Funds of (Difficult) Knowledge and the Affordances of Multimodality: The Case of Victor

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ABSTRACT: Drawing on semi-structured interview data, this paper examines one man's multimodal engagement with the emotionally difficult aspects of his Chilean heritage. It builds on recent work (e.g., Marshall & Toohey, 2010) that has begun to unearth the intersection between funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998, 2000), multiliteracies (New London Group, 2000), and multimodality (Kress, 1997) in an attempt to call attention to the shifting nature of what is considered "difficult" about difficult knowledge, and to the role of multimodality in both accessing and making sense of the difficult in one's funds of knowledge. The analysis reveals that young people might be purposefully kept away from punctuations on their community's semiotic chain that are deemed difficult (e.g., images, documentaries) not only by schools, but also by family members for whom such punctuations invoke painful memories. The paper concludes with a call to teachers to be ever mindful of reproducing knowledge hierarchies in their classrooms, which may be partly mitigated by discussing the affordances and challenges of drawing on students' funds of (difficult) knowledge with families and communities.

Key words: Multiliteracies, Multimodality, Difficult Knowledge, Refugees, Spanish

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The repercussions of the coup are still felt and Chile, generally speaking, hasn't faced its past. There are some who don't want to relive the horror, others who have resolved to go on indifferently, and still others who decide to forget. But we must face the past, learn from it and seek out the truth. Now is the time to 'overcome that dark and bitter time in which betrayal attempts to impose itself,' and to live out the dream of Allende, which he articulated so eloquently in his final message to the Chilean people: 'History is ours and it is the people who make it.' (Aguilera & Fredes, 2006, p. x, my translation)

On September 11th, 1973, the democratically elected socialist president of Chile, Salvador Allende, perished during the violent military coup that overthrew his government (Wright & Oñate, 1998). This event marked the beginning of Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship, a period of history in which hundreds of thousands of Chileans sought refuge in countries all over the world (Shayne, 2009; Wright & Oñate, 1998), and that resulted in a surge of growth in the Latin American community in Canada (Ruiz, 2006). Thus, instead of arriving in the diaspora with the kinds of dreams of more voluntary migrants, many Chilean exiles at the time carried with them a tremendous amount of grief. In Ariel Dorfman's words, on the day of the coup, "when Chile lost its democracy… death entered our life in an irrevocable way and altered it forever" (2006, p. 1, my translation). This observation is not insignificant. As I will argue, the pain many Chilean exiles brought into the diaspora was very real (Shayne, 2009), and in the case of the focal participant of this study, Victor (a pseudonym), it presented a barrier to accessing the emotionally difficult aspects of his Chilean heritage while growing up—but it was a barrier in which he managed to overcome multimodally, particularly through the visual.

This paper draws on interview data from a larger study whose goal was to analyze the relationship between the leftist political ideologies of Chilean exiles and the heritage language development of their now-grown children (Becker, 2013). Applying a multiliteracies lens of design (New London Group, 2000) to the interview data of Victor Sandoval, it

becomes possible to see how the affordances of multimodality can open up spaces to engage with and understand difficult knowledge, which is especially important when such knowledge is a defining feature of one's cultural heritage and funds of knowledge (e.g., Marshall & Toohey, 2010). My aim here is to build on work (Kendrick & McKay, 2002; Marshall & Toohey, 2010; Pahl, 2004) that has begun, directly and indirectly, to unearth the intersection between funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998, 2000), multimodality (Kress, 1997) and multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; New London Group, 2000). In what follows, I hope to call attention to the shifting nature of what is considered "difficult" about difficult knowledge, and to the role of multimodality in both accessing and making sense of the difficult in one's funds of knowledge.

The Funds of Knowledge Tradition

For over two decades, the concept of funds of knowledge (henceforth FoK) has been highly influential in educational research and practice. Since its inception, however, it has undergone much refinement. In its initial incarnations, it was defined in rather concrete terms, as an "operations manual of essential information and strategies households need to maintain their well being" (Greenberg, 1989, cited in Moll & Greenberg, 1990, p. 223); a few years later, Moll (1992) refined this definition to include more abstract dimensions of knowing, adding the "bodies of knowledge and information that households use to survive, to get ahead, or to thrive" (p. 21). In a more recent publication, Moll and his colleagues distilled the essence of FoK in general terms: "People are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge" (González et al., 2005, para. 3). In other words, FoK are generated through household and community practices, and these practices can include intergenerational storytelling. This conceptual breadth has allowed for the notion to be operationalized in ways not restricted to the quotidian household activities (e.g., Marshall & Toohey, 2010).

