 - What does it mean? Artist vs. Audience

Objectives:
- Students will be able to develop the tools to identify the media landscape in which they exist and operate by viewing media artifacts and participating in class discussion and analysis.

Materials Needed:
- DVD of Disney’s Frozen
- YouTube video of Old Spice Mom Song 60, Commercial, 2014
- YouTube video of Balance, German animation cartoon by Wolfgang and Christoph Lauenstein, 1989
- Actor’s Journals (students will provide)

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
A. As students enter the classroom, have the scene from Disney’s Frozen with the song “Let it Go” playing on the DVD player and projector. Lights should be dimmed to allow for free reaction to the piece.
   1. Note is the students sing along, sit down and watch, smile, roll their eyes, etc. Once the clip has completed sit them down and have a class discussion:
   2. Why did you have that reaction? What does that song or that movie mean to you? How do you respond to it as a viewer and why?

II. Directing the Learning
A. Continuing the discussion: What role does media play in your life? How do you respond to it? How do you surround yourself with it or identify with it and why?
   1. Let’s first take out our Actor’s Journals and respond to two more prompts. We are going to be taking another opportunity to critically think about and reflect on the role of media influences in our lives. Again, the purpose of the
free write is to get everything going through your head about the given subject matter down on paper and out of your head so you can better process it. Students will be asked to take out their actor’s journals. They will then be given 7-10 minutes to free write about the first of twelve journal prompts:

a. Does Digital Social Media affect the way you feel about yourself? Why or why not?
b. How do your parents feel about digital social media? Do you think they are right or wrong? Why?

2. Facilitate a class discussion focusing on their initial views of the role of digital social media and their response to their parent’s views. How does commercially produced and distributed media affect your view of self? What about when that media is shared and distributed on your social media walls? What do you believe is your reaction to that type of media? How often do you think about your interaction with it?

III. Reinforcing the Learning
A. We have identified that we are surrounded by media. Last time in class, I showed you two different commercial representations of the way we access and consume media. Additionally, we witnessed a number of still images that have been shared online and our response to them.

B. So now we are moving again from still images to moving images. I’m going to show you two short videos. After each one, I’d like to discuss the message being communicated and how you received and process it. We need to try to look for meaning in the media we encounter. From pop-culture to the avant-garde, there is power in communication.

C. Look at the following clips: *Old Spice, Balance*. After each clip, have the students get into small groups and talk about their responses as spectators/audience members to each form of media. Have one representative from each group stand in front of the class and share their groups’ observations.

D. With the remainder of the class period, hand back the students visual representations of their digital media landscape and encourage them to critically examine the media they encounter (especially online) and how they read and respond to it. They will need to be constantly critically examining the role and affect of media on their lives.
Lesson Plan 7

Planning:
Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 11 – Media Artifacts and Boal

Objectives:
• Students will be able to recognize media artifacts and how various people chose to share a sense of self through those media artifacts by viewing and responding to artifacts in class discussion.

Materials Needed:
• “Quiet”, song Clip from Matilda, the Musical
• Student Copies/Handout – “Quiet” from Matilda, the Musical
• YouTube video of Johnny Cash Music Video – Hurt, 2002
• Augusto Boal, Games for Actors and Non Actors, page 17

Performing:
Lesson presentation:
I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
A. Hand out copies of the lyrics to “Quiet” from Matilda the musical. Matilda is a musical based on a book by Roald Dahl. Ask if any students can summarize the story of Matilda. If they can’t, the instructor will do it for them.

B. As I play this song for you, I want you to listen and discover. What is she really saying? What is her understanding of the media in her life? How does she choose to respond? Just listen this first time for content. And then we will listen again and think about media implications and audience response.

C. The instructor will play the piece again after she has said the following: I want you to think about this in terms of the playwrights and Roald Dahl. The meaning of this message goes beyond a fictitious little girl. Consider the following questions:

1. What are the other voices contributing to the piece? What are they saying? What are they not saying? How does this interpretation in a musical format differ from the original written by Dahl? What did they leave out? What did they add? How does it affect your understanding of culture and media? What about British culture? Or the culture of
musicals? How do you as an audience use this piece to create your media landscape? How does your reading of the piece change when you have actually seen it performed live, as a few of you have?

D. Then the instructor will ask for volunteers or call on individual class members to share their personal and group observations.

II. Directing the Learning
A. Now, I would like to introduce you to two more media artifacts. Remember, a media artifact is a piece of man-made material that has a technological component. As you encounter these pieces, I want you to consider what they are communicating and how you, as an audience or reader choose to respond to it.

B. The first is a media artifact that I think, in many ways, defines me and my outlook on the theatre arts. It is an excerpt from a book by Augusto Boal, entitled Games for Actors and Non-Actors. I will use Boal a lot in my teaching because I think the man is a genius.
   a. Augusto Boal asks us to be spec-actors – both viewers of and participants in our world. Let’s read something from his book on that: Games for Actors and Non Actors, page 17. What does that mean for you? Boal’s goal was to get the audience thinking and involve them in creating art and culture.
   b. The teacher will read or hand out the excerpt for the students to read. She will have them discuss their reactions to the class in groups and then present their responses to the class.

C. The second piece is a music video by Johnny Cash. Tell me what you know about Mr. Cash and his life story. Have students share their observations.
   a. Johnny Cash became very introspective in his approach to music in his later years. He found a way to make music and media very personal.
   b. He actually covered a song performed by the band Nine Inch Nails, and written by Trent Reznor. NIN featured the song on their 1994 album “The Downward Spiral”. Cash later redid the song in his own style (therefore, a cover) in 2002 on his album “American IV: The Man Comes Around.”
   c. Now this is Johnny cash taking someone else’s media artifact and making it his own – making it represent him in some way.
   d. Play the music video and again have students respond.
D. I want you to think of a media artifact that defines you in some way. It could be anything that is essential to your day to day. This media artifact must communicate something to you. It can have some technological element - like an online post, your phone or tablet, or something from a book, a clip from a film, a song, etc. But it must be man-made.

E. Students will be asked to brainstorm a few media items that have made an impact on them. What piece of media can they bring that represents them? Or how they feel about themselves, or about the world in which they exist. Students will bring that item to share next time.

III. Reinforcing the Learning

A. Now, today and last time in class, I shared a number of media artifacts with you. I would like you to get into groups of 5-6 class members. Please make sure everyone is included and no one is left out. It is our jobs as actors and storytellers not just to observe and critically discuss the media messages we encounter, but also to share our response to them in performance.

a. You will have the remainder of the class period to create the following performance piece that will be exhibited next time in class:

i. Using one of the media artifacts that we have encountered in the past two class periods: Matilda, Hurt, Balance, Frozen, Mom Song 60, Social Media Guard, Your Verse, or any of the still images I showed you in the PowerPoint, your group will select a piece to discuss your response. What did it make you think or feel?

ii. Then you will create 3 moving pictures (body sculptures) that tell us the story of your audience response to that media artifact. You could choose to make pictures of what you understood the piece to really be saying or how you feel about its message.

iii. Do not simply recreate images from the piece, but instead focus on your own storytelling; of your response to the message or theme of the piece.

iv. You will have the remainder of the class period to work on these and they will be performed at the beginning of the class period next time.
Quiet, from Matilda, the Musical

Have you ever wondered, well I have. 
About how when I say, say red, for example. 
There’s no way of knowing if red 
Means the same thing in your head 
As red means in my head, when someone says red!

And how if we are travelling at, almost the speed of light 
And we’re holding a light 
That light will still travel away from us 
At the full speed of light, which seems right in a way

What I’m trying to say, I’m not sure 
But I wonder if inside my head 
I’m not just a bit different from some of my friends 
These answers that come into my mind unbidden 
These stories delivered to me fully written!

And when everyone shouts like they seem to like shouting 
The noise in my head is incredibly loud! 
And I just wish they’d stop, my Dad and my Mum. 
And the telly and stories would stop just for once!

I’m sorry, I’m not quite explaining it right. 
the noise becomes anger and the anger is light

And its burning inside me would usually fade. 

But it isn’t today! 
And the heat and the shouting.

And my heart is pounding. 
And my eyes are burning 
And suddenly everything, everything is...

Quiet 
Like silence, but not really silent. 

Just that still sort of quiet. 
Like the sound of a page being turned in a book. 
Or a pause in a walk in the woods. 

Quiet 
Like silence, but not really silent. 

Just that nice kind of quiet. 
Like the sound when you lie upside down in your bed. 
Just the sound of your heart in your head. 

And though the people around me. 
Their mouths are still moving. 
The words they are forming. 
Cannot reach me anymore! 
And it is quiet. 

And I am warm. 

Like I’ve sailed. 
Into the eye of the storm.

(Retrieved from www.metrolyrics.com)
Lesson Plan 8

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media

Title: Day 12 – Media Exposure and Bogost

Receiving and Giving, How you respond to and process meaning in media, and creating a soundtrack to your life

Objectives:

• Students will be able to recognize to exposure and consumption of media in their lives by completing a survey and discussing their findings that will be used to direct their performances.

Materials Needed:

• Student Copies/Handout: Media Exposure Survey
• Personal Media Artifact each student is assigned to bring
• Cell phones or iPods with recording and emailing capabilities

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. Give student 3-4 minutes to review their picture performances from last time. Then have them perform for the class. Feedback will be given as time necessitates.

II. Directing the Learning
   A. In preparation for this lesson, you were supposed to bring a piece of media with you and tell the class how you identify with it. I want you to think about what this artifact is and why it is important to you. Allow time for each student to present and talk for 30 seconds of less about those pieces. Tell them to remember what they and others say and how their perceptions change or grow over the next unit. We will be talking about your pieces more in depth a little later in the lesson and using these media artifacts to create group mini devised theatre pieces., but for right now, let’s do a little practice round…

   B. Split students up into groups of 3-5 students. Each group must have one member with a smart phone with video and email capabilities. Groups will have
the next ten minutes to create a Vine. A Vine is a 6 second video, but the instructor will allow students to go up to 12 seconds.

1. Using your media artifacts that you brought, and your responses to our class discussions, I would like you to develop a Vine that says something about your interaction with or understanding of media and it’s identifying or distancing qualities. Remember these have to be between 6-12 seconds at most and have to incorporate at least one media artifact from the group.

2. Student will use the 10 minutes to film the small vine and email it to the instructor. She will be putting them all together to show at the beginning of the next class period.

III. Reinforcing the Learning

A. There is a theorist that I want to tell you a bit about. His name is Ian Bogost. He writes a variety of pieces. But some of those apply to the worlds of gaming and technology and art. He wants us to look at carpentry with regards to art and media: “making things that explain how things make their world.” And to note that both the message and the medium (that which delivers the message) is important. We will talk more about the medium next time in class. But Bogost brings up a few things that are important to our understanding and interlacement with the media and culture:

1. “Art has done many things in human history, but in the last century especially, it has primarily tried to bother and provoke us. To force us to see things differently. Art changes. It’s very purpose, we might say. Is to change, and to change us along with it.”
   a. What do you think of this quote? Do you agree? Why or why not?

2. “Technology neither saves us nor condemns us. It influences us, of course, changing how we perceive, conceive of, and interact with our world. It’s an extension of ourselves. It structures and informs our understanding and behavior.”
   a. What do you think of this quote? Do you agree? Why or why not?

3. Bogost talks about how things interact and relate. What are their effects? We need to look at all media and the effect it has on us. How does our perception of ourselves and/or our world change based on the media or information we encounter?
B. We talk frequently in this class about the inherent power of theatre to change the world. And how theatre makes a new space for us in our thoughts and in ourselves. It gives us something to fight for or something to share. The media that we encounter does the same thing. Media also creates a new space for us to express ourselves, our thoughts, our opinions, etc. Just like we choose to teach the audience something through a theatre piece. The things we create and post online can have a similar effect, with widespread possibilities.

C. I would like you to now really look deeply into your interaction with media; both as an audience member and as an artist or creator of media.
   1. Hand out the Media Exposure Survey to each student and give them 15-20 minutes to complete it. Clarify any questions or concerns. Ask them to be thoughtful and thorough in their responses.
   2. Remind students that their engagement with the media and the media landscape they inhabit influences several facets of their lives. Anytime they encounter media, they need to think about it and its effect on them or their perception of the world. Their consumption and creation/authoring of media needs to be observed and noted in their actor’s journals.
   3. Facilitate a class discussion, going through and comparing and contrasting the student’s responses to each question.

D. Students will have the remainder of the class period to work on their surveys to turn in at the end of the class. Discussion will follow as time permits.
Media Exposure Survey

Name: _____________________________________________    Age:___________________

1. For how long do you think you have been a user/consumer or media?   __________________

2. Which statement most closely describes you:
   o I am skeptical about or don’t like social media and do not use it at all.
   o I have tried social media but am not super comfortable with it.
   o I am on social media, but I consider myself a beginner.
   o I am on digital social media often and am comfortable with it.
   o I use social media frequently and consider myself pretty advanced.
   o I consider myself an expert when it comes to digital social media.

