ELA Teacher Preparation 2.0: Critical Media Literacy, Action Research, and Mashups

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Abstract

Engaging preservice English language arts interns in the analysis of mashups accomplishes two objectives: (a) it brings interns to a deeper understanding of action research and (b) provides a critical media literacy (CML) foundation on which they might build with their own students. In this paper CML is defined and recent literature is synthesized, including a specific focus on mashups and DJ Earworm. The author describes his pedagogical context and procedures for examining research paradigms, exploring qualitative methods, and generating findings while developing a foundation for CML. The paper closes with responses to these procedures and implications for English language arts teacher educators and teachers.

My first use of DJ Earworm was merely a hook to grab the attention of preservice English language arts (ELA) interns. My increasing use of his oeuvre led me to see how the analysis of mashups (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008) was just one piece of a larger research project asking how to prepare preservice ELA teachers to see the classroom as a site for social justice. Over the last several years, an ongoing qualitative study has produced an engaging series of lessons and activities building on two foundations: action research (AR) and critical media literacy (CML). In short, the evolution of this study provides a theoretical foundation and practical toolkit that prepare preservice ELA teachers to use the classroom to engage media critically and work to make their schools and communities better places for everyone.

In reporting on this study, I first define CML and AR and synthesize foundational literature, describing how both represent tools for social justice; I then introduce mashups and DJ Earworm as a place where AR and CML can meet through current classroom technology. I next outline my context, methods, and data sources. I present findings in the form of the classroom procedures I have developed for teaching preservice teachers to examine research paradigms, explore AR methods, and generate findings and implications pursuing social justice ends; my own data analysis is described alongside each procedure. I close with implications for teacher educators interested in using AR, CML, and classroom technology to prepare preservice teachers with social justice dispositions and abilities.

Critical Media Literacy

Critical media literacy is a moving target depending on paradigm and context. In one of the first reviews of CML in education, Alvermann and Hagood (2000) succinctly synthesized the cacophony:

> Depending on one's perspective or theoretical frame, the term *critical media literacy* may be characterized as the ability to reflect on the pleasures derived from mass media and popular culture practices; the ability to choose selectively among popular culture icons; or the ability to produce one's own multimedia texts. Other perspectives emphasize different activities. (p. 194)

Since this definition appeared, research around the importance and use of CML has expanded. A prominent line examines CML's connections to social justice and participatory democracy (e.g., Kellner & Share, 2007; Luke, 2012; Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013). In addition, researchers have examined CML in localized contexts, including media and sex education (Albury, 2013), video games as military recruiting tools (Susca, 2012), and the perceptions of media credibility (Vraga, Tully, Akin, & Rojas, 2012) and news literacy (Craft, Maksl, & Ashley, 2013).

Beyond many reports of multimodal projects or digital storytelling (e.g., Chun, 2012; Ehret & Hollett, 2014), researchers have explored the implications and consequences of CML, stepping beyond *media literacy* into *critical media literacy* by focusing on social justice possibilities and requirements: "Critical media literacy thus constitutes a critique of mainstream approaches to literacy and a political project for democratic social change" (Kellner & Share, 2007, p. 62).

For example, Parker (2013) described students wrestling with power and responsibility while creating documentary films. Likewise, Santoy (2013) chronicled three Chicana bloggers and how "blogging has helped them gain literacy skills that have served to increase their ability to control their own representation" (p. 366). Finally, Jacobs (2012) presented a compelling critique of the assumption that students will naturally be more engaged in classrooms employing digital technologies.

Fewer researchers have engaged CML in teacher preparation, and they tended to engage teachers with tools as an end in themselves and not as a means toward social justice. For example, Stevens (2013) engaged teachers in the exploration of Web 2.0 tools like blogs, wikis, and podcasts. Similarly, Hundley and Holbrook (2013) worked with preservice ELA teachers to develop multimodal and digital writing pedagogies (see also Buck, 2012; Chun, 2012).

Yet, a gap remains in the research for using CML in teacher preparation as a means toward social justice ends. I situate my own work in this gap as I prepare ELA teachers with explicit CML instruction to develop "tools within a revolutionary process intended to challenge existing norms and disrupt existing power relations" (Morrell, 2005, p. 314). In short, CML provides space for ELA teachers and students to explore the politics of representation, learn how to counter oppressive representations, and analyze media to understand who controls each representation and to what ends (Kellner & Share, 2007).

Preservice teachers need experiences in CML so that they may guide their students toward critical consumption and creation of media (Botzakis, 2011; Kellner & Share 2006). CML offers a framework to "deconstruct several aspects of established school discourse: the space of school, the pedagogy and practices of literacy instruction, and relations between students and teachers" (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000, p. 199). Thus, the goal of CML in teacher preparation is not inoculation but engagement (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Kellner & Share, 2006) leading to understandings of inequality and injustice (Coffey, 2008), individual freedom and expression (Morrell, 2005), and participatory democracy (Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013).

