Crafting an Agentive Self:

Case Studies on Digital Storytelling

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Following critical analyses of social power and discourse (Bourdieu, 1977; Foucault, 1979; 1980), the social science research of the last two decades has moved toward reconceiving possibilities for agency and change (Bruner, 1990; De Certeau, 1984; Fairclough, 1989; 1995; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998; Scott, 1985; Wenger, 1998). With few exceptions, however, such moments of agency are sparsely illustrated in the literature, and the discourse of "possibility" is often tentative about its own hopeful assertions. Drawing on data from a multi-year digital storytelling project, part of a larger study on uses of technology and literacy to bridge the digital divide,[2] this paper illustrates how adults and youth in one Bay Area community used the powerful multiple-media, multiple-modality literacy of digital storytelling[3] to articulate pivotal moments in their lives and to reflect on life trajectories. Their stories speak to how conceptions of self have much to do with how and why we learn; the desire to acquire new skills and knowledge is inextricably linked to who we want to be as people. Through an exploration of participants' processes of authoring multimedia[4] autobiographical narratives about self, family, community, and society, we offer suggestions about the creation of spaces for learning that engage people's senses of motivation and purpose to craft "second chances" (Greene, 1990; Inbar, 1990).

We begin with a conceptual framework drawn from recent scholarship on narrative, identity, and performance, followed by case studies of two individuals—a young man 24-years-of age named Randy and a 13-year-old girl named Dara. These cases examine the multimedia literacy of digital storytelling and the social context for learning provided

through a community technology center called "DUSTY" (Digital Underground

Storytelling for Youth).[5] We are especially interested in how digital storytelling within

DUSTY positioned these participants to articulate pivotal moments in their lives and to

assume agentive stances toward their present identities, circumstances, and futures.

Randy's and Dara's experiences with multimedia composing additionally help to blur the

lines traditionally drawn between adult and adolescent development. In most conceptions

of schooling, learners are compartmentalized according to age, yet a community

technology center like DUSTY can privilege cross-age, cross-generational projects as

well as offer the opportunity to consider how people grow and change across the age

range. In this paper we illustrate how new literate spaces and symbolic tools for learning

can result in powerful forms of self representation for both children and adults, and how

authors of various ages can similarly develop agentive senses of self.

A Framework for Agency

   We center the theoretical framework that provides the conceptual grounding for our

work on ideas about how to foster agency. Debate over structure and agency, over the

interplay between lives as controlled and lives as having a semblance of autonomy or

self-direction, has been a leitmotif of social science literature during the last half-

century. Although some theoreticians find a small space for individuals to shape their

life chances, the vast majority are not optimistic. For example, Holland and colleagues

(1998) carefully note "the possibility of achieving *at least a modicum* of control over

one's own behavior" (p. 175; italics ours). When we turn to educational literature, we

similarly see a great deal of research that details the reproductive potential of schools and

teachers and students' responses to educational institutions and society (cf. Willis, 1981;

Ogbu, 2003). An especially powerful recent example is Ferguson's (2001) *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity*, which details the routine ways in which schools daily construct African American boys as criminals in the making. As we will detail below, while acknowledging the unmistakable weighting of the scale toward social reproduction, we have wanted in our work at DUSTY to consciously create a space for fostering agency. Following is the theoretical frame we developed to guide our efforts.

There is abundant research on narrative and the important role that narratives of self—stories about who we have been in the past and who we want to become in the future—can play in the construction of agentive identities (cf. Ochs & Capps, 1996, 2001). Miller and her colleagues have done extensive work on the role that personal storytelling plays in early childhood socialization and self-construction.[6] They suggest that "the narrated self is a relational self" (1993, p. 89). That is, if we believe that "narrative practices are social practices," then implicitly, "the narrated self is constructed with and responsive to other people" (1995, p.172). In studies with families from diverse backgrounds, Miller and her colleagues examined the social and interactional circumstances in which narratives occurred with young children (stories were told *around* children who were co-present others, *about* children as ratified participants, and *with* children as co-narrators). This work draws our attention to the dynamic nature of narrative practices; stories recur and they also change depending on who is listening and the relationship between interlocutors. Thus, how we represent ourselves in storied worlds depends on who we are trying to be in relation to others in the present. Though Miller and colleagues have focused in their studies of narrative and identity on children,

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it's been our observation that many of their claims seem applicable for older storytellers as well.

In his studies of spontaneous spoken autobiographical accounts by adults, Bruner (1994) commented on the universality of "turning points," moments when people report sharp change in their lives and accompanying dramatic changes in representations of self. So ubiquitous are such moments in autobiographical accounts that Bruner believes "it may well be that the culture's canonical forms for characterizing the seasons of a life encourage such subjective turning points" (p. 42). Among the features of these turning points are vivid detail and great affect; a connection between external events and internal awakenings; and agentive activity. In Bruner's words, such turning points are "thickly agentive" (p. 50). Rather than thinking of these accounts merely as true reports of past events, Bruner believes it useful to view them as "preternaturally clear instances of narrative construction that have the function of helping the teller clarify his or her Self-concept. They are prototype narrative episodes," he continues, "whose construction results in increasing the realism and drama of the Self" (p. 50). These turning point narratives thus serve as emblems or tropes for how one thinks of one's life as a whole.

Moving from studies of narrative to accounts of voice and self, we introduce Bakhtin's (1981) writings to acknowledge the reproductive powers of discourse while simultaneously allowing a space for self-determination. We have found especially helpful Bakhtin's metaphor of voice, by which he means the speaking consciousness and which he represents as multiple and dialogic in nature, as suggested by these companion terms: multi-voiced, other-voiced, double-voiced, and re-voiced. For Bakhtin, voices are continually reaccentuated, interanimated, even ventriloquated, as individuals encounter

and engage in multiple discourses. The process of constructing an agentive identity, then, can be viewed as a linguistic, ideological struggle to make others' words one's own—to create what Bakhtin calls an internally persuasive discourse, perhaps through an orchestration of voices from multiple discourses and social worlds.

To theorize identity and agency, Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain (1998), drawing on both Bakhtin and Vygotsky (1978, 1986), point to what Vygotsky termed "semiotic means" and Cole (1996) later reconceptualized as "cultural artifacts." Vygotsky believed that human sign systems such as language, writing, and mathematics have significant consequences for how we think and how we interact with the world. In fact, he saw these semiotic systems as a means of achieving voluntary control over one's behavior. As products of human history that emerge over time and vary in their nature and their use from culture to culture, such sign systems, or psychological tools as Vygotsky called them, structure mental activity. However, as Cole has pointed out, we can also usefully think of psychological tools as cultural artifacts that encompass material objects but also include scripts and schemas. To quote Cole, "Artifacts are simultaneously ideal and material. They coordinate human beings with the world and one another in a way that combines the properties of tools and symbols." (p. 144).

Holland and colleagues (1998) connected the concepts of semiotic mediation and cultural artifacts with identity formation and agency. They write:

> Persons develop more or less conscious conceptions of themselves as actors in socially and culturally constructed worlds, and these senses of themselves, these identities, to the degree that they are conscious and objectified, permit these persons, through the kinds of semiotic mediation described by Vygotsky, at least a modicum of agency or control over their own behavior. (p. 40).

These authors provided several sets of ethnographic and historical data—for example, an account of how women in Nepal "reauthored" themselves through a genre of song—to illustrate how the narratives that people learn to tell and retell about themselves have particular structures, allow particular roles, and promote certain values. The idea that specific instantiations of a genre provide access to particular social-interactional networks is reminiscent of linguistic anthropologist Urciuoli's (1995) ideas about sign systems.

In an essay on indexicality as a feature of all sign systems and signifying acts, be they dance, speech, written language, or visual texts, Urciuoli reminds us of the interpersonal and performative nature of self-construction. To continue, "If all sign systems have in common that they are indexically structured, then all meaningful action is concerned with the interactive construction of a person" (p. 192). She makes the important point that each action sign system has "a different potential for enacting a self" or "allows a different possible way to 'be yourself'" (p. 191). She explains, "speech facilitates ways of being social, or of understanding, that writing does not, and vice versa; similarly, hand signs and dance facilitate ways to be social or show understanding that speech does not allow" (p. 191). As the literacy field has become increasingly aware (cf. Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984; New London Group, 1996), the enactive potential for different action sign systems is differently valued, with some sign systems having more status in certain societies and communities than others. In western academic culture, linguistic sign systems, writing, and the essay are still the coin of the realm as opposed to photographs, images, and sound (but see Stanczak, 2004). Finally, while acknowledging that one's sense of self is continually recreated from moment to moment throughout one's life, Urciuoli also claims that some moments are more significant than others and take on

a special intensity. She writes, "Any activity that coordinates action to create a unity from many selves—dance, ritual, religion, sport, even military actions—can generate performative moments" (p. 202).

Urciuoli's essay pushes us to think about speech as only one of many action sign systems, one that shares certain commonalities with other systems for signification, including writing, and one which has particular entailments for enacting a self. Although there has been recent fascinating work on writing as an act of identity construction—most notably, Ivanic's study of academic writing (1998)—to our knowledge no one has yet explored the different possibilities and potentialities for enacting a self in written language as opposed to oral language, let alone the multimedia possibilities for such enactments that now exist via new technologies. We find especially helpful Urciuoli's notion of performative moments as potent opportunities for self-fashioning. It is commonly acknowledged that certain life changes have special import for one's sense of self—for example, critical periods like adolescence or critical events such as the birth of a child (Honess & Yardley, 1987). There are also turning points unique to individuals, as Bruner (1994) has noted, which likewise can serve as moments of change in how self is conceptualized. But Urciuoli's formulation of performative moments situates self-construction more collectively, as part of an activity that creates solidarity among a group of people and decreases an individual's sense of self as autonomous or isolated. Urciuoli's formulation also calls attention to the power of public performance in generating especially intense moments of self-enactment.