3. Which of the following media applications do you use and how frequently? Check the circle if you use it and circle the number according to frequency: (1, rarely…less than once a week through 5, frequently…multiple times a day)
   o Facebook 1  2  3  4  5
   o Twitter  1  2  3  4  5
   o Google+ 1  2  3  4  5
   o YouTube 1  2  3  4  5
   o Instagram 1  2  3  4  5
   o Tumbr 1  2  3  4  5
   o Snap Chat 1  2  3  4  5
   o Blogs  1  2  3  4  5

4. Why do you use digital social media?

5. If ever, on average how often do you create media like a collage or a video to send to someone you know?
   o More than once a week
   o Once a week
   o Once a month
   o Less than once a month
   o Never

6. How often do you send or receive links for other videos or websites from other people?
   o More than once a week
   o Once a week
   o Once a month
7. How often do you look at these videos or websites closer to find out more about the persons or company that made the video or website, what the story behind the video or website is, or what the purpose of the video or website is?
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Hardly Ever
   - Never

8. How often do you visit YouTube?
   - Daily
   - More than once a week
   - Once a week
   - Once a month
   - Less than once a month
   - Never

9. Why do you visit YouTube Yourself? (check all that apply)
   - To listen to music or see music videos
   - To see various kinds of home-made videos, vlogs, etc.
   - To watch scenes from television or movies, etc.
   - To look at commercials
   - To follow a particular YouTube Artist (if so, who: _____________________________)

10. How often do you visit Facebook?
    - Daily
    - More than once a week
    - Once a week
    - Once a month
    - Less than once a month
    - Never

11. Do you use the group function on Facebook?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Never heard of it

12. Do you use the fan/like function on Facebook?
13. Do you ever download podcasts?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Never heard of it

14. Do you feel that videos, movies or television shows that you watch are often produced by brands and/or products to promote their product or brand?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I couldn’t tell
   - I never think about it

15. Where do you feel most exposed to advertisements? (Check only one answer)
   - While watching or listening to movies/television/radio
   - On the street
   - On the internet
   - Other ________________________________

16. If you use Twitter, who do you follow most (Check only one answer)
   - Friends
   - Celebrities/Politicians
   - Interesting companies
   - I don’t use Twitter (skip to question 18)
   - Other ________________________________

17. What are you hoping to gain out of following these people or institutions? (Check all that apply)
   - Entertainment
   - Information/news
   - Premiums such as discounts of special offers
   - Insight into the personality of people
   - Other ________________________________

18. Please indicate how overwhelmed/oversaturated you feel in general about the following media vehicles:
19. Do you feel it is easier to express yourself and your opinions through web 2.0 applications (such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.) than it would be without these social networks?
   - Yes (Please specify below)
   - No (Please specify below)

   Why or why not:

20. How many TVs are in your home: ________________________________

21. Do you have a TV in your bedroom?  Yes  No

22. On an average school day, how many hours of TV do you watch?
   ___________ Hours  _____________ Minutes

23. On an average weekend day, how many hours of TV do you watch?
   ___________ Hours  _____________ Minutes

24. How often do you use the internet? (on a computer or other device, like your phone)
   _____ Weekly  _____ Daily  _____ Hourly

25. What role do you believe that media plays in your life? How does it affect your actions or views?

Survey was created by M. Nelsen based on questions asked in the Charters, W. W. (1935) *Motion Pictures and Youth: A Summary*. Motion Picture Research Council, The Macmillian Company, New York, the researcher’s own study, and a survey found at: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ht7klkc
Lesson Plan 9

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media

Title: Day 13-14 – Communication by and through media; a little Lasswell

Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify media messages and apply Lasswell’s communication model to media artifacts and distribution.
- Students will be able to recognize the space created by digital media in their lives and critically examine their interaction with it by responding to media created by themselves and their peers.

Note: This lesson plan will take two class periods, for all discussion time and additional time for students groups to create and rehearse their media projects. The instructor can choose to divide some of the lecture up over two class periods and use the remainder of the time for student work in groups, or can instruct and then give the next class period for creation and rehearsal. The decision should be made based on the dynamics of the class.

Materials Needed:

- Student Copies/Handout: Lorde, “Team”, lyrics
- Student Copies/Handout: Group Media Project
- Student vines that have been emailed to the teacher and uploaded for viewing.

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook

A. Let’s start with two more journal prompts:
   a. Take out your actor’s journals and you have 5-7 minutes to think about and respond to the following questions:
   b. In keeping with your Media Exposure Survey you did last time in class… “What digital social media have you used in the last 3 days and why? Have you been paying more attention to how much or how little you use it because we have been talking about it?”
   c. This next question is a little more difficult. I need you to honestly think about yourself. That is going to come into play as we talk more
about your next big project… “How would you describe yourself and your identity?”

d. Keep in mind that you can choose to incorporate some of what you write in our final devised theatre performance.

II. Directing the Learning

A. We will start off today by viewing the vines.
   1. Our job as actors is to be communicators. How do you choose to respond to the media around you? You created some vines for us about the role media plays in your life or your construction or view of the world. Let’s take a look at them.
   2. Each group will present their Vine and then get spectator feedback. After that, they will share their artist statement of what they were trying to say with their Vine.

B. Our job as artists is to create and to communicate. I want you to think of and give me some examples of when you have either participated in the creation of media or responded to the communication of media in your lives. What are the screens like in your life? What digital media surrounds you?

C. Media messages move us and affect us in a variety of ways, communicating different things. Sometimes the spectator and the author determine the meaning differently, based on their understanding and background, often different spectators receive different meanings. Just remember how even small things can change meaning in our mask game this morning.

   1. Intro into Lasswell’s Communication Model: Who (Control Analysis) Says What (Content Analysis) In Which Channel (Media Analysis) To Whom (Audience Analysis) and With What Effect (Effect Analysis)

   2. Identify and find examples of each step in the model.

D. Lasswell has some pretty interesting ideas of how communication spreads, especially via technology and the media and he looks specifically at the author, the audience, the ideology and the effect of media consumption beyond the audience’s initial engagement with the text. So let’s review a couple of things that he noticed as see how it applies to our study of our engagement with the media and the landscape in which we operate:
1. Most messages take place within families, neighborhoods, local contexts – and education takes place in a similar way. No one is entirely removed from the world.

2. Symbol specialists – two parts: manipulators/controllers who modify the content and handlers who don’t.

3. Institutions shape and distribute values in patterns of society. As with any capitalist structure, there is a discord between the ruling elite’s ideology and the power struggle therein.

4. Communication is efficient when judgments are rational. Goal is to get rid of inefficient communication. This is done through an increase in knowledge. Look for adjustments to ideology.

5. The importance of conductance, no conductance, and modified conductance: “What does he pass on verbatim? What does he drop out? What does he rework? What does he add? How do differences in input and output correlate with culture and personality?”

III. Reinforcing the Learning

A. So let’s look at some examples of a singular message being communicated in a number of ways. Take notes in your journals of your observations at each stage of this activity. Note also how those observations change with more media incorporated. Note how you access the piece visually and aurally.

1. Listen to “Team” by Lorde. After just listening to the song, have students discuss what the song is trying to say. What is the song about?

2. Hand out the lyrics to each student and have them listen to the song again; this time following with the lyrics so they fully understand and identify the poetry. They should circle important passages and imagery created in the song. Facilitate a class discussion centering on the following questions: From an audience perspective, what are you taking from this piece? What does it mean? What is it responding to?

   a. During an interview with Billboard, Lorde described the song as “her take on most modern music” and explained, “no one comes to New Zealand, no one knows anything about New Zealand, and here I am, trying to grow up and become a person.” Lorde explained that the line “We live in cities you’ll never see on screen” was “to be speaking for the minority” from small cities.
She also expresses distaste in common contemporary popular music lyrics telling listeners to “put your hands in the air”. Writer Lily Rothman for the magazine Time commented that the lyrics “we sure know how to run things” in “Team” was a response to the lyrics “we run things, things don’t run we” in Miley Cyrus’ “We Can’t Stop” also released in 2013.

3. Now play the music video. After having interacted with the piece, in three different formats, initiate class discussion on the following questions: How has your perception of the meaning of the song changed with each reading of the piece? What is Lorde saying now? Who is she rebelling against and why? She appears in the piece. How does she represent herself? Is this really her or is she acting?

a. Lorde’s Facebook page includes a post from her about her concept for the music video. She states: “this video was borne from a dream i had a few months ago about teenagers in their own world, a world with hierarchies and initiations, where the boy who was second in command had acne on his face, and so did the girl who was queen, i dreamt about this world being so different to anything anyone had ever seen, a dark world full of tropical plants and ruins and sweat. and of this world, i dreamt about tests that didn’t need to be passed in order to be allowed in: sometimes the person who loses is stronger. enjoy xx.” (sic)

4. This is how she chose to respond to the media that she saw in a visual way, with storytelling. Discuss the “what” and “why” of audience spectatorship.

B. Let’s look at Lasswell once more: Who, says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect? Lasswell also says that no matter how hard we might try, we are still connected to the world.

1. Facilitate class discussion: What does that mean for you? What are the obstacles in communication? Do you make choices as to what to watch with plays, films, TV, etc? How about what to read? Does someone do it for you? What inspires you to go see a film or read a book or an article? Or to follow someone on Twitter or look at their Facebook page?
C. What is our job as artists in presenting a message? We need to figure out what we want to say and then how to make that accessible to an audience. So let’s take this to the next level. We are going to create performances that incorporate technology. I want you to respond to your culture like Lorde chose to.

1. In groups of 7-8, you will be creating a theatrical piece that makes a statement on culture. It could be positive or negative, but should be a response to something you see in media and culture. It needs to incorporate some technology. I want you to think outside of the box here. Create something interesting and different. Your job is to do what Boal and Brecht talk about: to get people to think. Use the following two questions to influence your work:

   a. How do you respond to the media in your life?
   
   b. How does media create a new space for you or your art?

2. Performances need to only be 2-3 minutes long.

3. You will have the remainder of the class period to discuss your ideas with the group, plan out your piece, fill out the worksheet and hand it in to the teacher and rehearse for your performances. You will also be given a good portion of time next time in class to make sure these performances of devised theatre and thought provoking and interesting. I will hand back your media exposure surveys that you can use to influence your piece. You can also choose to use your media artifacts that you all presented a few class periods ago.

D. Students will use the remainder of the time today to work on their group media presentations. Remind them that they are doing what we call in the theatre world, a “performance of belief,” so there must be a message. Remind students that these will be preformed next time in class. They will be using their responses to media exposure survey to influence and direct their media presentations. These will be handed in next time in class.

Day Two start of lesson:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   
   A. Masks: The students will each create a visual image with their faces – something that suggests a thought or a feeling. They will move about the space
and encounter each other, pairing up with another player. After a moment to really survey that other person, they will exchange “masks” with the other actor, giving and receiving that physical communication and visually reinterpreting it. After several exchanges, they need to try to locate their original “mask.”

1. Class discussion. What did you observe? How did you receive and reinterpret the communication from the other actors? How did the message change or morph?

II. Directing the Learning
A. Give students the remainder of the class period to work on their pieces. See if they will need any special technical elements. Remind them that their pieces will be filmed and possibly exhibited in the final digital storytelling piece.
Team, by Lorde and Joel Little (http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/lorde/team.html)

Wait ‘til you’re announced
We’ve not yet lost all our graces
The hounds will stay in chains
Look upon Your Greatness and she’ll send the call out
(Send the call out) [1x]

Call all the ladies out
They’re in their finery
A hundred jewels on throats
A hundred jewels between teeth
Now bring my boys in
Their skin in craters like the moon
The moon we love like a brother, while he glows through the room

Dancin’ around the lies we tell
Dancin’ around big eyes as well
Even the comatose they don’t dance and tell

We live in cities you’ll never see on screen
Not very pretty, but we sure know how to run things
Living in ruins of a palace within my dreams
And you know, we’re on each other’s team

I’m kind of over getting told to throw my hands up in the air, so there
So all the cups got broke shards beneath our feet but it wasn’t my fault
And everyone’s competing for a love they won’t receive
‘Cause what this palace wants is release

We live in cities you’ll never see on screen
Not very pretty, but we sure know how to run things
Living in ruins of a palace within my dreams
And you know, we’re on each other’s team

I’m kind of over getting told to throw my hands up in the air, so there
I’m kinda older than I was when I revelled without a care, so there

We live in cities you’ll never see on screen
Not very pretty, but we sure know how to run things
Living in ruins of a palace within my dreams
And you know, we’re on each other’s team
We’re on each other’s team
And you know, we’re on each other’s team
We’re on each other’s team
And you know, and you know, and you know
Digital Identity and Performance

Group Media Project

List each group member: ___________________________ ________________________

_________________________________________ ___________________________

_________________________________________ ___________________________

_________________________________________ ___________________________

o In groups of 5-6, you will be creating a theatrical piece that makes a statement on culture. It could be positive or negative, but should be a response to something you see in the media landscape immediately around members of the group.

o Your performance must incorporate some technology.

o I want you to think outside of the box here. Create something interesting and different.

o Your job is to do what Boal and Brecht talk about: to get people to think.

o Performances need to only be 2-3 minutes long.

Use the following two questions to influence your work: Take a moment and discuss the following questions with your group. Write your team’s responses to the questions below:

1. How do you respond to the media in your life?

2. How does media create a new space for you or your art?

3. What statement do we, as a group want to make about media and culture?

4. How will we choose to make that statement?
Lesson Plan 10

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media

Title: Day 15-16 – Performing Media Views

Objectives:

- Students will demonstrate their understanding of media and culture application by performing a brief theatrical piece.

Materials Needed:

- “My Eyes” and “So they Say” music clip from Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog
- Returned copies of Exposure Surveys and Group Worksheet.
- Ipad (or similar) to film performances to view again later.
- Wiki entry handout
- Student Copies: Soundtrack to your life handout.
- Cat Stevens, music clip of “Father and Son”, 1973

Note: This lesson plan will take two class periods, for all discussion time and additional time for students groups to rehearse and perform their media projects. The instructor can choose to divide some of the lecture up over two class periods and use the remainder of the time for student performance, or can instruct and then give the next class period to finish up the rest of the performances. The decision should be made based on the dynamics of the class.

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. Before we start, remember that you have a Wiki due next time. I have a handout for you so you know exactly what to expect. The first response covers the following question: December 19, 2014: Who influences your body image/self image more… your parents? Your friends? Your teachers? The media? Why? What does that influence mean and how does it affect how you feel or act? Post some media examples that highlight your point of view on the topic.

