CHAPTER 7

HAVING A FEEL FOR WHAT WORKS: POLYMEDIA, EMOTION, AND LITERACY PRACTICES WITH MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES

Bronwyn T. Williams

University of Louisville

Sarah is using her phone to have a conversation.[1] To read this sentence will, for many people, conjure an image of a person holding a device to her head where she can speak and listen with another person holding a similar device. Yet, like so many secondary and university students (not to mention many of the rest of us), the concept of both "phone" and "conversation" are more flexible and capacious than we might initially imagine. During the course of the two hours in which I am observing and interviewing her, Sarah uses no fewer than five modes of communication (phone call, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, text message) to converse with friends and family. She trades text messages with three different people, receives and looks at photos on both Snapchat and Instagram (and writes comments on two of the Instagram photos), responds to a comment on her Twitter feed that is part of an ongoing conversation thread with two friends (one of whom she is also texting), and even takes a traditional phone call ("From my mother," she explains. "She still likes to call me"). In addition to her interactive uses of communication technology, Sarah also uses apps on her phone to look up information for school and check the traffic situation before she has to leave for her restaurant job.

Sarah's use of her phone, which is not unusual among her peers, makes clear that when we say "phone" and "conversation" now we are describing a set of practices very different from those we would have been describing even a decade ago. A "phone" today is a hand-held computer on which one can also make the occasional voice call, and a "conversation," in which one has interactive communication with others using such a device, may involve spoken words, images, audio, and video, or some combination of all of these.

Watching Sarah navigate the variety of modes and media through which she

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1   The names used are pseudonyms chosen by the individuals.

communicates raises the question of how and why she makes the choices she does. When does she decide to post to social media rather than text? What rhetorical factors does she weigh when she decides to use one social media platform, such as Twitter, over another, such as Instagram? How does she interpret and respond to the communicative choices made by others, from a friend's Snapchat post to her mother's phone call?

In recent years, scholars in rhetoric and composition and literacy studies have often turned to the concept of affordances as a framework through which to interpret and analyze the practices and pedagogy of composing with multiple media and modes (Cooper, 2005; Keller, 2007; Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; Wilson, 2011). Affordances, with their focus on rhetorical concepts such as purpose, genre, and audience, have offered a way to connect the concerns that shaped the teaching of traditional print-on-paper literacy with the burgeoning range of digital media available for creating texts. In this way, affordances have provided—and will continue to provide—productive frameworks for the theorizing, research, and teaching of multimodal composing.

Yet, as useful as the concept of affordances has been, the scholarship and pedagogy developing from the idea has often approached such composing choices as if they were limited and made one at a time. Do I use video or print? Sound or blog? Employing this concept of affordances, however, misses the ways that many people today approach the use of digital media in their daily lives. Rather than making singular choices, they move back and forth among social media and modes quickly, changing from one to another as the content and emotional register of their communication shifts. Their actions are fast, mobile, and grounded in social and emotional needs and relationships. Like Sarah, they may move, in one conversation with a friend or relative, from texting to photo sharing to phone call and back again, depending on the emotional register, power relations, and cultural genres of the situation.

In this chapter, I draw on Mirca Madianou's and Daniel Miller's (2012) concept of polymedia to explore how students negotiate these fluid movements among media in their literacy practices with social media. Polymedia assumes that people with multiple media, when communicating, make choices that, though including considerations of functional communication, are also shaped by material conditions, social contexts, relationships, and emotional responses (Madianou & Miller, 2012). In my chapter, drawn from interviews and observations with university students in the United States and United Kingdom using digital media such as mobile devices, I focus on how the rhetorical and compositional moves people make in communicating with others are shaped by concerns and responses of emotion and their relationships with audience members. For example, a person choosing to tweet rather than text is not only

deciding how best to convey information, but may also weigh the emotional dispositions toward the medium, such as the desire to establish or obscure intimacy. Such dispositions are constructed over time through experiences in specific cultural contexts as well as individual relationships. At the same time, emotion as a rhetorical performance (Micciche, 2007) also influences student choices, as the choice of media may be intended or interpreted as having a particular emotional impact. A person circulating news to friends may employ multiple media to friends and acquaintances (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, text, phone call) with the intent that different media will not only convey different information, but that the choice of media will also be read as rhetorical and with emotional impact. Focusing on the role emotion plays in individuals' polymedia literacy practices helps illuminate the embodied and affective impact of such practices and deepens our understanding of the role of social media in shaping and sustaining relationships and identities.

