

# MULTIMODAL MEDIA PRODUCTION: NEW LANDSCAPES FOR CRAFTING FUTURE SELVES

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## *Abstract*

This article outlines a framework for using multimodal media production (MMP) with urban youth to sketch critical future selves that are collaborative, self-confident, college-going, and resilient. Particularly today with the affordances of digital technologies, MMPs of alternative narratives by youth of color allow a particularly rich form of imagining and exploring different times and spaces, while also developing critical literacies, skills, and dispositions that allow them to actualize affirmative futures.

*Keywords:* multimodal media production, youth of color, narratives, urban youth, urban education

**M**arginalized urban youth of color today face a very real problem of learning how to read and write their world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Freire (1970) posits that the role of educators is to assist in this process by creating knowledge through a humanizing discourse forged with students, insisting that education must always stand in opposition to racial, gender, class, sexual, religious, and other forms of oppression. Possessing a critical consciousness or critical literacy skills means developing the ability to read one's world and the oppressive elements within it, while simultaneously becoming a social agent capable of changing that reality (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Giroux (1987) likewise explains:

[T]he process of developing critical consciousness means developing the theoretical and practical conditions through which human beings can locate themselves in their own histories and in doing so make themselves

present as agents in the struggle to expand the possibilities of human life and freedom... To be literate is not to be free, it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history and *future*. (italics ours, Giroux, 1987, p. 11).

In one of his final published contributions, Freire (1995) emphasizes a pedagogy of hope. In stark contrast to theories that equate poverty with social underdevelopment or illiteracy with a disease, a Freirean theory of critical literacy suggests that people suffering oppression “maintain hope even when the harshness of reality may suggest the opposite” (hooks, 2003, p. v). More recently Duncan-Andrade (2009), playing off United States President Barack Obama's 2008 campaign mantra of “hope” and building on recent research conducted in the field of epidemiology, suggests that “critical hope” can and has always been one of the few methods for urban youth to survive and thrive in the midst of intense traumatic life experiences. Along similar lines, as a critique of what was seen as neglect of temporal and future-oriented aspects of self-definition in psychology research, Markus and Nurius (1986) have developed the construct of “possible selves.” Possible selves refer to the ideas, images, beliefs, hopes and fears around what people expect to become in the future and “motivate behavior by providing energy and guidance to pursue hoped-for selves and to avoid feared selves” (Packard & Conway, 2006, p.252). This concept has been taken up by scholars working with youth and adults in areas from cognitive development and school counseling (Carey & Martin, 2007) to studies of African American Language (Lanehart, 2008) and critical multimodal literacies (Ewald & Lightfoot, 2001).

Not only speaking to Freirian aspirations of hope and possibility, a critical literacy approach also emerges from praxis—the practice of educators working with youth to develop alternative narratives by countering deficit discourses commonly associated with education, race, language, literacy and poverty in urban communities of color. Building on Freire's work, critical race theorists have suggested that one way education can challenge injustice is through storytelling, whereby audiences hear the professional and personal stories of people of color who have survived racist structural oppressions (Delgado, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Williams, 2000).

Multimodal media production (MMP), a concept developed by Turner (2008), explains the myriad of narrative modalities youth use to understand the world they live in, express themselves, be entertained, and defend themselves. Modalities include documentaries, video essays, digital stories, rap, digital video poetry, music videos, computer games, public service announcements, youth radio, and web sites (Bruce, 2002; Gubrium, 2009; Gubrium & Turner, in press; Trainor, 2004; Youth Radio, n.d.). The affordances provided by digital technologies make for a particularly rich form of imagining and providing space for exploration, while also developing critical literacies, information and communication

technologies (ICT) skills (Mahiri, 2004), and dispositions that allow youth to actualize future selves. As new forms of authorship, MMPs provide a link between cognition and motivation, as they build on youth funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992) and provide a legitimate and substantive forum for self-expression.