Finally, for analytic tools—for conceptual categories that allow us to identify the display and exercise of agency through various semiotic systems—we have turned to

linguistic anthropologists Bauman and Briggs (1990). Like Urciuoli, they are interested in performance, and they describe their theory as a "text-centered and agent-centered view" (pp. 67-71). But they focus their analyses on reported speech, delineating the ways in which speakers can establish control and textual authority. As we will detail in the sections that follow, we have extended Bauman and Briggs' helpful work to include, not only speech, but the multiple modalities that are a part of digital storytelling. We will also return to Bauman & Briggs in our conclusion, when we discuss the conditions under which storytellers can assume textual authority and perform agentive selves.

To summarize our framework on agency: We believe that individuals and groups can learn to fashion identities as competent actors in the world able to influence the direction and course of their lives. Our conception of identity is inherently dialogical. We enact the selves we want to become in relation to others—sometimes in concert with them, sometimes in opposition to them, but always in relation to them. Our sense of self-determination is tempered by the constraints of specific social, cultural and historical contexts, and especially for children and adults who are members of oppressed or disadvantaged groups, these constraints can seem, and can be, over-powering. Yet, we argue that people can develop agentive selves, using the unique repertoire of tools, resources, relationships, and cultural artifacts—the semiotic means, if you will—that are available at particular historical moments in particular social and cultural contexts. Traditionally, primacy has been given to narrative in oral and written forms as the semiotic means most central for the creation and enactment of identity. However, other semiotic systems can be primary as well—dance, music, images. In our particular context, as we will illustrate in the case studies that follow, multiple media and modes, in

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combination with supportive social relationships and opportunities for participation, can provide a powerful means and motivation for forming and representing an agentive self.

Randy and the Art of Digital Storyelling[7]

We met Randy while he was participating in a community-based job-training program on information technology. However, he found his way to this program not because he was deeply interested in computers per se, or because he wanted a job as a computer technician, but because the program was part of the city's diversionary penal system. Randy had the choice of going to school or going to jail (for possession of a small amount of marijuana and the charge of intent to sell), and he chose school. Our community technology center, DUSTY, was located in the same building as the job training program that Randy was required to attend, and during that same period, we offered a writing class and a digital storytelling workshop for adults in the jobs program. Randy participated. But "participation" is too bland a word for his engagement. He seemed to find what for him at that moment was a close to ideal means of self-expression and self-construction through the form of multimedia composing we call digital storytelling. He also found a supportive space within DUSTY that included interested colleagues, technological resources, and empowering social practices. These converged to engage his sense of motivation and purpose in ways that resulted in powerful learning, creativity, and enactments of self, despite seriously constraining economic and social worlds.

Background: "I don't have to be in the street"

The area of Oakland in which Randy lived is a dangerous place. The eastern sections of the city, as well as the western edge where our technology center is located, have had

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in recent years shockingly high murder rates.[8] As a young African American man in his twenties, Randy was very much aware of the pull of the streets and was looking for ways to resist their lure, and to create a different destiny for himself. He viewed this time in his life as pivotal, as a crossroads. Randy commented that "It was like a point in my life where I was like, 'something needs to change'." Then he revised his wording and cast himself as the change agent, albeit an uncertain one: "I need to change something. Somehow" (interview, 10/31/02).

Randy viewed the opportunity to be involved with digital storytelling as a path for change, literally a life-saving change, and he told us that we had no idea of the personal importance to him of DUSTY:

It made a way for me to put this stuff [his creative bent, his musical talent in particular] to use, so I can be here [inside his apartment] and not miss nothing. I can do what I want to do. I don't have to be in the street. It [the opportunity to be in DUSTY] was like right on time. Because that was when the murder rate was getting [high], you know what I'm saying. My partner got killed around the corner, another one around here. And it just took me off the street. (interview, 10/31/02)[9]

Randy clearly had a conscious desire to take charge of the course of his life, but he also seemed to worry about the likelihood of being able to change personal circumstances and habits. One line from his digital story entitled "Lyfe-n-Rhyme" stated that "the older we get the harder a habit is to kick," while a photograph of an old man smoking cigarettes came on the screen. (See Appendix C for the script of this digital story.) In commenting on this image and line, Randy recalled that his grandfather still smoked and that he doubted whether he could stop even if he wanted to. Randy then noted that he figured his grandfather (and the man in the picture) had simply "chilled and watched his life go by" (interview, 1/14/02). Randy was trying not to take the same path and thus felt an urgency about the process of crafting a different future (cf. Greene, 1990).

After attending high school, Randy told us, he took classes at a nearby community college, including courses on creative writing and photography. Recently he had an interview with a private graphics college, during which he showed the members of the admissions committee one of his digital stories. In Randy's words, "they were like sprung" and wanted him to enroll immediately in their eighteen-month program. But tuition was $26,000, a figure that might as well have been millions. "You know I'm coming from nothing…. I'm going to bury myself even deeper?" he commented incredulously, thinking the college recruiters had to be daft to expect to exact so high a price (interview, 10/31/02). Randy moved from one part-time job to another, and on a number of occasions he expressed his dismay at not having been able to find steady, full-time work.[10] Perhaps one day, he said with some wistfulness, he could get paid for doing something like digital storytelling.

One other powerful constraint weighed on Randy, curtailing his sense of agency, and that was what he regularly experienced as police harassment. Here is his account of an encounter with police that landed him on probation:

> I was coming from the wash house so I had a backpack loaded with clothes, walking over the hill and the officer stopped me…. They said they have me on camera trying to sell some weed to somebody. I'm like, "I ain't got no money on me, right?" I ain't got nothing on me but like 75 cents because I was just washing clothes and I've got a backpack full of clothes. But they weren't hearing that. And then they got to asking me about murders and do I know anything about murders or anybody that got dope in their house. I'm like "I don't know." Cause I don't know and even if I do I'm not about to tell, yeah. (interview, 10/31/02).

Even though Randy felt unjustly accused of possession with intent to sell, he nonetheless thought of his arrest as part of a positive spiritual plan: "I think it was

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just for a reason 'cause it changed my direction. I had to square up, I had to go to school" (interview, 10/31/02).[11]

And Randy continued to look for possible openings, new directions and fresh beginnings, as his "it was for a reason" comment implies, and his experience with us at DUSTY will illustrate. In addition to searching for jobs and trying out courses at community colleges and vocational programs, Randy was immersed in living another identity, that of an artist—a writer, poet, a videographer, and a musician. As we will see below, when Randy learned to combine his words and music with visual images to create digital stories, he was able to author an identity in very powerful ways, enacting the kind of agentive self that we and others (e.g., Greene, 1990) believe is necessary if individuals are to construct and make use of second chances (Inbar, 1990) to redefine their life trajectories.

Writing In and Out of School: "That's all I have really, just my writing."

Randy defined himself as a writer, began writing when he was quite young, and while he later developed expertise at other forms of signification, especially music-making, writing had for a long time been for him a primary mediational means and creative outlet. He wrote as part of the class we provided on digital storytelling, but he let us know that, regardless of the class: "I always write"; "I do a lot of writing"; I write poetry, I write raps." Most memorably, he explained that "I always wrote because … I don't know, that's all I have really. Just my writing." (interview, 1/14/02). Virtually all of Randy's writing was self-sponsored and rarely shared with others, and it was separate from school. He reported that one "hecka cool" teacher in high school had tried to "tap into" his out-of-school writing in the classroom, and he

also recalled appreciatively a creative writing teacher from a community college who had "accepted what I wrote" and "listened to what I wrote" (interview 10/31/02). But with these exceptions, no teachers knew that he enjoyed writing or that he filled notebook after notebook with feelings and ideas. A receptive, accepting audience was very important to Randy, and something that he didn't experience with much frequency. He noted that for a long time a lot of his writing had not been heard "because I'm protective about it"; he added with a laugh that "a lot of people just don't want to hear it anyway" (interview 1/14/02).[12]

A turning point for Randy as a writer and artist came when he was introduced within the context of DUSTY to the technologies and social practices associated with the genre of digital storytelling. As mentioned earlier, he found his way to our programs through a back door, as a requirement for probation, but once a part of DUSTY, he began to take his creative abilities in new directions, developing a startling expertise at multimedia composing. At DUSTY digital stories most often begin with written texts, usually narratives, and the narratives begin at writing workshops in which participants first share their ideas for what will become their multimedia compositions. Randy attended a Friday evening workshop with a few of his classmates from the vocational program. The first part of the workshop consisted of watching digital stories and discussing what stood out about them and what accounted for their power. Then the participants listened to each other's ideas for their own movies. When his turn came to talk about his ideas, Randy read a poem he had composed especially for the workshop entitled "Lyfe N Rhyme." [13]

Randy completed his first digital story that weekend, attended another workshop

two months later to create a second story, and then produced five others over a period

of four months, and another the next year. As we will see below, Randy authored

himself (Bakhtin, 1981; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998) through his

digital stories in agentive ways, representing himself as social critic, digital artist, and

loyal son. His movies, we want to argue, were performative moments (Urciuoli,

1995) which resulted in especially intensive acts of self-articulation and self-

construction. They were also agent-centered performances (Bauman & Briggs, 1990)

in which Randy engaged in textual practices that signaled an awareness and exercise

of social power and that indexed him as a legitimate and artful author.