A common thread uniting the various conceptualizations of FoK over the years has been the emphasis on households and communities as rich intellectual resources that can be fruitfully taken up in classrooms (González et al, 2005; Moll, 1992). Another central and related feature of the FoK literature has been the recognition that households exist and operate within a web of intersecting social networks (e.g., Moll, 1992; Oughton, 2010); thus the concept has provided the ideological groundwork for inroads towards a more democratic, anti-deficit model of knowledge sharing in educational contexts. However, Oughton (2010) cautions teachers and researchers "not [to] allow the ideological attractiveness of this concept to blind them to its potential pitfalls" (p. 75), such as inadvertently reproducing a knowledge hegemony when determining which knowledges 'count.' Others have convincingly argued that, while FoK may seem like a more equitable, bottom-up model of learning, "some types of knowledge (e.g., mathematical knowledge) are more aligned with communities of practice that hold more power" (Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011, p. 171), and, as a result, not all 'funds' of knowledge have the requisite social or cultural capital to translate into currency in educational or, conceivably, in community contexts.

> "People are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge." (González et al., 2005, para. 3)

Funds of (Difficult) Knowledge

It can be argued that knowledge deemed difficult or problematic has very little capital in educational settings (Zipin, 2009). As Marshall and Toohey (2010) have recently pointed out, not all of the knowledge children bring into the classroom conforms to "school notions of appropriate conflict resolution, secularity, gender equity, cultural authenticity, and sunny childhoods" (p. 237), which raises questions about what should be done with this knowledge, and how schools should address students' subjectivities (New London Group, 2000).

Traditionally, educators who have attempted to make a space for engaging with traumatic historical events have been met with "critical skepticism" and "dismissive suspicion" (Simon, Rosenberg, & Eppert, 2000a, p. 1). In the late 1990s, Deborah Britzman (2000) coined the term *difficult knowledge*, which, in broad brushstrokes, refers to the "stories that disturb one's sense of cohesiveness" (p. 43), namely in curricular materials (e.g., stories about the Holocaust). But difficult knowledge can also reflect the inner conflicts one might experience upon coming across certain kinds of knowledge in learning (Pitt & Britzman, 2003). Thus, difficult knowledge stands in direct opposition to the knowledge with which that one is most comfortable, and, as such, the inclusion of 'the difficult' within 'controlled' environments such as classrooms (and perhaps to a somewhat lesser extent, families) can be a disturbing proposition.

In general, difficult knowledge has tended to be operationalized from a top-down perspective; in other words, scholars have asked: What makes knowledge difficult in literature (e.g., Britzman, 2000; Eppert, 2000) or in artistic productions (e.g., Eppert, 2002; Heybach, 2012; Salverson, 2000), and how can educators help their students to learn "not only about, but from past lives and events" (Simon et al., 2000a, p. 6) in order to build more affectively-grounded pedagogies (Britzman, 2000)? A recent, more bottom-up orientation to difficult knowledge has asked: "When the funds of knowledge of a community include difficult knowledge that cannot be spoken or that is unfamiliar to teachers, what can teachers do with it?" (Marshall & Toohey, 2010, p. 238). This paper examines elements of the latter question. In my examination, I propose the term funds of (difficult) knowledge to account for the emotionally difficult chapters of one's cultural heritage or migration story (cf. Zipin's discussion of dark knowledge, 2009). I have placed 'difficult' in parentheses in order to recognize the mutable, constructed and subjective nature of what is considered difficult.

Multimodality and Design

The focus on multimodality in education seems to have emerged alongside a major reconceptualization of literacy, away from the traditional, autonomous model (i.e., literacy as a discrete set of text-based skills) to the understanding that literacy practices are culturally and socially shaped, and are located within complex webs of local and global ideologies (Street, 1984). Multiliteracies scholars have taken this revolution a few steps further, theorizing literacy as an inherently multimodal and dynamic semiotic process, in which individuals from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds move between modes (synaesthesia) and draw on semiotic resources from their life worlds to transform these semiotic resources, in turn transforming themselves (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; New London Group, 2000).

In step with the FoK agenda, multiliteracies scholars have called for a more dialogic and democratic relationship between home, community and school (Cummins & Early, 2011; Jewitt, 2008; New London Group, 2000). In their examination of the pedagogy of multiliteracies' evolution since the New London Group first published its seminal educational manifesto in 1996, Cope and Kalantizis (2009) indicate that despite changes to particulars (e.g., technological advances and increased movement across borders), the manifesto's original pillars stand strong today: "the centrality of diversity, the notion of Design as active meaning making, the significance of multimodality and the need for a more holistic approach to pedagogy" (p. 167). While the linguistic mode has traditionally predominated in schools, social semiotic theories highlight the need to recognize the broad spectrum of modes available in the human meaning-making process. Of relevance here is the point that different modes have different affordances, and so what might be the most apt mode for interpreting and communicating meaning in one situation, might not be in another (Kress, 1997).