   B. Briefly review the Wiki Handout with class members so they are ready for this homework assignment.
II. Directing the Learning

A. I’m going to play you two songs from the same piece. Most of you will probably know it. But I want you to really listen and identify the cultural references behind it. Play: “My Eyes” and “So They Say” From Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog

1. So, let’s look at the background here. (Only share some of this…) Dr. Horrible’s Sing-Along Blog is a 2008 musical tragicomedy miniseries in three acts, produced exclusively for Internet distribution. Filmed and set in Los Angeles, the show tells the story of Dr. Horrible (played by Neil Patrick Harris), an aspiring super villain; Captain Hammer (Nathan Fillion), his nemesis; and Penny (Felicia Day), their shared love interest.

2. The movie was written by writer/director Joss Whedon, his brothers Zack Whedon (a television writer) and Jed Whedon (a composer), and writer/actress Maurissa Tancharoen. The team wrote the musical during the 2007–2008 Writers Guild of America strike. The idea was to create something small and inexpensive, yet professionally done, in a way that would circumvent the issues that were being protested during the strike. Reception has been overwhelmingly positive. On October 31, 2008, Time magazine named it #15 in Time’s Top 50 Inventions of 2008. It also won the People’s Choice Award for “Favorite Online Sensation”, and the 2009 Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form. In the inaugural 2009 Streamy Awards for web television, Dr. Horrible won seven awards: Audience Choice Award for Best Web Series, Best Directing for a Comedy Web Series, Best Writing for a Comedy Web Series, Best Male Actor in a Comedy Web Series (Harris), Best Editing, Best Cinematography, and Best Original Music. It also won a 2009 Creative Arts Emmy Award for Outstanding Special Class – Short-format Live-Action Entertainment Programs.

3. Production: Joss Whedon funded the project himself (at just over $200,000) and enjoyed the independence of acting as his own studio. “Freedom is glorious,” he comments. “And the fact is, I’ve had very good relationships with studios, and I’ve worked with a lot of smart executives. But there is a difference when you can just go ahead and do something.” As a web show, there were fewer constraints imposed on the project, and Whedon had the “freedom to just let the dictates of the story say how long it’s gonna be. We didn’t have to cram everything in—there is a lot in there—but we put in the amount of story that we wanted to and let the time work around that. We aimed for thirty minutes, we came out at forty two, and that’s not a problem.” Some of the music was influenced by Stephen Sondheim.
4. Fan/Audience Interaction: The production of the DVD included a contest, announced at Comic-Con, in which fans submitted a three-minute video explaining why they should be inducted into the Evil League of Evil. Ten winning submissions have been added to the DVD release.

5. Recording locations: The songs were recorded in a small studio set up in Joss Whedon’s loft. *Dr. Horrible* was shot in Los Angeles, with five locations on one soundstage, and one day of filming at the Universal Studios backlot street set, including the scenes of the van heist, and the giant Dr. Horrible crushing people beneath his feet. Dr. Horrible’s home, used for blogging scenes as well as the final party scene, is the house featured in the “Mad Scientist House” episode of *Monster House*.

6. Distribution: Whedon has said that the plan was to find a venue for the series that would enable it to earn its money back and pay the crew. This plan was to release the show onto the Internet, with an iTunes release to follow. If the Internet and iTunes releases were successful enough, Whedon planned to greenlight an official DVD, which would include some “amazing extras”.

The musical’s fansite launched in March 2008 (despite the official site containing nothing more than a poster at the time) and was the first place to publicly release the teaser trailer three months later on June 25, 2008.

7. Online: The episodes first aired at the Official *Dr. Horrible* website, hosted on Hulu, accessible internationally (unusual for the US-based service whose videos are typically not accessible to Internet users who reside outside the US) and free to watch (ad-supported). Act I premiered on Tuesday, July 15, 2008 – Act II followed two days later on July 17, and Act III surfaced on July 19. The episodes were taken offline on July 20 as planned, but became available again on July 28. The show was later (date unknown) restricted to the United States only.

On October 10, 2009, all three acts were made available via iTunes for the UK and Australia. The film is also available from Amazon Video on Demand. On November 29, 2009 all three acts, both separate and together, were taken off Hulu. On February 22, 2010, the full feature became
available to stream on Netflix, with all three episodes appearing sequentially. On March 20, 2014, it was removed from Netflix. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dr._Horrible%27s_Sing-Along_Blog)

B. Class Discussion: The students will be asked to share their observations on the following questions:
1. So how did this group of artists comment in a comedic way on the state of the world?
2. How did they distribute their message?
3. How did they make it accessible for the audience?
4. What is the purpose?

III. Reinforcing the Learning
A. Together in your groups. I want you to write a collaborative concept for the piece you are creating to share with the class. Think specifically about your job as actors and authors. What is your purpose? How will you distribute your message? How will you make your message accessible?
B. Give students about 5-10 minutes to continue to work on their performance and finalize the space and materials needed. Review with them the components needed for their media projects.
   1. Use of technology, using art to cause change.
   2. Use your exposure survey to influence your work.
   3. Think about how your personal media artifacts can influence your piece.

B. Have each group perform their group media project performances. In my class, we will only get through the first three and then will do the remainder on the following day. After all have performed, discuss as a class what each piece said and the author intent vs. audience reading of the piece. Where do we go from here as spec-actors? Reference Boal’s intent for theatre again.
   a. Follow up the first three performances, depending on class time, with the following questions: (Then the last three on the following day.)
      • How does media create a “new space” for you?
      • How do you choose to look at media? What is the worth of an image, a song, a film, a text, etc? And what is your relationship with that image?
      • How do/can you look at media artifacts as a spectator and as an artist?
Digital Identity and Performance

- What role do media artifacts play as a component in communication, the transmission of information? How are texts read for you and how is meaning produced?
- How do you author media? How do you interact with it as a spectator? How much credence/time/space/thought do you give to the author of the media you encounter?
- How do you share media – aid in the transmission of media?

b. Students need to start critically examining, encountering and creating meaning on their own. From each Snapchat to television show, YouTube video to Facebook post, they need to view media as an artist and a spectator, to look at it aesthetically and critically.

c. This will specifically come into play as they present their sound tracks (in the following weeks) to the class and begin writing their devised theatre piece.

C. Have each group turn in their worksheet and their Media Exposure Surveys.
   1. Ask the students how they used their exposure surveys to influence their piece?

D. In the last few minutes of class, the instructor will review the class wiki site and how the blog posts will work. Specific instructions are included in the handout. The instructor can choose to schedule class time in the computer lab for the students to write their posts or can assign it as homework. Remind students that they will be reading and responding to other’s posts and that some of the dialogue for our final performance will be taken from these wiki and reflection journal responses.

Day Two: Today will be performances of the last three groups. We will finish them and then discuss what we saw. Be thinking about the questions we responded to last time in class.

After the performances are over, introduce students to the Soundtrack to Their Lives project so they can start thinking about them over the break.

II. Directing the Learning
   A. In a few weeks you will be presenting a very special project. I’m calling it a soundtrack to your life. We engage with media all the time, but music is very formable in our lives. How many of you listen to music constantly? Do you
listen to Pandora? To the radio in your car? While you play videogames? What role does music and sound play in your view of the world?

1. Review at length what the soundtrack is, how it works in a film or TV show and the expectations for the Soundtrack for your Life assignment. This is included on the handout.

2. Just to get you started, I am going to play you a song that I would include in my soundtrack to my life. This is a song that for me would be an example of a piece of music from the motion picture soundtrack. This song by Cat Stevens called “Father and Son” and is both something that my dad played all growing up, that reminds me of him, but also reflects the relationship that I had with him.

3. Listen to the song and get their responses. Clarify that it is great that we all have different views of and responses to the media in our lives. Engage in further discussion on spectator/audience/reader response, as class needs manifest themselves.

B. Remind the students that during the break, it would be a really good idea for you to find time to go online and respond to the second wiki prompt. It will be due on January 8, 2015, a few days after we get back. Please find a time to go online and respond to the following prompt due: January 8, 2015: What misconceptions of how men/women are “supposed” to look and act are most prominent in the media? Are they realistic? Why or why not? Post some media examples that highlight your point of view on the topic.

C. They may use the rest of the class period to start working on what songs or sound clips they will use for their soundtracks as well as to begin to write their paragraphs for the written portion of the assignment.

D. Remind students that during the break, they need to note in their actor’s journals their interaction with media while they are away from school. Think about the survey we did. What do you notice about your habits? Make a special effort over the next two weeks to think specifically about who is authoring the media that you encounter, especially the digital social media. What is its purpose, how does it come to be consumed by you and what do you do with it?

1. You need to have at least three entries in it by the time we get back.
Soundtrack to Your Life

sound-track
[sound-trak]

Noun

1. the sound recorded on a motion-picture film; audio portion of a film.

Origin of the term

In movie industry terminology usage, a sound track is an audio recording created or used in film production or post-production. Initially the dialogue, sound effects, and music in a film each has its own separate track (dialogue track, sound effects track, and music track), and these are mixed together to make what is called the composite track, which is heard in the film. The contraction soundtrack came into public consciousness with the advent of so-called “soundtrack albums” in the late 1940s. These commercially available recordings were labeled and advertised as “music from the original motion picture soundtrack”, or “music from and inspired by the motion picture.”

Types of recordings

1. Musical film soundtracks which concentrate primarily on the songs (Ex: Les Miserables)
2. Film scores which showcase the background music from non-musicals (Ex: Star Wars)
3. Albums of pop songs heard in whole or part in the background of non-musicals  
   (Ex: Forest Gump)
4. Video game soundtracks are often released after a game’s release, usually consisting of the background music from the game’s levels, menus, title screens, promo material (such as entire songs of which only segments were used in the game), cut-screens and occasionally sound-effects used in the game  
   (Examples: Sonic Heroes, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time)
5. Albums which contain both music and dialogue from the film.  (ex: The Wizard of Oz)

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soundtrack#cite_ref-1)
So…your assignment…

Find 3-5 songs, sounds, dialogue pieces, etc. that represent your life or the journey of your life up to this point. These can be either “music from the original motion picture soundtrack” – meaning actual songs from your life history that have shaped you, or “music from and inspired by the motion picture” – meaning songs that as you look in retrospect really encapsulate your journey.

You can choose to make this like a film soundtrack, or more along the lines of a videogame or any of the types of recordings mentioned above. You can even do a mixture of techniques as long as it flows well.

These need to be on a CD or MP3 to be shared with the class. Your entire presentation of your soundtrack should only be about 2-3 minutes long, so, of course, you will not be sharing your entire piece. But Ms. Nelsen will listen to the entire thing.

Each song/sound should have a brief paragraph (about 50-100 words) about how it fits into the story of your life and creates or influences your media landscape. Think about your engagement as an artist and an audience member with this piece of media. Your responses should reflect a critical analysis of the song/sound/media and an application of that media to your life experience. Be prepared to share part of this as well as a sampling of your songs with the class.

This will be due on January 12th. But don’t want until the last moment to do them!

You will be using some of the text you write for this piece to create our final performance.

You MUST also bring the lyrics for the song with which you most identify on another sheet of paper that you do not want to have handed back.
Digital Identity and Performance

Class Blog/WIKI Assignments

Four wiki postings will be completed and posted throughout the unit, occurring once per month, due on the following dates:

December 19, 2014
January 8, 2015
January 21, 2015
February 19, 2015

- Responses should be posted on: https://drama3media.wikispaces.com/
- Responses will be expected to be approximately 200-300 words in length.
- These writing responses fulfill the Utah State Drama Core Standards for script writing and constructed meaning. Further, some of your responses may be used to create the class performance script for the one act play this class will create at the end of the unit.
- Only students who opt into being a part of the research study will have responses analyzed as data for the project.
- Students will write the required responses and post media examples that highlight or inspire their point of view. The schedule for responses is below:


  - January 8, 2015: What misconceptions of how men/women are “supposed” to look and act are most prominent in the media? Are they realistic? Why or why not? Post some media examples that highlight your point of view on the topic.

  - January 21, 2015: How does it affect you in your daily life to have instant access to media with your cell phones, iPods, iPads, etc? How would your life change if you could only access it for a limited amount of time each day? Or each week? Create a meme that represents your point of view on this.

  - February 19, 2015: What is the use for digital social media? For whom is it (or should it be) a platform? If you could change or improve one thing about the media and especially digital social media, what would you change and why? Create and post a collage of 3-5 media artifacts that demonstrate your views on how digital social media can and should change.

In addition to student postings on the class wiki, you will choose two of your classmates postings and respond to their media examples and responses to the prompts. These responses should be 100-200 words in length and will serve as an opportunity to further thought, ask additional questions, or provide insights for the class performance script.
Lesson Plan 11

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 17 – Intro into Devising.

Objectives:
- Students will be able to understand some of the elements of devised theatre by viewing clips and beginning to brainstorm images.

Materials Needed:
- Actor’s Journals
- A large sheet of white paper for each student
- YouTube Clip of The Lookingglass Theatre Company and how they create performance art and devised theatre. Found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYisw4kEezs
- YouTube Clip of The Broken: A Devised Piece found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDNCDhNpIh8

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. We are going to be taking another opportunity to critically think about and reflect on the role of media influences in our lives. Again, the purpose of the free write is to get everything going through your head about the given subject matter down on paper and out of your head so you can better process it. Students will be asked to take out their actor’s journals. They will then be given 7-10 minutes to free write about the first of twelve journal prompts:
   1. What was the last thing you posted on your digital “wall” (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc) and in what context did you write it? What was going on at the moment?
   B. After students have been given the appropriate amount of time to get their thoughts and impressions out on paper, the instructor will give the students 3-5 minutes to share their thoughts and impressions with 3-4 people who are seated in their groups. They should look for similarities and differences in their responses and impressions.
      1. What commonalities do you see and why?
      2. What differences? Why?
   C. Then the instructor will ask for volunteers or call on individual class members to share their personal and group observations.
II. Directing the Learning

A. Great theatre is happening all around us, but sometimes we need to look for it. Our Drama department, this year, is going to be producing Metamorphoses by Mary Zimmerman. This was a piece originally created by the Lookingglass Theatre Company out of Chicago. Mary was an ensemble member and they specialize in devised theatre.