Digital Artist: "Sitting on the porch just watching my hood"

We will focus our analysis on one of Randy's digital stories, "Lyfe-N-Rhyme,"

referencing some of his other compositions more briefly. "Lyfe-N-Rhyme" is an

approximately two-minute video. Randy narrates the movie, performing his original

poem/rap to the beat of a Miles Davis tune playing softly in the background. He

illustrates, complements, or otherwise accompanies the words and the message of his

poem/rap, along with the Miles Davis melody, with approximately 80 images. Most

of these images are photographs taken by Randy of Oakland neighborhoods and

residents, others he found on the internet, and a few screens consist just of typed

words. The pace and rhythm of the piece varies, as does Randy's speaking voice, in

keeping with the background melody and the message. In this digital story Randy

used no visual transitions, such as fading one screen into another. Instead, the images

change precisely in time to the beat, a technique which emphasizes the rhythmical

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and musical quality of the narration and the union of spoken word with background melody.

Aesthetically, then, "Lyfe-N-Rhyme" comes across as a self-consciously artful performance. Randy brought to bear in this composition techniques he'd used in previous raps or poems. For example, he made conscious and effective choices in matters of poetic technique, photographic sequencing, and even spelling. He chose the unique spelling of "lyfe" and "n" instead of "in" or "and" because, as he said:

> I like to make up words or sometimes, you know, I spell stuff
> *different*…everybody has their own preference I guess when they're writing but,
> me that's just how I do mine (.3 pause) I want to spell how I want it to sound
> when I say it (interview, 1/14/02).

He also experimented with patterns of alliteration:

> That's just something I like to do in my writing sometimes, but I really thought it
> was cool that I did it like that, like in the first one, I was like like "love, truth,
> trust," you know. At first I did it in two's, you know, and then when I moved on
> it was, you know, "murder, money miseducation," all those three's and it's just
> rotating, it just, you know, it's cool like that (interview, 1/14/02).

Randy also contributed an innovation that he'd personally never seen before but was inspired to do in this digital story. In explaining the line from "Lyfe-N-Rhyme," "some rules are meant to be broken," a line which was accompanied by an image of a "no trespassing" sign in a park, Randy noted the rule he had broken was genre-related. He had combined two separate genres, poetry and rap, an amalgamation he compared to old style blues artists' combination of poetry and prose: "It was not a rap, I believe that it was a mixture of the two [rap and poetry], and I did not really see anybody do that before" (interview, 1/14/02). He also commented, with a definite sense of satisfaction at his innovation, " Who would ever think to twist poetry and rap in the same thing?"

(interview, 10/31/02). Thus, Randy demonstrated in his digital story his control of poetic and other literary techniques, conventions, and genres.

While some of the literary and literate expertise Randy demonstrated in his story were carry-overs from his years of writing raps and poetry, we were especially interested in the combination of word, rhythm, rhyme, music, and message together with image, which is the pictoral turn that distinguishes digital storytelling from composing in other genres (cf. Mitchell, 1994). Randy's use of images, linked to words, music, and voice, allowed a very powerful interweaving or juxtaposition of forms of signification. Deftly orchestrating multiple symbolic and semiotic systems, Randy was able to enact an agentive self, a self that we would argue was much less visible in his raps and poetry. In Bakhtinian (1981) terms, he was able through multimedia composing to populate others' words (and images) with his own intentions, pressing them into his own service and toward his own aims. In Bauman & Brigg's (1990) terms, Randy was able to decontextualize and recontextualize his performed discourse, processes linked to the construction and assumption of authority. To illustrate this powerful form of authoring, we will introduce some key images and lines from "Lyfe- N-Rhyme."

The digital story begins with a title screen of red words on a black background and a Myles Davis tune as background music. The second screen is a picture of a sphinx and the pyramids, which is paired with the line, "What's done through life echoes throughout time." The third screen shows a well-known portrait of Malcolm X, with Randy's voice narrating "It's an infinite chase to become what I was." The fourth screen, a Picasso-esque portrait of the late rap artist, Tupac, appears as Randy intones "But what was I? I don't remember." Suddenly, the beat quickens, and images or words flash second by

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second on the screen, each suggestive of the words Randy speaks: "Life, love, truth, trust, tribulation, that's what's up." (For "tribulation" Randy chose the infamous image of a plane crashing into the Twin Towers.) The ninth image is a picture of Marcus Garvey, the 19th century African American leader who advocated repatriation to Africa, and it is followed by a photograph of Biggie Smalls, another late rap artist. Randy's narration for these two pictures states: "The only thing I know is I've seen it before in the mirrors of my mind."

This remarkable opening lasts for less than twenty seconds, but it introduces in powerful fashion an authorial stance and set of motifs as well as performative techniques that recur and are developed throughout the story. This movie is about Randy, and in it he enacts several senses of self, including talented artist. He enacts himself as artist, not just directly through his artful use of poetic and aesthetic techniques, but by implicitly connecting himself with works of art and African American icons, past and present. He also decenters, to use Bauman & Brigg's (1990) terminology, these famous figures, removing them from their particular historical contexts, and recenters them, recontextualing them in his own creative universe of this digital story and his own social world of Oakland, California. In an interview Randy explained that he used the image of the sphinx because it represents a timeless wonder, and that he expects his work to have a similar longevity:

> If you just trip you know that's been sitting for just like, hundreds of, you know just STUPID years, but it still echoes through time and people still wonder and look at it like, "damn, how did they do this without electricity?"… That's just to say…what I do throughout life, like this right here [his digital story]…I believe that if I do it like probably to just the best of my ability or to the highest capacity that … it can last for more than just this time span (interview, 1/14/02)

Continuing the theme of his own power as an artist with the subsequent images of

Malcolm X and the others, Randy explained that he sees the rap artists Tupac and Biggie

as reincarnations of Malcolm X and Marcus Garvey, and himself as part of this tradition,

too. Strikingly, he added that although he could never do what Garvey and Malcolm did

since they lived in a different time, he could do something bigger and better, provided

that he could "tool his mind" and take advantage of what we might call current

mediational means like digital technologies. In Randy's words, "I could never do what

Malcolm X did but now I can do even better than he did… if I just…tool my mind…, just

be more, just more smarter, and use my mind more as a weapon…because I'm in a better

situation I'm in a better time, you know, technology and all this" (interview, 1/14/02).

Thus, Randy connected older African American political leaders with the rap artists

closer to his own historical moment (and by implication, musicians like Miles Davis and

himself), and positioned himself not only as continuing their lineage, but adding to it and

even surpassing their considerable achievements. Significantly, this entire level of

meaning resides in the juxtaposition of the words of his narrative with the images that he

selected, or the combination of multiple forms of signification.[14]

    In the opening to his digital story, with his references to Malcolm X and other African

Americans who had levied strong social and political critiques, Randy signals his own

identity as a social critic and his desire for social, political, and economic justice,

especially for African Americans in urban, low-income America. Through the remainder

of his story, he enacts that self by providing a litany of problems—urban poverty,

education, drug use, racism, the criminal justice system, weapons and war, urban

housing, and television. Here is an example, two photographs that Randy took of a

homeless man sitting outside a public transit station in the neighborhood. The man lives

on the street, and people pass him by without noticing that he exists. His home,

described in the line "heart of the street," is on the street, even though his presence there

isn't acknowledged. The greater irony, as Randy pointed out to us in an interview, is that

there is a "billion dollar company" promoting itself on a billboard behind the man also

visible in the photo. In Randy's words, "we got this billion dollar company …that's

promoting in my neighborhood, but what is it *doing* for these people in the

neighborhood? Nothing" (interview, 1/14/02). Following the image of the homeless man

is a picture of a littered sidewalk with broken concrete lined by a chain-link fence. With

this image goes the line "step by step on poverty's concrete." Randy's comment on this

pairing was that this sidewalk was right down the street from our technology center, and

that "when you go to Alameda"—an upscale neighborhood on a little island next to but

separate from Oakland—"you don't see too many sidewalks looking like that" (interview,

1/14/02).

The metaphor of "seeing" was a central one for Randy—seeing the world, his world,

and making what he sees visible to others through writing, music, and now, digital

storytelling. Threaded through his interviews are references to sight:

> Sometimes I like to walk out of the house like around twelve one o'clock and just
> walk the streets and walk the (dope) tracks and walk the (ho strolls) and whatever and
> just look, you know what I mean, and just I I see, what I see, that's what comes out.

> I'm sitting on the porch eating chicken from the liquor store just watching my hood
> and as the cars go by so does time, you know what I mean, and it's like … the life of
> rhyme….

> I mean, who can tell you better how to drive a Bentley than somebody who drove a
> Bentley, so who can tell you more about where I'm from and my neighborhood and
> what *I* see and what me and my community see as a whole is *me*, you know what I
> mean, cause that's me. (interview, 1/14/02)

The genre of digital storytelling, with its emphasis on the visual, seemed an especially good vehicle for Randy's truth-telling, his critical rendering of his world, by providing space for concrete and symbolic images and thereby additional layers of meaning. It's noteworthy that Randy could include his own photographs, juxtaposing those to famous pictures such as the one of Malcolm X, or a still frame from the well-known video of the beating of Rodney King. "Justice is a contradiction," Randy narrated, as the frame from the Rodney King video flashed on the screen, and then was replaced by the same image with a razor superimposed on it. "Living on a razor," Randy rhythmically narrated. Thus, Randy both demonstrated that he could appropriate well-known images, that he had the power and authority to do so, and that he could recontextualize them (cf. Bauman & Briggs, 1990) for his own purposes. He demonstrated the legitimacy of his own images and his own authorship (cf. Bakhtin, 1981) as well by placing the photographs that he took, and his own role as a poet and critic, on an equal level with authoritative images and figures like Malcolm X.

Miller & Mehler (1994) have written that the narrated self is a "relational" self, that it is defined in relation to others, and certainly, we've already seen Randy define himself powerfully in relation to revered African American leaders and figures from popular culture. He also defined himself in relation to the people from the neighborhood whom he photographed or who provided motivation or inspiration for his compositions. Randy, as mentioned above, conceived of himself as the voice of his neighborhood, a person willing to say what others don't; he said he liked to write about that "untouched ground" that people chose not to speak about or were afraid to speak about. And in doing so, Randy was speaking for the homeless and the poor, for people who were out-of-work, abused or

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neglected. One of his most poignant stories was entitled "For that Girl," inspired by a stripper who'd been raped as a child, but addressed as well to other women and girls who had been abused.