To conceptualize CML in a way interns might absorb and carry into the classroom, I have employed Kellner and Share's (2006) five core concepts drawn from the National Association for Media Literacy Education:

1. Non-transparency: All media messages are "constructed";
2. Codes and Conventions: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules;
3. Audience Decoding: Different people experience the same media message differently;
4. Content and message: Media have embedded values and points of view; and
5. Motivation: Media are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Action Research

Action research provides practical solutions to real problems in the classroom. AR allows a teacher to identify an issue, understand the issue, and work toward rectifying that issue. AR is grounded in a real, lived context but maintains scientific ideals of systematicity and empirical findings grounded in data. As such, AR is not something that happens behind the scenes but is a process that engages researcher and participants as allies: "It is important to remember that action research does not involve studies *on* participants (as in positivist human subjects research). Instead, it involves studies *with* participants" (Hinchey, 2008, p. 97, emphasis in original). Everyone in a classroom benefits from the resolution of problematic issues, and so AR emerges from within the setting and involves all stakeholders as potential beneficiaries.

Several definitions of AR exist in the literature, but I rely on two primary sources: Reason and Bradbury (2001) for its conception of AR as social justice practice and Hinchey (2008) as a concise textbook. Table 1 presents the primary tenets of AR from these foundations. By engaging AR as a means toward social justice ends, or "Emancipatory Action Research" (Hinchey, 2008, p. 41), preservice teachers build on John Dewey's view of teachers as active agents, John Collier's work (as the Commissioner of Indian Affairs) to undo injustices, Kurt Lewin's countering of social discrimination, and Paulo Freire's vision of dialog and activism.

Table 1
Definitions of AR

Hinchey (2008)	Reason & Bradbury (2001)
• Conducted by those inside a community rather than by outside experts; • Pursues improvement or better understanding in some area the researcher considers important; • Involves systematic inquiry, which includes information gathering, analysis, and reflection; • Leads to an action plan, which frequently generates a new cycle of the process.	• Starts with everyday experience; • Develops living knowledge and new abilities to create knowledge; • Emerges over time and cannot be programmatic or defined in hard methods; • Is emancipatory, a verb rather than a noun.

This connection of AR to social justice is prevalent in educational research as both method and content. As to the former, many teacher educators have used AR as a method of study to examine the efficacy of social justice education with preservice teachers across content areas, including in ELA (Akom, 2009; Dover, 2013), mathematics (Leonard & Moore, 2014), social studies and science (Hagevik, Aydeniz, & Rowell, 2012), art (Briggs, 2012), and special education (Bruce & Pine, 2010). As to the latter, much of the literature takes the form of textbooks aimed at teaching preservice teachers how to use AR in the classroom; however, the body of research is growing on AR as content within teacher preparation (e.g., Dodman et al., 2014; Price, 2001; Sevier, 2005).

Throughout the research on AR as content and method, the social justice foundations are consistent. For one, teacher educators must use the methods and pursue the goals they want preservice teachers to use and pursue in their future classrooms (Sevier, 2005). Similarly, preparing preservice teachers through AR equips them with a toolkit to enact the inquiry stance required by a social justice orientation (Dodman et al., 2014).

Overall, these teacher educators build on the foundation of Reason and Bradbury's (2001) succinct definition that casts AR as social justice praxis, the development of new knowledge, and new kinds of knowledge, through action and reflection:

> [AR is] a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview, which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (p. 1)

Casting AR as moving toward social justice complements the goals of CML to recognize and counter inequality and injustice (Kellner & Share, 2007; Luke, 2012; Mihailidis & Thevenin, 2013). As such, I have engaged interns in mashups as a bridge to CML foundations and AR methods, so they may come to see both as useful for unmasking and unmaking inequitable and unjust structures in a classroom or school.

Mashups and DJ Earworm

A particular form of media providing rich opportunities for teaching both AR and CML is the remix or mashup (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008). With growing access to videos and the digital tools to manipulate them, we now have the technological ability to mix and mash videos into something new, including teaching tools (Burwell, 2013; Rodesiler, 2009). In building on the work of Lessig (2005), Knobel and Lankshear (2008) defined *remix* as combining and manipulating cultural artifacts into "new kinds of creative blends" (p. 22). A *mashup* blends fragments from two or more texts but does not recreate the originals. Knobel and Lankshear (2008) described several examples of remix and mashup, like digital image editing, music video remixes, and manga and anime fan art.

In short, a remix is a new version of an existing text, while a mashup takes pieces of existing texts to create something new. I find mashups particularly salient when addressing AR and CML. The practice of synthesizing discrete fragments from multiple sources into a coherent narrative is, in sum, the process of AR; likewise, dismantling multiple representations in order to give voice to something new is the heart of CML. As such, mashups offer entrée into social justice by engaging popular culture and empowering marginalized frames of reference as valid.