B. Devised theatre is a collaborative experience where multiple ensemble members create a theatrical piece that is aimed at teaching something or allowing the audience to explore a story or an issue in a new way. Devising is “to imagine, to suppose, to guess, to purpose, to mediate, to describe, to depict, to scheme, to contrive…” We are going to be creating a devised theatre piece in this class.

C. So, let’s look at a video of the founding members and how they create pieces of theatre to get us started.
   1. The instructor will then show the clip. She will then facilitate a discussion about what it means and what it looks like to devise.

   2. Our devised piece deals with how people your age are affected by digital social media and how you choose to express and represent yourself online and in your media landscape. That’s why we have been and will continue to be focused on that subject. We will experiment several ways to bring that theme to life onstage.

   3. Now I want to show you one more piece that was created by George Fox University Theatre Company. This is a video about how and why they created their piece. This should give us an idea of where we are going with our piece and give us a starting point.

      a. The instructor will then show the piece The Broken, and initiate class discussion afterwards.

III. Reinforcing the Learning

A. Remember last time in class, we discussed Laswell’s communication model:

   1. Who, says what, in which channel, to whom, and with what effect?
   2. Give me some other example of this communication process. Think of plays, commercials, films, TV shows, books, digital social media, etc.
B. Before the break, we performed mini-devised theatre pieces. What stayed with you from those pieces? What have you noticed these past few weeks of break as you have been observing and noting your involvement with your media landscape? Are you starting to pay more attention to the media the surrounds you and who is creating it?

C. The instructor will then hand out the large sheets of white paper to each student. They have the remainder of the class period to draw a visual representation of their digital landscape. They should include all the media that they encounter and how it affects them. They will hand these in at the end of the class period or the beginning of the next class, depending on time.
**Lesson Plan 12**

*Planning:*

**Unit:** Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media  
**Title:** Day 18 – A Museum Stroll  
**Objectives:**  
- Students will be able to begin script writing through participating in an observational activity and then creating a dialogue piece.

**Materials Needed:**  
- YouTube Clip of Devised Piece found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE6nSjGx8M0  
- Student media landscape pictures.

*Performing:*

**Lesson presentation:**

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook  
A. I’m going to show you another devised piece. This is called Oklahoma Voices and was created by the OSU Theatre department. While not all of this is brilliant, it kind of shows you the direction I would like us to go with this piece.

B. I want you to note in your actor’s journals what parts or techniques were interesting that we can use in our own pieces and what we should try to improve upon from their performance.

C. The instructor will then show the piece (13 minutes) to the class and facilitate a discussion with feedback.

II. Directing the Learning  
A. In the hallway, I have posted your media landscape drawings. Let’s call it an art exhibit of sorts. I would like you to take your actors journals and walk up and down the hallway and observe other people’s drawings, their impressions of the media in their lives. Pretend that you are a media literacy critic. As you observe the pieces jot down observations of what you see. Your observations should be between 3 and 10 words long per piece. You need to observe and respond to at least 10 of your classmates’ drawings. Then return to the classroom.
B. Students will be given about 15 minutes to complete this task.

III. Reinforcing the Learning

A. After students have returned with their observations, put them into groups of 5-7. The instructor will pick the groups so as to mix the dynamic up a bit.

B. Now, using only your observations you wrote down as dialogue, your group needs to write a script for a devised theatre piece. You can certainly mix up the order of the observations. You do not have to use all of them from everyone, but you should use several from each person.

C. Have each group member help in creating the script, but only one person with good handwriting should write it down, or type and email it to the instructor.

D. You will have the remainder of the class period to work on your script, but each person must have some input. It will need to be turned in at the end of the class.

E. Please also remember that your soundtracks are due next time. Choose short clips to share so your entire presentation only lasts 3 minutes. Please also bring the lyrics for one of the songs, the one that best represents you, your identity, your outlook, etc., printed out on a separate piece of paper to hand in.
Lesson Plan 13

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media

Title: Day 19-20 – Soundtrack Presentations

Objectives:

- Students will be able to understand the role of media in their lives through presenting their Soundtracks to their Lives.

Materials Needed:

- Student soundtracks that they have been assigned to bring with them.
- A CD or MP3 player
- Actor’s Journals

Note: This lesson will take two days. It is the recommendation of the author to do the journal free-write on the first day and spend the remainder of the time on the soundtrack presentations.

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook

A. Let’s take out our actor’s journals again. If you need to use your phones for this, feel free.

1. What was the last thing someone else posted on your digital “wall” (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc) and what affect did it have on you? What did it mean and why did they post it?

B. After students have been given the 7-10 minutes to respond to the prompt, the instructor will give the students 3-5 minutes to share their thoughts and impressions with 3-4 people who are seated in their groups. They should start thinking critically not only about the actual responses, but the why behind them.

C. Then the instructor will ask for volunteers or call on individual class members to share their personal and group observations.

II. Directing the Learning

A. You were asked to bring your soundtrack assignments, the music, write-ups, and the printed lyrics of the song with which you most identify. Please hand the lyrics into me first and then the written responses about the songs.

B. We will be using these lyrics later for our piece.
III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. Please remember, as with our media artifacts pieces, many of these songs carry an emotional connection for the person sharing. You must be wonderful audience members, focused on the sharing aspect of this exercise; but you must also be good people and supportive classmates and friends. We need this classroom to be a safe space where people can feel safe when they are most vulnerable.

   B. I’m going to mix your write-up up and call on you at random to share your 3-minute presentation with the class. Remember we are looking for the following:
      a. Find 3-5 songs, sounds, dialogue pieces, etc. that represent your life or the journey of your life up to this point. These can be either “music from the original motion picture soundtrack” – meaning actual songs from your life history that have shaped you, or “music from and inspired by the motion picture” – meaning songs that as you look in retrospect really encapsulate your journey.
      b. An explanation of why the song represents you or why you identify with it.
      c. Any lyrics that particularly stand out to you.
      d. A sampling of your music choice(s)

Warm-up day two: because we are going to spend a lot of time listening today, let’s get our bodies ready to do that!
   A. Get into groups of 4-6. I need you to invent a selection of random sounds – with each group member making one vocalized sound. Next, the group will need to decide on a sequence on which these sounds are made and practice it.
   B. Groups will be given 5 minutes to create their soundscape and then they will perform it for the class.
   C. After each group performs, the instructor will ask the class to come up with possible storylines in which these sounds would occur in this sequence.
   D. Remind the students to start seeing potential theatre pieces everywhere and in everything.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. Use the remainder of the class period to finish the Soundtrack to My Life Presentations.
Lesson Plan 14

Planning:
Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 21 – Curator’s Response
Objectives:
- Students will be able to practice concept creation by first doing an improv exercise and then creating a performance piece.

Materials Needed:
- Actor’s notebooks
- Museum observation dialogue pieces.
- A 6x6 foot square taped out on the floor.
- Students divided up into five groups.

Performing:
Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
  A. Remember when we watched Into the Woods and we discussed concepts? A concept, driven by a major dramatic questions can make a piece great. How we as an audience receive a piece of media is contingent on how the story is presented to us, or told. We are going to do a little activity to remind us of create acting techniques as well as concept driven work.
    1. I need people to give me some concept ideas that I will then write on the board. Students will raise their hands and share ideas. The instructor will assist with some examples if necessary: Under water, It was all a dream, Inside a storybook, chess pieces on a board, etc.
    2. The instructor will then divide the students up into five groups and assign them numbers.
    3. Each group will get into the box, one by one, and improv a scene with one of the class chosen concepts. The scenes will take place inside of the box only with the following locations:
      a. A crowded Subway car
      b. Prisoners in a tiny cell
      c. Stuck in an elevator
      d. In line for the public restroom
      e. 10 in the bed
4. After each group performs, the instructor will ask them to share their experiences doing improv with the parameters of concept and limited space.

II. Directing the Learning
   A. Get back into your groups for the museum dialogue pieces. I’m now going to give you a piece that was created by another group. You will need to read through the piece and decide upon a concept, a storyline, a major dramatic question and a structure with resolution.
   B. Remember, these are pieces created by someone else, so you cannot alter their flow or order. But you can decide who in your group gets to say what line.
   C. All you have to work with is the dialogue, so the story must come from your group.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. Students will be given the remainder of the class period to create and rehearse their pieces, which will be performed in the next class period.
   B. The instructor will walk around and monitor and assist as needed.

Remember there is a wiki entry due next time by 5:00 PM. Get an early start on it!
Lesson Plan 15

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media

Title: Day 22 – Performing the Concept

Objectives:
- Students will be able to understand the necessity of concept driven devised theatre pieces by performing for the class and observing other students performances.

Materials Needed:
- Any technical needs for the performances.
- White board and dry erase markers

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. Students will get 10-15 minutes to finalize and rehearse their performances, using any props or costume pieces that would be helpful in the piece.
   B. Together as a group they need to come up with a statement about their concept and a title of their piece. These will be presented before their piece. They also need to be prepared to discuss their concept and interpretation after the performances.

II. Directing the Learning
   A. Groups will each present their concept and then perform their pieces. The instructor will facilitate a dramaturg-esque Q&A after each performance.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. Now I want you to think about pieces from each performance that we can and should use in our final piece. What do we want to say and what should be part of our message?
   B. The instructor will write student ideas on the board. Together the class will begin coming up with ideas for the final piece. They will find and note the following:
      a. A Major Dramatic Question
      b. Basic Storyline
      c. Who our audience is
      d. What we want the audience to get out of our piece
      e. Sections of dialogue that will work for the final piece.
Digital Identity and Performance

f. What techniques should we use to get our point across?
g. What should our concept be and what images can go along with that?

Remember, a wiki entry is due tonight by 5:00 PM. Here is a reminder about what you are responding to…

- Responses should be posted on: https://drama3media.wikispaces.com/
- Responses will be expected to be approximately 200-300 words in length.
- These writing responses fulfill the Utah State Drama Core Standards for script writing and constructed meaning. Further, some of your responses may be used to create the class performance script for the one act play this class will create at the end of the unit.
- Only students who opt into being a part of the research study will have responses analyzed as data for the project.
- Students will write the required responses and post media examples that highlight or inspire their point of view. The schedule for responses is below:

  - January 21, 2015: How does it affect you in your daily life to have instant access to media with your cell phones, iPods, iPads, etc? How would your life change if you could only access it for a limited amount of time each day? Or each week? Create a meme that represents your point of view on this.
Lesson Plan 16

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 23 – Changing mediums – Lyrics into performance

Objectives:
- Students will be able to utilize devised theatre skills by creating a mini performance piece.

Materials Needed:
- Lyrics sheets that were handed in two class periods ago.
- Student notebooks
- Audio Track for “Copy of a Copy” by Nine Inch Nails
- Lyrics for Copy of a Copy?

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. The instructor will hand out the handout for NAMLE’s Key Questions to ask when analyzing media messages. After each student has received a copy, she will review the questions and their context with the entire class.
   B. Now I want you to put these into action. I’m going to play a song for you and I want you to note what you think the responses to those questions are. This song might be a bit different for some of you and make others feel right at home.
   C. The instructor will then play “Copy of a Copy.” She may hand out lyric sheets to assist students in understanding how the song works with the key questions.
   D. She will then facilitate a discussion in groups first and then with representatives for the whole class, calling on students who have not shared a lot thus far.

II. Directing the Learning
   A. How does it change our perception of or interaction with a song when we read the lyrics and ask these questions?
   B. What is our obligation to do with our newfound knowledge?
   C. As theatre practitioners, we are often recreating the words that have been written by someone else, but we have to make them honest and authentic.
III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. Today, in new groups, you will be creating yet another devised theatre piece.
      Keep track of all the pieces that we have done thus far, as they will be used
      again, hopefully in the creation of our final piece.
   B. I’m going to hand each group a stack of lyrics from the pieces that were most
      significant to you from your soundtracks. I want you to go through each and
      pick the most important lines, words, phrases that tell the story of our
      collective struggle for identity expression, acceptance, etc.
         a. You will take pieces from each song and create a theatre piece using
            those as dialogue.
         b. As you go through each piece, one by one, I want you to again
            reference NAMLE’s key questions. Figure out what the message of
            the song is and then figure out what message you want to create.
         c. You should use those questions also in creating your piece.
   C. You will have the remainder of the class period to create and rehearse your
      piece. These will be performed in the next class period.
         a. They should be around five minutes long and incorporate some form
            of technology and/or media.
         b. They should make a statement and have something you want the
            audience to learn from the piece.
         c. They should be prepared and as memorized as possible.
“Copy Of A”

I am just a copy of a copy of a copy
Everything I say has come before
Assembled into something into something into something
I am never certain anymore
I am just a shadow of a shadow of a shadow
Always trying to catch up with myself
I am just an echo of an echo of an echo
Listening to someone’s cry for help

(Chorus)
Look what you had to start
Why all the change of heart?
Well you need to play your part
A copy of a copy of a
Look what you’ve gone and done
Well that doesn’t sound like fun
See I’m not the only one
A copy of a copy of a

I am little pieces little pieces little pieces
Pieces that were picked up on the way
Imprinted with a purpose with a purpose with a purpose
A purpose that’s become quite clear today

(Chorus)

I am just a finger on a trigger on a finger
Doing everything I’m told to do
Always my intention my intention your attention
Just doing everything you tell me to

(Chorus 2 times)

(Look what you had to start) Look what you had to start
(Why all the change of heart) Why all the change of heart
(You need to play your part) You need to play your part
A copy of a copy of a copy of a
(A copy of a copy of a copy of a copy of a)
(Look what you’ve gone and done) And look what you’ve gone and done
(That doesn’t sound like fun) That doesn’t sound like fun
(See I’m not the only one) See I’m not the only one
A copy of a copy of a copy of a copy of a
Lesson Plan 17

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 24 – Lyric Performances

Objectives:
- Students will be able to understand the key questions to ask when analyzing media by creating a theatrical piece and watching and responding to their classmates pieces.