RETHINKING AFFORDANCES WITH DIGITAL MEDIA

There is no doubt that the concept of affordances has provided us with a productive way of studying and teaching how to compose with multiple media and modes (Cooper, 2005; Keller, 2007; Werner, 2013; Wilson, 2011). As Kate Pahl and Jennifer Rowsell (2010) defined the term, "An affordance describes the specific possibilities resident within a mode, whether these are determined by the material or cultural possibilities of the mode" (pp. 4-5). In theory and pedagogy, the work on affordances has often focused on the rhetorical possibilities a mode offers, particularly in terms of concepts of audience and genre. The framework of affordances has been useful in reminding us that composing with digital media, as well as with print on paper, is not just about having choices, but about making thoughtful choices with regard to how a text can best convey particular ideas to a particular audience. The popularity of affordances in our field, with its frequent focus on pedagogy, also comes in part from its utility in talking about how digital media can and should be used in academic settings. Talking about affordances provides traction in such discussions by focusing on easily comprehensible rhetorical goals and principles, such as purpose, genre, audience, and impact. Such arguments have been useful to the field, useful to me, and I am in no way arguing that we stop using the idea and language of affordances when it is useful to our scholarship and teaching.

Yet affordances as a concept emerged in the 1990s, along with desktop computers and particular ways of engaging with software; as such, it has led to certain kinds of discussions and pedagogical practices that it may be time to complicate. First, the focus on affordances in terms of pedagogy has often meant

missing or discounting literacy practices that take place outside the classroom. What's more, many discussions of affordances approach composing with digital media as an activity that involves engaging one technology at a time in a series of choices that take place sitting at a computer, composed for a classroom. Each delivery system, such as a podcast, or genre, such as remixed video, is offered as a single choice. Yet new technologies, such as smartphones and tablets, have created more fluid and mobile practices that are not reflected in this more traditional approach to affordances and do not address or consider the role of emotion—both as individual responses and as social and rhetorical practices—in how and why a particular medium or genre might be chosen.

During the past two years, I have been involved in a research project exploring issues of literacy, identity, and perceptions of agency. The research, conducted both in the United States and the United Kingdom, has involved interviews and observations with a wide range of individuals, more than 100, from secondary school students, to community college and university undergraduates, to graduate students. The people I am quoting in this chapter were all participants in these interviews and observations and covered a broad range of backgrounds and social settings. I am drawing from a wide range of responses, rather than just focusing on one or two people, to underscore the range of participants and contexts. I did not set out in this research specifically to study the use of mobile technologies, but their ubiquitous presence and use made them an integral part of most of the conversations and practices I encountered.

I quickly realized that the widespread and mainstream concept of affordances can only partially help us understand or respond to a moment such as this:

> Aaron sits in the cafeteria area of his community college in a mid-sized city in the United Kingdom while he waits for his next class. Like many others in the large room, he has earbuds in his ears and is using his mobile phone. He is scrolling through his Facebook feed when a text comes in from his girlfriend, which he reads and answers. For the next few minutes, he moves back and forth between the text conversation with his girlfriend and his Facebook feed, smiling to himself at several moments. At one point, in response to one of his texts, she posts a link to his Facebook page and he comments on the link and then texts a private comment about his social media comment. During this exchange he also notices that another friend has posted a link to a song on Facebook and he likes the link and listens to the song.