While Knobel and Lankshear (2008) saw remixes and mashups as methods for achieving proficiency with new literacies, they were reticent to recommend their transfer to the classroom. However, Burwell (2013) took up this challenge and described her use of remixes with high school and university students, working from the claim that "remixing is one of the most significant cultural practices of our time" (p. 1) and that remixes have profound social and pedagogical implications (Kress, 2010). While Burwell (2013) found video remixes pedagogically relevant with high school and university students, I sought to build on such work by using mashups with preservice ELA interns.

A most creative and prolific mashup artist is DJ Earworm. I have found analysis of his mashups (and their components) an effective platform for engaging interns in AR and providing a CML foundation they can carry into their own classrooms. DJ Earworm (né Jordan Roseman) was raised in the Midwestern United States by a large family of musicians. With degrees in music theory and computer science from the University of Illinois, he found employment as a computer programmer but began to create mashups in his spare time. DJ Earworm shared his work with a disc jockey friend, who encouraged him to post his work online. He is now best known for his annual mashups of the top 25 pop songs of each year, as defined by Billboard (see www.billboard.com)**.**

The first, United State of Pop, arrived in 2007 as an exercise in trying to mash 25 songs into a coherent structure. By his third go, DJ Earworm realized he could also make a statement:

> I decided to sum up how things are and make a cohesive statement. I tried even harder this year to try to make a comment on where we are, and I felt strongly there was this new message in pop music. (Piazza, 2010, ¶15)

This shift toward a new representation illustrates a move toward CML. With each successive mashup, DJ Earworm took representative fragments of hit music from one year and created a synthesis exploring what pop culture says about the state of society and the interplay between those in charge and those on the margins. As a collection, his annual mashups have traced the global economic meltdown of 2008 (*Viva la Pop*) and

2009 (*Blame It On the Pop*), increasing military action in 2010 (*Don't Stop the Pop*) and 2011 (*World Go Boom*), the first steps toward recovery in 2012 (*Shine Brighter*), and increasing empowerment of the young in 2013 (*Living the Fantasy*) and 2014 (*Do What You Wanna Do*).

A particular talent of DJ Earworm is his artistry in synthesizing visual and audio fragments from different texts. For example, in 2013's *Living the Fantasy*, he mashed Avicii's lyric from *Wake Me Up*, "I tried carrying the weight of the world," with a visual from Imagine Dragons' *Demons* of a soldier carrying a wounded comrade. Likewise, a mashed lyric from Avicii and Bruno Mars, "You tell me I'm too young to understand/ too young, too dumb to realize," is placed over a bewildered Taylor Swift from *I Knew You Were Trouble.* This talent for a complete audiovisual text demonstrates artistry in a genre that is more often audio only.

Methods

At my university, preservice ELA interns are required to complete an AR project (Hinchey, 2008) while pursuing a secondary English license (grades 6 to 12). We label our preservice teachers *interns* because they participate in a yearlong teaching internship placement and are recognized by the state as having 1 year of experience at the end of the program. Annual cohorts of around 15 interns are prepared via theory and methods coursework taken simultaneously with the teaching internship.

Following the Holmes Group (1986) model, interns have completed content area bachelor's degrees and are working toward licensure and a master's degree in pedagogy. Interns are primarily White and come from diverse socioeconomic statuses; each year 10-20% of students are the first in their families to graduate from college.

Over the last 5 years (10 semesters), I have developed the use of music videos and mashups to engage interns in three lessons connected to the development and execution of an AR project: (a) exploring research paradigms, (b) AR methods, and (c) developing findings and implications pursuing social justice ends. Each lesson is tied to core concepts of CML (Kellner & Share, 2006), as laid out in Table 2, and serves as a foundation for the interns' AR projects.

Data sources for my own qualitative study surrounding the development of these lessons include (a) written intern responses, (b) course evaluations, (c) faculty class evaluations, (d) my own planning materials and reflections, and (e) intern action research projects. Written intern responses were used to assess understanding before and after the lessons. Similarly, intern and faculty evaluations provided an additional viewpoint of what happened during the lessons.

My own planning materials and reflections offer the deepest source of data, as these lessons have been developed and refined over the last 5 years. The first lesson described represents my only use of mashups during the first year; the subsequent lessons were designed and added as I reflected on how I might use mashups to do more in connection to AR and CML. The completed AR projects provide the opportunity to examine how these lessons carried through into individual products across a variety of teaching contexts.

Table 2
Lessons and Core Concepts of Critical Media Literacy

Lesson	Core Concept	Description
Research Paradigms	Principle of Non-Transparency	In learning to differentiate research paradigms, coming to see the constructed nature of all messages is important.
	Codes and Conventions	In examining research paradigms, the language and rules of each come to light.
AR Methods	Audience Decoding	As in qualitative microanalysis, different people mean different experiences, whether with data or media.
	Content and Message	All data, as all media, have embedded values and points of view, of which a researcher must take account.
Findings	Motivation	While researchers may not imagine trying to gain profit or power, they do conduct research toward particular ends.

