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By: Jen Scott Curwood and **Damiana Gibbons**

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## "Just Like I Have Felt": Multimodal Counternarratives in Youth-Produced Digital Media

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### Abstract

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## Introduction

Literacy practices associated with media and technology often challenge traditional classroom instruction. Instead of privileging print text (Burroughs and Smagorinsky 2009) and monologic delivery (Nystrand 1997), these new literacy practices encourage multiple modes of expression (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001), participatory and student-centered learning (Lankshear and Knobel 2006), and critical engagement (Lewis and Ketter 2004). However, most approaches to technology integration “tend to initiate and organize their efforts according to the educational technologies being used” (Harris, Mishra, and Koehler 2009, p. 395). Technocentric approaches (Papert 1990) focus on the affordances and constraints of the digital tools rather than addressing how the technology facilitates new kinds of learning or identity expression. Consequently, these technocentric approaches privilege the “technical stuff” of new literacy practices rather than examining how media and technology can also cultivate new “ethos stuff” (Lankshear and Knobel 2006). As Lewis argues, “New technologies afford new practices, but it is the practices themselves, and the local and global contexts within which they are situated, that are central to new literacies. The logical implication . . . is that schools would accomplish more if, like new literacy users, they too focused on the practices rather than the tools” (Lewis 2007, p. 230).

We suggest that these practices can have profound implications for school-based learning that integrates digital media production. While digital tools enable students to readily make films and podcasts, for instance, educators must remain attuned to the ways in which these tools allow students to express their identities, reflect on their lives, and share their stories with an audience.

We employ philosopher Hilde Lindemann Nelson’s concepts about counterstories and master narratives. Counterstories resist an oppressive identity and attempt to replace it with one that commands respect. Master narratives are the often archetypal stories “found lying about in our culture that serve as summaries of socially shared understanding” (Lindemann Nelson 2001, p. 6). Lindemann Nelson identifies three levels of resistance within counternarratives: refusal, repudiation, and contestation. We argue that young people can use multiple modes of expression within digital media to simultaneously highlight and push back against master narratives on each of these

levels, particularly around race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Specifically, we are interested in exploring how multimodal texts can function as *counternarratives* (Giroux et al. 1996). We primarily draw on Burn and Parker’s analysis of the kineikonic mode, “the mode of the moving image” (Burn and Parker, 2003, p. 13), in order to perform a *multimodal microanalysis* of a digital poem created by a high school sophomore, Tommy Nouansacksy (real name used with permission). We use this tool to better understand Tommy’s modal choices and how these, in turn, function to resist master narratives prevalent in his community around race and sexual orientation.

By capturing screenshots of the digital poem at two-second intervals, we iteratively coded them for categories including time, image, action, speech, shot level, transition, music, dialogue, and text-in-use. By describing the modes and analyzing their presence, absence, co-occurrence, and designed interaction, we are able to see how the digital poem functions in order to explain the self to others outside the cultural groups to which Tommy belongs. Consequently, we posit that young people can employ digital tools to tell a story of their lived experiences by using multiple modes to express a certain kind of self. We argue that Tommy’s digital poem is an attempt at beginning or continuing a negotiation of identity, such as when he directly asks his audience, “Will you feel useless? Used? Just like I have felt.” Our multimodal microanalysis suggests that marginalized youth can use multiple modes to assert their identities and in the process create *multimodal counternarratives* to resist oppressive master narratives and restrictive cultural ideologies. We posit that this has clear implications for educators as they work to integrate new literacy practices and allow space for identity expression within schools.

## Theoretical Framework

In this article, we explore both the structure and the substance of youth-produced, digitally mediated counternarratives. Bruner (1990) argues that we must examine both elements in order to understand how individuals express their identities through narrative. In Taylor’s words, “We grasp our lives in narrative. In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going” (Taylor 1989, p. 58). Consequently, narrative is both an exploration and an expression of

identity. Through her research on the narratives of gay and lesbian youth, Halverson (2005) concludes that stories provide a means for individuals to delve into three key dimensions of identity: how we see ourselves, how we relate to others, and how we integrate into the communities to which we belong (Côté and Levine 2002). Halverson argues that through telling our stories “we build our notions of who we are across a variety of social situations and interactions. In turn, the way we perceive ourselves to be in these social situations shapes the stories we tell” (Halverson 2005, p. 72).

Seen in this light, identity construction is an ongoing, dialectical, and reflective process. Youth who are oppressed by master narratives are often compelled to develop a counternarrative that depicts them fully, accurately, and fairly.

In schools, master narratives can be overt, as in the Texas State Board of Education’s conservative Christian agenda to rewrite content area textbooks (Shorto 2010). But they can also occur by the tacit omission of alternative narratives, such as when teachers do not include multicultural literature out of fear of censorship (Stallworth, Gibbons, and Fauber 2006). Given these realities, we agree that “[t]here’s no such thing as a *neutral* education process” (Shaull 2006, p. 34). Education can either perpetuate the status quo and inculcate master narratives or become the practice of freedom, the way in which youth “deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Shaull 2006, p. 34). According to Lindemann Nelson, not all master narratives are oppressive. She explains that we use them both to justify our actions and to make sense of our lived experiences. “As the repositories of common norms, master narratives exercise a certain authority over our moral imaginations and play a role in informing our moral attitudes” (Lindemann Nelson 2001, p. 6). She posits that when master narratives identify members of a particular sociocultural group as candidates for oppression, counternarratives can function to alter the oppressors’ perception of the group and the oppressed individual’s self-perception. “By helping a person with an infiltrated consciousness to change her self-understanding, counterstories permit her to put greater trust in her own moral worth. If the counterstory moves her to see herself as a competent moral agent, she may be less willing to accept others’ oppressive valuations of her, and this too allows her to exercise her agency more freely”

(Lindemann Nelson 2001, p. 7). Consequently, counternarratives can impact an oppressed individual’s identity and sense of agency at the same time that they provide a way for an oppressor to see others as developed moral agents. This may make oppressors “less inclined to deprive [oppressed people] of the opportunity to enjoy valuable roles, relationships, and goods” (Lindemann Nelson 2001, p. 7).

Counternarratives take two key steps. First, they identify the elements of the master narratives that are oppressive and note how these elements effectively misrepresent individuals, situations, beliefs, and practices. Next, counternarratives “retell the story about the person or the group to which the person belongs in such a way as to make visible the morally relevant details that the master narrative suppressed” (Lindemann Nelson 2001, p. 7). Traditionally, counternarratives have been expressed through spoken or written language. However, readily available digital media now allow for multiple, multimodal, and multifaceted (Coiro et al. 2008) textual representations. The use of multiple modes shapes both the telling and the transmission of counternarratives.