Materials Needed:
- Group Key Questions worksheet
- Any technical needs for groups performances.

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
A. Before we get started with or performances today, we are going to be taking another opportunity to critically think about and reflect on the role of media influences in our lives. Again, the purpose of the free write is to get everything going through your head about the given subject matter down on paper and out of your head so you can better process it. If you need to use your phones or electronic devices to look this up, feel free. Students will be asked to take out their actor’s journals. They will then be given 7-10 minutes to free write about the first of twelve journal prompts:
   1. What was the last thing you shared on your digital “walls” that was authored by another person? Why did you choose to share it?
B. After students have been given the appropriate amount of time to get their thoughts and impressions out on paper, the instructor will give the students 3-5 minutes to share their thoughts and impressions with 6-8 people who are seated in their groups. They should look for similarities and differences in their responses and impressions.
C. Then the instructor will ask for representatives from each group to come and share their group observations.

II. Directing the Learning
A. Hand out the group worksheets to help the students focus on their task. Give then about 10-15 minutes to fill them out and rehearse their piece a few more
times. After they are done filling the worksheet out, they should return it to the instructor who will assess it.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
A. Students will then perform their pieces. The instructor will either ask for feedback after each piece or at the end of the lesson, depending on the dynamics and needs of the class.
B. Any remaining class time can be used for discussion as a class or in groups. All materials will be collected and used for the final performance creation.
### Changing Mediums – Lyrics into Performance

#### Group members:

| _____________________________ | _____________________________ |
| _____________________________ | _____________________________ |
| _____________________________ | _____________________________ |
| _____________________________ | _____________________________ |

(Who made this?)

#### Answer the following questions as a group for your piece:

1. **What do we want the audience to get out of this piece?**

2. **What do we want the audience to do because they have seen this piece?**  
   **What action might we want them to take?**

3. **Who might benefit from our piece or its message?**

4. **Why (if anyone) might be harmed or left out of our message?**

5. **What do we as storytellers want the audience to remember? Images? Words?**

6. **What does this piece tell me about identity construction?**
7. What techniques will we use to get our point across?

8. How might different people understand this message differently?

9. What can/should I learn about myself from this piece?

10. Include a final performance copy of your script below or stapled to this sheet:
Lesson Plan 18

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media

Title: Day 25 – Wiki Responses to Peers

Objectives:
- Students will be able to synthesize how they respond to other’s points of view by reading and responding to their wiki entries.

Materials Needed:
- Access to the computer lab
- Access to the class wiki site
- Wiki Response handout as a reference guide
- Blind Folds for half the class members

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. It is important for us to be able to work together and learn from each other. And as we have noted, sometimes playing games is one of the best ways to do that. We are going to play a game called blindfold cat and mouse.
      1. Divide the class into half. One group stands in a large circle to mark the edge of the playing area and stop the blindfolded players from leaving the space. The other group puts on blind folds.
      2. One of the blindfolded players is named the cat and the others are the mice.
      3. The game is about maintaining perfect silence, listening and working together. The cat must listen very carefully and attempt to catch all the mice. The players are not allowed to stop moving for more than a few seconds. If a player is attempting to walk out of the circle, someone must turn to them gently and whisper “circle.”
      4. After each mouse is caught, the instructor gently takes them out of the circle to observe.
      5. The game is finished once all the mice are caught or the cat gives up.
      6. The groups will then switch places and play again.

6. Enlist students in a class discussion of what they observed both playing the game and watching others play it?
7. What tactics worked and what didn’t?
8. What skills or senses did they have to use to achieve their objective?
9. How can we use this exercise and our observations in our acting?

II. Directing the Learning
   A. It is important for us to get points of view from many people. We may or may not agree, but everyone should be given the right to speak and the privilege of being heard.
   B. Remember what we discussed at the beginning of the unit:
      a. All media messages are ‘constructed.’
      b. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
      c. Different people experience the same media message differently.
      d. Media have embedded values and points of view.
      e. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.
   C. We are now going to take the remainder of the class period and go down to the computer lab and read and respond to your classmates’ wiki posts. You should read several until you find 2 that interest you. This response must go beyond merely saying you agree or disagree. It needs to incorporate the critical thinking we have been discussing throughout the unit. Really try to engage the discussion. But also be thoughtful and kind in your responses.
   D. The instructor will be reading all responses.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. Students will be given time in the computer lab to read two if their classmates wiki entries and respond to them on the class wiki site.
   B. The instructor will monitor and assist as needed.
Lesson Plan 19

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 26 – Digital Theatre and Introduction into Devising Final Piece
Objectives:
- Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of devised theatre flow by beginning work on the final piece creation.

Materials Needed:
- YouTube Video, Prometheus, the Media Revolution
- Access to notes or text from past performances
- White Board and Markers upon which to write the lists of exercises and performances.

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. I want to show you a short film. It presents itself as an informational piece about the history of digitization and then turns. What is your response to a piece of digital storytelling like this?
      1. The instructor will show the short film and then ask for feedback.
      2. Do students agree or not? Is this likely? Is it good or bad?
      3. What are the creator’s of this piece trying to get us to do? What do they want us to think and how do they want us to take from this?

II. Directing the Learning
   a. Our job as digital and live storytellers to communicate a message. Over the course of the past unit, we have created several small pieces of devised theatre.
   b. Think of the pieces examples, and exercises we have done thus far in the unit:
      i. Dead Poets Society and Acting Your Verse
      ii. Contentless scenes
      iii. Concepts and Time Period Work
      iv. Entire pieces created based on a movement or an image, or a sequence of sound.
      v. Pieces created as a response to something.
      vi. The trading masks exercise
vii. Your group media projects
viii. Your soundtracks and lyric performances
ix. Improv inside a limited space.
x. The devised theatre examples we have seen thus far and new media we have encountered, etc.

c. We have also been attempting to read media in a new way. Especially digital social media.
i. Think of the survey
ii. The wiki responses
iii. The media landscape pictures
iv. The Journal responses
v. The class discussions

d. One thing we must understand in order to create our piece is the concept of Digital Theatre:
i. Digital theatre is primarily identified by the coexistence of “live” performers and digital media in the same unbroken space with a co-present audience. In addition to the necessity that its performance must be simultaneously “live” and digital, the event’s secondary characteristics are that its content should retain some recognizable theatre roles (through limiting the level of interactivity) and a narrative element of spoken language or text. The four conditions of digital theatre are:
   1. It is a “live” performance placing at least some performers in the same shared physical space with an audience.
   2. The performance must use digital technology as an essential part of the primary artistic event.
   3. The performance contains only limited levels of interactivity, in that its content is shaped primarily by the artist(s) for an audience.
   4. The performance’s content should contain either spoken language or text which might constitute a narrative or story, differentiating it from other events which are distinctly dance, art, or music.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. Put students into new groups. This should have 3-4 people each.
B. In groups, the students will begin to create a devised theatre piece. They should discuss moments from each of the mini pieces we have done over the past unit, remembering those we have discussed above.

C. Each group will pick pieces from throughout the unit to feature in our final piece. They will have the remainder of the class period to create the list, with specific moments to feature, and turn it into the teacher with their names on it. These will be used again in the next class period.

*** Reminder, you will be filmed in the next class period, so dress appropriately! ***
Lesson Plan 20

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 27 – Write, write, write…and a bit of filmmaking.
Objectives:
- Students will be able to practice creative writing and collaboration skills by writing devised theatre pieces and “I am” poems.

Materials Needed:
- Camera for filming
- A sheet of paper for each student
- Dark markers
- Actor’s journals for prompt
- Student notebooks or something upon which to write.
- Access to computer lab if possible for I am poems.
- Access to computers to write “I am Poem” – found at: ettcweb.lr.k12.nj.us/forms/iampoem.htm

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. Today I would like to take out a piece of paper. Before you respond to this question, I want to remind you that your responses will be shared with the whole class. But you do not need to include your name.
   
   B. I would like you to write a short “I am” poem. This is a poem that describes you. I want it no longer that 4-8 lines.
   
   C. There are a number of available templates for this exercise online. My students will use the one found at: ettcweb.lr.k12.nj.us/forms/iampoem.htm and edit it down to what they really want to describe themselves. They can create it online and then both print it out for themselves and email them to the instructor.
   
   D. Now I want you to choose one word from that exercise to describe you and write it very clearly and large on this paper I will give you. Today, as you work in groups, I’m going to film each of you for a few moments holding the sign, so
think carefully about what message you want it to say or the label you want to create for yourself.

D. After student have finished with the assignment, they will then hand them in to be graded and used in class next time.

II. Directing the Learning
   A. Take out your actor’s journals again. Let’s do a really brief free write today: They will then be given 5-7 minutes to free write about the first of twelve journal prompts:
      1. How often do you go and look at other people’s digital “walls” and why do you spend time there?
   B. After students have been given the appropriate amount of time to get their thoughts and impressions out on paper, the instructor will ask for volunteers or call on individual class members to share their personal and group observations.
   C. Please use this as something to influence your pieces today!

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. Groups from the last class period will get back together and create an outline and script for their ideas for the final project. These will be performed next time, so they need to be fairly solid. After they are performed, we will be choosing pieces of them, or even one in its entirety to create for our final piece.
   B. While groups are working, the instructor will take student out onto the stage to film for the digital storytelling piece. They will need to bring their sign they made today as well.
   C. Groups have the remainder of the class period to complete and rehearse this project.
Lesson Plan 21

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media

Title: Day 28 – Creating the final project – the Performance of ideas

Objectives:
- Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of devised theatre by performing a piece for the class and selecting the most appropriate moments.

Materials Needed:
- Any technical needs for the performances
- Actor’s Journals for taking notes
- White Board and markers.

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. Give students a few moments to review, rehearse and make any final preparations for their piece. Remind them to hand their outline into the teacher.

II. Directing the Learning
   A. Assemble students to watch performances. They should take notes of pieces they think will work for our class devised theatre project.
   
   B. Ask students what worked from each piece and what didn’t. What did they gain from their own piece or from others that must be part of our final performance?

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. After all the groups have performed and discussed their pieces, the instructor will facilitate discussion in which the class decides upon and finalizes the performance.
   
   B. Once a clear outline has been make, the class will figure out how to work transitions and discuss a title for the piece.
C. Any remaining time will be spent dividing out parts and figuring out characters. If there is not time for this in class, the instructor will do this on her own prior to the next class period.
Lesson Plan 22

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media

Title: Day 29 – Creating the Script

Objectives:
- Students will be able to practice their playwriting skills by creating a script for the devised theatre piece.

Materials Needed:
- Copies of their “I am” Poems that the instructor has already compiled.
- Semi-finalized version of the outline and enough handouts for the class members, divided up into sections.
- Student notebooks, or (if possible) computers so they can type the scripts on their personal devises and email them to the instructor.

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. Choral performance of I am Poems: I have taken your I am poems and layered them together to create an opening or closing (or both) for our piece. In small groups, I want you to try reading these in a variety of ways, sometimes with only one person speaking, sometime with people overlapping, sometimes with people saying the same thing – choral-like, sometimes with everyone speaking at once. Take the next ten minutes and create different ways of presenting this portion. Then you will present them to the class and we will choose what techniques will work best for our purposes.

II. Directing the Learning
   A. Remember all great theatre stories have to also have a through line; a format. Most well made plays follow the format established by Aristotle when he was watching Oedipus Rex. They contain the following:
      1. Exposition
      2. Inciting Incident
      3. Rising Action
      4. Climax
      5. Denouement
B. Remember also that a great piece of theatre will have clear character relationships, conflict driven scenes, a beginning, middle and end, and a secret that the audience needs to have revealed for the plot to resolve. How can you incorporate these into our piece?

C. The instructor will then hand out the outline for the piece that the class decided upon in the previous class period. She will have divided it up into sections.

III. Reinforcing the Learning

A. The instructor will then divide the class up into groups and assign each a section. Their job is to take the existing material and create a script, with clear-flowing, interesting and natural dialogue.

B. You can tell if dialogue is going to work by reading it aloud and making sure it sounds natural, not forced, fake, or cheesy.

C. One great way to do this is by improving some things and jotting down what works and then reworking it until you have the right piece that flows and makes sense for the whole of the piece and the characters therein. Remember as you write and work these pieces to ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is it necessary to the story?
2. Is it performable as it stands or does it need to be approached a different way?
3. Does it need further development?

D. You have the remainder of the class period to work on this. The finalized script for your section needs to be emailed to the instructor by no later than 5:00 PM tonight.

E. The instructor will gather the sections, compile the piece, make sure it makes sense and print out copies for the students for next time.

Note: One of the sections assigned to a group may be on transitions. It might be interesting to have a soundscape of mouse clicks, notifications, other sounds notably found in digital social media…
Lesson Plan 23

Planning:
Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 30 – Blocking a Devised Piece
Objectives:
• Students will be able to practice theatrical technique by blocking a devised theatre piece.

Materials Needed:
• Copies of the final script.
• Actor’s Journals
• Pencils for writing down blocking
• White board and markers

Performing:
Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
A. We are going to be taking another opportunity to critically think about and reflect on the role of media influences in our lives. Again, the purpose of the free write is to get everything going through your head about the given subject matter down on paper and out of your head so you can better process it. Students will be asked to take out their actor’s journals. They will then be given 7-10 minutes to free write about the first of twelve journal prompts:
   1. Do you ever look at others “walls” with another person or group of people? Why and what do you talk about with them?
B. After students have been given the appropriate amount of time to get their thoughts and impressions out on paper, the instructor will give the students 3-5 minutes to share their thoughts and impressions with 3-4 people who are seated in their groups. They should look for similarities and differences in their responses and impressions.
   1. What commonalities do you see and why?
   2. What differences? Why?
C. Then the instructor will ask for volunteers or call on individual class members to share their personal and group observations.