Procedures and Findings

My primary responsibility in the English education program is a two-semester sequence (fall/spring) where interns design and conduct AR projects. The AR project prepares interns to identify significant issues in the classroom and develop effective means for resolving those issues. Throughout this sequence, I use multiple videos to help interns develop proficiency in CML. While the content and method of AR and CML extend throughout the year, in this report I focus on three primary lessons where AR and CML came together most explicitly.

Written intern responses and intern action research projects suggest that these lessons engaged interns in AR and CML in ways that might translate to their own classroom practice of social justice. Mashups provide entrée to the uses of AR while highlighting the goal of CML to include marginalized voices and draw on the multiple funds of knowledge present in any classroom. The interns may came to see their own AR projects as mashups pursuing social justice and develop the pedagogical content knowledge to engage CML with their own students and defend such practices to those who might see only a teacher showing music videos in class.

Research Paradigms

In laying a foundation for AR, I began by addressing the question, "What is research?" Interns read Guba and Lincoln's (1994) chapter on *Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research,* because it succinctly presents the history and characteristics of qualitative research. Our discussion centered on how to ground their AR projects. Through this discussion, I want interns to understand that a critical theory paradigm will be most appropriate, because the classroom is not an objective laboratory and AR is a democratizing process.

Guba and Lincoln's (1994) Table 6.1 encapsulates four research paradigms and serves as frontispiece for pairing current music videos with each paradigm. Our discussion responded to the question, "What would a music video from each of these paradigms look like?" These videos demonstrate characteristics of each paradigm, but there is room to

define these videos in multiple ways. Each year, I drew my examples of paradigms from components of the current DJ Earworm mashup (Table 3 provides additional examples):

Positivistism. Beyoncé's *Single Ladies* (Video 1; http://youtu.be/4m1EFMoRFvY) presents a singer/dancer singing and dancing before a neutral, empty background, a laboratory for music and dance where lyrics and choreography literally align (e.g., when Beyoncé sings, "Now put your hands up," the dancers put their hands up). In a positivist paradigm, research is conducted acontextually and based on objective observation; in Beyoncé's video, singing and dancing occur outside of any context and with objective connections between audio and video modes.

Postpositivism. Distinguishing positivism from postpositivism is often difficult. In Adele's *Someone Like You* (Video 2; http://youtu.be/hLQl3WQQoQo), a singer is again singing. Research is contextual. This ballad recounting lost love is placed in Paris and shot in crackled black and white, reminiscent of romantic films of the mid-20th century.

Constructivism. In moving to constructivism, the discussion moves from objectivism to subjectivism. In Bruno Mars's *Just the Way You Are* (Video 3; http://youtu.be/LjhCEhWiKXk), a woman listens to the song on a Walkman. Mars interrupts her, pulls out the magnetic tape, and constructs a representation of the song using the tape. Viewers still see literal representations of the subject and object of the song, but they also see the author of the song constructing that representation, as the video explicitly points out the constructed nature of the song and its video representation.

Critical Theory. Travie McCoy's *Billionaire* (Video 4; http://youtu.be/8aR0r905cCw) opens with Bruno Mars singing, "I want to be a billionaire…" However, the audiovisual representation tells a story different from a mere plea for immense wealth: Travie McCoy gives a new skateboard to a skater who has broken his board, buys a sample CD from a struggling artist, gives a car to a hitchhiker, and so on. The more common story of accumulating wealth for personal gain is being critiqued.

After exploring each paradigm, I shifted the discussion with the latest DJ Earworm *United State of Pop* mashup (all available at djearworm.com). We discussed how the mashup represents social reality but is composed by synthesizing its component pieces. The discussion moved toward a more complete view of AR as telling stories selectively drawn from data.

This discussion included questioning the process of storytelling by asking, "Who is DJ Earworm, and by what right does he tell this story?" as well as "How would the story be different if someone else told it?" In this way, a foundational understanding of the perils of AR is laid, the CML concept of representation is broached: The reduction of collected data through analysis, even the processes of collecting data, necessarily leaves bits out.

As action researchers working *with* (and not *on*) participants, the ELA interns and I have wrestled with our positions as instruments through which data flow. Herein lies the need for the critical in AR to guide researchers toward implications challenging injustice and inequality instead of trying only to report on pedagogical improvement.