In defining himself in relation to others through his digital stories, Randy also authored relationships with family and friends. A photo of Randy and his mother appears twice in "Life-N-Rhyme," once when he states "family first," and another time with the memorable line: "Mama's only son is mama's only gun with a guillotine tongue." He told us in an interview that "I'm the one who's gonna blast for her, I'm the one that's gonna get her off section eight living, *me*" (interview, 1/14/02). Randy was deeply concerned that his mother had never owned a home and that she suffered a variety of indignities as a result of having to live in low-income housing. In his digital story it's noteworthy that Randy's weapon of choice is his words, his ability to tell stories, to craft a self through narratives.

Randy defined himself in relation to one other group of people in "Lyfe-N-Rhyme"— his writing teacher at DUSTY, the leaders of his digital storytelling workshop, and his fellow participants at the workshop. At the end of the story, he stated that "Some rules are meant to be broken/some doors are meant to be opened/and regardless of race/we all mostly come from the same place/Love. This is life in rhyme."   With the phrase about race, Randy introduced a series of photographs that he'd taken at the digital storytelling workshop. These photographs, which included white people as well as black, were Randy's surprise for the group. Through these photos he suggested that love should transcend race and that since we all have in common that we originated in love, there shouldn't be so much room for hate or stereotyping based on skin color. We interpreted

this ending to Randy's story as his signal that he valued the relationships he had made at DUSTY and that he wanted to include them in the social world created through his digital story.

Dara and the Social Contexts of After-School

In our second case study of 13-year-old Dara, we see a young woman similarly concerned with family, relationships, and with her sense of belonging to a community. A lively and affectionate girl of Guatemalan and American heritage, Dara likewise found ways to reposition herself through digital storytelling both in relation to the people she loved and admired, and in relation to institutions, like school, which she described as a place where "they tell you to do stuff and I can't do what I want." In the DUSTY context, Dara negotiated what she wrote about and how she represented herself to the world. She accomplished this not only through her digital stories, but also through her social relationships with DUSTY peers, mentors and facilitators who shared Dara's perception of herself as an expert digital storyteller, a skilled writer possessing technological savvy who could assist her friends in creating digital stories.

Below, we juxtapose her sometimes meek and discontented school identity with the confident author and active community participant we knew Dara to be after school. Let us be clear that we don't want to imply that children can't develop positive identities within traditional schooling, or that, conversely, most children develop agentive senses of self only after-school.[15] However, we do want to illustrate how out-of-school spaces can sometimes effectively support adolescents' interests in literacy and foster their developing sense of agency. We should also note that many of the youth and adults who come to DUSTY have had poor experiences in school and tend to speak about themselves

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as poor students. As Miller and Mehler (1994) caution, personal stories can aid in the creation of school-based identities that are less than powerful or positive. "There is just as much potential," they write, "for undermining as for supporting identity, both at the content level (e.g., by repeatedly recounting experiences of failure, making invidious comparisons between the child's past experiences and peers' experiences or between home and school) and at the discourse level (e.g., by using styles of discourse that interfere with those that children bring from home)" (p. 51).

In exploring the connections between Dara's social life at DUSTY and her sense of herself as a maturing writer and storyteller, we reflect on the aspects of DUSTY's environment—the social and textual practices that characterize the program —which we believe were critical to helping Dara, Randy, and children and adults like them, embody more agentive stances toward themselves and their social worlds.

Perceptions of Dara at St. Anthony's School

In the winter of 2002, a few months after we first met Dara, several members of DUSTY's after-school program paid a visit to St. Anthony's school. In one of the poorest parishes in Oakland, St. Anthony's, which is right across the street from DUSTY, sends many of their children to our afternoon program.[16] On this particular afternoon our program director and coordinator accompanied by a researcher and an undergraduate mentor went to the school to make a presentation about DUSTY and show students and teachers several digital stories that St. Anthony's students had created the previous semester. The stories met with enthusiastic praise, and students whose stories were shown, although a little embarrassed, savored their classmates' approving hoots and applause. But as DUSTY staff prepared to leave, one teacher's parting comments about

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Dara surprised us; Mr. W, impressed by the work that had obviously gone into Dara's

story, quickly pointed out to us—in Dara's presence—how uncharacteristic such hard

work was for the young lady he saw in his classroom everyday.

> One researcher recorded the following fieldnotes:

> [At St. Anthony's,] M showed Dara's story about her grandfather who passed
> away. During this time Dara was slowly trying to hide underneath the table.
> When her credits came on, the students started dancing to the Madonna
> background music. "That was good Dara," one girl called out. Dara smiled. The
> Vice-Principal also commented that that was a good story. So did Mr. W.

> Mr. W, with his arm wrapped around Dara's shoulder, told [DUSTY staff] that he
> was surprised at Dara's story because she never did any work in his classroom.
> No homework, no schoolwork, nothing. A student walking by joined in with
> 'nope, never.' Dara appeared uncomfortable and looked like she wanted to cry.
> [The DUSTY coordinator] smiled and put an arm around Dara. She told Dara
> that they could work on it together. Dara smiled and nodded her head. Mr. W
> continued, 'Maybe you could use it like a motivating factor. She seems to enjoy
> doing it very much and it could help her do her work.' [The coordinator], with
> her arm still around Dara, stated that they would work on it like they had been
> working together in the past. (S's fieldnotes, 1-31-02)

Dara at DUSTY

We were surprised by the discrepancy between Mr. W's evaluation of Dara and the

bubbly, cheerful, and engaged writer we knew during the after-school hours at DUSTY.

For example, one undergraduate wrote in her case study of Dara:

> My initial meeting with Dara was during the DUSTY orientation when [the
> program coordinators] were giving a presentation at St. Anthony's. Dara is a
> bright, outgoing, affectionate and friendly student. Before the presentation, Dara
> ran up to [one coordinator] to hug her and told [her] how much she missed her.
> During the orientation I saw Dara's first movie, which is about the death of her
> Grandfather, Papido. After seeing it I felt impressed with her… Luckily, I got an
> opportunity to work with Dara on her [next] movie about Sailor Moon on my first
> day. It was then that I reaffirmed she was outgoing, friendly, and affectionate.
> (H's case study, May 2002)[17]

In short, the Dara we knew at DUSTY did not appear to be the same girl Mr. W

recognized in his classroom.

Narrative Alignment: Digital Stories and Transforming the Self

Although Dara remained quiet in her teacher's presence, she unreservedly shared how she felt about school with DUSTY staff. In fact, her feelings about school figured prominently in her second digital story about Sailormoon, a female cartoon character who Dara claimed shared her aversion to school. In an end-of-semester case study about Dara, one undergraduate wrote:

> In her movie [about Sailor Moon] she commented on hating school, homework and teachers; therefore, I assumed she might not have received good grades. To find [out] the truth I decided to question Dara about school.
>
> Me: Do you like school?
> Dara: No.
> Me: Why do you not like school?
> Dara: Because they tell you to do stuff and I can't do what I want.
> Me: What grades do you get?
> Dara: F's, D's [Observation 4-22-02] (H's case study).

Although it would have been helpful to know more about the "stuff" her teachers told her, and what she couldn't do that she would have liked to, her words provide a sense of her displeasure with school and its demands. The following excerpt from an interview about her Sailormoon story further confirms this impression:

> S: How would you describe your [Sailormoon] story? Is it funny, sad, exciting?
> D: Hmm, funny and sad.
> S: What makes it funny?
> D: Because when I say she likes sleeping, and um, homework and schoolwork – those are things she hates, that may be funny.
> S: And why is it sad?
> D: Because they cancelled the show when a lot of kids liked Sailormoon.
>
> {Portion of transcription omitted}
>
> S: What's *your* favorite part of the story?
> D: When I say that she don't like school, homework and schoolwork.
> S: Why do you like that part the best?
> D: Because it [school] makes us sleepy.

S: It makes you sleepy? You say that you don't like school like Sailormoon, how come you don't like school?
D: Sometimes it makes me sleepy and sometimes I get in trouble (Interview with S, May 2002).

In Dara's second digital story script, "Me and Sailormoon," she begins by consciously aligning herself with this fictive figure, saying "I wanted to write about Sailormoon because *she is just like me*." It is interesting that Dara likens Sailormoon to herself, rather than herself to Sailormoon. She describes "Serena's journey," which involves getting a locket from her cat, Luna, so that Serena can "transform [in]to Sailormoon to protect the earth." This is followed by a list of the nine "sailor scouts" who accompany Sailormoon on her lofty mission to protect the earth. Following the list, Dara's digital story script describes all of the preferences she and Sailormoon share: "She likes the things I like. She likes junk food, pizza, ice cream, candy, soda, and things like that. Besides junk food, she likes volley ball, sleeping, art and much, much more." Dara then catalogs their common aversions: "I will move on to the things we hate. We hate school, homework and school work because they are boring and they make us sleepy." Dara's appropriation of Sailormoon's tastes seems to be a way of sanctioning her own feelings toward school; such an alliance invokes credibility. This alignment with Sailormoon's likes and dislikes exemplifies Miller and her colleagues' (1993) description of children's abilities to revoice others' stories for innovative purposes, or in a Bakhtinian sense to make them their own. "A child might appropriate and use for his or her own purposes someone else's experience, someone else's story. Framed in this way any story has the potential to be a personalized story, a story that is personally meaningful or useful to the narrator" (p. 91). Dara's narration is both selective and strategic.