In contrast with more static visions of pedagogical processes, the notion of design has been proposed to highlight the dynamic, creative, and agentive potential of teaching and learning relationships; it holds that teachers and learners are designers of their learning, rather than merely distributors and recipients of curricula. Design refers broadly to "any

semiotic activity, including using language to produce or consume texts" (New London Group, 2000, p. 20) and is central to the multiliteracies conception of meaning-making. The concept has been divided into three interrelated and cyclical stages: available designs (the semiotic resources at hand for sense-making and meaning-making), designing (the use and subsequent transformation of semiotic resources), and the redesigned (the result of the meaning-making process, the production of new available designs) (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; New London Group, 2000).

A key part of the meaning-making process involves how individuals initially engage with the signs embedded within patterns of communication (designs). When engaging in meaning-making within our semiotic environments, Kalantzis and Cope (2012) distinguish between three processes: representation (telling yourself), communication (telling others), and interpretation (telling yourself what you think others mean) (p. 177). Representation is a particularly useful concept for investigating how individuals enter into the design cycle, or the point of initial contact with available designs; indeed, not all sense-making is immediately discernable by others. Both representation and interpretation refer to internal sense-making, concepts upon which I draw heavily in the discussion of results.

As alluded to above, designing is essentially an identity project: "through these processes of Design,...meaning-makers remake themselves. They reconstruct and renegotiate their identities" (New London Group, 2000, p. 23). Every stage of the design process is motivated by the interests of the sign-maker (Kress, 1997; Kress & Jewitt, 2003) and as such, the identities and habitus of the designer become sedimented into the texts they produce (the redesigned) and made perceptible (Cummins & Early, 2011; Rowsell & Pahl, 2007). Beginning with the selection of available designs, multimodal text making allows for the simultaneous designing and development of identities—an activity that in turn becomes a "sign of learning, a material trace of semiosis" (Jewitt, 2008, p. 259) located along a semiotic chain that can stretch across time, space, and relationships (Stein, 2003).

Multimodal Engagements with Difficult Knowledge

While there exists a growing body of literature documenting the implementation of multiliteracies pedagogies in schools (e.g., Cummins & Early, 2011; Giampapa, 2010), my focus in this section will be on studies that have examined the intersection of multimodal literacy practices and difficult knowledge. Relatively few studies have probed this relationship, and those who have did not set out to examine it explicitly, but rather it became a salient theme during data analysis. Indeed, my search for "multiliteracies" or "multimodality" and "difficult knowledge" retrieved zero results from the databases ERIC and ProQuest (April 28, 2014). This apparent gap in the literature might be due in part to the fact that "the school curriculum does not have an adequate grasp of conflict in learning, either the conflict within the learner or the conflict within the knowledge itself" (Britzman, 2000, p. 37). In other words, researchers and educators alike remain unsure, if not uneasy, about how to address the difficult knowledge that is interwoven in students' FoK. In a small way, the studies reviewed here point to the current status of our grasp of conflict in learning.

Multimodality and funds of (difficult) knowledge in classrooms. The impetus for the present study arose from reading Marshall and Toohey (2010). In the article, the authors conduct a critical discourse analysis of a multimodal, multilingual, intergenerational storytelling activity that an Anglo-Canadian teacher assigned to her fourth and fifth grade Sikh students in Vancouver. The teacher had initiated the storytelling activity because she noticed that the grandparents of young students in the school (the children's primary caregivers in many cases) had been reluctant to participate in the school's "noisy reading period" (a time when students' caregivers were invited into the school to read with their pre-school- and kindergarten-aged kin) and she was looking for a way to make them feel welcome. Thus, she supplied her students with MP3 recorders and sent them out to record their grandparents' FoK in whichever language they felt most comfortable, which the students would then translate into picture books to be used by kindergarten and first grade students during the noisy reading period with their grandparents. The stories that the students collected varied in terms of form and content, but, notably, a number of them contained "gritty" details of their grandparents' involvement in the Partition of India and Pakistan. The bilingual, multimodal texts that were produced to tell these stories contained drawings with images of machetes being plunged into people's chests, guns being fired, and tears being cried. As a result, the content was deemed inappropriate for younger children, and remarkably, what was initially intended to be a bottom-up celebration of multiculturalism and multilingualism that would serve as a grassroots, multilingual literacy resource for the school's younger learners never left a box in the older students' classroom. As the authors point out, the study raises important questions regarding the cultural relativity of what is deemed appropriate knowledge for children, as the grandparents clearly did not feel that the content of their memories was too difficult for their minor-aged loved ones to hear. It also raises questions about the affordances of the multimodal for communicating "difficult" topics: Would the written texts have been perceived as less problematic if they had not been accompanied by "gritty" imagery?