According to Lindemann Nelson, not all counternarratives are compelling or effective. “Good counterstories aim to free not only individuals but the entire group whose identity is damaged by an oppressive master narrative. They don’t try to free one group by oppressing another, nor do they throw out moral understandings that ought to be left in place” (Lindemann Nelson 2001, p. 183). Counternarratives, in this sense, are an attempt to regain moral agency and humanity. Freire cautions that as individuals initially work to resist harmful cultural ideologies they must not become “oppressors of the oppressors” (Freire 1970/2006, p. 44). Rather, they should work to restore the humanity of both the marginalized and the dominant groups. Lindemann Nelson argues that resistance to detrimental counternarratives can happen at three levels: refusal, repudiation, and contestation.

To *refuse* a master narrative is to deny that it applies to oneself and to tend one’s own counterstory, perhaps without serious effort or any hope that others will take it up. To *repudiate* a master narrative is to use the self-understanding arising from a counterstory to oppose others applying the narrative to oneself, but the opposition is piecemeal. To

*contest* a master narrative is to oppose it with a counterstory both publicly and systematically. (Lindemann Nelson 2001, p. 178)

Often, youth are more interested in what are perceived to be the extraordinary and everyday experiences of their own lives, which are real yet different from the “discourse of realness” (Fleetwood 2005) that adults expect, especially in school settings. Depending on the structure, substance, medium, and mode of its telling, youth-produced counternarratives may function at any one of Lindemann Nelson’s three levels.

Within the realm of education, we must question the responsibility of the classroom teacher in creating space for counternarratives. As hooks states, “The revolutionary hope that I bring to the classroom is that it will become a space where they can come to voice” (hooks 1994, p. 53). Given the space, the tools, and the audience, how can young people create counternarratives? Youth-produced counternarratives do not operate within a vacuum, separate from the social, cultural, and discursive spaces within schools. Therefore, in order to understand how youth can resist master narratives through their digital media productions, we must closely study what young people are creating and what their intended message is for their audience. “True speaking is not solely an expression of creative power; it is an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless. As such, it is a courageous act—as such it represents a threat. To those who wield oppressive power, that which is threatening must necessarily be wiped out, annihilated, silenced” (hooks 1994, p. 8).

If teachers themselves—consciously or unconsciously—wield such power and attempt to perpetuate master narratives, they will likely resist the creation of space for students to tell their stories and talk back against such oppression. On the other hand, by allowing counternarratives to enter the classroom and be produced by students, teachers can actively resist cultural imperialism, which “involves the universalization of a dominant group’s experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm” (Young 1990, p. 59).

In a digital age that readily allows for the creation and dissemination of multimodal texts, the examination of how elements of power and control, form and format, practice and pedagogy are effectively re-envisioned is critical. Although literacy skills are still

rooted in decoding, comprehension, and production, the media within which they occur extend far beyond print text. Consequently, new literacy practices involve new forms of multimodal discourse (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001), take place within different social and spatial contexts (Leander 2007), and foster distinct forms of engagement and practice (Lewis and Ketter 2004). Whether new literacy practices engender counternarratives or counternarratives are more readily apparent within and disseminated through digital media remains to be seen. However, it is important for researchers to examine how youth can use digital tools to produce and share stories that actively seek to resist master narratives.

Our analysis of youth media takes a social semiotic approach. Social semiotics emphasizes meaning and meaning potential, or the different ways that language can be used in any given situation; it includes both what is used and what could have been used (Hodge and Kress 1988; Lemke 1990; Halliday 1993; Lemke 2000). Consequently, subjectivity is constructed in and through language, and this construction itself is ideological. In the case of identity, though, meaning potentials have traditionally fallen within certain recognized parameters, including race and sexual orientation. However, these parameters are too discrete and fail to account for the complexity of lived experiences and identity development. The language that creates identities must be accounted for in all of the different ways that social subjects are positioned in culture. Language itself can be used to resist the ideological constructions that are always present and being negotiated by participants in a linguistic act. According to Eggins, “[T]he implication of identifying ideology in text is that as readers of texts, we need to develop skills to be able to make explicit the ideological positions encoded, perhaps in order to resist or challenge them. This means we need a way of talking about how language is not just representing but actively construing our view of the world” (Eggins 1994, p. 11). This distinction is important for our analysis. Even though youth are bound by certain limitations set up by schools and society, they are not voiceless or helpless. Quite to the contrary, youth are able to tell their stories, engage in meaning-making activities, and manipulate multiple modes of expression for a particular audience and purpose.

Because communication is not limited to spoken or written language, accounting for other modes of expression—including sound, gesture, visual image,



and movement—is essential. In accounting for multiple modes, researchers have found that nonprint texts are able to convey identity (or at least expressions of identity in the form of identity markers) in ways different from print texts. In analyzing a digital story created by an African-American boy, Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith (2008) found that when they paired a close analysis with an examination of the social context of its creation, they uncovered not only how the young man represents his identity but also how that digital expression of identity interplays with his life outside the digital story (see also Hull and Nelson 2005). In this way, media productions are powerful expressions of selfhood: “A new media text such as a digital story presents a semblance of Self that is seemingly true, in the sense of ‘true to life’ by virtue of semiotic fullness, its multimodal completeness relative to the printed text” (Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith 2008, p. 421). Whereas Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith (2008) examined the digital story produced in an after school program, we explore how one young man, Tommy, created a digital poem in a school setting to try to determine how his identity expression in digital form, with its own “semblance of self,” could be an example of a counternarrative. With his poem, Tommy, who identifies as gay and a second-generation Asian immigrant, talks back to Eurocentric and heteronormative master narratives prevalent in his school. Drawing on critical theory, social semiotics, and multimodality, our analysis indicates that as youth use digital media tools, they create a *multimodal counternarrative* by employing multiple modes of expression to both highlight and push back against oppressive master narratives.

### Context

In this article, we focus on how Jen, Tommy’s English teacher, used media and technology to teach poetry to high school students. While canonical poetry is rooted in print literacy practices and traditionally taught with an emphasis on literary techniques and themes, Jen’s classroom embraced both digital tools and new literacy practices. As a result, her poetry unit involved the creation of several digital poems. Through her years of secondary teaching, Jen collected action research data, including (1) field notes and artifacts related to her process of working with the school’s library media specialist to collaboratively

design, implement, and reiterate the digital poetry unit over the course of four years; (2) students’ resultant digital poetry productions, with a focus on students who grounded their work in their lived experiences and addressed issues of cultural oppression; and (3) interviews with these focal students to uncover their perceptions of using digital media for self-expression, the role of the audience in shaping their work, and how their work pushed back against dominant cultural ideologies and master narratives.

Tommy Nouansacksy produced his digital poem while a high school sophomore in Jen’s English class during the 2005–2006 school year. Perhaps in a more urban or more liberal school district, Tommy’s race or sexual orientation would not have set him apart from his classmates so starkly. But in his suburban Midwest high school, over 90 percent of students were white and the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance and annual Day of Silence were met with overt resistance from both the community and students (Curwood, Horning, and Schliesman 2009). In such an environment, Tommy’s race and sexual orientation not only put him in the minority but became targets of oppression, such as when several of his fellow students donned “Anti-Day of Silence” badges and mocked the efforts of the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance to raise awareness about homophobia (Duwe 2008; Schultz 2008). When Jen, who is European-American, attended high school in this same school district more than a decade earlier, a Ku Klux Klan rally in town drew international attention (TV Host Geraldo Rivera Fights with Klansman 1992). Jen knew far too well how deeply racism and xenophobia were embedded in some residents’ psyches. The prevalence of master narratives in such an environment—where blatant discrimination, whether related to race, sexuality, or other identity markers, has persisted over time—is easy to see. In such a context, any attempts to address issues of oppression with those who identify as white or heterosexual may be met with either passive or overt resistance.