II. Directing the Learning
A. Before we begin blocking today, we need to get our bodies on the same age as our minds.
B. Who can tell me some of the themes of our piece? As student share ideas, the instructor will write them down on the board. After they have found 6-10 themes, the instructor will have them all get to their feet and create a life size sculpture with their bodies of each theme. They need to focus on how their body, its position, etc. contributes to the storytelling aspect of the piece.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
A. After each has been tried, the instructor will have students gather their materials and go out onto the stage to block the show. This should take the remainder of the class period. But the last five minutes should be reserved for homework instructions.

B. Inform students that their homework for tonight is to go home and find 3-5 pictures that they have posted online. These will be used for a photovoice project, so make sure they are pictures that you are comfortable with exhibiting. Also, if you select pictures that show people other than you, you need to get their permission to use their image in our piece. Some of these will be used in our digital storytelling piece.
   1. They can bring these in a hard copy format or they can (preferably) email them to the instructor.
Lesson Plan 24

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 31 – Rehearsal
Objectives:
- Students will be able to improve their acting technique through focused and concentrated rehearsal in class.

Materials Needed:
- Any props, set or technical equipment.
- Notes from the previous rehearsal
- Music for Abba’s “Dancing Queen”
- All chairs cleared away and a free and open space in which to perform.

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. First, I need you to hand in your homework of the photos that you are using for your photo voice project.

   B. Today we are going to focus on everyone getting up and moving and performing without worrying what other people think about them.

   C. The goal with today is for you to throw out all concepts of right and wrong choices today and just experiment and experience. Rehearsal is for experimentation. I will help you know if it works or not. We can first do that by throwing out all concept of good or bad dancing.

   D. I’m going to turn on some music and I want you to just let go and dance. If a character emerges in your dancing, let it happen. Maybe they are a great dancer. Maybe they just think they are a great dancer…If relationships with other characters emerge, go with them and see where they take you.
      1. I will start by tapping you one by one to go dance. You decide how long to stay in. But if someone brings you in, you must respond with an affirmative answer. Don’t be afraid of looking silly, just focus on experiencing the moment.
2. The instructor will then put on dancing queen and let them start dancing one at a time. She will encourage their engagement with the audience in getting them to join this invisible-theatre type of play.

II. Directing the Learning
   A. What can we learn from the experience that we can take with us into rehearsal today?
   B. The instructor will finish blocking the piece, review the notes from the previous rehearsal and works specific scenes as needed.
   C. She will give the students the opportunity to ask any questions, clarify moments, and work acting technique.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. Students will rehearse the devised theatre piece, stopping as necessary to fix the problems.
   B. Notes will be taken and posted to ensure improvement and open communication and expectations.
   C. Remember, you have a wiki entry due next time in class. Review it tonight and take care of it early!
Lesson Plan 25

Planning:
Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 32 – Rehearsal
Objectives:
• Students will be able to improve their acting technique through focused and concentrated rehearsal in class.

Materials Needed:
• Any props, set or technical equipment.
• Notes from the previous rehearsal
• YouTube clip from The Lookingglass Theatre Company’s production of Little Prince. Found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfjnMxLKcgY

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. We talked about some other devised theatre groups. I want to show you a clip from one of the Lookingglass Theatre in Chicago’s productions. This is the trailer from their production of The Little Prince. Notice how they take existing stories and incorporate innovative storytelling techniques.
   B. The instructor will then show the clip and facilitate the discussion:
      1. What can we incorporate to make our production interesting and innovative?

II. Directing the Learning
   D. The instructor will review the notes from the previous rehearsal and works specific scenes as needed.
   E. She will give the students the opportunity to ask any questions, clarify moments, and work acting technique.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   D. Students will rehearse the devised theatre piece, stopping as necessary to fix the problems.
   E. Notes will be taken and posted to ensure improvement and open communication and expectations.
F. Remember, a wiki entry is due tonight by 5:00 PM. Here is a reminder about what you are responding to…

- Responses should be posted on: https://drama3media.wikispaces.com/
- Responses will be expected to be approximately 200-300 words in length.
- These writing responses fulfill the Utah State Drama Core Standards for script writing and constructed meaning. Further, some of your responses may be used to create the class performance script for the one-act play this class will create at the end of the unit.
- Only students who opt into being a part of the research study will have responses analyzed as data for the project.
- Students will write the required responses and post media examples that highlight or inspire their point of view. The schedule for responses is below:

  - February 19, 2015: What is the use for digital social media? For whom is it (or should it be) a platform? If you could change or improve one thing about the media and especially digital social media, what would you change and why? Create and post a collage of 3-5 media artifacts that demonstrate your views on how digital social media can and should change.
Lesson Plan 26

Planning:
Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 33 – Rehearsal and Creation of Photo voice
Objectives:
• Students will be able to improve their acting technique through focused and concentrated rehearsal in class.

Materials Needed:
• Any props, set or technical equipment.
• Notes from the previous rehearsal
• Photos handed in prior for the photo voice assignment, which should have already been scanned and integrated in a digital format.
• Large butcher paper that is spread out on the floor.
• Tape or a way to safely mount the pictures

Performing:
Lesson presentation:
I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
A. Students will be given back their images they brought of pictures they have posted online. I want you to think about why you posted this picture. What was happening in the moment? What did you want to remember from it?

B. I would like you to lay them out on the big butcher paper. Try to find people who have similar pictures and poses and lay then close to those they are similar to. Your pictures will likely get separate from each other.

C. After you have laid them out and found the similar pieces, tape or glue them to the paper. Write a caption underneath about what each picture means to you. How does it influence your constructed identity or vision of self?

D. After all students have completed that, the instructor will share observations with the group. This piece will be filmed and possibly included as a media artifact in the digital storytelling piece.
II. Directing the Learning
   F. The instructor will review the notes from the previous rehearsal and works specific scenes as needed.
   G. She will give the students the opportunity to ask any questions, clarify moments, and work acting technique.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   G. Students will rehearse the devised theatre piece, stopping as necessary to fix the problems.
   H. Notes will be taken and posted to ensure improvement and open communication and expectations.
Lesson Plan 27

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 34 – Rehearsal
Objectives:
- Students will be able to improve their acting technique through focused and concentrated rehearsal in class.

Materials Needed:
- Any props, set or technical equipment.
- Notes from the previous rehearsal
- Visual slides of the following two paintings: Any Iris Scott finger painting. Nude Descending Staircase by Marcel Duchamp.

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. Movement is incredibly important. Our bodies are constantly communicating something. We need to make sure that what we communicate is appropriate to the action of the character and the moment of the piece.
      1. I’m going to show you two different images. The first I would like you to create the movement of the painting with your body. Each person will do this on their own.
      2. The teacher will then show the Painting: Dog Shaking Head in Rain by Iris Scott and have the students communicate the movement of the piece. She will give feedback as needed.
      3. The students will then be put into groups of 4-5. They must work together to create the movement of the painting.
      4. The teacher will then show the Painting: Nude Descending Staircase by Marcel Duchamp (though possibly don’t tell students what it is called…) and have the students communicate the movement of the piece. She will give feedback as needed.
      5. Let’s remember these and use them in our rehearsal today. But first, we need to take a moment and reflect and critically think again.
II. Directing the Learning
   A. We are going to be taking another opportunity to critically think about and reflect on the role of media influences in our lives. Again, the purpose of the free write is to get everything going through your head about the given subject matter down on paper and out of your head so you can better process it. Students will be asked to take out their actor’s journals. They will then be given 7-10 minutes to free write about the first of twelve journal prompts:
      1. Have you ever changed something about yourself or seen someone change something about themselves because of something that was posted online? Write about your experience.
   B. After students have been given the appropriate amount of time to get their thoughts and impressions out on paper, the instructor will give the students 3-5 minutes to share their thoughts and impressions with 3-4 people who are seated in their groups.
      1. Why is it important for you to think about and discuss this subject?
      2. What can and should you do knowing what your classmates feel and how they respond?
   C. Then the instructor will lead the group in a brief discussion of their responses.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   H. The instructor will review the notes from the previous rehearsal and works specific scenes as needed.
   I. She will give the students the opportunity to ask any questions, clarify moments, and work acting technique.
   J. Students will rehearse the devised theatre piece, stopping as necessary to fix the problems.
   K. Notes will be taken and posted to ensure improvement and open communication and expectations.
Lesson Plan 28

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media
Title: Day 35 – Rehearsal

Objectives:
- Students will be able to improve their acting technique through focused and concentrated rehearsal in class.

Materials Needed:
- Any props, set or technical equipment.
- Notes from the previous rehearsal
- YouTube clip from the Lookingglass Theatre’s production of Alice. Found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2V3wPXvsZc

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. Let’s look at another example from the Lookingglass Theatre Company. This is from their Alice in Wonderland storyline, simply called Alice.

   B. The instructor will then play the clip and facilitate a brief discussion:
      1. What can we learn from the commitment of their performers that we can take into our own work?

II. Directing the Learning
   A. The instructor will review the notes from the previous rehearsal and works specific scenes as needed.
   B. She will give the students the opportunity to ask any questions, clarify moments, and work acting technique.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. Students will rehearse the devised theatre piece, stopping as necessary to fix the problems.
   B. Notes will be taken and posted to ensure improvement and open communication and expectations.
Lesson Plan 29

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media

Title: Day 36 – First Dress Rehearsal

Objectives:

- Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of devised theatre by performing a dress rehearsal of their digital storytelling and devised theatre piece.

Materials Needed:

- Any technical equipment needed for performance
- All costumes
- All Props

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook

A. The instructor will do a number of vocal projection and diction warm-ups to get students prepared to perform.

1. While stretching, students will do the following exercises:

   a. Bubbles
   b. Tongue twisters: Toy boat, red leather yellow leather, good blood bad blood, unique New York, I edited it, etc.
   c. Proper cup of coffee

II. Directing the Learning

A. We are going to be writing one final journal prompt. Then all your entries will be handed in and graded. Think one final time about the media you encounter, but most importantly, the media you author. Students will be asked to take out their actor’s journals. They will then be given 7-10 minutes to free write about the first of twelve journal prompts:

   1. Have you ever posted something that has received a negative reaction, was misunderstood, or do you wish you wouldn’t have posted? Write about your experience.

B. After students have been given the appropriate amount of time to get their thoughts and impressions out on paper, the instructor will give the students 3-5 minutes to share their thoughts and impressions with 3-4 people who are seated in their groups. They should look for similarities and differences in their responses and impressions.
1. What commonalities do you see and why?
2. What differences? Why?
C. Then the instructor will ask for volunteers or call on individual class members to share their personal and group observations.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
A. Today is a dress rehearsal for your performance next time. Please remember to invite your friends and family members and get all permission slips signed and turned in.
B. Students will quickly change into costume, set up the space and perform the piece like it is a real show.
C. If there is time after the dress rehearsal, the instructor will give notes.
Lesson Plan 30

Planning:

Unit: Digital Identity: Influence of Student Identity Construction through Media and Digital Social Media

Title: Day 37 – Final Dress Rehearsal

Objectives:

- Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of devised theatre by performing a dress rehearsal of their digital storytelling and devised theatre piece.

Materials Needed:

- Any technical equipment needed for performance
- All costumes
- All Props

Performing:

Lesson presentation:

I. Preparing for Learning/Hook
   A. Students will enter, and the instructor will take role.
   They will then immediately change into costume and get set up to run the performance and get feedback.

II. Directing the Learning
   A. Today is the final dress rehearsal before the performances that night and the following day at the Region Drama Competitions.

III. Reinforcing the Learning
   A. Run performance
   B. Give feedback notes
   C. Answer any questions the actors might have and clarify moment of the show as needed.
APPENDIX C

Writing Prompts

Reflective Journal Writing Prompts:

• What was the first digital social media that you chose to use and why? What do you like or dislike about it? Why do you use it?

• Does digital social media affect the way you feel about yourself? Why or why not?

• How do your parents feel about digital social media? Do you think they are right or wrong? Why?

• How would you describe yourself or your identity?

• What digital social media have you used in the last three days and why?

• What was the last thing you posted on your digital “wall” (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc) and in what context did you write it? What was going on at the moment?

• What was the last thing someone else posted on your digital “wall” (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc) and what affect did it have on you? What did it mean and why did they post it?

• What was the last thing you shared on your digital “walls” that was authored by another person? Why did you choose to share it?

• How often do you go and look at other people’s digital “walls” and why do you spend time there?

• Do you ever look at others “walls” with another person or group of people? Why and what do you talk about with them?

• Have you ever changed something about yourself or seen someone change something about themselves because of something that was posted online? Write about your experience.
Have you ever posted something that has received a negative reaction, was misunderstood, or do you wish you wouldn’t have posted? Write about your experience.
Wiki Post Assignments:


- What misconceptions of how men/women are “supposed” to look and act are most prominent in the media? Are they realistic? Why or why not? Post some media examples that highlight your point of view on the topic.

- How does it affect you in your daily life to have instant access to media with your cell phones, iPods, iPads, etc? How would your life change if you could only access it for a limited amount of time each day? Or each week? Create a meme that represents your point of view on this.

- What is the use for digital social media? For whom is it (or should it be) a platform? If you could change or improve one thing about the media and especially digital social media, what would you change and why? Create and post a collage of three to five media artifacts that demonstrate your views on how digital social media can and should change.
Vine Project Prompt

Creating a Vine!

In preparation for this lesson, you were supposed to bring a piece of media with you and participate in a brief presentation to the class, explaining how you identify with that piece of media. I want you to think about what this artifact is and why it is important to you.

Don’t forget to remember what others say and how your perceptions might change or grow over the next unit. We will be talking about your pieces more in depth a little later in the lesson and using these media artifacts to create group mini devised theatre pieces. But for right now, let’s do a little practice round…!

Get into groups of 3-5 students. Each group must have one member with a smart phone with video and email capabilities. Each group will have the next ten minutes to create a Vine.

