Literacies that Move and Matter
Nexus Analysis for Contemporary Childhoods

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EXPANDING LITERACIES IN EDUCATION SERIES

This is a preprint that introduces the book. The entire book is available at https://www.routledge.com/Literacies-that-Move-and-Matter-Nexus-Analysis-for-Contemporary-Childhoods/Wohlwend/p/book/9780367211578
Preface

Nexus analysis is the critical analysis of literacies that move and matter, that is, it unpacks how people enact and mobilize meanings that largely go without saying. It provides methods for tracking literacies in motion—closely examining moving bodies and things in live-action, animation, video, augmented reality, and so on, which may or may not include verbal modes of print or speech. Nexus analysis captures and analyzes action in multimodal texts such as photographs, films, digital animation, live-action performances, video game play, screens, signage, artifacts, designs of built environments, and more. It fills an urgent need for more fully theorized methods for closely examining the collaborative and imaginative activity in increasingly immersive technologies, pervasive multimodal texts, and expansive digital networks. But it’s also important to point out that the action-based methods in nexus analysis are particularly apt in here-and-now settings where texts are moving and fluid or where spoken language is fragmented or developing, as in a crowd at a sporting event or a playground full of young children. The methods in this book provide contemporary and accessible tools for critically analyzing action in real-time interactions in a range of everyday settings from coffee shops to classrooms to social media. In short, nexus analysis is useful wherever it’s important to have a better understanding of texts and power relations communicated through action, bodies, materials, and spaces.

On one level, the chapters in this book provide a roadmap for conducting a study of mediated discourse: exploring a site and getting started, identifying the critical issues tangled up with literacies here, uncovering the norms that influence who gets to do what in this space, and revealing how a small change in a routine practice can disrupt and open up more opportunities for being and belonging in this place.

On another level, each chapter is a demonstration that shows how a conceptualization of literacy indexes theoretical concepts that shape the choice of methods. One set of nexus analysis methods appropriate to a particular framing of literacy is illustrated in each chapter. Because the conceptual foundations differ across the book, the chapters do not map neatly onto one another as they might in a single study. Instead, the chapters provide a sampler of the range of analytic choices that nexus analysis supports.

Chapter One provides an overview of Ron Scollon’s mediated discourse principles and methods, using his example of “having coffee” to illustrate the differences in goals and analytic focus when inquiry is framed by general nexus analysis. The chapter shows how analytic goals and methods shift when using more targeted methods for multimodal interactional analysis, for geosemiotics, or for actor network theory.
Chapter Two previews the guiding concepts in nexus analysis through an illustration: how a puzzled baby’s finger swipes on a magazine and an iPad reveal her negotiation of two sets of expectations for literacy users.

Chapter Three provides ethnographic methods needed to deeply understand the ways of belonging on a school playground and to recognize the literacies that matter to children in their peer cultures.

Chapter Four demonstrates how to sort through ethnographic data to focus a large set of ethnographic video data to select moments for closer analysis, specifically looking at reading as a situated literacy for making meaning but also for participating in a classroom culture.

Chapter Five examines movement and materials in a school makerspace to see how multimodal literacies enact norms and boundaries for group interaction. Multimodal interactional analysis uses close readings of activity to see how the use of materials and spaces shapes who gets access to literacy resources.

Chapter Six unpacks how bodies are disciplined into ways of acting and moving. Nexus analysis of fashion makeovers and classroom literacy lessons demonstrates how expectations for “proper” dressing, reading, or writing are inscribed and enforced through embodied literacies.

Chapter Seven reads the designs of artifacts and places for the user actions and identities they elicit. Geosemiotic analysis of artifactual literacies reveals the gender discourses embedded in toys in children’s media franchises.

Chapter Eight shows how immersive literacies like play and drama provide tactics: imagining otherwise and making do, tactics that explore alternatives to the nexus’ dominant expectations, such as children surreptitiously changing the pretended meanings of their not-safe-for-school paper light sabers into teacher-approved “electric eels”.

Chapter Nine examines tactics for more-than-human literacies such as remaking and toy hacking. These tactics alter materials in a teacher education makerspace to reassemble official relationships between people and things, keeping things messy and loosening locked-down nexus that limits alternative action and change.
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Engaging Nexus
Inquiry 1: Where Should I Look? Surveying a Site of Engagement
To understand how everyday practices depend on unspoken shared recognition and cooperation, linguistic anthropologist Ron Scollon went for coffee. The opening chapter in *Mediated Discourse*: The Nexus of Practice (2001) describes his visit to a San Diego Starbucks coffee shop. Scollon explored mediated discourse as both a tension and an intertwining between concrete actions, people, and things in a real place and abstract global discourses that permeate daily interactions. Mediated discourse is inseparably a set of discursive expectations manifesting in an action and an action circulating a discourse. I draw on Scollon's coffee shop example to illustrate core principles of his seminal work on mediated discourse theory and analysis, shaping this chapter around one central question: How does an action as ordinary as handing someone a cup of coffee enact core beliefs about belonging and the literacies we use to make sense of actions, materials, and spaces? Let's go have coffee and find out.