## ENVISIONING FUTURE SELVES THROUGH MMP

Several studies examine what happens when marginalized youth are encouraged to reconceptualize identities in future-oriented ways (Day, Borkowski, Punzo, & Howsepian, 1994; Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006). The studies take an intervention-based approach, working with youth to develop clear and detailed possible selves, as well as to develop specific strategies and skills to achieve these selves. Findings are linked to schooling outcomes, indicating that the interventions result in increased attendance rates, reduced retention rates, higher GPAs, and higher standardized test scores.

Oyserman and colleagues' work (2002), focusing on African American youth envisioning future selves, reviews the process of students constructing future selves by synthesizing what they know about themselves with their life aspirations. "Possible selves" serve as virtual constructions of the type of person the youth participants would like to become (or avoid becoming) and work as an engine for driving eventual action. Indeed, a variety of studies have demonstrated that youth with school-focused possible selves are at reduced risk of involvement in delinquent activities, attain better school outcomes, feel engaged in the school setting, show an increased persistence in academic tasks, and exhibit higher levels of resilience and feelings of self-efficacy (Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002).

Several studies establish a link between racial identity, school involvement, and student conceptualizations of future selves. Findings from one small, group-based intervention (Day et al., 1994) demonstrate the balance of affirmative and negative possible academic self-conceptions of Mexican-American elementary school students. Other studies (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1994) refer to feelings of conflict experienced by some low-income African American youth, who feel torn between choosing personal achievement goals and identifying as "Black youth." More recent scholarship on Black youth identity and academic achievement (Carter, 2008; Graves, 2006) indicates that students who display racial identities that employ a critical race theoretical (CRT) lens develop ideologies and strategies that embody critical hope.

MMPs afford the possibility for critically analyzing issues of social justice within historically marginalized communities of color. The pedagogical practice of applying the literacy activities of MMP to tap into students' funds of knowledge (Moll, 1992) forms an effective teaching strategy. For example, Lee and Major's (2003) theory of "cultural modeling" uses African American literature to

engage African American students in discussions around text using their own language and literacy practices. The authors argue that all classroom instruction should be grounded in students' own cultural knowledge, reminiscent of Vygotsky's (1935/1978) conceptualization of literacy as a tool students use to understand themselves in relation to their own cultural worlds. Using the MMP process to teach multiliteracies is consistent with the Freirean tradition of meeting students where they are. Research supports the efficacy of starting with students' own language and literacy practices in order to teach them new analytical skills that they can then bridge to other endeavors (Lee & Majors, 2003; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2004).

Even with research conducted on the ways youth view possible/future selves, relatively little has been written about MMP practices that offer students opportunities to construct future selves while developing critical media literacies. In this article we examine MMPs as a site for the construction of alternative narratives (Packard & Conway, 2006) in which youth of color explore their future selves.

## METHODOLOGY

The data for this study comes from a larger study conducted by Turner (2008) at Fanon Middle School (FMS)\*, an urban public school in Northern California, focusing on a multimodal media production (MMP) course used as a literacy intervention. FMS serves a high percentage of students who are below grade level in both English and Math, according to 2004-05 California Standard Test results, and who live with families that subsist below the poverty level (over 75% receive free or reduced lunch) (YMCA, 2005). Most students come to FMS amidst a multitude of challenges that coincide with growing up in a neighborhood affected by low wage jobs and an overabundance of opportunities to enter an underground economy. Although the students do live and study in a context of degenerating physical and social structures, they also arrive with a wide range of experience with technology and varying degrees of ICT literacies.

The basis for establishing the research project and implementation of the MMP course stemmed from a prior community-based participatory needs assessment. African American, Latino and Asian youth were apprenticed as community researchers to examine issues students and community members felt were important to address. Students developed open-ended and closed survey questions, collected survey results on the streets in their community and aggregated results using spreadsheet software. Findings suggested that community members

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\* All place names and names of participants have received pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

thought the community needed more programs focused on helping youth to succeed in life.