While a Vine is normally a 6 second video, I will allow students to go up to 12 seconds. Here are some things to remember:

- Using your media artifacts that you brought, and your responses to our class discussions, I would like you to develop a Vine that says something about your interaction with or understanding of media and its identifying or distancing qualities.
- Be thoughtful in your media creation. Think about what we have discussed thus far in class. Remember you are now becoming the author of this media that is going to be shared with others.
- Remember these have to be between 6-12 seconds at most and have to incorporate at least three media artifact from the group.
- Your group will have 10 minutes to film the small vine and email it to the instructor. I will be putting them all together to show at the beginning of the next class period.
- Now go have fun creating media that means something!
Some things to remember:

- Our devised piece deals with how people your age are affected by digital social media and how you choose to express and represent yourself online and in your media landscape. That’s why we have been and will continue to be focused on that subject. We will experiment several ways to bring that theme to life onstage.

- Remember last time in class, we discussed Laswell’s communication model:
  - Who
  - Says what
  - In which channel
  - To whom
  - With what effect?

Now I want you to think of some other example of this communication process. Think of plays, commercials, films, TV shows, books, digital social media, etc.

I have a bunch of large pieces of paper, crayons, markers, and colored pencils set up on the table in the back of the classroom. Come and get a sheet of paper and some writing/coloring utensils.

You will have the remainder of the class period to draw a visual representation of your digital landscape. Make sure this drawing includes all the media you encounter and how it affects you.

These will be handed in either today or at the top of the next class period. Your images will be shared with others in the class, so do your best work, but be safe with the information that you share!
APPENDIX D

Final Performance Script

“I AM”
By Ms. Nelsen’s Intermediate Drama Three Class

Drama 3 One Act
(All names have been changed to protect student anonymity)

Group 1: Brooke, Sylvester, Grace, Lilly, Brent, Isabella, Elaine
Group 2: Nadia, Jamal, Chandler, Bee, William, Lee, Kim
Group 3: Ginny, Elizabeth, Jennifer, Gorden, Candace, Scott, James, Meg, Sophia, Monica
Group 4: Lillian, Zach, Lou, Bayly, Elle, Arlene, Hermione, Ceasar, Nicole, Crystal

Nine Inch Nails “Copy of Copy” starts playing. The actors synchronize movement to tell the story of dependence on the digital world.

**Group one** (Brooke, Sylvester, Grace, Lilly, Brent, Isabella, Elaine)
(Saying section of the lyrics, alternating and overlapping):
I am just a copy of a copy of a copy
I am just a copy of a copy of a copy
I am just a copy of a copy of a copy
I am just a copy of a copy of a copy

Sylvester: Everything I say has come before

Lilly: Assembled into something into something into something

Grace: I don’t know for certain anymore

Brooke: I am just a shadow of a shadow of a shadow

Brent: Always trying to catch up with myself

Isabella: I am just an echo of an echo of an echo

Elaine: Listening to someone’s cry for help

**Group one freezes on stage in picture. Group 2; crosses upstage, into a line. Group 3; from seats in the house, alerts and ringtones go off.**
**Group three** *(saying section of the lyrics, alternating and overlapping):*
I am just a copy of a copy of a copy
I am just a copy of a copy of a copy
I am just a copy of a copy of a copy
I am just a copy of a copy of a copy

*(As lines are stated, the actors come up onto the stage.)*

Ginny: I am little pieces little pieces little pieces

Elizabeth: Pieces that we picked up on the way

Jennifer: You need to play your part

Gorden: A copy of a copy of a

Candace: I am just a finger on a trigger on a finger

Scott: Doing everything I’m told to do

James: Always my intention my intention your attention

Meg: Doing everything you tell me to

Sophia: Look what you had to start

Monica: Why all the change of heart?

Group 4 (Lillian, Zach, Lou, Bayly, Elle, Arlene, Hermione, Ceasar, Nicole, Beettany) *(coming out on stage and join picture):* You need to play your part

All: A copy of a copy of a copy of a copy of a

*Groups one and three sit “staring” at their phones. Group four exits the stage, ad libbing lines on the phone. Group two, all look at their phones and line up.*

*(There is a boy and a girl who are standing in the middle of the stage, frozen.)*

Bee: *(she is standing right beside the boy, she is on the phone. Takes a selfie)* School is SO boring. #schoolsucks #getmeoutofhere *(Ads do hashtag symbol)*. Instagram is so lame. What’s on Twitter?

*(Nadia)* Ad 1: Single? In love? Heartbroken? Or just wanna laugh? FOLLOW @femaletexts for the best relatable tweets!
(Jamal) Ad 2: You won’t get a job with these majors! Check out career advice at www.monster.com.

(Kim) Ad 3: Join the Nation Campaign-Nationwide Insurance is the best way to go!

(Nadia and Jamal) Ads 1-2: *Sings* Nationwide is on your side.

Bee: Sooo many ads today, ugh

(Lee) Ad 4: Ding!

Bee: Ooh! Someone responded to my Tinder request!

*Freezes scene, Switches to*

Chandler: Oh sweet!

(William) Ad 5: @sparklekitty123 accepted your request

Chandler: Gotta get ready then! Siri, what’s the best place to take a girl?

(Kim) Ad 3: You shouldn’t be taking anyone out but me.

Chandler: What?

(Kim) Ad 3: Searching for results…

Chandler: Thank you?

(Kim) Ad 3: There are four restaurant locations, two of them are near you.

Chandler: Chinese sounds good!

(Nadia) Ad 1: There are three flower shops around you.

Chandler: Oh! Speaking of flowers, I should probably smell good… hmm.

(William) Ad 5: Hello, ladies, look at your man, now back to me, now back at your man, now back to me. Sadly, he isn’t me, but if he stopped using ladies scented body wash and switched to Old Spice, he could smell like a real man like me.

Chandler: Old spice for real men? Well I am a man (says all cocky)

(Lee) Ad 4: Real biceps real fast! You can do it in less than a month.
Chandler: Biceps? Hmm *(start looking at himself like he is looking into a mirror and starts to question his body)* Maybe I’m not a real man…*(looks at phone and pretends to see all the images of the ripped guys)* Maybe…

*(Scene freezes on Chandler and we turn back to Bee)*

Bee: Gotta get ready for tonight got myself a sweet guy. Need some make up ideas.

(Nadia) Ad 1: Hey #HOTSTUFF spice up your gloss game with new COVERGIRL Lip Lava. Its bold like a lipstick, feels like a balm, and has sparkles for days!

(All) Ad: For dayyyys

Bee: Hmm I could spice up my game.

(Jamal) AD 2: If you want your hair to be as bouncy as a kangaroo, use Aussie shampoo.

Bee: (looks in mirror kinda sad) Well, my hair is kinda flat. (Stares in the mirror for a little while when she hears a ding.)

(Lee) Ad 4: Hey this is Pinkypie17, uhh I have a thing tonight I totally forgot and I will be gone for like ….a month… but after that I will totally call you back. Save me a date till then.

Bee: (Looks sad while looking at her phone)

(Jasmine) Ad 2: Buy a beautiful set of German chocolate too beautiful to eat.

Bee: Charge it to my card

(William) Ad 3: New Garcinia Cambogia pill will make you lose up to twenty pounds in one month!

Bee: I should probably have that too…

*(Scene freezes and we go back to Chandler)*

Chandler: (While looking at huge biceps) Now that it’s been a month and I have great biceps, I should go on that date with @sparklekitty123! *(Pulls out phone)*

(Lee) Ad 4: @sparklekitty123 says: I haven’t talked to you for a while! Let’s def go on a date! I can’t wait!

Chandler: Neither can I!

*(Bee unfreezes and meets with Chandler)*
Digital Identity and Performance

Chandler: Oh….. (Disappointed) You look a lot different from last month’s profile pic…

Bee: Oh just some new stuff I am trying out. All the make up, the hair, even the weight loss stuff! I really love it. It really boost some of my self esteem (unsure about her own words)

Chandler: It’s… not what I expected… but…I like it! (Chandler looks confused)

Bee: What about you? You look like you had to have lifted an elephant everyday since the picture you posted.

Chandler: Oh that profile pic is...really old I really have always looked like this. I am a dude after all.

Bee: yeah a dude

Chandler: yeah a girl

Bee: I often wish I could be this, or be that, but in reality we are who we are. I don’t want to be this way anymore. But I am kinda afraid this is who I may be (Begins taking off makeup and taking hair out, taking off extra layers of clothing, and exits.) and to tell you honestly I don’t really have any plans on stopping.

Chandler: It’s hard to be me with an identity when all I see is what I am suppose to be. But I will turn a blind eye because being the odd one out now that is real humility (walks off) and to tell you honestly I don’t have any plans on stopping

(Ads still in a line get into one big line)

(Nadia) AD: HATE THE YOU NOW? TRY ME FOR A WHOLE MONTH FREE AND BE EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL YOU!

(Kim) AD: THINK YOU LOOK LIKE A BIGGER VERSION OF THOSE OTHER GIRLS? FIND OUT THEIR SECRETS NOW!

(Jamal) AD: THINK THAT YOU LIKE THE REAL YOU! WELL EXPERTS SAY THAT THE REAL YOU IS BORING! TRY ME FOR FREE NOW AND SEE WHAT THE PROFESSIONALS RECOMMEND.

(Lee) AD: FEELING DEPRESSED, LONELY, OR HATED? TRY THIS NEW, ENHANCING PILL! GUARANTEED TO GET YOU OUT OF THAT NERDS GROUP AND JUST LIKE THOSE KIDS YOU ALWAYS LOOKED UP TO.

(Tim) AD: do you love the way you are today

(all ads )

ALL: OF COURSE NOT
(Tim) AD: of course not. (Smiles and walks in the background)

(Bee re-enters with Chandler holding hands.)

(The items are still on the floor)

(Chandler and Bee are standing in the center again.)

Bee: (she looks at all the stuff and puts back on some of the things) I wonder what’s on Instagram today?

Group 2 crosses, circling around Chandler, then exits the stage. Group 4 (Lillian, Zach, Lou, Bayly, Elle, Arlene, Hermione, Ceasar, Nicole) enters to music. They take group 3 (Ginny, Elizabeth, Jennifer, Gordon, Candace, Scott, James, Meg, Sophia, Monica) and place them like statues. They then tie marionette strings around their wrists.

Elle: Why are we always trying to act the same? Trying to conform to some supposed ideal?

Ceasar: In real life, we never seem to look like what we appear in the digital world.

Lillian: The girl in the magazine doesn’t really look like the girl in the magazine.

Arlene: What makes us want to be like what we see on the screen so badly? It’s not even close to achievable! No real person is as perfect as these images we sometimes strive so hard to mold ourselves into.

Bayly: Why don’t we represent people who aren’t perfect? People who are just trying to find their place in the world, like everyone else? It would resonate more with an audience more than an airbrushed model ever would.

Zach: Every kid my age has the same thoughts. We all know it’s bad and we all hate that we are sucked into the lies media gives us. The power we let it have on us. But if we say it’s bad, and we agree that we shouldn’t listen to it, why does it feel like we are all lying? If we say it’s so bad, why do we love it so much?

Hermione: Before I had access to social media, I didn’t see a need for it. But once I did get it, I found that I could never go back. If I ever leave the house without my phone, I feel empty and awkward. Social media is my life now.

Lou: You really can’t say anything you want on the internet. I mean, really, you can. But when you want to write things on social media, you must accept the consequences.
Arlene: Sometimes we just need to realize that we might hurt people with what we put on there. Ourselves or others. If you post something you wouldn’t share in real life, should you really post it on the internet?

Nicole: Words can hurt. And it’s not just the physical that can scar a person for life.

*After all group 3 (Ginny, Elizabeth, Jennifer, Gorden, Candace, Scott, James, Meg, Sophia, Monica) is placed in their picture, All of group 4 puts the masks on group three. The following lines are spoken with the masks on. They are removed as each character discovers the “you” of the other person who helped them. They break away from the strings holding them.*

Group four: You need to play your part.

Nicole. I actually love talking to someone face to face. A screen doesn’t satisfy that need for interaction.

All: Human interaction, human interaction, human interaction…

*All students assume puppet and puppet master positions. They come alive and are controlled on their line.*

Meg: We all wear masks, but there comes a time when we cannot remove them without removing some of our own skin.

Elizabeth: I was alone, scared in a dark place. My life was a cycle of never ending trials. I tried to hide in the shadows. Each day it was the same: pain-hide, pain-hide. This never-ending pattern was the only thing I knew and expected until you came into my life. You dropped out of the sky. You let me see the beauty in the world; you saved me from myself. I’m no longer afraid, because of

Elizabeth/Gorden: you.

Gorden: My friends were better than me. Everyone was better than me. They won, I lost. I hated them, yet I wanted to be them. I wanted to be anything but me. I was entirely made up of wants, until you taught me to see everything I already had. You showed me that I don’t need more because I already have enough. I have come to realize that nothing is better than supporting a friend because of

Gorden/Ginny: you.

Ginny: I was lost. I didn’t know who I was or where I was going. I wasn’t sure of anything. I had no goals, no future, and no hope. Everyday, I woke up and wondered why I needed to get out of bed and struggle through reality. Nobody needed me. But you told me I was important and that I
Jameser. You helped me find a true reason to keep going. You forced me to make goals and to discover who I really am. Now, I get out of bed every morning with a desire to live because of Ginny/Jennifer: you.

Jennifer: The future terrified me, who am I kidding? I was terrified of everything, nervous and worried about everything. I knew that somebody wasn’t going to like the way I look. I knew that I was going mess something up, just like I usually did. Always worried about how things would turn out, scared I was annoying. Just scared. I didn’t think I could be the person I needed to be. The harder I tried, the more I knew I would never be good enough, pretty enough, skinny enough. I would never be enough, period. You pulled me out of my worry. I know that you love me, even though you’ve seen my scars. I know that I don’t have to worry anymore because of Jennifer/Scott.: you.

Scott: I was invisible. Nobody saw me. Nobody knew me. I felt meaningless and unimportant. I just wanted to hide from the world because I honestly believed I was a disgrace. You found me. You changed my mind. You gave me hope. I found out what I was really worth because of Scott./Candace: you.