As this moment indicates, the choices of people—in particular, many young

people—are fluid and shifting. Rather than address one affordance at a time, mobility and software allow individuals such as Aaron to move back and forth among media and genres quickly within a day, or even a conversation. What's more, while the rhetorical choices people make certainly involve considerations of audience, genre, purpose, and what a particular technology allows them to do, such considerations are not limited to detached, logic-driven concerns. Emotions and relationships are also integral to the choices individuals make, from embodied responses to emotion as a rhetorical and social factor involving networked, mobile communities. When Aaron described what he had been doing, he said that because he was in school and his girlfriend was at work, they did not get to spend as much time together as they would like:

> So any time we can, we get in touch. Mostly texting, but
> when she posts things on my (Facebook) page I like it because
> it's usually some joke or movie we like and so it takes more
> thinking to do it than just text. I know she's thinking about
> me.

It's clear that Aaron's considerations of how and why he makes particular choices in communicating and responding with his girlfriend require an approach, in addition to rhetorical affordances, for understanding how emotions and relationships mediate his literacy practices.

In their concept of polymedia, Madianou and Miller (2012) offered a useful approach for considering the role of emotion and relationships in the choices people make while composing with digital media. For Madianou and Miller, polymedia focuses "less on the affordances of each particular medium and more on how users exploit the contrasts between media as an integrated environment in order to meet their relationship and emotional needs" (p. 128). To put it another way, deciding on whether to text or tweet or post a photo online to communicate with friends is not only a matter of considering the technological affordances of each medium and mode and making a single choice about how best to communicate a message. Smartphones, tablets, and laptops all now routinely offer the capacity to switch quickly among different media and modes, making the material constraints and considerations less important in shaping such choices. In the pre-digital era, deciding between mailing a letter and making a long-distance phone call was often determined by cost as much as it was by rhetorical impact. Even ten years ago, creating a video or posting a photo often took special software and skills and high-end technology that would influence decisions about composing messages. Once a person had made a choice about medium and mode, it took time and a deliberate change in work and often location to move to another way of communicating.

Material costs obviously are not absent with smartphones—first you have to own one and then the cost of data plans can vary widely. A smartphone without a generous data plan is much more limited in how it can be used. As with other technologies, recent research reinforces the fact that one's level of affluence and location as well as identity factors such as race and gender influence the kind of technology to which a person has access (Dugan, 2014; Smith, 2012, 2013; Williams, 2018). In other words, you're most likely to have a powerful smartphone if you're a white, urban, male professional. While mobile devices themselves have become a pervasive part of the culture in the United States and Europe, levels of affluence now determine who can afford a device and plan that allow for more varied multimodal applications and practices. Almost all the university students I spoke with and observed in the United States and the United Kingdom owned smartphones. The universities in question are urban institutions that include many first-generation university students or students working one or two jobs in addition to going to school. Even those who, in other contexts, told me about their struggles making financial ends meet while at university were not deciding to economize by doing without a smartphone. Indeed, several students said it was easier to get by without a laptop or home computer—and use computers on campus—precisely because they could get so much done with their smartphones. While it is important not to overlook issues of access, it is also clear that recent trends indicate that smartphone ownership and use is going to continue to increase and that we must pay attention to how people are communicating on these devices and over these networks (Dugan, 2014; Smith, 2012, 2013). Smartphone ownership in the United States is increasing rapidly, from 35 percent of the population in 2011 to 56 percent just two years later (Smith, 2013). Among young people the trend is even more telling, with 84 percent of adults between the ages of 18-29 reporting owning smartphones (Smith, 2013). In the United Kingdom, smartphone use in 2014 was reported at 62 percent of the population (Ofcom, 2014). Of course, not all smartphone use involves social media sites. However, polymedia practices illustrate that people often move quickly from social media use to individual communication such as texting and back again. At some moments, the networks of social media sites become important factors in these decisions, as I will discuss below, but not always. Yet given how much social media participation comes from people using smartphones, it is important to explore these practices even if at some moments they are communicating by individual text or phone call.