Experiences conducting the survey, combined with their own writings about the self, family, relationships, and community, served as a foundation on which students developed their MMPs. Students were trained in critical reading and media production using appropriate software applications and worked collaboratively four days per week, for one hour and 45 minutes periods. We label these groups of students as “social networks” because multimodal media production involves a level of collegiality beyond mere friendship (Soep & Chávez, 2005) and includes transformative relationships with teachers and other adults. Social networks were divided into four cohorts, with networks named after local universities to promote a college-going attitude.

The research takes a narrative analytical approach. A narrative perspective takes the situated realities of participants into account in analysis and emphasizes multiple levels of narrativity, opening its representational activity to view (Peterson & Langellier, 2006; Riessman, 2008). In this article we focus on the ways that participants frame their understanding of what they gained through participating in the MMP course. In particular, we examine the ways they position their identities to make sense of how MMP allows them to craft new landscapes related to who they think they are. Here we present testimony from the seven focal students. Their cases are not idiosyncratic, but represent in microcosm the work of biographical construction.

Student-produced MMPs, ranging from public service announcements (PSAs) and digital stories to hip hop songs, music videos, and digital music; pre/post-course surveys; individual interviews conducted with seven focal students and their teachers; and over 15 hours of digitally recorded classroom interaction were all considered as data sources for analysis. We used a similar system to that of Leondari, Syngollitou and Kiosseoglou (1998) for coding data to examine shifts in students’ conceptions of future selves. The authors analyzed the relationship between students’ possible selves and school behavior and performance, coding students’ data texts on a range of dimensions and correlated these different dimensions with both self-reported school behavior and achievement measures (i.e. GPA).

## FINDINGS

In addition to critical and multiliteracies students developed in the MMP course (Turner, in press), recognizable shifts took place in students’ ability to work collaboratively, as well as attitude shifts regarding the pursuit of a college degree, increased self-confidence and greater perseverance.

### *Collaborative creation*

One key finding is that student collaboration in MMP disrupted traditional notions of authorship and positioned students as members of a community of practice. For example, all of the hip hop productions were collaborative in nature, involving the labor of at least three students. This finding suggests new ways of thinking about student authorship, in ways not typically conceptualized in the school setting. Turner asked one participant, Gina (G), what it was like to collaborate with two other participants, Danielle and Jollie, in the production process.

G: Woo....it was tough...it was really tough. Me and Jollie we did record it. But we had to wait for Danielle. At the time that's why I quit, and we never got, and I think they said they were going to record with [an African American female student], and I was like o.k. And then now it's time to go solo.

NT: So in that case collaborating was very tough.

G: Yeah a lot of people be like...ohh you guys are like Destiny's Child  
You guys breakin' up  
Then comin' back

I was like woo....I'm just gonna go solo

And do what I have to do to make it possible

NT: What are some of the challenges in collaborating? And what are some of the strengths and the good parts of collaborating?

G: Well, the good things are like how you guys have it where we have to come together. And make it possible... Don't say that we can't. Like we all have to get together to make the song perfect. [Waiting and thinking] And the bad things about it was all sayin' "oh that don't sound right," and "this do sound right." So we all had different parts in our minds. It was different than we thought it would be. (Interview, May 3, 2007)

Gina was forthright about the benefits, as well as the challenges, of collaboration. She responded to Turner's question diplomatically, refusing to blame any one of her collaborators, while also explaining that it was the responsibility of the group to "come together" and never "say that we can't." In this sense, her reflections focus on the possibility that comes to fruition as a result of collaboration. Going it alone would have meant not getting the work produced.

When asked about what it was like working with Gina, however, Danielle (D) and Jollie (J) responded less diplomatically:

J: O my god! It was so hard because, you know, some people they just can't sing. O my god! It's just hard. Cuz you have to train people and then when you do a song people try and sing like other people, even though it's not workin'. But I'm not speakin' on no names, I'm just speakin' from experience.