In the fifteen years since Jen was a student, the town has attempted to address these issues by creating Human Relations Clubs at both high schools and by erecting the world’s tallest peace pole at the site of the Klan rally (Peace Park Playground n.d.). However, tensions remain. During the same year that Tommy made his digital poem, administrators brought in an African-American educator to address issues of racism

during an all-school assembly. Jen attended, and she left the assembly feeling that some critical issues had been discussed. Many of her white students, however, felt attacked by the speaker and decried that he was “anti-white” and, hence, a racist himself. As a teacher, Jen embraced a critical pedagogy. She knew that some students were very conscious of the ways in which master narratives impacted their lives—and that these same students were often the ones who existed outside those narratives and who experienced discrimination—while others simply could not recognize (let alone respond to) them.

Master narratives function to reinforce potentially oppressive cultural ideologies and maintain the status quo. In Jen and Tommy’s school, a Eurocentric master narrative pervaded the school environment. As Saran notes, “Racism has been institutionalized in the American curricula. . . . The non-critical curriculum does not recognize ‘racism’ and racism is not discussed” (Saran 2007, p. 68). Similarly, a heteronormative master narrative was tacitly enforced by the curriculum. When Jen introduced young adult literature with LGBTQ themes, an administrator told her that it would cause an uproar with parents and other community members and that such novels should be avoided. When the curriculum is considered in conjunction with actions against the school’s Gay-Straight Alliance, a heterosexist master narrative is evident. As Chesir-Teran and Hughes note, “[Heterosexism is] . . . based on the assumption that heterosexuality and heterosexual power and privilege are normal and ideal. . . . The absence of general harassment policies, specific non-discrimination policies, and inclusive programs and the presence of overt hostility in the social environment are all aspects of heterosexism in school” (Chesir-Teran and Hughes 2009, p. 964). For Tommy, the master narratives that privileged Eurocentric and heteronormative ideologies functioned to position him as an outsider.

When Jen designed the poetry unit, she kept her and her town’s experiences with Eurocentric and heteronormative master narratives in mind. For one part of the unit, Jen and her students read Walt Whitman’s “I Hear America Singing” and Langston Hughes’s “I, Too, Sing America” (Hughes 1995; Whitman 2003; see appendix B for the full text of all poems). The conscious selection of these poems is important. Nussbaum (1998) argues that carefully chosen works of narrative literature have the power to enhance our perception. Lindemann Nelson adds,

“Implicit in this locution is the idea that carelessly selected works of narrative literature could diminish us—or at least, fail to improve us” (Lindemann Nelson 2001, p. 41). After taking a rather traditional approach and analyzing the poems’ literary devices and situating the themes within a historical context, Jen then asked the students, “What is your America like?” While all students wrote a text poem in response, a number decided to use this as one of their digital poems. To do this, students used words (either text or voiceover), images, and music. They then compiled and edited their work in iMovie. The entire process took approximately three to four 50-minute class periods per digital poem.

The digital poetry project drew on both critical pedagogy and critical literacy theories in that it encouraged students “to discuss relations between literature texts and ideals and values in the dominant society while coming to a better understanding of their own humanity” (Duncan-Andrade and Morrell 2008). Jen and her students turned an unused room in the school into a Poetry Café, complete with Italian sodas, treats, comfortable seating, and a projector and screen. Prior to beginning the project, students knew that they would select one of their poems to be shown in this venue. The audience included their classmates, as well as other students, teachers, administrators, and parents who were invited to take part. As everyone gathered during the school day, drinks and desserts in hand, and watched the students’ digital poems, Jen began to wonder: Given the same assignment, why did some students focus on their friends or their hobbies while others explicitly addressed their race, immigration status, or sexual orientation? All of the students who remixed (Lessig 2005) work by Whitman and Hughes represented their identity and their experiences through their digital poem. But what led some to focus on how their lives existed outside dominant cultural groups? Through their use of digital media, were some youths pushing back against oppression in their own lives, in their America? We attempt to answer these questions by applying an analytic tool called multimodal microanalysis to examine how Tommy’s modal choices and modal patterns in his digital poem constitute a *multimodal counternarrative*. In Amélie Rorty’s (1989) view, personal self-invention is dependent upon two narrative acts. The first involves the reading of sophisticated, thought-provoking literature; the second entails using that literature as a guide to retell one’s

own story. For Tommy, Walt Whitman and Langston Hughes prompted him to critically consider his experiences and how he “sings” America.

### Multimodal Microanalysis

#### Methodology

Tommy’s parents are immigrants, and he identifies as Asian and gay. In his digital poem entitled “I, Too, Sing America,” Tommy explicitly addresses issues around his race and sexual orientation. For that reason, we chose to use *multimodal microanalysis*, an analytic tool Damiana developed to examine youth-produced digital media, to understand the modal choices that Tommy made throughout the production process and to uncover whether and how he creates a counternarrative. Damiana originally developed multimodal microanalysis to study video data in youth media arts organizations (see Gibbons, Drift, and Drift, forthcoming). Although she had previously applied this tool to youth videos produced in nonschool settings, we thought it would also be useful to trace the patterns in in-school digital media productions because of the tool’s focus on multiple modes (multimodal) and its detailed analysis of the microdetails of the text itself (microanalysis).

Multimodal microanalysis draws from a variety of resources, including work examining how identities are expressed in digital stories and how these identity expressions can be traced using multimodal analysis. Pahl explores children’s digital stories as they develop over time and finds that “by pulling apart and critically analyzing these modal choices, the power of digital storytelling as a medium for expressing identities is clear, as moments of modal choice are excavated as signs of identity in practice” (Pahl, forthcoming). Burn uses multimodal analysis to study how bilingual students make digital stories about their experiences and finds that “media genres and technologies allow dramatic reworking of aspects of the world closely related to identity—cultural passions, fashions, play, narratives of self, family, and friends” (Burn 2009, p. 89). Nixon has worked with migrant youth as they create digital stories in a summer program. She finds that not only were the youth able to create powerful digital stories, which she conceptualizes as multimodal literacy practices, but “through digital storytelling, the students in [the summer program] learned new literacy practices and developed agentic identities with a sociocritical

consciousness about their social worlds” (Nixon 2009, p. 66). Consequently, digitally mediated stories provide a means for identity expression, and multimodal analysis can be used to trace how this occurs in youth productions.