Like her teen counterparts in Fisherkeller's (1997) study of adolescents and television culture,[18] Dara found models with whom she identified in the world of popular culture. While two of her story scripts focused on family (specifically on the importance of various family members to Dara – what each relationship offered her), the other two were multimedia digital biographies – the first about Sailormoon, described above, and the second about Selena, a Mexican female pop vocalist. In both of the biographies, we were struck by Dara's conscious alignment with her biographical subjects as well as with the sociopolitical dimensions of each story. She wrote the Sailormoon story, as she told one of our researchers, "because they cancelled the show when a lot of kids liked Sailormoon." Dara continued, "I wanted to write about her 'cause I wanted to send it to the people who cancelled the show" (S's interview, May 2002). In addition to this social project, as we have seen, Dara drew on Sailormoon's social status and tastes to carve out a space for her own feelings.

Dara's fourth story celebrated the life of pop singer Selena and mourned her untimely death. Part of Dara's script read: "When I heard that Selena was murdered by her associate Yolanda on March 31, 1995, I was very upset. I started crying." As scholars of narrative have pointed out (Bruner, 1990; 1994; Miller, 1994), stories provide people with cathartic outlets that help them make peace with upsetting events and resolve intra-psychological conflicts. Miller (1994) suggests that "by replaying or reenacting for the self some troubling experience from the past, children seem to come to an acceptance of or reintegration of past experience" (p.174). While there was a dimension of this in Dara's account of Selena's death, perhaps more significant was Dara's alignment with the artist, reminiscent of the alliance she sought to create between herself and

Sailormoon. Dara held Selena up as someone in whose steps she might follow, saying, "Even though she passed away, I still see her as the first Mexican singer and my memories of her will always be with me. She's still my role model to this day on." Selena, like Dara, was a young woman for whom family and relationships were critically important. She lived life fully, and embraced her public visibility, as Dara did herself in the narrative act of (re)telling Selena's life.

We turn now to explore how Dara's developing sense of self actually took place through the process of authoring digital narratives at DUSTY. We focus on the social contexts in which youth like Dara (and adults like Randy) are learning to write, and on the interwoven processes of identity development and multimedia composing.

Being an Old Timer

One afternoon during fall 2002, two girls came to visit DUSTY to see what it was all about. That day, Dara and several other students were present, and the program director asked everyone to introduce themselves to our visitors. When Dara's turn came, one of use wrote the following fieldnote:

> Dara introduced herself, and said that she had been here "for 3 years." [The program director] corrected her and said 3 semesters, and she gave him a glaring look and said "no, don't say that – I like to say that I've been here for 3 years!" [He] laughed. Then he said that she had made 2.5 stories, but Dara countered that she had made 3. They argued playfully about this for a couple of turns at talk. (M's fieldnotes, 10-10-02).

In this exchange, the ease with which she refuted the director's attempt to accurately (factually) represent how long she'd been at DUSTY and how many stories she'd made, indicates Dara's comfort. Although the director seemed amused by her antics, he let her assertions stand, perhaps because he sensed how important to Dara it was to represent

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herself to newcomers as an experienced digital storyteller and veteran member of the DUSTY community.

Her old timer status meant peers frequently asked for her help solving technical problems encountered while making digital stories. As we sat observing Dara at the computer that day, two girls on either side of her working on their own computers called to her several times for help "Hey Dara. How do you…?" "Dara, can you show me how to…?" At one point, she leaned over and whispered "they're always asking me questions!" We sympathized, telling her it was tough being the one who knew how to do everything because then people wanted help. After a pause, one of us asked if the other kids' questions disturbed her. She sighed as if she were going to say 'yes' but surprised us with an upbeat "not really." Our sense, then, was that her role as expert digital storyteller outweighed the burdens of helping friends. A lively, engaged, and hard-working girl, Dara saw herself as an valued and knowledgable DUSTY community member who had 'been around for a long time.'

The following scene from DUSTY, in which Dara worked with an undergraduate mentor named Jeannie on editing her fourth digital story illustrates how the writing process seemed to shape Dara's developing sense of authorial capability.[19]

Developing Selves Through Digital Stories

The subsequent discussion traces Dara and Jeannie's work on the fourth draft of her Selena story. We will begin with some general comments about the editing exchange as a whole, and then analyze one episode more closely.

This exchange lasted approximately 20 minutes, and although Dara attempted to end the editing session about 2/5 of the way through by twice saying "I'm done," Jeannie's

respectful approach to mentoring kept the two engaged in the editing process. Jeannie

asked many questions; some aimed to clarify her understanding of Dara's ideas and

intentions, and others served to instigate the ongoing possibility of making modifications

and revisions with queries like: "Okay so is there anything you wanna like change that

sounds weird to you…?" "Anything else you wanna change?" "What did you wanna say

here?" Or, "It seems like you're saying… but then…" She also checked in to make sure

Dara was happy with the changes: "Was that better for you to say?" (Meaning did it roll

off your tongue more easily? For an oral script, sound was key.) Jeannie also asked, "Is

this the only thing you wanna add?"

    Other questions served as requests for factual knowledge. For example, there was a

discussion about how many people were in Selena's band, and who in the band did what.

Jeannie treated Dara as someone who knew more about the subject than she did (see

Appendix D, lines 29-47). In fact, throughout the exchange, their speech was peppered

with indications of their mutual comfort level, revealed through the extensive latching in

the following series of turns:

> Jeannie: All right. This seems good. Anything else you wanna change?==
> Dara: ==Yeah {*pointing to script on computer screen*} this part right here. See
> it's really getting see {*reading*} "Selena y Los Dinos. Amazingly, even at the
> young age of four… in the group" that's kind of like messing me up.
> Jeannie: Yeah I know. What did you…==
> Dara: ==I just wanna fix that.==
> Jeannie: ==what did you wanna say here like==
> Dara:==well I can say {*reading and revising*} "Amazingly even at that age
> {Jeannie: um hm} at the at that age four {Jeannie: uh huh} XXXX together.
> Jeannie: Like… 'cause it seems like you're saying about Selena but then here
> you're saying like the group. So…
> Dara: Well {*pointing to script on computer screen and reading*} "Selena y Los
> Dinos" this part leaves me alone. But it's this part {*pointing elsewhere*} that's
> REALLY getting me confused.
> Jeannie: Maybe "even at the young age of four"
> Dara: "In the group's first year together."

Above, Dara jumped quickly to the parts that were 'messing her up' and 'getting her confused' when she read her script aloud, and of course knowing where the problems lie is key to successful editing. Particularly in the final portion of their exchange, Dara and Jeannie took up each other's words, phrases, and ideas – an indication not only of the security Dara felt working with Jeannie, but also of Dara's growing willingness to play with language and make changes (see Appendix D, lines 50-72).[20] In addition to signaling her comfort level working with her mentor, we also saw Dara's latched turns throughout the exchange as evidence of her growing confidence as a writer. Out of a total of 10 invitations to make revisions, most of which were introduced by Jeannie's use of questions ("Anything else you want to change here?"), Dara accepted seven. Of those seven offers, all were ultimately conceived and executed by Dara. Her certainty, evidenced by the speed with which she pointed to the words, phrases, and sections that needed to be "fixed" because, as she put it, they were "messing [her] up," reflected her developing sense of authorship.

We were also struck by Dara's apparent awareness of her audience's ear. In the above exchange her evaluation of the story script's fluency was based in large part on its oral coherence. Knowing that her script would soon become the voice track for her digital narrative, she attentively deliberated over the rhythm of her prose. Finally, throughout the exchange with Jeannie, the highly negotiated nature of their interaction kept Dara in the driver's seat, always directing – a role she seemed quite as ease with, while Jeannie acted largely as scribe. Although we've often seen mentors take over the writing role, commandeering the computer mouse or the pencil, this was certainly not the case with Jeannie, who was especially respectful of Dara's authorship throughout the

exchange. This too, we think, supported Dara's developing sense of herself as a competent and knowledgeable writer.

Discussion

We have presented two case studies that illustrate how two individuals, an adolescent and a young adult, authored themselves by means of multimedia storytelling and the social and material resources of a community technology center. Despite the material and social constraints within which he lived—poverty, unemployment, a poor education, racism, and violence—Randy found ways to create a social world through multimedia composing in conjunction with music-making that positioned him as an agent. He constructed his authority through poetics, his consciously artful and aesthetic use of language, image, and music. He constructed his authority as well through his appropriation and recontextualization of images linked to words and music, and through his juxtaposition of his own images and authorial stance to authoritative images and authors. He also constructed supportive social relationships through his storytelling— with famous figures, with ordinary people from the neighborhood, with family, and with new friends.

For her part, Dara too was building a positive sense of self, one that posed a contrast to the identity that she seemed to wrestle with at school, where some perceived her as unmotivated and unproductive; Dara certainly harbored her own share of ambivalence, as interviews and her story about Sailormoon suggest. At DUSTY, through her writing and her relationships with peers and staff, Dara agentively negotiated an identity as author and storyteller, and as a skilled peer willing and able to share her technical expertise. An

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integral member of the DUSTY after-school community, Dara was learning not only how to tell stories about others, but to rearticulate her sense of self in the process.