D: Everybody has different personalities so it's hard to work it all out.

J: Yeah one [person] just all sensitive.

D: [Trying to make sure Jollie doesn't name Gina on the digital recorder]  
Just be quiet.

J: The others....

NT: hy do you collaborate? Because you keep doin' it. Yeah.

J: Cuz the song gon' sound better.

D: You singin' it wit' cho friends

J: [Overly dramatic] Your beautiful sisters. (Interview, May 3, 2007)

Jollie and Danielle explained how challenging collaboration could be, especially with different artistic tendencies involved. The upshot was that their song would "sound better" and that, overall, they enjoyed the collaborative process. In particular, they highlighted the sense of strength in unity they experienced through collaboration.

D: She's the writer. I'm the voice.

J: NO! I'm the voice.

D: We're both the voice.

J: Yeah. Well she's like the publisher too, because she's havin' problems, because she was like, "well, we need to change this, we need to do this, put this in there, change this, take this out."

NT: Good so that is part of the collaboration. [Jollie] do[es] a lot of the ideas and brainstorming and then [Danielle] goes back and fixes it, corrects it, improves it and things like that?

D: Uh huh. I improve it.

NT: So the process of the song is you write it, she edits and improves it, then what's the next step?

J: Then we record it. (Interview, May 3, 2007)

The students' comments reflect the fluid nature of creative roles while producing MMPs, as well as an understanding of the profoundly important concept of submerging one's own ego for the future benefit of the greater good.

Similarly, another participant, Tyrone, explained his struggles with negotiating and building consensus with participant Devonte in order to complete production on their MMP:

Well, Devonte had made up the first and second rap, though, and then I had come up with the verse for the first song, and then on the second song he did the whole thing, and then I helped him make up the chorus. And then the people I worked with on the first song had did it and so, but then on the second song, we didn't have one person on there. We changed, we didn't let...[catches himself being rude]. I guess he didn't want to be on the song. So then we said, "let's get a different person." And so we choose [name of student]. Me, Devonte, and [student], and then [the student on the first song] wasn't up in it. (Interview, May 3, 2007)

Although collaborating was difficult at times for students, they were generally grateful for the opportunity to work with others. Participant Edward explained, "...all of our classes don't have what [the MMP course] has, which is teamwork, working together and great tutors" (Interview, May 2, 2007). Indeed, videotapes of students working together provide more insight into the process of collaboration. We saw students getting up, watching each other record, giving feedback, and sharing words of encouragement.

Co-authorship, which in this case included open exchanges and elaborated discussion on the project at hand, is typically not accounted for in the school setting, let alone assessed. That said, in the modern corporation and in higher education settings, less and less work is being completed or published by individuals working in isolation. In fact the reverse is true. More co-authored articles, chapters and books are published in academia, and corporations such as Google have their employees all work in teams of three to support and allow collaboration to flourish. Collaboration as a literacy practice is only becoming more significant and is a major skill students will be asked to engage in the future.

### *Increased self-confidence*

Research shows that self-knowledge and intrapersonal intelligence are key ingredients to success in future learning and life outcomes (Carey & Martin, 2007). Through observation of students at FMS, Turner was witness to the ways students experienced feelings of success through their recognition in school performances, conference presentation, and community events, which prepared them to learn, unlearn, and relearn across a variety of new domains—a skill undoubtedly important for future endeavors. During individual interviews focal students consistently cited a greater self-confidence realized through their participation in the MMP course. For Devonte (D) the opportunity to continue making beats and songs for hip hop MMPs was the most significant reason he had for participating in the course. A self-proclaimed perfectionist at his art, Devonte put a lot of pressure on himself to do his best when he was recording. Initially, when asked if he enjoyed the recording process, he explained:

D: Not that much.

NT: Why?

D: Cuz sometimes I'd mess up and stuff.