Along similar lines, Kendrick and McKay (2002) analyzed one boy's drawing of literacy for its strikingly unusual and potentially difficult content within the context of school. When asked to draw an image of himself involved in reading or writing, Dustin, a fifth grade student, drew a buck hanging by its hind hooves with blood dripping from its neck and a smiling hunter (presumably a self-portrait) standing to the left of it. Of the drawing he wrote: "I shot my first buck with a doble barel shotgut. It is at my grapernts farm. My dad Helped me" (p. 50, Dustin's spelling). Classroom observations and in-depth follow up interviews revealed that Dustin had been keenly aware of the school's zero-tolerance policy regarding violence, and as a result had made the drawing (and a prior one, depicting a gopher being shot) furtively. Indeed, he needed verbal reassurance from the researchers that his teacher would not see the drawing without his consent, and that he was welcome to draw whatever he wanted. The authors suggested that Dustin's experience of hunting with key male members of his family only became difficult knowledge once it entered the

school, and that by adopting an official no-violence stance, the school ultimately "restricted his identity as a writer [and multimodal meaning-maker] at school, and failed to acknowledge how he positioned himself as a member of his family" (p. 53). Together with Britzman (2000) and Marshall and Toohey (2010), Kendrick and McKay (2002) remind us that "the world is redolent with people and topics that teachers may not want children to think about, but children do think about these topics because they live them" (pp. 54-55)—be they experienced first- or second-hand (Baum, 2000).

Multimodality and funds of (difficult) knowledge in the home. In the two preceding studies, students' FoK became difficult only upon entering the school context (primarily as drawings) where topics related to violence were overtly unwelcome. Pahl's (2004) examination of one young Turkish-British boy's drawings of birds offers an alternative way of understanding the role of the multimodal as a semiotic resource for mediating different knowledges, namely that of personally difficult knowledge. With the objective of capturing their communicative practices in the home, Pahl made regular ethnographic visits to two London homes over the course of two years, one of which was that of five-year-old Fatih and his mother, Elif. Pahl provides a rich description of the ways in which Fatih's constant drawings of birds emerged as part of a semiotic chain that spanned geographic spaces (e.g., happy memories of chickens in his grandparents' farm in Turkey) and time (e.g., his last name was the name of a wild bird). But perhaps of most relevance to our discussion here is the range of affective and symbolic meanings that the bird connoted. On the one hand, the bird represented warm memories in his grandparents' village, but on the other hand, according to his cousin, the bird could be interpreted as a symbol of freedom from "feeling trapped" by a home in which Fatih had witnessed domestic violence as a young child, and from which he and his mother had fled.

Linking multimodality and funds of (difficult) knowledge. Far from being a comprehensive review of studies concerned with the intersection of multimodal literacy practices and difficult knowledge, the studies summarized here provide a useful way of situating the present study among others that have considered difficult knowledge from diverse perspectives. These studies also provide a valuable glimpse at how difficult knowledge is manifested and addressed in home and school settings. This short review suggests that what might be considered "difficult" about a particular fund of knowledge depends to a large extent on the context in which it is received, and possibly even on the mode of its representation (e.g., visual versus textual).

Marshall and Toohey's (2010) study demonstrates how what is perceived as "difficult" about a community's FoK can change as it moves across modes, generations, cultures, and educational institutions. Kendrick and McKay's (2002) analysis of Dustin's drawing reminds us that "difficult" knowledge is not unique to homes or communities that have experienced war or collective trauma, and that what might be perceived as a threat to the school's officially condoned knowledges may stand at the very core of a young person's developing identity. And finally, Pahl's (2004) examination of Fatih's birds as knots in the semiotic chain running across his complex life worlds calls our attention to the affordances of drawing to express difficult knowledge by appropriating symbols that have multiple connotations, and perhaps even to offer a form of liberation from personally difficult knowledge.

These studies all point to the complex nature of the visual, where depth of interpretation and understanding of the links in the designer's semiotic chain may depend to a great extent on how well acquainted one is with the designer's life worlds: Fatih's birds carried both knowledge that was and wasn't difficult, but determining what the bird symbolized in a given text seemed to depend on the viewer's knowledge about Fatih's family life. Similarly, Dustin's drawing, like the drawings made by the fourth and fifth grade students in Marshall and Toohey's (2010) study, became less difficult (albeit not less problematic) to teacher- or researcher-viewers when they were understood within the prescriptions of an assignment or official task. Nevertheless, even with this understanding, the students' drawings were not allowed to circulate freely among the other students in the school, which underscores the incipient nature of our understanding of what to do with difficult

knowledge in institutional settings once it has been identified as such.

Multimodal activities can offer a freer, "unpoliced zone" (Stein, 2003, p. 124) for sense-making and meaning-making, but as the studies reviewed here show, the type of knowledge that the redesigned represents can determine the extent to which gatekeepers police them. In the case of Marshall and Toohey's (2010) participants, a "policed" intervention meant keeping the redesigned in a box in the designers' classroom, preventing it from reentering school's broader design cycle as a new available design.