Multimodal analysis also draws from research that analyzes video data specifically, including work on identity expression (Halverson et al. 2009) and analysis of data using specific software, such as Transana (Halverson, Woods, and Bass, forthcoming). However, multimodal microanalysis is primarily informed by Burn and Parker’s work on the kineikonic mode. Burn and Parker (2003) create a new framework beginning with a mix of Metz’s (1974) filmic terms and Goffman’s (1959) social selves. They then expand these ideas to include a social semiotic analysis of the modes within youth video. Burn and Parker find that with improvisation, representation shifts in unexpected ways. Their examination of one particular video looks at how the youth shooting the video responded, both while filming and during the editing, when what they had planned to shoot was interrupted by the appearance of an old man shouting at them to stop filming. In their analysis, Burn and Parker uncover two competing discourses in the video: (1) skateboarders and youth; and (2) teachers and examiners. They trace the following components of the kineikonic mode: music, action (determiner of agency), shot level, written language, speech (the accentuation of agency), movement over time, designing social space, and putting modes together. They introduce the idea of “functional load,” a mode that has the “stronger weight, or determining function at any given moment” (Burn and Parker 2003, p. 25), and suggest that

making the moving image is itself a kind of drama, where the burden of representation shifts between participants in the process of making the film. It shows something of how the material bodies and movements of the actors oscillate between the real-time drama of everyday life and performances for the camera; and how the filmmakers themselves are caught up in this social drama, as partial observers, and as improvisatory re-makers, carving out a new version of the event. (p. 26)

In this article, we expand on Burn and Parker’s work in order to explicate how researchers can understand the modal choices and patterns in youth digital



media productions. Through the application of a critical lens, we can then see how the presence, absence, and co-occurrence of modes function to create a multimodal counternarrative.

#### Phase One of the Multimodal Microanalysis: Transcription

In multimodal microanalysis, two terms are important to understand. A *mode* is an element such as image or dialogue in the video. A *code* is how the researcher searches for modes. Codes describe modes as analytic data points. Often we use *mode* and *code* interchangeably, but they are slightly different. Modes exist in the video (and in many other types of text); that is, they exist outside of the analysis. In contrast, codes are a product of the analysis itself. As researchers, we identify and label codes, but their purpose is to describe the modes.

Multimodal microanalysis begins with transcription of the video data in order to develop the codes. With Tommy's digital poem this meant taking screen captures at two-second intervals. We then saved the captures as .jpg files and placed them in an Excel spreadsheet. Next, we transcribed the digital poem using codes based on Burn and Parker's (2003) codes for kineikonic mode. Adapting the codes according to the modes that are present in the video is essential. For instance, we added the "text-in-use" code because Tommy's digital poem relied heavily on text.

For the multimodal microanalysis of Tommy's digital poem, we used the following codes:

*Time.* Time is used to ground the analysis in a common variable. But these are images through time, which means they are not static. They move through time and space. Movement through time makes the moving image more complicated to analyze (see Burn and Parker 2003). The time was recorded for this analysis at two-second intervals, beginning at 0 second (the beginning of the digital poem) and ending at 57 seconds (the ending of the poem). Two seconds was chosen as the smallest unit of time that was reasonable to capture within this analysis. Going frame by frame would have meant losing too much of the movement—not enough would have occurred in the time between frames to show the modes—but at two-second intervals we could capture and analyze the modes.

*Image.* When multimodal microanalysis is used to trace images in a video such as Tommy's digital poem, the movement inherent in the digital poem is lost. Capturing images at frequent intervals allows only a semblance of movement to be retained. However, capturing the image is a necessary precursor to analysis because as researchers we had to find a way to slow the digital media production enough to analyze its modes. Image capture is the most common way to accomplish this (see Burn and Parker 2003; Baldry and Thibault 2006; Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith 2008). Therefore, we used a screenshot of each image captured every two seconds and saved as a .jpg file.

*Action.* Action is what is occurring on the screen in terms of movement or activity. For Burn and Parker (2003), action determines agency. What is seen on the screen during Tommy's digital poem is what he wanted to include and edit into it.

*Transition.* Transitions are used to denote a change in scene; for example, a fade or wipe.

*Music.* Music includes what instrumental or lyrical music is used, if any.

*Language used.* Language used traces which language is used in the video; for example, English or Spanish.

*Written text.* Written text is a code for any text that is written on the screen, such as a title or text.

*Text-in-use.* Text-in-use refers to what type of text is used, including the style, size, and color of the typeface. Text-in-use also refers to the placement of text on the screen; for example, whether it appears on a black background or on top of an image.

The first phase of multimodal microanalysis begins with transcription, or identifying which codes are present in each timeframe. (See figure 1 for a screenshot of four timeframes on the Excel spreadsheet.) After noting whether a mode is present, we then determine what is happening with each mode at each timeframe. To do this, we analyze the digital poem to see what is occurring before, during, and after each timeframe, and we iterate this process several times to ensure the accuracy of codes. In addition, transcription allows us to identify and begin to trace modes as they temporally co-occur.

I, too, am America

time	16	18	20	22
image				
action	text is fading (transition)	no action	image is being zoomed out	image is zooming out (will be zoomed out at 23 sec)
transition	dissolve	no transition	there was a fade to black screen at 17 sec	ken burns effect
music	Song is "Asian Beats"; continues throughout video	continued	continued	continued
language used	English	continued	continued	continued
written text	And live unnaturally	Don't make me do your homework	Because I'm a Sally and can't take a punch.	Because I'm a Sally and can't take a punch.
written text in use	Text in white, same font, placed at center vertically and at lower center horizontally	Text in same position as last image—lower half; text is white, same font as before; text is placed under girl in image and over the paper and pen	Text in same position as last image—lower half; same font and size; positioned "under the action" of bullying	Text position is exactly the same as the image is zooming out

Figure 1 Coding for Tommy's poem (16 to 22 seconds).

Phase Two of the Multimodal Microanalysis:  
Transcription Narrative

After the transcription is finished, the next step in multimodal microanalysis is to narrativize the transcription in order to gain a sense of which modes are salient. Here, our transcription narrative attempts to make sense of Tommy's modal choices at each time-frame. This allows us to begin to see how Tommy is using various modes to create his counternarrative. In this section, we include part of the transcription narrative to highlight how the tool is used throughout the entire digital poem. We detail this in order to show the level of complexity present in Tommy's poem. Tommy uses these modes deliberately, choosing which to use and when (even if he would not articulate them in the way we do). A coded category is present in every second of Tommy's poem. Every mode in the digital poem, then, is also a data point, which we call a code. Although there was some repetition of what was occurring in the codes, there was also variation in what occurred in each one. By tracing the modes as codes, we can see the patterns that develop.

To illustrate phase 2 of the microanalysis, we have excerpted a portion of the multimodal transcription and the accompanying transcription narrative (for the full transcription narrative, see appendix C).

The following is an excerpt of the transcription narrative of what happens in Tommy's poem during, just before, and just after the section shown in figure 2:

33 to 36: The **image** in 33 to 36 is the same image as the one at 18 seconds. The **transition** is a dissolve into this image at 33 seconds, but the transition through these screens and out to 38 is made up of parts of the photo disappearing. The **written text** says, "And show that I am More than Just A Stereotype." The **text-in-use** is the same as previous. The **action** is the transition itself, which is an iMovie transition called dissolve.