NT: What didn't you like?

D: Nuthin really.

NT: You can be honest.

D: Oh what I didn't like was shootin' the music video, cuz I was nervous and stuff. (Interview, May 24, 2007)

The interview extract suggests that Devonte was initially insecure about being on camera, and possibly not so confident about the work he had produced. However,



toward the end of the interview, he addressed the viewers on the other side of the video camera, telling them to “Oh yeah, watch the music video!!” (Interview, May 24, 2007). Although nervous while shooting the video and self-conscious about his performance in the video and recording his music, in the end Devonte was quite proud of his video/music productions.

During interviews, students expressed a similar pride in having created tangible media productions. While many originally doubted that they could complete an MMP, the fact that they were able to produce something tangible led to a belief in new capabilities for themselves. Gina’s testimony exemplified this sentiment. Through her participation in the MMP course she was able “to achieve what I actually wanted to be, and to believe I could actually make it instead of just saying I can’t. So I never thought about saying ‘no I can’t do that, I can’t do this’” (Interview, May 3, 2007). Attesting to the power of the MMP creative process, Gina is able to achieve a future self by producing a tangible representation of an envisioned future self. Instead of dreaming about what she could achieve and simply dismissing it as fantasy, she has learned a method for systematically actualizing her aspirations.

Even at the end of her interview, Gina encouraged others not to be held captive by doubting their own abilities saying, “All I got to say to the people is that you should achieve things that you never could. So go for it!” (Interview, May 3, 2007). For Gina there was a realization that her own internalization of negative messages was the largest obstacle to achieving her goals. She was encouraging people to create alternative narratives for themselves, envisioning future selves that resist oppressive messages. We saw this pattern repeated over and over again with students, consistently focused on the fact that their main take away from the MMP course was the knowledge that they could do more than they previously thought possible and, moreover, that they should never give up on their affirmative aspirations.

Mr. Miller, a seventh-grade science teacher for Gina, Danielle and Jollie, reflected on changes in the ways the students now participated in his class as a result of their participation in the MMP course:

Jollie ha[d] a self-esteem problem...at the start of the year... So...I had to constantly tell her, you know you can express that through your after school program...you just need to channel. And once Jollie started to channel, and she is getting better as a matter of fact, it’s a total turn around... All of a sudden since she did it then Danielle and Gina started to do it and they got one small increment of what and how powerful [the MMP course] could be. (Interview, January 31, 2007)

Mr. Miller alludes to Jollie’s past negative life experiences and the way she allowed these experiences to surface in his classroom. However, the process of “putting it on wax” (recording a song) allowed her to change the way she viewed herself and

her academic capabilities. The confidence Jollie gained was contagious. Through the collaborative process of MMP, she and her friends gained self-confidence as a group.

### *Perseverance*

Similarly, when Edward was asked specifically about skills he gained during the MMP course, he explained, “They taught me to never give up when I’m trying to do... Just never give up on your dreams and hopes and just keep tryin’ your best” (Interview, May 2, 2007). Edward’s comments represent an increased belief in himself and a learned ability to persevere. Edward’s PSA titled “Stop Guns” is about how tired he is of constant death and destruction in his city, in particular the role guns play in this cycle of violence. In his conclusion he states:

It is very sad that adults, children, and teens all have a gun. They always think that guns will help, but they are wrong, it will only get worse. Do you all think God has made us to make guns, war and death? So stop with all the guns, deaths, and wars and bring peace to all for God. (Edward, PSA: “Stop Guns,” 2007)

Edward credited the MMP course with his ability to express a vision for the city to be more peaceful in the future.

Juan and Edward collaborated in the MMP process, reading drafts of each other’s work, and learning the digital storytelling process and beat making software together. Juan echoed Edward’s sentiments regarding the envisioning process of MMP: “the most important thing that [I learned] is to try my best and to not give up on my life and what I’ve accomplished” (Interview, May 2, 2007). Juan referred to the media he created in the MMP course as an accomplishment that increased how he viewed his own self-worth.