In addition to more widespread adaptation of smartphones, a number of the students I interviewed, like Eric, said that they used their smartphones for most of their digital work, using a more traditional laptop or desktop computer only for writing papers and other school work. Young people with smartphones say

they often do not need to consider cost and time to the same degree when deciding whether to post a video or photo. Applications that allow for posting messages from different modes and through different media are often free and many of the people I talked to did not regard data speeds and costs as prohibitive. Smartphones and tablets are also set up to allow users to open, close, and move among applications quickly. For many young people, including most of the people I reference in this chapter, most of their activity with their smartphones is done through apps rather than by using more traditional Internet browsers such as Google or Safari. "My apps give me what I have to have (to communicate and find information). I pretty much never use Google," Leslie said. The processing power of new phones, and the convenience of apps that open with a single tap, mean that more applications can be kept open at any one time. As Daniel Keller (2013) pointed out, we live in a "culture of acceleration" in which speed is privileged and celebrated in most aspects of life, including literacy practices and rhetorical choices. Speed in using digital media is a consistent theme in scholars studying students' online literacy practices (Carrington, 2012; Davies, 2014; Keller, 2013; Rowsell, 2013; Williams, 2009). The value placed on speed has only increased as mobile devices provide individuals with the ability to have a device immediately accessible that allows them to move rapidly among apps, and know that all of them can be used in fast, interactive communication with friends.

SOCIALITY AND EMOTION

If the material and technological conditions are not as central to the choices people make in communicating through digital devices, then, as Madianou and Miller (2012) argued, other considerations become more important, such as sociality, emotion, and power. As they pointed out, "Polymedia is not a range of technical potentials, it is a series of cultural genres or emotional registers that make these contrasts into significant differences in communication by exploiting them for various tasks within relationships" (p. 148). To think about sociality is to consider how relationships are coordinated and sustained. Such relationships are formed within what the conventions of what Madianou and Miller called the cultural genres of sociality, which include the roles and expectations within relationships that are shaped by culture. For example, a mother is both someone in a personal relationship with an individual child as well as someone acting within and shaped by the cultural genres of the role of motherhood. To think about polymedia literacy practices within the context of sociality is to consider how the medium and mode, as well as the message, will be read within the context of the particular relationship.

For example, when Sarah's mother calls Sarah on her smartphone, the mother's choice—and the daughter's reaction—reflects not only their individual relationship but their roles in culture. When the call is over Sarah rolls her eyes slightly and says:

> Mom always calls because people her age do that and I know that, pretty much, if I get a phone call it's her or my grandma. And I have to always try to answer it or she'll get worried about what's happened to me.

Sarah's response places the actions of her mother in the context of cultural generalizations about the practices of people of different generations with digital media. Sarah does the same thing when talking about email when she says that the only emails she gets are from her boss or official university information, including from professors. Email, in her eyes, is an older person's technology she only checks for work or school purposes. Sarah's reaction to her mother's phone call also illustrates the roles mothers are supposed to play with their daughters—the latter worry about the former, who in turn try to be reassuring. Cultural genres also privilege certain forms of technology, or adapt them for uses in ways that conform to social expectations. In Jamaica, the popularity of mobile phones reinforced cultural values of individuality and privacy that are less possible when using a landline phone in a shared household space such as a kitchen (Madianou & Miller, 2012). And in Qatar, young women adapt Facebook pages to conform to local cultural genres. Instead of posting photos of themselves in the space for the profile photo, which would be considered immodest and inappropriate for a young woman, they instead post photos of younger siblings, celebrities, or designer fashion items (Rajakumar, 2012).