38 to 52: There is no **image** in these time codes; rather, the background is white. Note that Tommy begins the poem with a black background when he is talking about himself, and now when he is addressing the audience,

I, too, am America

time	46	48	50	52
image				
action	text appears	text fades	text appears	text appears
transition	fade in	dip to color	fade in	dip to color
music	continued	continued	continued	continued
language used	continued	continued	continued	continued
written text	Just like I have felt.	Just like I have felt.	When you look sally too,	don't be ashamed
written text in use	Text placed at center vertically and horizontally; same font, font size and color as previous	Same as previous but fading	Text placed slightly lower than center; same font, font size and color as previous	Text placed slightly higher than center; same font, font size and color as previous

Figure 2 Coding for Tommy's poem (46 to 52 seconds).

the background is white. The **transitions** move from fade to white screen (38) to dip to color (40 to 42, 48, 52) to fade in (44, 46, 50). The **written text** asks, "Will you feel useless? Used? Just like I have felt? When you look sally too, don't be ashamed." This **text-in-use** has the text placed in the center vertically and horizontally. The text is still Tempus Sans, but the font color is no longer white. The font color is a bright pink, almost fuchsia color. The placement of the text changes in three places. In the first, when it states "Used?" the text is placed slightly lower than the previous text. When it reads, "When you look sally too," the text is slightly lower than center again. And, when it adds, "don't be ashamed," the text is slightly higher than center.

In this excerpt, one can see how, at each time code, we narrativized what occurs with each mode as well as any pattern that is developing. Each mode is described in detail. One gets a sense of what the patterns might be. Essentially, the transcription narrative

is a representation of the transcript written in detail. For instance, at 33 to 36 seconds the image is the same as in a previous code. Sometimes modes operate jointly, such as when the action is actually a transition called a dissolve. In the scene at the timeframe of 38 to 52 seconds, the modes of transitions, written text, and text-in-use co-occur and interplay with one another to create a series of questions to the audience. The transcription narrative is detail laden, which allows for a richer analysis in the last phase. The narrative serves both as a "thick description" (Geertz 1973) of the digital story and as the beginning of the analysis insofar as one begins to see modal patterns.

Phase Three of the Multimodal Microanalysis:  
Modal Patterns

Once we complete the transcription narrative for each mode, we begin the third phase of multimodal microanalysis. Here, we code for *modal patterns* that occur through the digital poem as well as any patterns that start then stop or reoccur. We analyze the patterns mode by mode, looking for the presence or absence

of each mode, its content, and its connections to the other modes in the poem. We found in our analysis of Tommy's digital poem that the interplay of modes is most salient. Thus, we turn our attention to his poem's modal patterns and how they reflect or embody a counternarrative.

*Pattern One: Using Modes to Shift from the Literal to the Abstract*

The first pattern we found in Tommy's digital poem is that his modal choice shows a *movement from the literal to the abstract* as he combines image with text. The images are, in fact, quite literal. When the written text mentions America, for instance, an image of the American flag is shown (0 to 4 seconds). When the written text mentions chopsticks, an image of a woman eating with chopsticks appears (24 to 26 seconds). Yet these literal images border on the abstract because they are ambiguous. The images of people are interesting because who they represent is unclear. Of the images of people who are facing the viewer (image of Asian/Asian-American girl at 18 seconds, image of Asian/Asian-American woman at 24 to 26 seconds, and Tommy at 54 to 56 seconds), all are Asian/Asian-American. Tommy is Asian-American, but the majority of images of people facing the viewer are of Asian or Asian-American girls and women. Is Tommy representing himself (or a part of himself) here?

The other images, while literal, are also symbolic in that they stand in for whatever they are representing. For instance, the flag stands for America (0 to 4 seconds), and the boy being bullied (20 to 22 seconds) stands for bullying. But does the boy being bullied also represent Tommy? At 16 to 22 seconds (see figure 1), the image is of an Asian/Asian-American girl writing on paper. The text states, "Don't make me do your homework," which uses a personal pronoun, but the image is of a girl. The next frame has an image of a young boy being bullied by an older boy/man, and the text states, "Because I'm a Sally and can't take a punch." The image is masculine, but the use of "Sally" is gendered both female and gay (male). Also note that the Ken Burns effect makes the act of bullying more visible. By zooming out, the effect shows the full action of bullying. The modes are working together to symbolize stereotypes and bullying.

While Tommy aligns his images literally with his words, he uses modes to make strong counternarrative claims through abstractions from the literal. For instance,

12 seconds into his digital poem (figure 3), Tommy uses a visual image to refer to marriage and written text in a way that abstractly refers to gay marriage.

With these modal choices, Tommy is using a representative image; in this case, two men walking hand in hand down a hallway past a sign with written text that says, "Passports and marriage licenses." The elements of the image combine to imply that the men in the photo are on their way to get a marriage license. The written text that Tommy pairs with this image is "And not choose, but do choose the unnatural." Paired with the image, this text functions to push back against heteronormative master narratives. Tommy identifies with these men, but he points to the pervasive view in his community that homosexuality is "unnatural." Here, gay marriage is not just about some strangers' rights but is about Tommy's rights too. Tommy subtly but effectively expresses this in the scene by using a combination of modes.

He uses a similar counternarrative move in his modal choices later on in his digital poem when he poses a series of questions to his audience: "Will you feel useless? Used? Just like I have felt?" The questions are abstract and without image. When Tommy asks, "Will you feel useless?" (40 to 42 seconds), he directs viewers to put themselves in another person's (specifically, Tommy's) place. We posit that Tommy's use of modes serves to emphasize these questions, which function to directly challenge what he perceives as his audience's misconceptions. With these modal combinations Tommy is calling the master narrative into question as he confronts his audience and requires them to question themselves and their own assumptions. The questions he poses to his audience come near the end of the poem as it builds toward a climactic final image of Tommy (52–54 seconds). Tommy's modal choices at this point in the narrative—both what he includes and what he does not—build dramatic tension. The final image is striking because it follows an absence of images. The questions are posed against a white background, and the color for the transition to the final image is also white. This creates the impression that both text and background color are bleeding into the final image. The fact that this image is of Tommy—and that this is the only image of him shown in the digital poem—culminates the drama of the scene. Through his combination of modes and through what he makes present and absent as the narrative ends, Tommy leads the audience to a different experience of the image of himself.





Figure 3 Screenshot of image and text at 12 seconds.

Although Tommy's use of visual images carries significant meaning in his digital poem, he relies on other modes of communication too. We can see shifts from literal yet ambiguous images paired with abstract written text to no visual images coupled with abstract written text to the literal image of Tommy with the restated title that appears at the end of the digital poem (56 seconds). By the end, the literal image of Tommy and the title as an abstract representation of the poem itself have come together to represent a symbolic image of Tommy himself. The image of Tommy and the poem title are both standing in for Tommy the person. We think it is significant that Tommy ends with an image of himself. To youth who identify with dominant cultural groups, terms like "racism" or "homophobia" may be more abstract and impersonal concepts. But part of the purpose of Tommy's counternarrative is to make these terms real and personal.