Candace: I didn’t know what was wrong with me. I watched people around me laughing and smiling. I wondered why. Why were they smiling? I didn’t smile. I wasn’t happy. I didn’t have a reason to be. I didn’t think anybody would understand what it was like to be me until I met you. You saw what I had tried so hard to show them. But, you also showed me how they felt, how the world could be a good place if I let it. Now, I can’t stop smiling because of Candace/James: you.

James: You gave me this mask. Why? Why do we wear these masks? Why do we wear bent and broken faces that don’t show who we really are? It tears us apart! We waste our lives hiding under false truths. I hate these masks. All I’m doing is hiding myself. Takes off mask.

All: Why are you wearing that mask?

James: Why are you wearing that mask?

Sophia: Don’t hide behind your mask.

Monica: What is wrong with you? Why won’t you accept who you really are?

Meg refuses to remove her mask.

Meg: Because of you.

Black out, play Michael Jackson’s “Man in the Mirror” as actors exit and others come forward.
Brooke: We look at stories from history, the events of actual people, and think that there is no way things like that could possibly happen. They are happening as we speak, and not just in Chad, or Nigeria, but also in our own homes and schools. Bullies, cruel tormentors can rule the internet, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Lilly: Remember these things are still happening; personal holocausts of the soul, and of self worth and image. Dreams are crushed underfoot, until we are forced to cling to the dissolving ideals of a dying nation.

Elaine: Just remember, YOU must change. YOU can change the world. And only YOU can heal the world. Only YOU can heal others.

Isabella: And only YOU can hurt and be hurt. *(She takes ribbons and starts to tie Zach up. Others follow on their lines.)*

Zach: After a while you start to believe. You start to say those things to other people. I would call them names and spread rumors. Tell lies. And it felt good. At school I felt invincible. I was strong. I could say what I wanted. I felt big. At home I was scared, helpless, weak, small. Making people smaller made me bigger. Making people weaker made me stronger. I had no idea what I did to others, and I didn’t care. I had no idea how much pain I had caused. I was just trying to forget. And after a while I started to believe the things they said to me.

Hermione: I’m okay. I’m fine. Don’t worry about me. I’ll be okay. You’re worthless, you don’t mean anything. You’ll never amount to anything. I tell myself I’m okay when in reality, I tear myself down. I’ll never get over what has been said to me, but I’ll put in a smile and fake being human for them. And after a while I started to believe the things they said to me.

Arlene: Problem after problem. No one ever cared about what I had to say. I knew the truth behind the rumors and the lies. I had no friends to spread them to anyways. The lies and secrets and rumors and problems were my friends. And after a while I started to believe the things they said to me.

Bayly: *(As Brooke attempts to tie her up, she breaks away, and helps the others get untied.)* They try to tear me down but they can’t. Instead of spreading the hurt, I try to turn it around and spread positivity. I try to help the people realize that words only affect them if they let them. Sure the words they say hurt but I know who I am and nothing they say can take that away. I try to help them see that too.

*Other students start to come from their positions around the stage and from off, joining “friend group” formations.*

Sylvester: Sometimes, people label us.

Brent: Society tells us what we are and what we should be.
Nadia: And sometimes, we can’t see past it.

Lee: We are blinded by the names and labels we are given.

William: We accept them all too easy.

Jamal: We decide to become what they say we are.

Kim: We are blinded and we can’t see ourselves.

Ginny: We live under shadows like; Geek, fat, slut, ugly, gay.

Elizabeth: And sometimes we seem lost.

Jennifer: It seems like we can’t find our way back.

Gorden: And we don’t see the people around us giving us light.

Candace: I’m looking at the man in the mirror.

James: I’m telling him to change his ways.

Scott: If you want to make the world a better place, just look at yourself and make the change.

Monica: We don’t have to be what society says we should.

Meg: Remove the blindfold.

Sophia: We are amazing.

Sylvester: We can do amazing things.

Isabella: We can create. And invent.

Lilly: Life is beautiful all on its own.

Brooke: You don’t need to be anything for anyone.

Elaine: Remove the blindfold.
Elle: *(Bringing out the mirrors and placing 2 actors on either side of the mirrors)*
I heard that a secret to get to the top of the social class is to say you look horrible, and you hate yourself so others will pamper you, and say “oh no you are so gorgeous” I’ve done it and it got me a lot of attention.

All 4: *(mirror self talking)*
Look at you, you’re pathetic.

Nicole: Who could ever learn to love you?

Ceasar: Accept you?

All 4: You need to play your part

Lillian: You need to be perfect.

Lou: You won’t ever fit in looking like that.

All 4: Your worthless, and no one can change that! Who are you really? *(Turns around to face audience)*

All Cast: I am just a shadow, just an echo, I am just little pieces, just doing everything you tell me to.

Lillian: Everyone has a place in this world.

Hermione: Everyone deserves a chance to be loved and to feel important.

Ceasar: Each one of us is special; and despite how you look or what you like, there’s going to be someone out there that will accept you, no matter what.

Lou: Although there is a condition: You have to accept yourself first, and then you’re on the road to being accepted by others.

Nicole: If you’re not confident in yourself, then how are others supposed to be confident in you?

Bayly: Understand, we all wear masks, but there comes a time when we cannot remove them without removing some of our own skin.

Arlene: Real people are beautiful. The sooner we accept that, the closer we are to being happier.

Zach: Real people work, they have ordinary jobs. They have to work to get the girl or guy they want. They have struggles; they cry, they laugh, they lose their jobs, they get back up and they keep fighting, trying to provide for a family of five. These people are the real fighters, they fight the ultimate enemy, life.
Bee: There is beauty in differences.

Elle: We make the choice of who we are and who we want to be.

All: Who are you?

*The students come forward, taking their positions at the front of the stage, overlapping.*

William: I am strong and loyal.

Brent: I dream that everyone can be an individual.

Isabelle: I want happiness to be my different in this world.

Sylvester: I see a man in a shattered mirror.

Elaine: I see magic and I understand people’s feelings.

Lee: I am kind and loyal.

Chandler: I am happy and fun.

Grace: I am brave.

Lilly: I touch a dream that was one reality.

Kim: I am joyful and caring.

Brooke: I dream of turning my weakness into strength.

Bee: I am strong and loving.

Jamal: I am fearful I pretend to be fearless.

Zach: I pretend to be someone I’m not.

Hermione: I am weird and outgoing.

Scott: I am spontaneous.

Elizabeth: I am outgoing and understanding.
Bayly: I say it’s my choice to be happy

Meg: I am easygoing and independent.

Sophia: I dream of changing the world one person at a time.

Candace: I want to be remembered.

Nicole: I am beautiful and strong.

Caesar: I want another person to care for

Lou: I only want to be loved

James: I pretend to never be prideful.

Lillian: I pretend to be a princess

Arlene: I want to be the best me I can be

Gorden: I want to know everybody

Monica: I am optimistic and spontaneous

Crystal: I dream endlessly to be the hero of my own story.

Ginny: I am weird and happy.

Nadia: I am ambitious and strong

Elle: I am my best no matter what.

Jennifer: I understand why I am who I am.

All: I am me.

*Actors exit as film of students being themselves comes up on the screen, “Man in the Mirror” is again heard. Then, blackout.*
APPENDIX E

Classroom Announcement

September 22, 2014

Digital Identity Performance: How Student Identity Construction can be influenced through Digital Social Media and expressed through theatrical performance

Classroom Announcement to be made by a Colleague Unaffiliated with the research (Colleague will distribute two copies of the two consent documents to the class.)

This term, your teacher, Ms. Mindy M. Nelsen, will be conducting a research study as a part of her Master’s program at Brigham Young University. This study was designed to explore the effect of student identity construction through and resulting from digital social media, and is a part of the normal class curriculum in the Intermediate Drama 3 class this year.

This project will take place during the second and third term of the school year, from November 3rd through, and including a culminating Performance on March 12th at the Region Drama Competition at Pleasant Grove High School. As a part of the regular classroom activities and requirements you will be required to write weekly journal entries and post bi-weekly to the class wiki. Writing prompts will be given for each entry. You will also be asked, as part of the regular classroom assignments, to read and respond to other students’ wiki entries as well as participate in small and large classroom discussions related to performance of self and media consumption.

Students can choose to volunteer to be a part of the study; however, all students will be required to do the accompanying course work. Students who volunteer for the research study may have their work selected for specific study and incorporation into the project. A selection of six to eight students will be selected from those students who volunteer for the research study to participate in additional focus group discussions and interviews. A student may opt out of being a part of the focus group without any repercussions.

If you agree to participate in the focus group for this research study, the following may occur: you will be interviewed for approximately thirty (30) minutes on three occasions throughout the project about the role of digital social media in your life, what is posted by and for you on your digital walls, and your perception of self and others. The interview will be audio or video recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your statements. The interview will take place in the researcher’s office or classroom at a time convenient for you. The total time commitment outside of normal classroom will be for each focus group participant will be three and a half hours, over the course of the three month study.
Digital Identity and Performance

There are minimal risks for participation in this study. You may feel some anxiety knowing that other students will read and respond to your class discussions, wiki and journal entries, however, this is a course requirement and not limited to the volunteers for the study. Further, you might also experience some slight distress at the possibility to performing yourself on stage or film. But performance and critique are drama class requirements, according to state core standards, and expected in every drama class. These expectations are clearly outlined on the disclosure documents signed by you and your parent at the beginning of the school year.

For those of you participating in the focus group: You will discuss personal opinions, and therefore, additional measures will be taken to protect your privacy. The teacher will ask participants to agree to the importance of keeping the information discussed in the focus group confidential. She will ask each participant to verbally agree to keep everything discussed in the room confidential, and will remind you at the end of the group not to discuss the material outside.

Only the teacher will have access to the data collected. You will have complete autonomy to choose if your image or video footage of you in used in the digital storytelling project and short documentary film. Any tapes or transcripts of the focus group will be destroyed after one year or at the end of the study.

Risks will be minimalized due to the fact that you, as the student, will have control over how your image and work are presented. You will have the opportunity to allow their work and/or comments to be used in the performance, but this is not obligatory. Further, you will perform and work in partners and small groups before doing so in front of the entire group or audience. The teacher will work extensively with students to assure their collaborative piece is one they feel comfortable with presenting to a larger audience of peers and family. Any additional help that might be needed will be provided to assure that the classroom is a safe space.

You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study, and participation is entirely voluntary. All students will be expected to complete normal classroom assignments; however, refusing to participate or withdrawing from the research project will not affect your grades in the class or standing at the school.

These four papers that I have just given you include a written version of what I have just told you. In addition, these are legal consent forms that are necessary if you want to participate in the study. Please take them home, read them over with your parents and then decide whether or not you would like to participate in this research study. If you choose to do so, please (have you or your parents) sign one copy each of the consent to be a research subject, video release form, photo release form, and Parent Permission for a Minor. Return the signed papers to Ms. Mindy Nelsen, the second copy is for your own records. If you or your parents have any questions at all, talk to
Ms. Nelsen or email her at her school address. All the contact information you will need is on the consent forms.
Focus Group Invitation Letter

January 15, 2015

Dear ______________________________,

Based on your acknowledged interest, you have been randomly selected to participate in Ms. Nelsen’s focus group for her research project. This will consist of three group meetings with her during FLEX Time/Lunch where we will discuss various aspects of the curriculum as well as your perceptions of and interactions with various types of media. During these sessions, Ms. Nelsen will record the sessions for her research purposes, and she will later transcribe the discussions so you do not have to worry about your voice being heard or your face being seen by anyone other than her. Ms. Nelsen will also provide for your lunch during these meetings in order to enable you to stay during the lunch hour.

In addition, Ms. Nelsen will set up individual interview times where she will speak to you individually about aspects of the curriculum as well as your perceptions of and interactions with various types of media. These interviews will coincide with the focus group meetings, but may need to take place at a different time, depending on your availability or the length of the focus group meetings.

Thank you SO very much for being willing to do this. I can’t tell you how appreciative I am. Below are the proposed dates for the focus group meetings. They all fall on B-days so that I can go get food during 3rd hour. The first meeting is next week, and PLEASE let me know then if the other two dates will not work for you.

Focus Group Meeting 1: Wednesday, January 21, 2015
Focus Group Meeting 2: Friday, February 20, 2015
Focus Group Meeting 3: Thursday, March 26, 2015

Sincerely,

Ms. Mindy M. Nelsen
Focus Group and Interview Questions

- How does media influence you and your construction or expression of identity, especially digital social media?

- Do you believe that it has a negative or a positive impact on you?

- Do you feel like you need your phones or connection to mobile technology to feel okay?

- How is your daily life affected by having instant access to social media?

- How often do you think about who has authored the material that you find online? Why or why not?

- Have you ever changed something about yourself or seen someone change something about themselves because of something that was posted on digital social media?

- What do you believe is the motivation behind why and when people post on their digital social media?

- If someone is posting with the intent to get a reaction out of others, how does that affect you or how you see other people?

- How do you feel about the anonymity that is available online?

- How do you feel about incorporating technology into theatre using digital storytelling and documentary theatre techniques? How might we most successfully do that with this topic?

- What are some social concerns or issues that surround you in your various communities, especially your online communities?

- Are there any comments, media or events that have been posted on digital social media that have affected you that you think should be examined more fully?

- Has doing this unit and creating these pieces of theatre work have made you look at media or social media in a new and/or different way?

- What do you think teenagers (or their parents) should know about media and social media and how it affects you?
Digital Identity and Performance

Socratic Seminar Questions

- How is meaning and value produced?
- How do you author media?
- How do you consume media?
- How often and what type of media do you consume?
- How does media create a “new space” for you?
- How much credence/time/space/thought do you give to the author of the media you encounter?
- What role do media artifacts play as a component in communication, the transmission of information?
- How do you share media or, rather, aid in the transmission of media?
- How do you choose to represent or perform yourself online?
- How do you allow how others represent or perform themselves online to affect your view of yourself or them?