While the social relationships that are sustained by digital media use are shaped by larger cultural conventions—such as the role expected of mothers—they are also shaped by the often-varied cultural genres of local groups of friends and acquaintances. Within a particular group of friends, there often emerge specific expectations of what kind of information gets posted on a particular social media site. While some of these social conventions reflect broader cultural practices, sometimes they can end up developing practices that are quite specific to one local community or group. For example, Alia, a U.S. student at a public urban university in the Midwest, had a specific set of criteria for what media she used for what kinds of communications:

> Texting is for daily life, so I use it when I'm just trying to communicate news to people—"I'm just leaving" or "Where should I meet you." And jokes. Lots of jokes and being stupid

with friends. A phone call is usually just for a crisis. And
when I post pictures on Instagram that's for friends to enjoy,
sappy pictures, selfies, you know.

Robert, a student at the same university in the United States, had a slightly different set of categories and preferences. He also said he used texting for informal conversation and communication with friends. "I like Twitter for getting news and ideas about the world. I find out most of my news from there," he said. "I use Facebook for sharing photos and for posting new music I hear or what I'm listening to at the moment."

Both Alia and Robert said that they would not post information on any site that would be at odds with what people there expected. Alia said, for example, that her friends would be surprised if she posted anything on her Instagram account aside from social photos of friends. "It would be weird if I posted something serious on there, like from the news, or even about me," she said. This sentiment was shared by many of the students with whom I spoke and echoes the work of Ilana Gershon (2010) on how, for many young people, the management of a breakup of a relationship through texting and social media—or how they broke the news and let their friends know about the breakup—is judged by their peers in terms of what the local community perceives as the appropriate use of medium and platform. As another student told me, it would be wrong to post a photo online of herself with a new boyfriend until everyone knew about the previous breakup. The considerations of timing, social response, and rhetorical effect that students demonstrate in these kinds of actions and comments supports Keller's (2013) observation that students exhibit "awareness of *kairos*, which involves choosing the best discourse for the situation, taking into consideration, timing, audience, and context" (p. 93). As Kristin L. Arola's chapter on indigenous interfaces in this volume also points out, students, like the rest of us, develop a keen sense of the kinds of rhetorical moves they need to make in their social groups to not only communicate information but to sustain community relationships.

Yet the sustaining and coordinating of relationships through polymedia practices involves considerations of emotion and the rhetorics of emotion as much as a rational weighing of affordances and kairotic opportunities. As Madianou and Miller (2012) pointed out, "Being in an environment of polymedia matters because polymedia allow the choice of medium or combination of media that best conveys one's feeling and intentions" (p. 147). Individuals often discuss their choices of social media and digital communication in terms of emotions. In my interviews and observations, I came across quote after quote in which people used phrases such as "it made my day," "I love to laugh at that," "that made me

depressed," "it would be embarrassing," "I wanted to show I cared," and so on. Megan's quote is typical of the kinds of things students talk about:

> I worry sometimes about how people are going to react if I tweet about having a bad day, or feeling bad about myself, that they'll think it's self-centered or annoying. But most of the time when I do, I get favorited, or my friends reply with something nice and, I know it sounds lame, but that makes me feel better.

Megan's comment reveals the complex interaction of the personal and the social in how people experience and conceive of emotion. Although there is a tendency in the culture at large to regard emotion as an individual, embodied experience, in fact the experience and communication of emotion are inextricable from social practices and conventions. As Margaret Wetherell (2012) argued, while we may feel emotions as embodied responses, they are reinforced and gain meaning in relationships with others and agreed upon social contexts: "The affective pattern is in fact *distributed* across the relational field and each partner's part becomes meaningful only in relation to the whole affective dance" (p. 87, emphasis in original). The posts students make on social media, from photos to written sentiments to popular culture links, reflect a shared conception of emotion. Their communicative acts not only reflect a sense of how the content will transmit emotion, but also how the act itself will be read emotionally. So, for example, when Aaron sees a post on his Facebook page from his girlfriend of a funny article from *The Onion*, it amuses him, but it also makes him feel cared for that she took time to post it, and that she posted it where it can be seen by their friends as a public display of affection. Emotion, then, is relational and dynamic, and rarely far from the minds of students when they are communicating with their mobile devices.