#### *Pattern Two: Combining Action with Other Modes*

We find compelling patterns in how Tommy combines the mode of action with other modes. This includes his use of transition as action, as well as his

use of text-in-use as action. The scene shown in figure 2 illustrates both of these. In general, transitions are meaning-makers in Tommy's digital poem. Most of his transitions are a basic dissolve (at 8–12, 16, 24, 28, 32–33 seconds). This transition moves the story along from image to image without much fuss. At significant breaks, the transition is a fade-to-black (at 14, 17 seconds) or no transition (at 26, 30 seconds). What is interesting, though, is how Tommy combines the modes of transition and action by using *transition as action*. For instance, viewers see the appearance of action when Tommy combines the transition of "dip to color" and "fade in" with the use of text when he poses a series of questions. When Tommy uses two transitions back-to-back (dip to color then fade in), the movement between the transitions gives the appearance of action. Tommy also creates the appearance of action through text movement when he uses the transitions to move from one written text to a white background to another written text. The text itself appears to move in and out, but this action effect is created by the combination of the lack of image, text being centered in the screen, and the rapid transitions between those modes.



In this part of the poem, Tommy uses text-in-use combined with transition to make the text pop out at his audience in order to emphasize the words themselves. By the time Tommy asks the first question, the audience has become used to the text being placed in the bottom center and the text being white in color (the pattern used for most of the poem). When Tommy asks, “Will you feel useless?” the dip to color transition occurs, making the screen a blank white; then the words pop up. Tommy combines this transition with a text-in-use of bright fuchsia words placed in the center of the screen. The color signals a change in tone and highlights the words themselves. The basic pattern is straightforward, but the effect is striking when Tommy combines all three modes of action, transition, and text-in-use. As the text moves into view and out of view, the impact of the questions becomes more forceful because the questions themselves become the action in the frame. Thus, Tommy’s modal choices amplify his counternarrative. The text literally moves, and we posit that Tommy intended the text to rhetorically move his audience.

*Pattern Three: Written Text Speaks to Whitman’s and Hughes’s Poems*

The third key pattern is based not only in ideas about counternarratives but in how youth express their stories through modal choices. Stein analyzes performed, written, and drawn versions of a young black South African girl’s stories, finding that in the transformations from one medium to another the girl creates her own powerful narrative. Stein argues that “what this points to is a need for pedagogy to value different aspects of texts and to open up the space for students to produce multiple perspectives on the same subject” (Stein 2007, p. 74). As Stein’s work makes clear, multimodal counternarratives do not take digital forms only. In fact, the mediums through which counternarratives are expressed may shift and evolve. Stein argues that the ability of educators and researchers both to trace and to value modal representation within multiple mediums is critical. In our analysis of Tommy’s digital poem, we find that Tommy’s *written text both refers to Whitman’s and Hughes’s poems and is markedly different from them*. Ostensibly, Tommy’s digital poem is a response to Hughes’s poem, “I, Too, Sing America,” which is itself a response to Whitman’s “I Hear America Singing.” Although Tommy keeps many of the themes of these poems, he adds his own perspective in both written and digital form. Lindemann Nelson (2001) notes that counternarratives often occur in response to

texts, artifacts, and events in society, and this is evident in Tommy’s work.

In Jen’s class, Jen and the students discussed the themes of individualism, identity, opportunity, discrimination, and perseverance evident in Whitman’s and Hughes’s poems. Jen contextualized the poets’ work, both historically and culturally, and encouraged students to do the same when writing about their America. Tommy’s poem (see appendix B) begins and ends with the phrase “I, too, am America,” just as Hughes’s poem does, but Tommy’s combination of modes makes his poem different and more powerful in some ways. Tommy echoes several of the key themes in Hughes’s poem. First, he translates the idea of others laughing at the speaker in Hughes’s poem by calling the speaker (and possibly himself?) a “sally.” Tommy also echoes Hughes by incorporating scenes of eating; for example, the scene depicting chopsticks and the image of the woman eating (24–26 seconds). Third, the idea that the speaker will have the last laugh, so to speak, because others will see his value, is present in both poems. Tommy uses the image of a sunset/sunrise and text that reads, “But I’ll use my lows to bring you down to make me stand strong” (28–32 seconds). Hughes also uses the word *strong* and the idea of being strong in response to how others see the speaker. Finally, Tommy may have kept Hughes’s theme of shame. Is Tommy not shaming the audience with his series of questions at 38–52 seconds? Is he not asking them to engage in perspective-taking and to understand what his experience, as a second-generation Asian immigrant and gay male, has been in a predominantly white and conservative Midwest town? Through understanding Tommy’s story and his experience, might his audience develop empathy—or find fault with oppressive master narratives around race and sexual orientation?

Multimodal microanalysis can be a powerful tool for educators and researchers to understand how youths’ modal choices function to assert identity, speak to their audience, and create counternarratives. Because young people are increasingly engaging in digital media production in school spaces, which themselves are historical and ideological contexts, we need to remain closely attuned to issues around modality, agency, and identity. Through multimodal microanalysis of youth digital narratives, educators and researchers can not only begin to see how youth are using modes to create counternarratives but can also begin to value what youth can create with new media in terms of identity and agency.

## Findings

Multimodal counternarratives are a means by which youth can employ multiple modes of representation to push back against oppressive master narratives and restrictive cultural ideologies. The ways in which youth create multimodal counternarratives will depend on several factors, including the kind of digital media they use, how they integrate multiple modes, how they combine these modes to tell their story to an audience, and whether their audience is known or unknown, local or distant. A multimodal microanalysis of Tommy's digital poem reveals that he used digital media in four key ways: to remix stories and traditions, mix modes, use functional load to foreground identity, and dialogue with the audience. Through this process, Tommy challenges Eurocentric and heteronormative master narratives that threaten to marginalize his lived experience and silence his voice.

### Remix Stories and Traditions

Lindemann Nelson (2001) suggests that master narratives are evident in many of the best-known and often-taught canonical works. The literature selection in secondary classrooms still draws heavily from a white, male, and Western tradition. As Willis and Palmer note, "Retention of the canon means the continued use of the same 'classic' literature that has been the staple for nearly a century" (Willis and Palmer 1998, p. 217). Teachers bear a responsibility to highlight the master narratives present in literature and to note how some authors create counternarratives.

Tommy's teacher, Jen, taught Hughes's and Whitman's poems as alternatives to the master narrative. Tommy continues in this vein by making his own counternarrative that focuses explicitly on his race and sexual orientation.