Inquiry 1

ENGAGING NEXUS

Where Should I Look? Surveying a Site of Engagement

This exercise explores a familiar place on many college campuses or urban/suburban neighborhoods: a coffee shop. Ron Scollon analyzed a coffee shop to illustrate core concepts in mediated discourse. Taking an ethnographic approach to this space means entering the site in the dual roles of participant and observer. Participant observation means you are having coffee like others in the coffee shop, but at the same time purposefully observing and documenting what you see. Unobtrusive note-taking is easy to do in coffee shops where the tables are strewn with open laptops, notebooks, and half-finished coffee drinks. Typing or jotting notes is an expected practice here and an unremarkable part of the everyday literacies of solitary reading and writing in this site.

This exercise is designed for a group of people so that each person can take a different focus on an aspect of the activity in the coffee shop, but you can also conduct this mini-exploration independently and focus on just a few aspects of the

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1 In this book, discourse aligns with Gee’s (1999) notion of a shared set of language/beliefs/group who value, justify, circulate, and enact a common set of identities and practices, or “ways of being and doing”.
observed activity\textsuperscript{2}. The idea is to look closely at what people and things are tacitly agreeing to do in this space.

1. Meet at a coffee shop and divide up the following tasks:
   - One person will observe and record the physical environment—make a map, notice signs, describe the surroundings, collect artifacts
   - One person will observe and record the people and their activities—Who is in this place? What do they look like? How do they act? What are they doing?
   - One person will observe and record bits of talk—What are people saying to each other? Who says it? What seem to be routine ways of talking in this place?
   - One person will observe and map movements of the people and objects across the space. What seem to be routine ways of moving or stopping throughout this place?
   - One person will observe and record vocabulary, written or spoken, that is unique to this place. What words or phrases would be strange if you had never been to this community location before?
   - One person will observe and record tools and artifacts, unique to this place. What objects would be strange if you had never been to this location before?
   - One person will observe and record images and environmental features in this location. What parts of this location would be strange if you had never been here before?
   - One person will gather and record evidence of learning—What knowledge is needed to participate in this place? Who are the “regulars” or insiders? How do you know?

2. Split up, find a place, settle in and observe for 15-30 minutes.

3. Take notes the entire time. Sit apart and try not to talk to your group so that you can capture as much activity as possible.

4. Meet with your group and talk through your impressions as a whole.

5. Share what you found out about this place. Any surprises? What seems important here? What activity (doing something with objects) etc. did you notice? What artifacts, images, signs, etc. were there?

6. Reflect individually and write a short response to make sense of what you’ve observed. Why are the things you noticed interesting? Make some guesses about the reasons behind the activities according to your past experiences in similar places. Interpret (make your best guess) about the activity or environment:

\textsuperscript{2} For the original inspiration for this inquiry exercise and for additional direction on conducting collaborative ethnographic exploration, see Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2012, pp. 82-73.
What is discourse doing here?
Why are the materials in this place arranged in a particular way?
What kinds of activities “count” or matter here? What kinds do not?
What ways of acting mark people as regulars or insiders? as outsiders?
Why do you think that? How do you know?
What have you done or read that supports your interpretation?
What connections can you make to Scollon’s analysis of Starbucks? If you read chapters one and six of Mediated Discourse, you can compare your findings with his theorization of the social practice of “having coffee”.

If your experience of having coffee is like the visits my students and I have taken in our research methods classes, you’ll end with a rich, messy, and overwhelming amount of observational data from just one hour-long session. And we usually come away with many new questions and endless possibilities for inquiry! One of the things that attracts me to nexus analysis is its humility and openness—it’s an inquiry approach that attempts to enter a place with a minimum of pre-conceptions, waits for action to unfold before determining research questions, tries to understand what people really want before acting, expects to be surprised by the data, seeks to make the opaque transparent, and welcomes complexity and ambiguity. For researchers, this can produce an uneasy where-do-I-go-next uncertainty and an intense and all-consuming immersion. However, this combination uniquely equips you to understand how bodies, actions, and global discourses come together in something as simple as taking a coffee cup from a barista.