Table 3
Examples of Music Videos for Research Paradigms

Paradigm	Example
Positivist	*Single Ladies* (Beyoncé, 2009) *OMG* (Usher, 2010) *Rolling in the Deep* (Adele, 2011) *Lights* (Ellie Goulding, 2012) *When I Was Your Man* (Bruno Mars, 2013) *Let Her Go* (Passenger, 2014)
Postpositivist	*You Belong with Me* (Taylor Swift, 2009) *Need You Now* (Lady Antebellum, 2010) *Someone Like You* (Adele, 2011) *Wild Ones* (Flo Rida, 2012) *Suit & Tie* (Justin Timberlake feat. Jay-Z, 2013) *Rude* (Magic!, 2014)
Constructivist	*I've Got a Feeling* (Black Eyed Peas, 2009) *Just the Way You Are* (Bruno Mars, 2010) *Good Life* (OneRepublic, 2011) *We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together* (Taylor Swift, 2012) *Safe and Sound* (Capital Cities, 2013) *Happy* (Pharrell Williams, 2014)
Critical Theory	*Poker Face* (Lady Gaga, 2009) *Billionaire* (Travie McCoy, 2010) *Sexy and I Know It* (LMFAO, 2011) *Wide Awake* (Katy Perry, 2012) *Royals* (Lorde, 2013) *Hozier* (Take Me to Church, 2014)
DJ Earworm Mashups	*United State of Pop* (2007) *Viva la Pop* (2008) *Blame It On the Pop* (2009) *Don't Stop the Pop* (2010) *World Go Boom* (2011) *Shine Brighter* (2012) *Living the Fantasy* (2013) *Do What You Wanna Do* (2014)

Note. Official videos for each of these songs are available on YouTube. Entries listed as *Song Title* (Artist, Year)

This discussion also engaged interns in the first two core concepts of CML. In exploring multiple research paradigms, interns can come to understand how ontology, epistemology, and methodology construct each paradigm in ways that enhance or limit understandings of reality and the systems impacting a classroom; such understanding supports the concept of nontransparency and how all messages are constructed by and for the benefit of someone. Likewise, the concept of codes and conventions may have become more apparent, as interns could see how songs, videos, even research paradigms have their own languages and rules for construction using those languages.

DJ Earworm's mashups provide the foundation to move through the next steps of the AR process, as well, providing an example of a complete AR project. He proposed a research

question: "What does popular music have to say about life and society this year?" He provided his data set: the top 25 songs of the year according to a specific source. He synthesized his data by coding each source and then presenting overarching themes that run through those sources. Thus, his work is useful at each step of the process for engaging interns in the methods of AR.

To assess intern understandings around these foundations, I used bell-ringer/ticket-out-the-door writing. For example, before presenting the initial lesson on research paradigms but after reading the Guba and Lincoln (1994) chapter, I asked interns to respond in writing to the following questions:

- What do you understand about research paradigms?
- What do you not understand about research paradigms?

The following are representative answers:

- "I don't see how to pick out subtle differences between the different research paradigms. What you pick in one paradigm may limit what information that you may use in another."
- "I did not understand if one is 'the best' for AR. I think <u>critical theory</u> personally, but constructivism as well."
- "How do I figure out which paradigm my research will follow?"

After exploring these paradigms through mashups, I asked the same questions, and received very different written responses:

- "In positivism, there is only one reality and the researcher is out to prove something. The postpositivist allows for some distances, but it is the constructivist who takes into account context and constructs their own reality. The critical theorists deal with social issues and construct a response to that."
- "Does critical theory always focus on social justice elements, or is it more about showing that constructed realities are false?"
- "How do we narrow our A.R. while also addressing a variety of sources (like DJ Earworm) w/o [sic] getting lost?"

While questions remained, they were not about what research paradigms are but about how to engage AR. This response indicates a move away from trepidation in conducting AR and toward a desire to conduct research more effectively and with purpose.

When I taught the research paradigm lesson in fall 2010, an outside observer sat in and also saw the students more readily grasping the intricacies of research and wrote the following commentary:

> This is abstract stuff for beginning English teachers who are struggling to write coherent lesson plans and get to school on time. But it was evident to me that the students appreciated Dr. Laughter's use of popular culture as a medium in which to grapple with ontological and epistemological questions.... As several literacy researchers suggest, teachers should be drawing on students' popular culture knowledge in English classrooms as often as they can, as doing so positions students as primary knowers and contributors. Because the students were familiar with the videos–indeed, several held opinions about the videos and/or

songs–they were engaged and eager to think and talk about the concepts Dr. Laughter introduced. I believe the videos provided a "real-world" context in which to ground abstract ideas.

This commentary represented an endorsement for using mashups as a foundation for AR and CML in preservice teacher preparation that might carry into the secondary ELA classroom. Later peer evaluations of these lessons reported similar conclusions.

AR Methods

Exploring data collection and analysis through multimedia texts added flesh to the outline and directions interns read concurrently in Creswell's (2003) and Hinchey's (2008) description of AR methods. A progression of multimedia activities provided the opportunity to examine and discuss the limitations of different data sources and the importance of triangulation. These activities addressed three primary data sources for AR: artifacts, observations, and interviews. This lesson was first piloted in spring 2010 by using *Blame It On the Pop* as a text for open coding; the more complete lesson was first used in spring 2011 as I began to stretch my use of DJ Earworm.