Tommy is remixing (Lessig 2005; Knobel and Lankshear 2008) stories and traditions that he has read or been told as he creates his own story via digital media production. Tommy, therefore, remixes both Whitman's and Hughes's poem. He does this in two forms of media: his written poem and his digital poem. The written form could stand alone, but more likely it is a bridge to the digital version. In the digital poem, Tommy maintains several of the themes from Whitman's and Hughes's work: a celebration of people no matter their position in society; a celebration of oneself when faced with discrimination (more present in Hughes but implicit in the rest of Whitman's work);

and the idea that America stands for what the people "sing." In other words, people represent America. In Tommy's digital poem, he shows these themes by focusing on how he himself is representative of them. Tommy explains his position to the audience as a young, gay, second-generation Asian-American teen. He updates the poems by adding a modern perspective and by asserting himself and his place in his community.

Tommy is taking what he knows, putting his own perspectives into stories and traditions, and expressing them in new ways. This should not be taken lightly. Often, critique of youth-produced work asserts that it is simply mimicking what is already available (Drotner 2008). Youth like Tommy, however, are taking what is present and making it their own not only by making it represent themselves and their place in their communities but by remixing it with digital tools and multiple modes.

### Mix Modes

Not only does Tommy use various modes to express meaning, including sound, image, and written text; he expertly combines these modes in order to express particular meanings. Furthermore, he uses the affordances of digital storytelling and video production to tell about his experiences and share how they have impacted him. Tommy's most prevalent combination of modes is the use of transition as a type of action. The most striking example of this is when Tommy asks a series of questions to the viewer (38–52 seconds). In this section, Tommy employs text-in-use, including where the text is placed on the screen and how transitions are applied. This movement coincides with the meaning of the text and thus amplifies its meaning. For instance, in one section (40–44 seconds), the written text states, "Will you feel useless?" and a dip to color then transitions to a second question, "Used?" placed slightly lower than the previous question and with a fade-in transition. The sequence moves the questions in and out, highlighting each one before moving to the next. Moreover, the transition effectively moves the text on the screen from screenshot to screenshot. The movement shows a trajectory from feeling useless to the even more negative emotion of feeling used. The questions are direct attempts on Tommy's part to break through his audience's adherence to the master narrative in order to show them how power and privilege may function in their own lives.

Tommy also combines image and transition when he has images appear and disappear through the use

of obvious transitions. Most of the time, Tommy uses transitions, such as a basic dissolve, that are not readily noticeable. But at certain points, Tommy highlights the transition, and the transition itself becomes a meaning-maker. For instance, when Tommy ends his movie with an image of himself, he does not simply use a dissolve to move from the assertion “don’t be ashamed.” Instead, he uses a multipart dissolve involving blotches of color. This transition is visually linked to the previous questions and response to not be ashamed because it is literally the last screenshot that dissolves to reveal the image of Tommy playing with a doll and text that asserts, “I, too, am America.” The idea of not being ashamed and the moment of connection that the audience might feel at that moment are combined in the transition from sequence to image. The transition makes that connection with Tommy’s audience, prompting them to engage in critical perspective-taking to empathize with Tommy’s experiences as an often-marginalized American. This perspective-taking is at the heart of counternarratives.

#### Use Functional Load to Foreground Identity

Tommy combines modes to create meaning, but he also uses modes to highlight certain aspects of identity. He employs the affordances of a “functional load,” the mode that has the “stronger weight, or determining function at any given moment” (Burn and Parker 2003, p. 25). Marginalized youth like Tommy can use functional load in order to express specific aspects of their identities that exist outside dominant cultural ideologies and are actively oppressed by master narratives.

Tommy often foregrounds color and/or image in order to illustrate aspects of identity. For instance, when Tommy includes a yellow screen with the text “Because I see yellow,” he is referring to the connotations of Asian-ness in the racial slur of being “yellow,” but he is reappropriating the connotations to signify his Asian-American identity in response to how he is often seen as “twice below” the audience. In the next screenshot, he uses the image of two men walking down a hall past a sign stating “Passports and Marriage Licenses.” The image stands in for another aspect of Tommy’s identity, his sexuality. In this case, the text implies pervasive homophobia (“unnatural”), which is reflected in the image. The combination of these timeframes illustrates two important facets of Tommy’s identity: his race and sexual orientation. With these two aspects of his identity he is making the case for being included in how our society defines being American.

#### Dialogue with Audience

In his digital poem, Tommy directly addresses his audience, which he knew would include his classmates, friends, teachers, and other school staff. Tommy’s school is predominantly white, and homophobia among community members and even Tommy’s own classmates has been documented. In this environment, master narratives position someone like Tommy as an outsider. After using multiple modes to express how America often positions him as “twice below” other citizens, Tommy asserts that he is more than just a stereotype. When Jen asked him in an interview what he hoped to accomplish in making this digital poem, Tommy smiled and said, “I wanted people to laugh.” His final image, of himself playing with a doll, did accomplish this. With his final image Tommy employs a common technique, one often used by William Shakespeare: comic relief. After sharing his experiences with an audience that may have actively discriminated against him in the past, Tommy sought to lighten the mood. Rather than negating the counternarrative present in the rest of the digital poem, the comic relief lessens the tension and makes Tommy’s message more palatable to his audience.

#### Implications

McLaren suggests that “[o]ne’s lived experience, race, class, gender, and history are important in the formation of one’s political identity, but one must be willing to examine personal experience and one’s speaking voice in terms of the ideological and discursive complexity of its formation” (McLaren 1995, p. 52). Hooks (1994) argues that teachers resist examination of, and changes to, their pedagogical practice out of fear that a classroom with no one “right” way to teach, no one “right” way to make meaning, and no one “right” way to read and interpret a text means a loss of control. Therefore, educators need to begin by examining how the multiple facets of their own identities relate to both dominant and marginalized cultural ideologies. They need to work to become more self-reflexive about their biases and explore how those biases work to inform or impede their pedagogical practice.

In many ways, Tommy’s digital poem exemplifies three movements in education today: technology integration (Lankshear and Knobel 2006), critical pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade and Morrell 2008), and literacy and identity studies (Moje and Luke 2009). Multimodal texts can provide a way for young people, whether

they are part of a dominant cultural group or not, to examine how their identity is both related to and reflective of master narratives that are present in society. Bamberg argues, “If it is possible to delineate more clearly where and how discourses that run counter to hegemonic discourses emerge, and if it is possible to describe the fabric of these counter discourses in more detail, we should be able to make headway in designing alternative strategies to public, institutionalized power relations, resulting in more egalitarian reciprocity and universal moral respect” (Bamberg 2004, p. 353).

We hope that our microanalysis can shed light on how marginalized youth can use various modes of representation to create a counternarrative. By tracing Tommy’s modal choices, we are able to show how he resists racism and homophobia while concomitantly opening a dialogic space with his audience. Digital media production can be a way for youth to explore the master narratives around them, to push back against them, and to tell stories of their lives in an effort to (re)present their identities. But before that can happen, teachers need to turn inward and look at how their own experiences are reflected in their pedagogy. Understanding how youth create counternarratives in

school spaces through the use of digital media is the first step in this direction.