Method

Consistent with the methods of the three studies reviewed above, most literacy studies considering children's multimodal productions have employed ethnographic methods in order to be able to peel back the accretive layers of meaning that children sediment into their designing/ text-making processes (e.g., Cummins & Early, 2011; Lytra, 2012; Rowsell & Pahl, 2007). The data upon which the following discussion is based, however, are from a larger study whose objective was to probe, via semi-structured interviews, the connection between the politically-charged history of the Chilean community in a Western Canadian city and the heritage language development of four of its now-grown children (Becker, 2013). The original study did not include official ethnographic observations or document collection, so it is not possible to examine the focal participant's text-making beyond what he reported in the interview data. The gaps left by the original methodology highlight both the indispensability of ethnographic methods when studying human identity construction and meaning-making, and the insufficiency of a single mode (in this case, the linguistic) to obtain a truly textured understanding of the relationships between identity, mode, and cognition (Kress, 1997). Nevertheless, the interview data do offer certain insights that will hopefully inspire future work in this area.

Data Collection and Analysis

Over the period of approximately one month (December, 2011 to January, 2012), I interviewed Victor twice, with interviews ranging between one and two hours each. Questions centered on themes of ethnic identity construction, political ideology and activism, and (heritage) language development. Following other interview-based studies with related objectives (Kanno, 2003; Kouritzin, 1999; Poyatos Matas & Cuatro Nochez, 2011), the data from the original study (Becker, 2013) were transcribed for content and analyzed in an iterative, ongoing fashion, allowing for themes to emerge (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Themes were generally identified by recurrent patterns in Victor's discourse, although occasionally I noted "significant meaning in a single instance" (Stake, 1995, p. 78). For the present study, I re-examined Victor's interview transcripts, looking for themes that reflected the difficult knowledge contained within his cultural FoK. The original study followed a pilot study I conducted with different families in the same community in 2008 (see Guardado & Becker, 2013). My fluency in Spanish in addition to multiple long-standing personal and professional connections helped me to develop a level of rapport with community members from different generations, which greatly facilitated recruitment in both studies.

"I always say I'm a human being first, then I'm a Latin American, and then maybe I'm a Chileno, but I don't necessarily identify with the Chilean state either because of the role that it has had to play in our colonialist history." (Victor, direct quote)

The Focal Participant: Victor Sandoval

Victor Sandoval's father was the first of his family to flee the dictatorship in Chile, and his mother followed some time later with Victor and his three

older brothers in 1976. He was two years old when he arrived in Canada. Prior to this study, I had met Victor at different community events in a Western Canadian city. Victor caught my attention because of his high level of activism and involvement in the local Latin American community there, although he was also involved in social and political activism in other communities. I approached him to participate in my study because I was curious about the ways in which political ideology had become a cultural trait in his Chilean community and the potential implications of this characteristic for Spanish language development in the second generation.

Spanish had been Victor's first and dominant language until he entered daycare at age five, where English quickly became his dominant language. At the time of our first interview, he was in his mid-thirties and reported Spanish as his dominant language. He had travelled to Latin America several times and had taken some Spanish courses during his undergraduate degree. My interactions with him indicated that he was a highly proficient speaker, reader and writer of his heritage language. Despite having travelled to Chile, though, Victor had a complicated relationship with the contemporary culture he found there due to the capitalist turn he felt the society had taken since the Allende government was overthrown in 1973. He described his identity as such:

> I always say I'm human being first, then I'm a Latin American, and then maybe I'm a Chileno, but I don't necessarily identify with the Chilean state either because of the role that it has had to play in our colonialist history.

Discussion of Results

The multimodal resources that Victor drew on as he encountered and then began to make sense of his community's funds of (difficult) knowledge form an intertextual, semiotic chain that becomes perceptible by analyzing his narrative accounts. Throughout these excerpts, we can see that what made his knowledge difficult was defined by his own emotional responses to the content as presented in (and intensified by) multiple modes, as well as by how other people (e.g., his parents) experienced this

knowledge. While the excerpts presented here offer no tangible examples of the redesigned, as in text making (Cummins & Early, 2011; Rowsell & Pahl, 2007), it is nevertheless possible to glimpse the dynamics of multimodality and difficult knowledge in his reports of the initial sense-making stages of his design process, and how they helped shape his developing sense of self.

Synaesthesia: "In my mother's womb"

Not four minutes into the first interview, Victor delved into one of his first and perhaps most difficult memories. He explained that the anger and pain this memory caused him was a driving force in all that he did, and that he chose to channel this anger in positive ways through artistic expression. The curious thing about this memory was that it was not his—not directly, anyway. His mother had been pregnant with him at the time that this memory was made, and he felt that the outrage that she felt that day was transmitted directly to him:

> One of the common stories that always was kind of, that's always been ingrained in my brain from a young time is that when my mother, when the military coup happened on September 11th, 1973 I was still in my mother's womb. My mom tells me the story that a couple of days after the military coup, she actually went down to El Palacio de la Moneda [Chile's Presidential Palace where the bombing to which Victor refers took place] [voice cracks with emotion] and walking in amongst the rubble she saw a soldier and she just was consumed by this anger of what had happened. And that story sticks with me today because I still feel an anger. It's an anger and it's a pain that it's very hard to explain to people. And it's a driving force for me for all the things that I do. I would say that it's more, it's more of a pain than an anger, but they're related....And it's a lot, it's very hard for Canadians who haven't gone through the experience of a military coup like we have to understand that pain. Or why we're angry. So I get it a lot, "Why are you angry, Victor? Why are you angry?" And one of my goals is to explain that anger through art. Whether it be through

lyrics of a song or through art itself, but I really look for ways of expressing how all of this is related, like how it all has made me the person I am today.