Mr. Vee, a seventh grade math teacher, who worked with many of the focal students on year-end “expo-projects,” recognized the development of students’ self-confidence.

I did see a lot of the kids in [the MMP course] and I did see some of their performances in [Turner’s] room and performances they did outside the school and I would say with the kids in [the MMP course], like some of them were very much more confident in expressing, like, their work that they did in front of the whole school. (Interview, June 19, 2007)

“Believing in oneself” and “not giving up” are concepts cited by students and teachers as a significant benefit realized from students’ participation in the MMP course.

Math teacher Mr. Miller also recognized an increased level of technological know-how, confidence, and perseverance exhibited by students who participated in the MMP course:

That's the hardest thing in the world...if they have that fear of this thing called the computer... Not believing that this thing has all the information that you want... We are constantly fighting fear... We are boxing with self-esteem everyday... If we put out a question to you, such as we want everyone to find the vitamin food groups of Vitamin B & C, do you know that the students who have a fear of the computer, they won't even relate the computer to finding this information? ...[B]ut get the kids from [the MMP course]... You'll never hear a student from [the MMP course] state "how in the world do I find it?" (Interview, January 31, 2007)

Miller's comments relate directly to a major finding, that students were able to persevere through technical difficulties, overcoming initial obstacles related to insufficient technologies and producing new media.

While most students recalled repeated instances when they felt frustrated by computer failures, nearly all were grateful for the opportunity to work with computers and, in particular, the computer skills gained. While Jollie held a negative attitude toward the available computers, going so far as to use an expletive to demonstrate her disgust, Danielle helped her keep it all in perspective.

J: ...They [uses a unintelligible derogatory adjective to describe the computers]!

D: [Being grateful] They're good enough because they're better than nothing so....

J: They move hecka slow and stuff. And one computer they got a blue screen. What the...O my god

D: But it's better than nuthin'.

J: Shut up. He asked me for my opinion not you!... You can't barely see nuthin.'

D: Yeah, but if you can't afford a laptop or something, the best thing you can go up to next is a computer.

J: But you can't see nuthin' but blue on the computer you don't know whatchu doin.'

D: Well, make do.

J: Can't make do off of blue words and blue screens... Oh my god! It was so irritating. I was in the middle of doin'...some work and my mouse stopped workin.' The words were all small and stuff and it just froze and then [over dramatically pretending to cry]...it was so sad!

D: You really don't need computers these days cuz if you need to do research go to the library and if you need to type somethin' just write it.

J: Or you got a phone that got email on it. That's how my phone got Internet.

D: That's just a whole bunch of money.

J: My phone got Internet.

D: People ain't rich like that, O.K.!

J: If you got a Ghetto, you is...shoot yo bill is, well they're good.

D: But they could be better. (Interview, May 3, 2007)

Jollie was clearly dissatisfied with the performance of the computers in the lab and positioned herself as at the mercy of technology offerings at her school, due to her lack of privilege. On the other hand, her friend Danielle situated herself as on the privileged side of the digital divide, persevering with available technologies by using her cell phone to access the Internet.

Like Danielle, Rickey expressed a similar appreciation for simply having computer access when asked about the quality of the computers.

I have to be honest the quality is sweet... If its runnin' good and doin' what's it's supposed to do I don't see the problem. It's probably like the Windows 2000. It could be upgraded to like XP home or somethin'... It really doesn't matter as long as they go on and do what they gotta do on it. (Interview, April 3, 2007)

Insisting that as long as the (ancient) computers were doing what he asked of them, Rickey highlighted a philosophy of "making due with what one is given" through perseverance.