Data analysis. The first steps into data analysis are, at best, timid if not downright intimidating: "Once all of the data is collected…inexperienced researchers can feel at a loss, confronting a mountain of information with no idea how to begin tunneling through it" (Hinchey, 2008, p. 86). As such, DJ Earworm's mashups provided an easy place to practice open coding. For example, in 2009's *Blame It On the Pop*, students immediately coded the repetition of the words *up* and *down*. A second viewing while focused coding for those two words required a deeper definition of the numerous ways they are used. That is, "Get back *up* when you're tumbling *down*" meant something different from "Baby, are you *down*?" Within the coded word *down*, interns had the opportunity to learn to differentiate and code for spatial metaphors, personal emotions, and idioms of agreement. By being more specific in the coding definitions of *up* and *down*, interns could see where open coding begins and then shifts to axial coding.

Observations. The next activity involved observational data. I wanted interns to practice coding a video recording but also understand the limits of any medium. I began with the video for Michael Bublé's *Haven't Met You Yet* (http://youtu.be/1AJmKkU5POA) but muted the audio. Comments centered around how this visual text presents the received fairytale story of boy meets girl and fall in love. I asked for evidence from their notes supporting this contention.

I then replayed the video with the audio so we could discuss differences between visual data sources and audiovisual data sources. However, I instead play the so-called "bad lip reading" version of the music video, entitled *Russian Unicorn* (Video 5; http://youtu.be/YjaZNYSt700). A bad lip reading mashup examines a visual text and supplies a different but believable soundtrack based on synchronous lip and mouth movements. This genre includes everything from music videos to political speeches to popular movies. We then discussed how visual expectations may not match audio realities (and vice versa) and how action researchers must seek multiple data sources and try to absorb data with open eyes and ears, recognizing their own biases and a medium's limitations.

Interviews. To engage the interns with interview data, I followed a three-part lesson designed to spark discussion about researcher positioning. I began by presenting a written transcript of a one-on-one interview with a high school student in central Los

Angeles. After time spent coding the transcript, we discussed what themes we found and began to draw some descriptions about what we were reading.

We then discussed what other types of data we might collect if we had an audio recording paired with the transcript. I played the audio recording of the interview, which is, in fact, Eazy E's *Boyz N the Hood* (Video 6; http://youtu.be/fGeNDnYcQOA). The audio version of this interview thus added a specific context to the interview and allowed for discussion about differences among recording media.

As a final step, I asked how a video would change what researchers drew from the data. I then showed a Dynamite Hack cover version (Video 7; http://youtu.be/aeL9gagV_VA). In this video, the band portrays an upper class, White context for the lyrics, challenging expectations and providing space for discussing how researchers' preconceived notions might color the data they collect.

These discussions engaged interns in the next two core concepts of CML. By seeing how different researchers and participants might understand data in different ways, they had the opportunity to come to an understanding of audience decoding and how different people experience the same message in different ways. Likewise, in experiencing data drawn from multiple sources, interns might see how all research participants embody individual values and points of view, which supports the concept of content and message. Audience decoding became important as the interns saw how different people can understand the same experience differently. Likewise, these multiple data sources each carry embedded values and points of view, for which a researcher must account.

In anonymous end-of-course evaluations, these activities involving DJ Earworm and video mashups were mentioned most often as adding to the course. When asked, "Was this class intellectually stimulating?" interns have responded as follows:

- "Curriculum was presented in a variety of mediums. We covered high-level, abstract concepts." (fall 2009)
- "The approach to teaching us about AR was challenging and engaging. Considering the ways this type of research is approached was interesting and helpful for me to understand the best approach to do this next semester." (fall 2011)
- "The frequent use of media grounded our topics in a contemporary context and appealed to me as a visual learner." (spring 2013)

When asked, "What aspects of this class contributed most to your learning?" interns have responded as follows:

- "Class discussion and use of media." (spring 2010)
- "I would say the use of video clips and class discussion contributed most to my learning." (fall 2011)
- "The DJ Earworm lessons blew my mind. They were very relevant and helped me to understand the obtuse elements of research that I wasn't understanding." (spring 2013).

Follow-up conversations with interns and the implications drawn from their AR projects demonstrated a general willingness and ability to engage CML in their own classrooms toward social justice ends. Anecdotally, many interns have described how they have continued to use AR in their own classrooms throughout the first several years in the

field; capturing these stories more systematically is a line of research currently under development.