According to Kalantzis and Cope (2012), "synaesthesia is the process of expressing a meaning in one mode, then another" (p. 195), but in the above excerpt, we can see how synaesthesia was integral not only to expressing/communicating meaning (designing and redesign) in his story, but also to Victor's interpretation of available designs. Victor remembered being told, through language, the details of his mother's painful memory, yet in highlighting his own physical situation within his mother at the time the memory was made, he insinuates that her anger was transmitted to him in a more embodied way. For Victor, the linguistic mode

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did not transmit the emotional force that now motivates "all the things that [he does]"; while his mother's verbal retelling of this memory allowed him to connect to his own pre-natal, kinesthetic experience of being carried across the ruins of his homeland in the belly of his anguished mother, for him, the linguistic mode was not the most apt mode with which to communicate this experience (Kress, 1997), especially to those who had not experienced it (i.e., "Canadians"). Instead, to translate this emotionally difficult experience to others, Victor preferred non-linguistic modes such as "art itself," or the linguistic embedded in auditory modes, as in the "lyrics of a song."

In this excerpt, our attention is called to the specific ways in which connections to the available designs of one's funds of (difficult) knowledge can be made multimodally along more global semiotic chains, and that certain extra-linguistic modes can become preferred for both representing and communicating emotionally difficult topics in particular. By contrast, the bird icon in Fatih's (Pahl, 2004) semiotic toolkit did not appear to serve a communicative function in the sense of transmitting the pain of his difficult knowledge to others, but instead may have had more representational, or internal significance. The difference in their multimodal experiences might have had to do with the different degrees of shared-ness of their difficult knowledges: Victor's difficult knowledge was shared with millions of other people (Britzman, 2000; Marshall & Toohey, 2010), while Fatih's experience of domestic violence was more direct, localized and personalized.

Exploring Emotion with Film and Image

From Victor's comments, it becomes possible to see how we can talk about "most apt mode(s)" for communicating emotionally difficult knowledge, but also for representing and interpreting it:

> It's like when you watch a documentary about La Unidad Popular [a collective of leftist political parties led by Salvador Allende] and you begin to see the happiness in people's faces as they were fighting for their own rights as people, during La Unidad Popular, and to see it all come crashing down with a dictatorship, there's this sense of solidarity I think that some youth feel. They want that. They want to go back to that time, even though it doesn't exist, it doesn't exist, but that's what they're looking for. They wanna be part of something that feels like that solidarity being expressed through that video by that person's smile or face or something. And that's what I identified with when I was growing up, like as I had mentioned the last time we got together, the book of murals, or photographs.

Being able to access his funds of (difficult) knowledge multimodally, through a documentary which contains visual, gestural, auditory, and

linguistic designs, seemed to have affordances that allowed Victor to go beyond merely learning about "that time," and to enter into a kind of experience of it (Britzman, 2000; Eppert, 2002; Simon et al, 2000a). As we can see in this excerpt, multimodal points of entry to this difficult yet defining moment in his diaspora community's history became points of personal and social identification for Victor. In other words, Victor was able to identify with the content of his cultural group's difficult history because it had been represented multimodally, and in turn, he came to identify not only with the historical events themselves, but also with their mode of representation.

Due to the tremendous emotional anguish surrounding their flight from their home country, Victor's parents "would never really talk about [what had happened in Chile]." In this sense, his parents acted as gatekeepers of their family's funds of (difficult) knowledge because, in Victor's words: "They wanted us to grow up happy. They wanted us to grow up not sheltered or grow up naive, but specifically not wanting to share the immensity of that pain with us." Nevertheless, the memory that Victor's mother shared with him "at a young age" in the first excerpt gained momentum as Victor grew older and found fragments of it embedded in the semiotic chain of his family's and his community's difficult past, manifest in images contained in a book at the local library, for instance:

I was 13 years old when my mother took me to the [public library] and I ended up picking up my first book on what had happened in Chile....[On] the very first page of this book was Salvador Allende on the balcony of the presidential palace, and the very last picture of the book is that same balcony after the bombing. So it gave you the entire history of Salvador Allende's presidency through pictures, murals, and short little blurbs. So it was much more of a picture book, and that's probably why I ended up picking it up at 13, right? But that book changed my life, because at that point the art of La Brigada Ramona Parra [the official muralist brigade of the Chilean communist party] became such an important thing. So here I am, a young chileno or, however I identified at that time, chileno-canadiense [Chilean-Canadian], and rather than language being

the main driver of the ideas, it became art, and photographs.