Any moment or phenomenon that is social is very often rhetorical, and emotion is no exception. We communicate our emotions to others for rhetorical ends, but we also learn and shape our emotions in the context of the rhetorical conventions of the culture in which we live. To feel and communicate outrage, for example, is shaped by cultural and rhetorical expectations as much as by the embodied feelings that follow a particular event. The feelings are real, but to process them as outrage, rather than shame or even indifference, is learned and then performed for, and interpreted by, others. As Laura Micciche (2007) pointed out:

> Performing emotions suggests that emotions are not already *in* us or others, waiting to be externalized. It means that

> they take form, become recognizable, and enter the realm of
> rhetoric when they are bodily enacted and lived, which always
> entails some degree of performance. (p. 62, italics in original)

Emotions have their social component, but explicitly enter the realm of rhetoric when they are performed and enacted. Enacting emotions does not mean they are not genuinely felt, but that they become knowable to others, and gain rhetorical power, through how we perform them to others. I may feel impatient if I am waiting in a long line, but the way I fold my arms, plant my feet, and roll my eyes is a performance of that emotion meant to communicate my thoughts and feelings to others in the line—or to the person at the airline ticket counter refusing to help any of us.

It's easy to think about embodied performances of emotion as the kind I described above, but for young people, the rhetorical performance of emotion also takes place online in both the choice of social media and what is posted there. Young people in particular are mindful that making the wrong rhetorical choices online, in terms of media or tone, can have social and emotional consequences (Davies, 2014; Keller, 2013; Williams, 2009). Robert said that he had made posts on both Facebook and Twitter that were meant to be read ironically. When some people misread his posts as sincere, he found he had to explain his meaning—and apologize: "I have to be a lot more careful now if I'm going to make a joke. It's not worth the trouble for people to misunderstand it and get all in your face over it." Anxiety over being misread, or over having posted material interpreted in ways they had not intended, came up a number of times in interviews, as it has in other research (Buck, this volume; Williams, 2009).

Conversely, people talk about how making the right rhetorical choices can be emotionally fulfilling and sustain relationships. Leanna, a university student in the United Kingdom, said that getting texts from her boyfriend "never gets old. It doesn't always matter what he says, but I like hearing from him. When I walk out of class and look at my phone, I'm hoping I hear from him. That's what I want to see." Leanna's comment reflects not only the way the texts and posts from her boyfriend make her feel when she reads them, but also how the use of social media builds a sense of anticipation that individuals feel about what might be waiting for them when they go online. Just as people used to wait for the mail to arrive by post for word from loved ones, Leanna's sense of opening her text and social media accounts on her phone once she leaves the classroom indicates the same kind of anticipation and even excitement. Such an understanding of how social media facilitate daily relationships provides a substantially different perspective than the critiques of social media that have received so much attention in popular media (Carr, 2011; Turkle, 2011). In addition to the rhetorical

considerations that shape the composition and reception of individual posts and messages, the students' comments also indicate that they began to see different social media sites as more appropriate for performing particular emotions. For example, a number of the people I interviewed talked about Instagram as a place where more sentimental and traditionally emotional material was posted, such as photos of friends and family or notable events. Twitter, on the other hand, was described more in terms of humor or politics and Facebook as a place to share popular culture as well as the kind of photos that go on Instagram. For these students, posting sentimental testimonies to friendship on Twitter would "hit the wrong note," Robert said, "You'd be embarrassed and look stupid." Different sites had definable emotional registers and were part of students' calculations about the rhetorical moves they made online. Although emotion in discussions of rhetoric often is addressed in terms of how it helps people communicate ideas—and that is certainly happening when students are deciding what to post to friends—it is the case that emotion in polymedia practices also functions as a rhetorical matrix that shapes the messages that sustain relationships. For these young people, emotion as performance, as context, as interpretive framework, is always present in their online conversations.