### *Crafting future selves*

Collectively, students in the MMP course crafted alternative narratives to the common media portrayal of themselves as violent youth gangbangers and drug dealers. As a rebuttal to these stereotypes in interviews and MMPs, students consistently referenced broader possibilities for future selves than they had originally envisioned for themselves. In addition to going to college, MMPs referenced studying hard, potential career interests, and the incredible power of hope in achieving their desired future selves. Findings from Oysterman and Markus (1990) demonstrate the relationship between characteristics of "possible selves" (hoped for, expected, and feared possible selves), with a balancing mechanism put in place when aspects of the "expected self" (e.g., attending college) are used to shore up the possibility of a "feared self" (e.g., being poor and unemployed) from realization.

Likewise during interviews, when Turner asked focal students what types of things they needed to know to consider themselves as successful adults, nearly every participant referenced college attendance or math and English skills gained during the traditional school day. Juan explained what he needed to be successful in the future as: "Knowing how to get to college... cuz after I do, um... after I finish college I would be able to get a really good job, and I could study lots of things and different types of things" (Interview, May 2, 2007).

Students also referenced aspirations to attend college in their hip hop lyrics: "I wanna learn about cars or go to college to get more far, I like school even though

its hard but I'm still gonna work even though its hard" (Tyrone, Song: "Hyphy, Hyphy, Stupid, Hyphy") and "Selling dope I've probably been dead if it wasn't for hope, going to college that's the big time, graduating that's ma time" (Devonte, Song: "Get Up!"). While Tyrone and Devonte both reference future possible "feared selves" in their lyrics, rapping about prototypical lives of difficulties in school and resulting dead end jobs, they choose to highlight more affirmative "expected selves" that entail their going to college to seek better future lives for themselves.

## MMP AS A NEW LANDSCAPE FOR CRAFTING FUTURE SELVES

The production of MMPs entailed the development of critical literacy skills, a more meaningful level of collaboration, a greater level of self-confidence and perseverance than previously experienced, and an affirmative envisioning of future selves (e.g. a college-going attitude). Turner also observed students' increased technological proficiencies through their use of audio and video equipment, and their development of critical research and analytical skills.

By telling stories about their own lives and communities, students linked local knowledge to the new process of creating MMPs. Traditional literacies of *writing* lyrics; *editing* text, sound, and images; and *preparing* for final presentation were also an essential component of the process. Several students spoke either for the first time, or with more conviction than before, of college as a future possibility for themselves. Whereas the "point" of much of mainstream academic work can be lost on students, particularly those suffering from a lack of skills and self-confidence, the potential applicability and usefulness of the MMP work was enticing to them. Perhaps as important, MMP was a type of work that was *enjoyable* to them, a quality far too often seen as exclusive of "rigorous" academic work.

In addition to shifting conceptualizations of future selves, comments from both students and teachers reflect transformation of selves in the present. A sense of having accomplished something meaningful and completed something tangible, having shared it with a group of interested peers, and considering new possibilities for the future allowed students to engage in all of their present activities with more focus, confidence, and vigor. Embarking on a project that engaged students intellectually, tactilely, aesthetically, and inter- and intra-personally, allowed them to tap each of these realms of engagement in other tasks as well.

MMP is a unique pedagogical tool in its ability to tap into students' existing literacies and interests in technology, media, and popular culture. The use of new media as a tool for allowing marginalized students to envision and actualize affirmative future selves is ripe for potential. While the power of possessing a sense of hope and possibility for the future is widely recognized, it is incumbent upon

educators to develop critical pedagogy that allows students to explore their potential futures, while gaining the skills necessary to actualize those futures.

The affordances of new media are particularly suited to this kind of exploration, given the ease with which students can now research multimodally; mining video, audio, text, and other graphics in their pursuit of knowledge. Likewise, the ability to use all of these modalities in production—whether by crafting hip hop videos or other forms of multimedia—allows students to access and develop literacies other than traditional academic reading and writing. In addition, students gained skills that can help them to actualize envisioned futures through meaningful collaboration, a sense of self-confidence, and an ability to persevere in the face of difficult circumstances.

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