Echoing the previous excerpt, here Victor highlights the influential nature of the visual in accessing the available designs of his diaspora community and his ongoing identity designing. If the book in which the Chilean coup d'état was represented had not been "more of a picture book," Victor felt that he may not have accessed this difficult knowledge at the age of 13. Thus, again we see how not only is it important to consider the most apt mode for communication, but Victor's memories raise questions about the most apt mode for the reception, representation and interpretation of available designs (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001)—processes that preclude the (re)designing stage of meaning-making, and that influence how we store and create memories. It would appear that semiotic resources, especially if their content is deemed problematic by gatekeepers (e.g., parents, teachers), are not equally available to young meaning-makers.

Making Discursive Connections through Song

The issue of accessibility is a recurrent theme in this analysis: not only accessing materials outside of the home (e.g., Canadian library books), in which available designs could be located, but also the ways in which Victor felt that the multimodal gained him access to deeper levels of understanding of and involvement with the issues. Even within the linguistic mode, Victor was able to distinguish between manifestations of language that were more accessible to him:

> I remember reading the Communist Manifesto when I was like 16 years old, but not really understanding it as much as I understood a song about Silvio [Rodriguez, see Fischlin, 2003; Nandorfy, 2003]....I think that language is a big thing, like the type of like, the discourse....The discourse [in the song] is much more—it's an everyday discourse. That is more accessible.

Where the linguistic mode was present in Victor's sense making, it was often complemented (or even overshadowed) by other modes.

Jewitt (2008) has posited that "all modes are partial....no one mode stands alone in the process of making meaning" (p. 247), and music is a common example of the confluence of modes (auditory, linguistic, and even gestural or spatial) to make up a whole (van Leeuwen, 1999). In the following excerpt we can see how the emotional weight of a particular song made it inaccessible to Victor's father, and yet the difficult cultural knowledge that this song carried became an available design which Victor welcomed as he consciously engaged in the (re)designing of his community's future:

> My family was more private than most families. We weren't always involved in everything that the rest of the community was doing and I think that that comes with, that was a result of the incredible pain that I already explained that my father also felt. Like for example my father couldn't listen to, for example, the Himno de La Unidad Popular [Hymn of the Popular Unity Party] in our house because it brought back too many memories [voice cracks with emotion]. And the fact that you know in that song it says [singing] "Venceremos, venceremos" right? "mil cadenas habrá que romper. [We will triumph, we will triumph...a thousand chains will have to be broken]" [Voice cracks as he begins to speak again] The reality is that we lost. We lost everything. So it's hard to listen to that song. Even though it, you know like, you know, culturally speaking music and art and all of that contributes to this progressive political culture of who we are, sometimes it's difficult to look at the murals [voice cracks]. It's difficult to listen to the music. It's difficult to hear the poems being recited. Because of that pain. But at the same time it's a driving force to help us moving toward the future.

Although it might be said that the tragic irony of the lyrics was what made listening to this song too difficult for Victor's father, it is worth asking what role the auditory played in intensifying the emotional difficulty of the song for Victor's father, and in making it accessible to Victor (see Baum, 2000, for a discussion of second-generation witnessing). Although there exists little research on the relationship between sound (design) and emotion to inform our understanding of this choice here (West, 2009), it is not insignificant that Victor chose to sing these lyrics to me in the interview. Nevertheless, that he sang them and became visibly and audibly distressed in his performance suggests that the elements of melody and rhythm that carry the lyrics contributed to the affective weight of the linguistic components, corroborating Kress' (1997) contention that different modes enable different forms of cognition and affect.

Conclusion

In the foregoing analysis, I employed the multiliteracies notion of design in a close examination of one man's reported sense-making process while engaging with the difficult elements in the FoK of his family history as part of a Chilean diaspora community. Although Victor was no longer a student at the time of the interviews, his retrospective accounts shed light on (immigrant) students' access to difficult aspects of their FoK. By combining the concepts of design and funds of (difficult) knowledge, this paper was able to uncover that individuals may have differential access to the range of available designs in their FoK—that they haven't necessarily "lived with them since [they] were born" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012, p. 183), but perhaps alongside them.

As concerns elements of cultural heritage that gatekeepers, such as Victor's parents, find personally difficult, young people might be purposefully kept away from punctuations on the community's semiotic chain that are deemed difficult (e.g., images, documentaries) until they are thought to be old enough to access these painful designs. Victor was 13 before he learned, primarily via the images in a book, about "what happened in Chile"—in other words, before he learned the full(er) story behind his family's exile and gained access to a wider range of available designs related to it. Perhaps because of the official policies that schools purport, we often think of institutions and teachers as gatekeepers managing the flow of knowledge, but this paper suggests that parents, as other authority figures in children's lives, also manage their children's access to and engagement with certain available designs. This point raises questions regarding whose vision of

childhood schools should follow (Marshall & Toohey, 2010).