POWER, EMBODIMENT, AND MOBILITY

Of course, in any relationship and in any cultural context, power is always present. In terms of polymedia, power is evident from a number of perspectives. Certainly the most obvious position of power is that of the corporations who own, shape, and set the terms of use of social media sites. However, it is also the case that the practices through which users choose and engage in sites and the relationships they foster and develop there can, in turn, result in changes from the owners of the sites (Madianou & Miller, 2012). Rather than focus on this perspective in this chapter, which has been addressed at length elsewhere, I find it also useful to consider power in terms of the relationships of the users. For example, the person who buys and pays for the technology and the data plan, which for some university students is still their parents, controls what kinds of choices are available. Peter did not have a smartphone, and so was excluded from Instagram and did more of his social media communicating on Facebook. Power can also be seen in how the media choices influence a sense of the context of a site. As more parents and grandparents have established Facebook accounts, some young people used Facebook less frequently (boyd, 2014). On the other hand, the inability of Google+ to gain enough users as a social media site meant it never once came up in interviews or observations.

In addition, the power in relationships in terms of polymedia can be seen

when one person insists on a particular medium and the other person feels obliged to acquiesce to that choice. Students often note that their professors are among the few people they know who use email. Amber Buck's discussion in this collection of graduate students' considerations of how and when to use social media also reflects the impact of power relations between student and instructor. Or, as in the scene that opened this chapter, when Sarah's mother makes a phone call, Sarah always answers. When I ask if she ever ignores her mother's calls, she says:

> I'd like to sometimes when I don't want to have to deal with her. But I know if I do then there would be problems that I'd have to deal with a lot. So it's better I do what she wants.

Sarah's response highlights both the power dynamics involved in the relationship as well as the social factors involved in the emotions. She feels an obligation to answer the call from her mother, and in doing so both mother and daughter are acting out the social roles they understand in their relationship. Later in the conversation Sarah mentions that many of her friends get phone calls rather than texts from their parents. At the moment of getting the call, though, the tone of Sarah's voice and the rolling of her eyes indicate a measure of embarrassment and slight exasperation that is the cultural and relational marker many contemporary students and parents would recognize in such an exchange. Power, or resistance, can be enacted in many different ways, however, and are reflected in the choice and control of the media through which one chooses to communicate. Sarah also said that she often chooses to text her mother rather than call, particularly "if I don't want to talk and talk and have to answer all kinds of questions when I don't have time." In many relationships, the text rather than the phone call, the phone call rather than the email, are understood by both sides of the relationship to have implications about both message and relationship. Sarah used texts to her mother to establish distance and indicate her independence (and while we don't know her mother's response, I am sure she interpreted the texts through a particular set of emotions). And several students said that, if they received a phone call from a friend it indicated a level of seriousness to the message or situation that required immediate response. By contrast, an email might be used to defer emotion or distance.

Sarah's response to her mother's call, while illustrating the social and relational aspects of emotion, also reminds us that emotion is very much an embodied experience—as I could see as she rolled her eyes and hear in the mild tone of exasperation in her voice. Having an embodied, emotional response to composing or reading a text is certainly nothing new. Yet the mobility provided by digital technologies such as smartphones means that we now encounter and engage in

digital literacy practices through a broad range of our daily experiences—and, by extension, a broad range of our daily emotions. Mobile technologies, and the variety of media they allow individuals to use in rapid succession or even simultaneously (sound, text, image, video), illuminate how online literacy practices are deeply entwined with the embodied lives of the person holding the mobile device. Immediate experiences, language histories, or geographical locations shape online practices, which in turn affect embodied, physical responses and interpretations of the surrounding world. Eric, for example, said that what he looked at outside the window of the bus as he rode home could affect how he responded to people, both in terms of the content of his messages and how much he could focus on what he was reading and writing. And, while a number of the students talked about how messages from friends and family could make them feel happy or cared for, several also said that getting a message at the wrong time and place could lead to problems. Alia said that, more than once, she had posted comments to people on both Instagram and Twitter that were critical in tone because of the stress she was feeling in her embodied life at the moment:

> Like, I'm in a traffic jam, late, late, late, and I'm looking at stuff that hits me wrong and I say something sort of bitchy. And it's all because of where I'm at at that moment. It's not them. I've got to stop doing that because I always regret it.