Generating Findings and Implications

Beginning in spring 2012, I included a demonstration of how to generate and ground findings in analysis, because this seemed to be a particular stumbling block for several interns. I examined the original data set of 25 videos from which DJ Earworm drew his 2011 mashup and conducted my own analysis. I first watched the component videos DJ Earworm used in *World Go Boom*, employing open coding to determine if my own analysis would mirror his expressed commentary. Through qualitative microanalysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) I developed a central category, two primary findings, and an analytical framework. I then shared this process with the class, closing with a description of how these findings then provided a foundation for social justice implications. The annual repetition of this lesson has provided new findings and implications as the data sets change.

In my 2012 analysis a central category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) that emerged was the genre Party Rock. I defined this genre as music about parties, as opposed to music intended to be played during parties. A representative example of Party Rock is Jennifer Lopez's *On the Floor* (Video 8; http://youtu.be/t4H_Zoh7G5A). Seventeen of 25 songs included in *World Go Boom* represent Party Rock. In addition to discussing this central category, I described how two findings added depth. Within Party Rock, I found two primary themes: (a) Party Rock trending toward Hopeless and (b) Party Rock trending toward Hopeful. Discussing these themes provided the opportunity to discuss binary and continuum analytical frameworks.

In describing Hopeless, I first presented Pitbull's *Give Me Everything* (http://youtu.be/EP05wWmKEaI), in which the chorus states, "Give me everything tonight… For all we know, we might not have tomorrow." This carpe diem sentiment is a mild version of Hopeless when compared with the postapocalyptic vision of Britney Spears's *Till the World Ends* (http://youtu.be/qzU9OrZlKb8), in which the party rock continues underground after the destruction of the cities above. Likewise, this theme includes a parody of hopeless where Party Rock is the cause of a zombie outbreak in LMFAO's *Party Rock Anthem* (http://youtu.be/KQ6zr6kCPj8).

In the opposite direction, Party Rock might trend toward Hopeful. This theme begins with Lady Gaga's *Born this Way* (http://youtu.be/wV1FrqwZyKw) and her call for those who are marginalized to recognize their innate value as unique beings. Lupe Fiasco moves further with *The Show Goes on All Night* (http://youtu.be/Rmp6zIr5y4U), presenting himself as one who escaped the poverty into which he was born and who is now fighting for the kids currently living in similar conditions. Likewise, Katy Perry's *Firework* (http://youtu.be/QGJuMBdaqIw) encourages marginalized youth to bring their *fireworks* to the world to make it a more beautiful place.

Finally, *Raise Your Glass* by Pink (http://youtu.be/XjVNlG5cZyQ) takes this message further, encouraging the marginalized to fight those who define them as subcultural. Once I laid out these themes, we placed all the songs on a continuum from Most Hopeless to Most Hopeful and used that framework to analyze the other Party Rock videos in *World Go Boom*.

By undertaking this entire process in one class, I presented a larger picture of the AR process so interns could feel more able to go about developing findings within their own

projects. We generated discussion and understanding around the entire process of AR, in effect, modeling the move toward social justice implications. This demonstration also included discussion around how different researchers might analyze data in different ways, how to approach data analysis systematically, and how to understand biases that might impact analysis.

In addition, interns experienced the fifth core concept of CML, motivation. Just as each research participant embodies individual values and points of view, the action researcher also embodies specific motivations for engaging a research project toward particular ends. In coming to understand AR as a tool of social justice, interns may learn that they have the ability to unmask and unmake inequality and injustice in their own educational contexts.

Our 2012 discussion centered on how hope for a better world might be developed and maintained despite the many media representations of a postapocalyptic breakdown. In 2013, we analyzed representations of relationships. In 2014, we explored the impact of featured artists and what was implied by the shift from dance music to ballads. In 2015, we began with the differing representations of male and female artists and then looked at how they intersected with emotions.

The next evolution of these lessons would be to develop a longitudinal analysis whereby we compare DJ Earworm's representation of each calendar year to what was happening at the time. A cursory glance at the titles of each mashup would indicate that the economic collapse of 2009 would pair well with *Blame It On the Pop,* just as 2010's first steps to recovery would be reflected in *Don't Stop the Pop.*

Outcomes

The results of these lessons are expressed most fully in the completed AR projects. I have now supervised almost 100 AR projects, each one using the AR process toward social justice ends. Almost all of these projects have focused on one of three overlapping issues: (a) a specific classroom method, (b) student motivation, and (c) content relevance. No matter the focus, each project somehow has made the AR move toward social justice (a few examples follow).

A common classroom method to be examined is whole-class discussion and student participation. Interns have used discussion as the foundation for AR projects exploring the development of student social awareness (e.g., "Dialogic Pedagogy In and Out of Class"), critical thinking (e.g., "Discuss Amongst Yourselves"), and student voice (e.g., "Finding Humanity in Students' Voices"). Other interns have examined what happens when derogatory language is used (e.g., "'G' Dudes: Combatting Homophobia in the Classroom") and how gendered expectations impact student-teacher interactions (e.g., "The Impact of Gender on Student-Teacher Interaction").