In the final section of our paper we discuss the features of DUSTY and digital storytelling that seemed to position Randy and Dara to author powerful multimedia pieces, and to represent and reposition themselves. To do so we return to work on performance by Bauman & Briggs (1990). These authors have helped us to think about how digital stories, as instances of verbal performance, do not simply reflect social life, but have the capacity to comment critically on it as well. Like other forms of verbal art, digital stories reposition both authors and the texts (words, images, music, voices) they appropriate and "recontextualize" during performance. Because of our interest in the relationship between performance and agency we have found useful Bauman & Brigg's discussion of "entextualization," which they define as "the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit – a text – that can be lifted out of its interactional setting" (p. 73). In the DUSTY data, Randy's use of photographs or Dara's alignment with Sailormoon's likes and dislikes show how these digital storytellers engage in such textual extractability or "entextualization." Bauman & Briggs claim that "if we consider what becomes of text once decontextualized, we recognize that decontextualization from one social context involves recontextualization in another" (p.74). For example, Randy's decentering of the photograph of Malcolm X from the Civil Rights movement and the photo's recentering within his own digital story is a symbol of what powerful figures with the right tools can do.   In reflecting on how digital stories as performative speech events exemplify such recontextualizations, it is interesting to consider, as Bauman & Briggs do, "what the recontextualized text brings

with it from its earlier context(s) and what emergent form, function and meaning it is given as it is recentered" (p.75). DUSTY participants' digital stories seem to embody the kinds of performative opportunities that enable young people like Randy and Dara to take on agentive stances toward themselves and their social worlds through "recontextualization" or "recentering," and through realignment of self in the digital storytelling process.

In Dara's case we perceive her concerns with family, relationships, and her desire to belong to a community. Through her social work around writing at DUSTY and by borrowing from or "reaccenting" the stories of others (Miller et al., 1993), Dara constructed a sense of herself as an able writer, valued community member, and even a social critic. The level of her critique reflects a 13-year-old's concerns, just as Randy's critique in Life-n-Rhyme reflected the apprehensions of a young man in his mid-twenties finding a strong voice in an often hostile and unforgiving world. What we see in both cases is that "when messages are packaged in self-relevant ways… the consequences… include not only the acquisition of discursive skills, but the creation of self and identity" (Miller, et al., 1993, p. 88). We believe that participation in digital storytelling, and the social practices that accompany it at DUSTY, have provided both Randy and Dara with the means to reposition themselves as agents in and authors of their own lives.

We find it interesting that as different as Randy and Dara are, they shared certain formative experiences, such as not being fond of school and not having positive experiences around writing in school contexts. Nevertheless, both of them loved to write; Randy wrote at home, and they both did so at DUSTY with enthusiasm. We are aware that part of that enthusiasm and willingness to work at it came from their comfort in an

atmosphere where people actively encourage them to speak their minds, genuinely wish

to hear what they have to say, respond respectfully to their ideas, and treat them as

knowledgeable members of their peer groups and communities. In such an atmosphere,

not only did both Dara and Randy master the technological skills necessary to create

digital stories, but they also paid increasingly close attention to the technical aspects of

language – to its sound, to genre, to its poetic dimensions, and to textual images as

messages of another sort. And they masterfully combined image, sound and text into

powerful and personally meaningful multimedia narratives that spoke to others. These

others included their DUSTY peers and friends as well as a larger social world that might

not otherwise have listened to what they had to say; the fresh nature of the medium itself

appeared to lend their ideas both currency and urgency.

In addition to harnessing digital storytelling as a means of engaging in social critique,

Randy and Dara both found it a natural medium for paying homage to family – for

making public statements about the private world. And finally, Dara and Randy used

digital stories to align themselves with public figures and causes. Randy saw himself as

continuing the tradition of social critics like Malcolm X and others, while Dara aligned

herself with persons—fictive and real—who either shared her views on topics (school),

or who represented admirable causes. Selena was a role model for her and for others, and

was therefore worth knowing and telling about.

But what made such appropriative performances possible for Randy and Dara? We

believe that in part, the social environment at DUSTY provided a number of things which

Bauman and Briggs (1990) see as critical to such a process: access, legitimacy,

competence and values. "Access depends upon institutional structures, social definitions

of eligibility, and other mechanisms and standards of inclusion and exclusion (even such practical matters as getting to where the texts are to be found)" (p. 76). In addition to having access to a community that supported them, Randy and Dara had entrée to technology that enabled them to create digital stories—performative speech events with high political-economic value. In the act of appropriating and "decentering discourse," digital stories can be seen as "acts of control," agentive and constructive performative moments. Second, and critically, at DUSTY they were "accorded the authority to appropriate" texts, and Randy and Dara's "recenterings" (p.76) of those texts were seen as legitimate by other members of the community. Third, both Randy and Dara were given the means to acquire the knowledge and competence they needed "to carry out the decontextualization and recontextualization of performed discourse successfully and appropriately" (p.77). And fourth, their texts were valued. Bauman and Briggs noted (1990): "All of these factors – agency, legitimacy, competence, and values – bear centrally on the construction and assumption of authority" (p.77). And the "authoritative voice of the performer… is grounded at least in part in the knowledge, ability, and right to control the recentering of valued texts" (p.77). Randy and Dara were given the space and support to create authoritative texts which embodied agentive selves. As Miller reminds us

> Selves, like cultures, are not so much preserved in stories as they are created, reworked, and revised through participation in everyday narrative practices that are embedded in and responsive to shifting interpersonal conditions. Memories of self and other provide a constantly updated resource that narrators exploit in projecting tellable and interpretable selves" (Miller, 1995, pp. 175-176).

Miller et al. also maintain that "although speech is never free from generic constraints, …speakers can achieve some individuality of expression by creatively appropriating and reaccenting existing genres, and by orchestrating particular voices" (p.98). Both Dara and Randy clearly found ways to appropriate, orchestrate, and recenter texts and use them for novel, meaningful purposes.

We expect, in our future work on literacy, identity, digital technology, and community storytelling, to continue to explore how to create alternative learning spaces where individuals and groups can define and redefine themselves, voicing agentive selves through the creation of authoritative texts. As part of this work, we are especially interested in constructing a framework for thinking about development that extends across the lifespan. In institutions of schooling and other educational settings, it's customary to separate youth and children from adults and seniors, distinguishing rather rigidly what counts as learning and development. Yet, as we have seen from the cases of Randy and Dara, "what develops" as individuals participate in the social and intellective worlds of a community technology center can be similar for youth and adults. We are beginning to understand, as we hope we have illustrated in this paper, how pivotal the enactment of an agentive self can be for learning and motivation, and conversely, how the opportunity to be successful as a learner and doer can foster a view of self as agent, able to influence present circumstances and future possibilities, and to situate self in relation to others in socially responsible ways. It is such a view of self, and continual opportunities to enact this self in relation to new skills, technologies, knowledge, and practices, that we see at the center of development for both children and adults.

We also hope to explore the role of multimedia and multimodality as a powerful form of communication and means of representing self, family, community, and social worlds. There are beginning to be helpful theoretical accounts of the changing face of literacy (e.g., Kress, 2003). But to date there are few empirical on-the-ground studies of what constitutes what might be thought of as a new literacy and how it relates to essays and other linguistic texts. We would argue that digital storytelling and the social practices that encircle it, as illustrated through the work at DUSTY, are one example of a mediational means that will soon constitute an expected part of a person's literate repertoire. It is especially exciting to us that, unlike traditional essays, digital stories, through their combination of image, music, sound, and text, seem to engage young communicators and to provide an especially potent way to perform a self.

Coda

Bruner has helpfully defined "agency" in psychological terms as "the initiation of relatively autonomous acts governed by our intentional states—our wishes, desires, beliefs, and expectancies" (1994, p. 41). Others frame this concept more politically as a belief in and the activity around remaking one's world (cf. Freire, 1970). In most western discussions of education, individual development, and social change, the desirability of an "agentive" stance for learners is taken as a given (cf. Hull & Greeno, 200x), even though the theoretical literature is less than optimistic about this possibility. We ask, then, how might we conceptualize spaces for the development of agency in what Giddens (1991) has called "our runaway world"?

Some readers may wonder given our focus on Randy and Dara, two individuals, what kinds of claims we might make about the development of agency and identity participants

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experienced through digital storytelling at DUSTY. Although human lives can never be reduced to simple cause and effect explanations, we certainly observed Randy and Dara, and other participants whom we have described elsewhere (Hull, 2003b, 2003c; Hull & Zacher, 2002; Hull & Zacher, 2004; Katz, 2004a, 2004b, 20044c; Wing, 2004) enacting agentive selves in their digital stories and in their relationships at DUSTY, and we witnessed as well how community involvement and storytelling became powerful and sustaining forces in their lives. While it would be impossible to fully tease apart such influences and their consequences, there exists an abundant theoretical literature, and also a striking, although less abundant, empirical literature which illustrates how important it is for people to be able to influence their own lives. We know from this literature and from our own research how, especially for people living in disenfranchised or disadvantaged communities where they are often segregated from the material resources of our society, how critical it is to have access to tools and technology, and to believe in their own present capabilities and imagined futures.

At this writing, Dara, who was a vibrant and central member of the DUSTY children's program for several years, has moved on to high school, where we hope she will continue to flourish by drawing on the positive sense of herself as a writer, thinker, and agent that we saw her developing at DUSTY. Randy was recently promoted to dayshift at the warehouse where he works. His artistic life remains a major part of his identity; he continues to rap, to make beats, and to create digital stories, and he has ventured of late into videography, filming his own performance at a club, and recording life at night on the streets of Oakland.

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Appendix A: Setting

While the San Francisco Bay Area is often associated with the vast wealth that was generated in the Silicon Valley, just down the road from the chip manufacturers and software companies are urban communities in the grip of intense poverty and the educational and social inequities that accompany it. West Oakland is one of these communities, and has, in fact, been designated a federal empowerment zone. Its largely African American population has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country—63%—and the majority of its children (75%) rely on free or reduced-price lunches. Educational statistics are predictably grim. Neighborhood schools are some of the lowest performing in the Oakland Unified School District, with 80% of fifth graders scoring below the national median in reading. To be sure, today in West Oakland there are few signs of the city's rich history, which included an active economy mid-century when the city's dry docks, railroad system, and factories attracted immigrants from throughout the world, and an activist culture during the 1960's which played a pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement.