The dual mobilities (Nordquist, 2014) of simultaneous physical movement along with the virtual movement of digital texts mean that the emotional and relational impact of communication feels immediate and sometimes unpredictable. In addition, the cultural emphasis on acceleration and speed means that people often feel the pressure to respond right away to texts and posts. To not respond quickly to a message can be regarded as its own emotional message of neglect or indifference.

CONCLUSION

To bring the perspective of polymedia to our discussions of people's daily digital media practices helps foreground the role emotion plays in the rhetorical choices individuals make with speed and facility. Whether it is with friends or authority figures, the decisions made by people using mobile devices and social media are made with an ongoing evaluation of how they will affect social relationships. Understanding sociality means thinking about the "social" as more than just the implications of culture, institutions, and power that have dominated much of our conversations in rhetoric and composition over the past two decades. Instead, sociality, while not ignoring power, also asks us to think about how

people create and maintain meaningful relationships with others in their lives, online and off. Certainly the social media networks people establish and nurture through polymedia literacy practices are quite often about sustaining relationships. When I talk to people about why they decide to sign on, or not sign on, to a particular social media site, the answer is more often than not a variation of "because that's where my friends are." What's more, once on a site, people are willing to invest time to learn how to use the site and to understand the cultural genres that shape the rhetorical conventions people employ there. The importance of relationships for motivating learning and perceptions of agency offer us an important perspective for exploring how and why people use social media in their lives. At the same time, the understanding of those social relationships mediates how people decide to shift from one app to the next, from one social media network to another.

Emotion is always a presence in the cultural genres people learn and negotiate to maintain these social relationships. To think about emotion in this way—as not a matter of a single person's feelings, but as an ongoing system of embodiment and social response—also helps us understand how integral it is to our rhetorical choices. Our understanding, interpretation, and performance of emotion happen through a continuing pattern of feelings, actions, and responses from others. We learn what an emotion is not just from how it feels to us, but also from how others respond to our performance of that emotion. It is, as Wetherell (2012) maintained, a "joint, coordinated, relational, activity" (p. 83). What we can see in the polymedia practices of young people with their mobile phones is that these patterns of performance and response now take place regularly through digital media and social media networks, and that digital media has become an essential part of those patterns. Emotion is not optional in these choices and communications, nor is it a less important or less intellectual rhetorical consideration. Emotion is both the motivator and the framework through which the communication and rhetorical choices are made that build and sustain relationships. In addition, these recurring emotional patterns create dispositions that are an essential part of what we think of as identity and, as such, are also bound up in individual perceptions of agency.

Finally, in understanding the role of mobile digital technologies in creating and nurturing relationships, we should see it not as a replacement, nor an add-on, but as an integral part of daily life. The social networks and embodied feelings people have are not divided into online and offline experiences, but are part of the ongoing flow of experience. The development and popularity of mobile devices allows online experiences to be accessed and engaged with almost as consistently and continually as face-to-face encounters. Mobile technologies are embedded in the lives of many of the people I observed and interviewed, and

have entwined themselves in their relationships and supporting social structures.

People choose to communicate through particular media or modes not solely—or perhaps even primarily—in terms of the traditional rhetorical affordances. Instead their choices "come much more from the wider social context of their communication rather than the narrower issues of technology and function" (Madianou & Miller, 2012, p. 137). In our conceptions of the motivations that drive particular rhetorical choices, and the affordances that people perceive in a given medium or mode, we have to include considerations of emotion and sociality.[2]

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