Increasing student motivation is a common concern, but interns do not study only how to motivate students by some extrinsic or intrinsic means. Student motivation has been explored by leading students to see themselves as their own educational advocates (e.g., "Self-Advocacy in the Responsive Classroom"), by asking how an ELA curriculum might include English language learners (e.g., "Benefitting ELLs–and All Students–in the ELA Classroom"), and by increasing student choice in the classroom (e.g., "Authority and Responsibility in the Secondary Classroom").

Making ELA content relevant to students, while tied to issues of student motivation, begins by learning what is already relevant and real in students' lives. Topics have included the impact of violence on students' lives (e.g., "Creating Non-Violent Action Out of Violent Tendencies"), how to connect ELA content to current or future employment (e.g., "?When Will I Use This?' Exploring Relevancy in the English Classroom"), the impact teachers might have on students in gangs (e.g., "Clogging the Pipeline"), and including students' linguistic funds of knowledge in the ELA classroom (e.g., "Bridging Home and Academic Vocabularies").

One example of an AR project that explicitly used CML asked how media might reduce student anxiety and self-doubt ("Using Popular Media to Breach the Affective Filter"). Likewise, music has been a common medium for CML exploration through making connections to student motivation (e.g., "Creating Meaningful Connections with 21st Century Students") and asking if using popular music as a bridge text to the canon demeans students' cultures (e.g., "Music as Text in the ELA Classroom").

One intern explored how media representations of a school affected student motivation in the classroom ("The Impact of Community Perception on Schools"), while an increasingly common topic questions the effect of the expansion of personal classroom technology (e.g., "Students' Perceptions of On-Task Behavior and Classroom Engagement in a 1:1 iPad School" and "Gauging Student Motivation and Engagement in the 1:1 ELA Classroom"). While every AR project has not specifically addressed CML or classroom technology, most interns have reported using the core concepts of CML in their daily teaching.

Implications

Just as Burwell (2013) and Chun (2012) found video remixes to be effective foundations in secondary and university classrooms, mashups are effective tools for the development of teachers as action researchers and for establishing a foundation for engaging CML in their future classrooms. By engaging AR and CML through mashups, interns can come to see the classroom as a site for social justice and feel able to effect that change.

Burwell (2013) closed the report of her teaching practice by claiming, "Such transformative texts and practices certainly merit a place in our classrooms. The exploration of video remix allows for important ideas to be introduced and questions to be asked" (p. 8). These important ideas and questions are at the heart of seeing the classroom as a site for social justice and represent the objectives for both CML and AR. However, teacher preparation must include an explicit focus on CML and AR. If teachers are to pursue social justice in the classroom, they need the pedagogical content knowledge to do so. In my own context, overlaying CML and AR provides interns with tools for understanding classroom context and responding to issues in the field.

Throughout my evolving use of these current classroom technologies, there remains the need for explicit instruction; while my own context involves only secondary ELA teachers, such work is necessary across grade levels and content areas. The opportunity for interns to develop a theoretical framework and methodology for such critique has led to a higher level of comfort with and ability in designing these types of lessons for their own classrooms. In particular, connecting these lessons with the five core concepts of CML offers both necessary vocabulary and an adaptable rubric for assessment, while AR provides the toolkit to pursue the social justice aims that develop when critiquing media.

Moving toward a social justice disposition requires explicit instruction in how CML might be engaged as content and AR as a method of naming and addressing issues. For example, ELA teacher preparation might benefit from including the core principles of media literacy education presented by the National Association for Media Literacy Education (http://namle.net/publications/core-principles/), the organization from which Kellner and Share (2006) drew their core concepts. These principles move beyond a basis for CML and provide examples of the types of questions students and teachers might discuss, a clear connection between CML and critical thinking curricula, and the implications of the expanding conception of literacy. Such connections between theorized principles and classroom practice represent a needed area for further development of CML literature.

Likewise, the arrival of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in many ELA classrooms requires specific consideration of how AR might work within these boundaries established a priori while also problematizing their narrowed conception of what counts as literacy. For example, CCSS promotional materials tout components of and the need for digital literacy; however, they focus only on getting hardware into the hands of students so they can use them to take the standardized tests associated with CCSS (Heitner, 2013), thus using schools as new markets for the technology firms behind CCSS. As with any educational reform, teachers are going to look for ways to stay within the rules while still doing what is best for students; teacher preparation in AR methods should be the vanguard for such efforts.

The ELA classroom is a complex place where much that should happen across the curriculum is relegated (National Council of Teachers of English, 2013). Where else can a teacher show mashups as texts for analysis and discussion? Previous interns have reported that AR and CML are both constant presences in their classrooms and that they serve to provide frameworks and methods for seeing the classroom as a site for participatory democracy and social justice. ELA teachers must be prepared with the methods and content to facilitate their own students toward social justice ends, lest they tacitly communicate that students are only consumers or that critique does not have a place in ELA classrooms.

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