Yet, recovering and preserving that history, revitalizing the community, and empowering residents educationally and economically are the ambitious aims of many dedicated private citizens, local businesses, schools, and non-profit agencies. This is not to say that efforts at "community revitalization" and "community development" aren't fraught with difficulty and characterized by divided interests. For example, a current project to restore a once grand train station and build middle-income housing near it has attracted much criticism from residents who deplore gentrification and what some have

termed a "racist redevelopment" that creates housing most community members can't afford.

Our modest contribution to the community revitalization effort has been to help establish a community technology center, a non-profit called the Oakland Technology and Education Center (OTEC). Founded in 2001 by Glynda Hull and Michael James, and affiliated with a statewide and international network of community/university after-school collaboratives (cf. Cole, 1996, for a discussion of the "5th Dimension" project, and Underwood & colleagues, for an account of UCLinks), this center combines instruction on writing and literacy with a form of multimedia composing called "digital storytelling, " as well as digital music-making, and it operates as a collaborative between the university—in particular, the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley—and a community center, the Prescott-Joseph Center for Community Enhancement, in order to provide free after-school programs for children and youth, as well as workshops for adults and seniors on weekends and evenings. OTEC has been fortunate to have had the time and energy of a raft of volunteers, most especially undergraduate student-mentors from UC Berkeley. These undergraduates are enrolled in an Education course at the University of California, Berkeley, focusing on literacy teaching and learning and the intersection of literacy with race, ethnicity, and identity. Through fieldnotes and case studies, as is illustrated in the section on Dara in this paper, they explore their experiences of working with children and youth at the Center. Thus, the project could be considered a type of "service learning" (see, for example, Adler-Kassner, Crooks, & Watters, 1997; Cushman, 1999; Flower, 2002), although its equal

focus on creating and sustaining programs in the community, in addition to linking

undergraduates to "service" in community-based programs, makes it somewhat unusual.

Over the last four years, our after-school programs have become especially visible

and popular. Called DUSTY, "Digital Underground Storytelling for Youth"

("underground" because of our home in the basement of a former convent and Victorian

home and our interest in the subversive), our youth programs as well as those for adults

can be viewed as a new literate space and an alternative place to learn. In particular, and

as detailed in this article, we have been interested in providing the material tools and

symbolic resources and fostering the social relationships and forms of participation that

will make it possible, even likely, that individuals can envision and enact agentive selves.

Appendix B: Methodology and Transcription Key

These case studies are drawn from a larger ethnographic research project spanning three and a half years at DUSTY, Digital Underground Storytelling for Youth, in Oakland, California. The theoretical underpinning for the larger research project centers on **identity formation**, especially the role of language and other semiotic systems in this process. In assembling a framework for thinking about these issues, we have found four related literatures especially helpful. First is the cross-disciplinary work on narrative and self as "storied" (e.g., Bruner, 1986, 1994; Gergen, 1991; Ochs & Capps, 1996, 2001). Second, we have found useful **discourse theories** (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Gee, 1996; Luke, 1995) and accounts of the influence of others' voices on an individual's sense of self (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Ivanic, 1998), especially the writings of Bakhtin (1981). We have also drawn on perspectives from **activity theory** and **cultural pscyhology** (Cole, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1991), particularly understandings of learning and identity development as mediated by **cultural artifacts**, to use Cole's terms, or **psychological tools**, as borrowed from Vygotsky. And finally, we looked to **literacy theory and semiotics**, especially accounts which explore the **affordances of different modes and media**, for insights about **self-representation** (e.g., Kress, 1997; cf. Urciuoli, 1995). These literatures, each in different ways, privilege the idea that all semiotic systems, of which language is only one, give us various means of embodying and enacting a sense of self in relation to others. In the words of Urciuoli, "The creation of meaning is above all embedded in human relationships: people enact their selves to each other in words, movements, and other modes of actions" (1995, p. 189).

Thus far, we have paid attention in our research to digital storytelling as a new literacy, cataloguing the kinds of stories that youth as well as adults, who have access to separate programs through DUSTY (see below), create and the differences between written and multimedia stories. In addition to our interest in how digital storytelling and the social practices developed at DUSTY can foster reflection about notions of self and agency, we've also documented how youth, and the undergraduate mentors from UC Berkeley who assist them, develop socially and academically through their participation with each other in the activities of DUSTY. We have collected over a period of three and a half years a large corpus of data focused on undergraduate learning and development, including their written artifacts – fieldnotes from DUSTY, literacy autobiographies, and end-of-semester case studies of DUSTY youth for a literacy theory and practice course taught by Hull in UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Education. In addition to videotaped and audiotaped footage of undergraduates and youth working together, for the same time period we also have pre- and post-surveys exploring shifts in undergraduates' beliefs and understandings about race, ethnicity, social class and education. Finally we have researchers' participant-observational fieldnotes describing undergraduate and youth interaction, as well as numerous digital stories and end-of-semester performance pieces created by undergraduates as final projects for Hull's course.

We also have a substantial body of data focused on our ongoing work with adults of all ages to create digital stories, poetry, and digital oral histories. Data with adults includes many digital stories and poems, researchers' observational fieldnotes, as well as videotapes and audiotapes of individual interviews and adult workshops in progress.

For our after-school program, we have researchers' observational fieldnotes spanning three years; videotaped and audiotaped footage of youth working with one another on all aspects of the digital storytelling process, videotaped and audiotaped footage of youth working with their undergraduate mentors; interviews with children; interviews with DUSTY parents; children's digital stories; as well as many of their written artifacts leading up to the digital story making process. We are also able to use the rich undergraduate data sources as vehicles for triangulating the after-school data.

For the first case of Randy, our data consist of (1) field notes detailing a two-month writing class and two weekend digital storytelling workshops in which Randy participated; (2) Randy's writing from that class; (3) two hour-long, transcribed interviews with Randy, conducted eight months apart, focusing on his digital storytelling projects, his history of work and schooling, and his plans and hopes for the future; and (4) six digital stories created by Randy over a period of one year. For the second case of Dara, the data consist of (1) field notes on Dara' participation in DUSTY and at school, notes written by four different researchers over a period of a two and a half years; (2) four story scripts and three digital stories created by Dara during this same time period; (3) two interviews with Dara; (4) interviews with the teachers who have worked with her; (5) and fieldnotes and case studies written by UC Berkeley undergraduates enrolled in Hull's course. For both participants we have field notes about the public showings of their digital stories at a local theater, as well as our on-going ethnographic data on establishing a technology center jointly via university and community participants.

With regard to data analysis, we have used thematic coding (Miles, 1994) as well as critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) and narrative analysis (Ochs & Capps,

52

2001). During the past two years as we've begun to sort through our substantial, varied

data sources, in addition to our desire to explore new literacies and the development of

selves in the context of digital storytelling, we have become aware that children and

adults, as different as they are in many cases, seem to benefit from digital storytelling and

from the DUSTY environment in many of the same ways. The present analysis aims to

reveal some of those likenesses, and in so doing, to blur the lines which have traditionally

been drawn, we think at times unhelpfully, between adolescent and adult learning and

development.

Transcription Key

==	Indicates latched turns
[xxxx] [xxxx]	Indicates overlapped turns
CAREful	CAPS indicate increased speaking volume
:	Colon indicate elongated vowel pronunciation as in Lo:vely da:y.
(XX)	Conveys indecipherable talk – each X equals one syllable
.	Period indicates sentence final intonation
?	Indicates rising intonation
!	Indicates phrase or sentence final emphasis
…	Indicates a short pause in talk
… …	Indicates a longer pause in talk
{*description*}	Indicates relevant non-linguistic information
"quotes"	Indicates text being read from the computer screen"

Appendix C: Script for Lyfe-N-Rhyme

What's done through life echoes throughout time
It's an infinite chase to become what I was
But what was I? I don't remember
Life, love, truth, trust, tribulation
That's what's up
The only thing I know is I've seen it before in the mirrors of my mind
The older we get, the harder a habit is to kick
Damn! Pleasure, pain, purpose, prison
Justice is a contradiction
Living on a razor, fell onto a felony
And having what was left of me
Life is a lesson
Groove with me
Move like a millipede
Thousands of legs controlled by one head
Yes, mama's only gun is mama's only son with a guillotine tongue.
Murder, money, miseducation
Living in incarceration
Urban voice, heart of the street
Step by step on poverty's concrete
Choice, change, crack cocaine
Capitalism in my veins, yeah, that's what I'm talking about
A page full of rage!
Wait! How does a cage rehabilitate?
Next, America's new war
Billion dollar weapons don't feed the poor
But then again, who cares?
All we do is breathe what they put in the air, yeah
I said it before, I'll say it again
Contradiction, Section 8 living
Society's rival, freedom of speech, who are we to teach
Heart, body, mind, soul
So many different worlds in one planet going on
Youth neglected, expected to listen, born and raised on television
Friction, failure, function, worth
Me and my deuce, family first
Some rules are meant to be broken
Some doors are meant to be opened
And…regardless of race
We all mostly come from the same place…Love
This is life in rhyme.

Appendix D:
Partial transcript of an editing session on Dara's Story about Selena

3

4

5   Jeannie: All right. This seems good. Anything else you wanna change?==

6   Dara: ==Yeah { *pointing to script on computer screen*} this part right here. See it's

7   really getting see {*reading*} "Selena y Los Dinos. Amazingly, even at the young age of

8   four… in the group" that's kind of like messing me up.

9   Jeannie: Yeah I know. What did you…==

10 Dara: ==I just wanna fix that.==

11 Jeannie: ==what did you wanna say here like==

12 Dara:==well I can say {*reading and revising*} "Amazingly even at that age {Jeannie: um

13 hm} at the at that age four {Jeannie: uh huh} xxxx together.