**Appendix A: Glossary**

- Code: A data point in analysis. In this case, it is the use of a mode as a data point in semiotic analysis.
- Modal choices: What the youth chooses to put into his/her video in terms of mode.
- Modal patterns: How modes are used in a text to convey meaning, including how they are used concurrently and in relation to one another.
- Mode: Any visual, auditory, textural, gestural, kinetic, or other form of symbolic representation used to convey meaning in print or digital text; e.g., image, dialogue, etc.
- Multimodal counternarrative: The way in which young people employ multiple modes of representation to push back against oppressive master narratives.
- Multimodal microanalysis: An analytic tool for tracing modes through video texts using a process of transcription, narrativization, and analysis of modal patterns.

**Appendix B: Three Poems**

I Hear America Singing by Walt Whitman	I, Too, Sing America by Langston Hughes	I, Too, Sing America by Tommy Nouansacksy
<p>I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear, Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong, The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam, The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work, The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck, The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands, The wood-cutter’s song, the ploughboy’s on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown, The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing, Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else, The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly, Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.</p>	<p>I, too, sing America. I am the darker brother. They send me to eat in the kitchen When company comes, But I laugh, And eat well, And grow strong. Tomorrow, I’ll be at the table When company comes. Nobody’ll dare Say to me, “Eat in the kitchen,” Then. Besides, They’ll see how beautiful I am And be ashamed— I, too, am America.</p>	<p>Twice am I below you And not choose, but do choose the unnatural And live unnaturally Don’t make me do your homework Because I’m a Sally and can’t take a punch. without my chopsticks But I’ll use my lows to bring you down to make me stand strong And show that I am More than Just A Stereotype Will you feel useless? Used? Just like I have felt. When you look sally too, don’t be ashamed I, too, am America</p>



### Appendix C: Full Transcription Narrative

0 to 4: Title sequence. The title is expressed in **written text**, “I, Too, Sing America,” which appears in white Tempus Sans font. The **text-in-use** is in the center (both vertically and horizontally) of the screen. The text also has **action** in that it is moving side to side. The first two screens use a black background, but at 4 seconds, Tommy places the **image** of an American flag, and this image covers the entire screen and it has the **action** of zooming in on the image. The written text is the same and stays in the same location. The **transition** is a dissolve with a fade-to-black at 1 second. The **language used** is English, which is used throughout the entire video without change.

6 to 8: From 6 to 8 seconds, the **written text** states, “Twice am I below you.” The **action** is the letters of the text for “Twice” drop, almost letter by letter. The **text-in-use** is Tempus Sans, the same font as for the title sequence. Tommy uses a larger size for “Twice,” smaller for “am I below you,” and white font color. Once the word “Twice” drops, it is located at the center of the screen; however, it looks like it is higher but that is because of the large font size. The written text “am I below you” is located at center below “Twice” and less than half its size. The **transition** is text animation with the dropping letters serving as the transition.

10: At 10, the screen image changes to a yellow background with the **written text** stating, “Because I see yellow.” The **text-in-use** is white Arial font, which is the only time this font is used in the poem, and it is placed in the center, both horizontally and vertically. The **transition** is a dissolve.

12: At 12 seconds, the image changes to a sign and people walking down a hallway. There are two types of **written language**. The first is Tommy’s text that states, “And not choose, but do choose the unnatural.” For the **text-in-use**, the font is Tempus Sans and white, and Tommy’s text is placed under the sign in the image, bottom center. The second type of written text is in the sign that states, “Passports and Marriage Licenses.” Here, the **text-in-use** is handwritten in black marker, and the placement is on the sign. There is no **action**, and the **transition** is a dissolve.

14 to 16: At 14 to 16 seconds, the **action** is the text appearing (all at one time). The **written language** states, “And live unnaturally.” The **text-in-use** is Tempus Sans in white over a black background. The

**text-in-use** placement is the same as the previous screen’s text, at the bottom center. The **transition** is a fade to black.

18: At 18 seconds, the **image** is of a young Asian (or Asian-American) girl who appears to be writing on a sheet of paper. There is no **action**, and the **transition** to this is a dissolve. The **written text** states, “Don’t make me do your homework.” The **text-in-use** is Tempus Sans and it is in the same position as the last image (the bottom half) and placed underneath the girl’s face and over the paper.

20 to 22: The **image** is of a man (or older boy) bullying another boy. The **transition** is the Ken Burns effect, which is a slow zoom into the image. This has the effect of making the image appear larger in the second timeframe. The **written language** states, “Because I’m a Sally and can’t take a punch.” The **text-in-use** is that the text is in the same position as the last 4 screenshots, in the bottom center, with the same font and font size. It is positioned under the “action” of bullying.

24 to 26: The **image** is of a woman eating using chopsticks (also in the *mise-en-scène* is four birdcages with birds in the background). There is no **action**. The **transition** is a dissolve into this image with no transition between the two-second intervals. In other words, the image is still. The **written language** is “without my chopsticks.” These words do not seem connected to the previous statement, which had ended with a period, nor are they connected to the next. They are connected, it seems, only to the image of the woman eating with chopsticks. The **text-in-use** is that the font is the same and in the same location as the previous, and its location is over the image of the plate and below the chopsticks.

28 to 32: The **image** is of a person in the shadows with a sunset (or sunrise) in the background. There is no **action**, and the **transition** is a quick dissolve. The **written text** is “But I’ll use my lows to bring you down.” The **text-in-use** is the same as previous (same font, same position). The text is placed below the person walking and beneath the sunset (or sunrise). Then, the **written text** changes to “to make me stand strong,” with a dissolve as **transition**. There is also a transition in which the words disappear in between 30 and 31 seconds.

33 to 36: The **image** in 33 to 36 is the same image as the one at 18 seconds. The **transition** is a dissolve into this image at 33 seconds, but the transition



through these screens and out to 38 is made up of parts of the photo disappearing. The **written text** says, “And show that I am More than Just A Stereotype.” The **text-in-use** is the same as previous. The **action** is the transition itself, which is an iMovie transition called dissolve.

38 to 52: There is no **image** in these time codes; rather, the background is white. Note that Tommy begins the poem with a black background when he is talking about himself, and now when he is addressing the audience, the background is white. The **transitions** move from fade to white screen (38) to dip to color (40 to 42, 48, 52) to fade in (44, 46, 50). The **written text** asks, “Will you feel useless? Used? Just like I have felt? When you look sally too, don’t be ashamed.” This **text-in-use** has the text placed in the center vertically and horizontally. The text is still Tempus Sans, but the font color is no longer white. The font color is a bright pink, almost fuchsia color. The placement of the text changes in three places. In the first, when it states “Used?” the text is placed slightly lower than the previous text. When it reads, “When you look sally too,” the text is slightly lower than center again. And, when it adds, “don’t be ashamed,” the text is slightly higher than center.

54 to 56: There is an **image** of Tommy himself sitting on pavement with a doll in front of him. The **transition** is a quick dissolve. The **written language** states, “I, Too, am America,” in the same font, location, and size as the title sequence. In fact, it appears to be exactly the same. There is another **transition** between the screens in which there is a Ken Burns effect that zooms into the image of Tommy.

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