The findings of this study corroborate Pitt and Britzman's (2003) contention that knowledge becomes difficult when it breaks with the knowledge with which one is most comfortable. Knowledge can become difficult at the personal level (e.g., Victor's knowledge of the injustices that transpired in Chile and Fatih's knowledge of violence in the family), but also at the institutional level (e.g., the zero-tolerance policy regarding violence in Dustin's school). Advocates for incorporating students' FoK in the classroom "perceive the students' community, and its FoK, as the most important resource for reorganizing instruction in ways that 'far exceed' the limits of current schooling" (Moll & Greenberg, 1990, p. 345), but the question remains of how to include these FoK if they include difficult knowledge (Marshall & Toohey, 2010)—knowledge that parents and students alike may or may not feel comfortable about seeing represented at school.

While school policies have a clear role in policing which knowledges are deemed problematic in the classroom, critics of "sunny childhood" pedagogies (Britzman, 2000; Marshall & Toohey, 2010; Simon et al, 2000b) and also of FoK (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011) have posited: "Teachers need to engage in critical thinking and participate in a constructive dialogue that challenges their misperceptions" (p. 171) in order for the truly democratic goals of FoK approaches to be realized. Oughton (2010) asks, pointedly:

If we, as teachers or researchers, feel entitled to arbitrate what 'counts' as valid and useable funds of knowledge, are we not replacing one set of cultural arbitraries (the approved curriculum) with another (our own well-intentioned but value-laden judgments)?...The teacher or researcher who is committed to a funds of knowledge approach needs to be highly reflexive and (self)-critical as they attempt to arbitrate which funds of knowledge to draw on in the classroom. (p. 73)

The issue of which knowledges 'count' is one of which educators will have to be mindful as they acquire more education surrounding the funds of (difficult) knowledge that their students and their students' families bring to the classroom, or that they might want to highlight while attempting to make curricular content relevant for their learners. Just as we, as teachers, may no longer restrict ourselves to monomodal, text-based forms of meaning-making in schools, so too must we be critical of the ways in which hegemonic policies dictate which knowledges count (Oughton, 2010; Rios-Aguilar et al, 2011) and subsequently, the extent to which children and youth will be welcome to bring their multifaceted selves into their education (Kendrick & McKay, 2002; New London Group, 2000).

This study's findings also contribute to current work on multiliteracies and multimodality (Cummins & Early, 2011; Giampapa, 2010) by pointing to the potential value of multimodality to unlock difficult knowledge (e.g., Marshall & Toohey, 2010; Mutonyi & Kendrick, 2011), and thereby make it available for appropriation, as an available design, in students' semiotic toolkits. Music and images in books, for instance, can represent elements of culture or cultural practices that contain difficult knowledge, and as such deserve serious consideration for their role in validating and deepening engagement with student subjectivities. Indeed, the effects of multimodal engagement can echo back to the child's multiple life worlds, as we saw in Victor's comments about his desire to build a better future as a result of coming into contact with this difficult knowledge multimodally.

Comparing the diminished synaesthetic ability of adults to that of children, Kress (1997) writes: "What is suppressed is not absent, of course" (p. 39)—a sentiment that echoes the suppression of difficult knowledge in classrooms (Kendrick & McKay, 2002), communities, and homes. The funds of (difficult) knowledge that children are obligated to suppress at school are not necessarily suppressed elsewhere (Marshall & Toohey, 2010)—but as the foregoing analysis shows, they might be. In the epigraph, Aguilera and Fredes (2006) suggest that in some cases, merely acknowledging this suppression might be the first step towards healing in/and learning (also see Simon et al., 2000b). Although this study was not conducted in a school setting with children, Victor's retrospective accounts may serve as a window into the ways that youth whose FoK contain difficult knowledge might begin to engage multimodally with the difficult aspects of their

cultural heritage, as they "face the past" and begin to carve out resilient identities. It is hoped that this finding will be useful in raising awareness among teachers and researchers who seek to engage deeply with the emotional complexity inherent in students' FoK.

There can be no fixed guidelines signaling whether or when to address the "difficult" in a student's FoK. The FoK agenda was conceived in a spirit of collaboration between households and schools, families and teachers (González et al., 2005), and addressing the potentially difficult elements of students' FoK should be conducted in the same spirit. The benefits of including funds of (difficult) knowledge in classrooms are, then, also for families, communities and schools to decide. Nevertheless, whatever their decisions may be regarding what to do with the 'difficult,' in the end, those FoK that remain hidden or inaccessible simply cannot be a resource for learning (Moll & Greenberg, 1990) or for designing social futures (New London Group, 2000). As teachers and researchers, it behooves us to take stock of which knowledges we privilege, which ones remain tucked away in libraries or in boxes at the back of classrooms, and to be ever cognizant of our reasons for including or excluding both.

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