14 Jeannie: Like… 'cause it seems like you're saying about Selena but then here you're

15 saying like the group. So…

16 Dara: Well "Selena y Los Dinos" { *pointing to script on computer screen and reading*}

17 this part leaves me alone. But it's this part {*pointing elsewhere*} that's REALLY getting

18 me confused.

19 Jeannie: Maybe "even at the young age of four"

20 Dara: "In the group's first year together."

21 {*Various interruptions by DUSTY staff to talk about taking pictures and distribution of*

22 *cameras.*}

23 Jeannie: Okay what if we just cut the whoo::le young age thing

24 {*Dara starts talking to staff member again about taking pictures*}

25 Jeannie: {*tape was off, turned back on to catch*} cut this whole sentence?

26 Dara: uuu::h==

27 Jeannie: ==Like just say "In the group's first year together Selena da da da da da cut their

28 first album xx==

29 Dara: ==How about you say "amazingly at that age… of four, amazingly"

30 Jeannie: Selena was in a group?

31 Dara: of four. I could put "of four" in there 'cause there was four of 'em. It was her, her

32 brother…

33 Jeannie: Okay.

34 Dara: XX three of 'em wasn't it. Her brother and sister and Selena. That's three.

35 Jeannie: Wait. Her brother, her sister, no there were four. Kay her sister was the

36 drummer==

37 Dara: no her brother was the guitarist, her sister was the drummer.

38 Jeannie: Right. her sister was the drummer, her brother was

39 Dara: the guitarist and==

40 Jeannie: ==wait who plays the piano.

41 Dara: Nobody. They added. They were added so it was three. Not four.

42 Jeannie: Okay.{*reading*} "Amazingly even at the age of four Selena

43 Dara: No we have to change the four to three.

44 Jeannie: No but you're saying at the young AGE of four.

45 Dara: Oo::h. That's the age they were.

46 Jeannie: Yeah. {*laughs. Typing*}At the young age of four Selena called

47 Dara: called Selena y Los Dinos.
48 Jeannie: Okay there we go.
49 Dara: Called Selena y Los Dinos.
50 Jeannie: Okay. Um
51 Dara: Wait. When they cut their first album and performed… WHEN they cut their first
52 album and performed live for the first time
53 Jeannie: {*typing*} when they cut their first album… {*to Dara*} what does it mean by they
54 cut their first album.
55 Dara: Like they made their first album.
56 Jeannie: Oh.
57 Dara: {*suggests changing word*} When they MADE. How about when they MADE their
58 first album.
59 Jeannie: Okay. Yeah.
60 Dara: Does that make sense?
61 Jeannie: Yeah.
62 Jeannie: When they made their first==
63 Dara: ==When they made their first album they performed live for the first time.
64 Jeannie: Okay.==
65 Dara: ==Does that make sense?==
66 Jeannie: ==Yeah. Was that better for you to say?==
67 Dara: ==Yeah. Yeah 'cause I was the one who made it up. {*both laugh*} I had to. Okay.
68 {*Reads smoothly and with emphasis*} "Amazingly, even at the young age of four, Selena
69 was in a group called Selena y Los Dinos. When they made their first album, they
70 performed live for the first time."
71 Jeannie: That sounds much better.
72 {portion untranscribed}
73 Dara: I think I wanna go do my voice capture now.

Notes

[2] There is debate over whether a "digital divide" exists, and if so, its nature and extent. See, for example, Fairlie (2003). The communities, schools, and homes that have figured in our work, and that are referred to in this paper, leave little doubt that grave inequities exist in access to information technologies and their meaningful uses.

[3] "Digital storytelling" is a term associated with a form of multimedia composing pioneered and popularized by Joe Lambert and Nina Mullen, founders of the Center for Digital Storytelling (http://www.storycenter.org/index.html). The DUSTY project, described in this paper, grew from Lambert and Mullen's model and with their support.

[4] In this paper we will use "multimedia" as shorthand for multiple media and multiple modalities. That is, the digital stories that our participants created involve more than one medium (paper and pencil, computers, cameras, etc.), and more than one modality (speech, writing, music, images). We acknowledge that it is important in work on digital media to distinguish media and modalities and appreciate the important theoretical groundwork in this regard done, for example, by Kress (2003).

[5] Please see Appendix A for a more detailed account of the origins of DUSTY, the larger community in which it is situated, and its relationship to the University of California, Berkeley. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of schools and participants except in the case of Randy, who preferred that we use his actual given name.

[6] See, for example, Miller, 1995; Miller & Mehler, 1994; Miller & Goodnow, 1995; Miller, Hoogstra, Mintz, Fung & Williams, 1993; Miller, Mintz, Hoogstra, Fung & Potts, 1992; Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra & Mintz, 1990.

[7] We provide an account of methodology in Appendix A.

[8] Over 100 people were murdered in Oakland, CA, in 2003, most of these victims being black men and most of them young, and police presence in these areas has intensified. This homicide rate, and the drug and gang activities that beckon to many youth, are testimony to the ways of crafting a life and having a livelihood that seem credible to a significant number of residents in these neighborhoods.

[9] Even before he was involved with DUSTY, Randy said he had been searching for a kind of deliverance:

> I just prayed … [to] be a better person. Help me be stronger. Just get up out of this negative bull that I'm stuck in. And DUSTY just came right on time. And it gave me a chance to use my creativity and tell my story. (interview, 10/31/02)

[10] Randy's digital story entitled "Frustrated Soul" was inspired in part by his experience of looking for work:

> "Frustrated Soul" came from job hunting…. From me being frustrated, turning in application after application. I was working a job at a card board place right there on 8th (Street), and I had 90-day probation, so on my 90th day, I passed the probation. On my 91st day they laid me off….They said "you'll be back in like two weeks." They didn't call me back for like a month and a half. I quit my City of Oakland job for this job. So then they called me back like a month and a half later letting me work for a week, then they laid me off for like 4 more months. Then I get a letter that I'm terminated." (Interview, 10/31/02)

[11] We saw Randy on other occasions when he said he'd been harassed unjustly by the police, and we saw the toll that these experiences took on him (fieldnotes, 11/9/02). Indeed, in our work at our technology center, we have seen brutalizing experiences with police, as well as brutalizing experiences with violence and poverty, tamp down the spirit of other people, but especially African American men.

[12] Randy also spoke in detail about a community college teacher who had responded to his poetry in a manner that he experienced as so harsh that he could still remember their exchange verbatim. The assignment, Randy recalled, was to write a poem using repetition, which he did by repeating the phrase "it wasn't like right." His teacher wrote at the end of the poem that "it wasn't like I liked your repetition." Randy said he thought to himself, "You didn't have to do that! That was cold!" When he asked the teacher about the comment, she replied that he had to take criticism, which Randy claimed wasn't the issue. (Perhaps it wasn't, since he specifically asked the teacher of the writing class we provided on digital storytelling to "correct all errors accordingly, please." [In-class writing inventory, 10/01].) However, Randy interpreted the manner of his community college teacher's comment quite negatively, as trying to "cap" him or "ground him," and thus, he said, grew disenchanted with her course, though he continued to write for himself.

[13] After each person read a draft or ventured ideas for one, the workshop leaders provided a lot of positive feedback, praising participants' accounts, and gave suggestions on how to shape the stories to maximize their dramatic effect for the genre of digital storytelling. As was the case in most of these workshops, participants listened intently to each other and responded respectfully and with encouragement. Then, over the next two days, they turned their written narratives into digital stories: recording their voices as they read their stories; locating or taking photographs to accompany their words; finding other images on the internet; digitizing snippets of video; laying down a sound track; and finally, bringing these multiple media together to make a short digital movie.

[14] Part of our current research program is to devise an analytic framework for understanding this "braiding" of modalities.

[15] For reviews of research on literacy in school and out-of-school contexts, and the continuities and discontinuities across these contexts, see Hull & Schultz (2001, 2002).

[16] Although St. Anthony's is a private school, most of the students only pay 5% of the fee. Many of the children are low-income, and test scores are very low. (S's fieldnotes, 1-20-02)

[17] A researcher portrayed the same day's events similarly: "Dara, a student from last semester, saw [the coordinator] and [me] and ran to us. First she hugged her and then me. She said that she missed us and asked if we were going to stay long" (S's fieldnotes, 1-31-02). And finally, as the same researcher wrote in her fieldnotes the following week, "at the Center [DUSTY], Dara is one of the hardest working kids" (S's fieldnotes, 2-7-02).

[18] In her study of adolescents and television culture, Joellen Fisherkeller explores the connections between young people's favorite television personae and their "identity projects," which she suggests "are a primary kind of cultural acquisition process" (Fisherkeller 1997, p.467). She elaborates: "Identities are constructed by selves interacting with sociocultural ideas, artifacts and activities… Thus, constructing identities is a primary kind of cultural learning…" (p.469). Fisherkeller observed that while the teens' home cultures and communities provided impetus for their notions of how they wanted to change themselves and how they wanted to develop their lives, television provided images of the kinds of people they might become – the sorts of identities they were interested in developing.

[19] See Appendix D for the transcript.

[20] Although Dara's use of the expression "to cut an album" is accurate (see Appendix D, l. 50 and following), she perceived that it was confusing to her audience (her audience being Jeannie at the moment) and changed it to "made their first album" to facilitate understanding. Dara's concern with "making sense" is apparent throughout the sequence. In addition, she pointed out that the reason this version works is because she's the one "who made it up" – the words are her own, and therefore, she can say them comfortably. She read the revised sentences with expression and ease. We heard Dara talk about "making sense" on other days, in other writing contexts. On Halloween, for example, when children, facilitators and undergraduate mentors were co-authoring "scary stories," they had been asked not to read the stories except for the line that came immediately before the one they were to write themselves; however, Dara kept opening up the stories and reading the whole thing, claiming that she needed to read it all in order to write something – to add a line – that "made sense."