Scollon looked at the handing of a coffee cup and saw that at the center of this commonplace activity was a paper cup that aggregated a range of actions, identities, and discourses in its materials. The cylindrical cup that contained the coffee made the handing possible and its requisite status in the transaction is unremarkable. You pay for the coffee and the server hands you a cup. Scollon wondered what else was being handed with this taken-for-granted object, so he gave its materials and manufacture a closer inspection than might be expected in a linguistic-focused discourse analysis or a culture-focused ethnographic analysis. In addition to print on the cup, meanings were conveyed through the placement of its logo, its cardboard-and-definitely-not-styrofoam construction, and its physical relationship to not only the social actors and furniture in the coffee shop but to the surrounding geopolitical context. Legal discourse warned consumers (and hedged against potential class-action injury suits) through a small printed disclaimer that the coffee was extremely hot; commercial marketing advertised the purchaser’s affiliation with the brand through the highly-recognizable large logo on the side of the cup, and the drab brown corrugated cardboard band that created an insulating
sleeve with its triangular recycling symbol indexed the corporation’s desire to convey an environmental ethos.

Looking at similar coffee cups and the surrounding activity in Starbucks today, what intersections of discourses about race and commerce can now be considered that Scollon’s 2001 analysis might not have foreseen? For example, who’s expected in a coffee shop and who’s not? Recent events exposed the tacit racialized expectations in a Philadelphia Starbucks’s policies and sparked a wave of protests in April 2018. The catalyst was a store manager’s phone call to police to remove two African-American male customers who sat at a table, waiting for a business associate to arrive.

Nexus analysis opens paths for studying literacies in action and embodiment by tracing the interaction of bodies, materials, and discourses in a here-and-now location. How were bodies and actions read in the context of this coffee shop and what produced a reading of loitering rather than waiting? How was this reading made possible by the absence of a paper cup that symbolizes a legitimating purchase? How was legitimation made necessary for these men and not other customers in this place? Nexus analysis can scrutinize actions in this location, tracking embodied histories to see how practices of corporate marketing and managerial monitoring materialized expectations for White affluent customers. Such expectations circulate raced and classed discourses, without saying a word, in the give-and-take actions that typify transactions with coffee and paper cups. How should we read this moment against a corporation’s marketing strategies and consciousness-raising efforts such as attempting to inspire dialogues about White privilege in 2015 by having baristas write “Race Together” on coffee cups? Or in the company’s attempts to remediate its workforce and limit the damage to the brand by closing 8000 coffee shops for a mandated four-hour “Racial Bias Training Day” for employees on May 29, 2018 following widespread protests about the Starbucks arrests? How does this racialized reading of actions and bodies ripple out in overlapping trajectories beyond this time and place? We can trace its emanations in ongoing iPhone videos on social media (e.g., “#livingwhileblack”) that capture White 911 callers who report African-Americans for enacting everyday practices in the “wrong” places: napping in a dorm lounge at Yale University, playing “too slowly” on a golf course in Pennsylvania, or checking out of an AirBnB in California (Wootson, 2018; Hall, 2018). Mediated discourse theory unpacks how bodies, actions, and materials activate raced and classed expectations in discourses that converge within a local place and how these expectations circulate along the currents and undertows of global histories and imagined futures that swirl into and emanate from a given moment. Taken together, these flows in and around a paper cup and its handing make up a site of engagement, the starting point for a nexus analysis, the primary set of methods for studying mediated discourse.

**Mediated Discourse Theory and Methods**

The methods for analyzing mediated discourse have continually evolved to fit emerging issues and changing technologies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As a result, the corpus of Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon’s
work contains overlapping versions of mediated discourse analysis with slight shifts in focus and ontological premises. Similarly, literacy definitions and discourse procedures have shifted over these decades (and across my own research projects) so that distinctions among the terms and approaches blur. In this book, I have attempted to show a range of analytic methods and theoretical stances that can be used and how these may vary with the context and focus of a study. The examples here are neither fixed nor comprehensive as new methods for studying action and materiality in literacy studies continue to emerge. However, nexus analysis is the overarching frame and methods that the Scollons developed for the larger project of mediated discourse theory and analysis. In this book, nexus analysis provides a general methodological framework, compatible with the theoretical grounding and assumptions of more focused analytic methods such as multimodal interactional analysis, geosemiotics, or actor network theory.

Nexus analysis, introduced in the Scollon’s (2004) book, examines action to see how valued practices affect shared understandings and participation in a culture. Itunpacks the meanings and expectations that practices bring into moment of action, the well-worn ruts that shape interaction that have accrued over years of use across groups and cultures. In the coffee shop example, nexus analysis would analyze the relationships among engrained ways of enacting race and privilege that came together around the absence of a transaction in the Starbuck arrest.

Additionally, nexus analysis not only uncovers the hidden assumptions behind an action but it also identifies actions with potential to become tactics to change the nexus to better address equity and participants’ concerns. In this way, nexus analysis is not just critically deconstructive, it is reconstructive. A nexus analyst would also consider the reconstructive power of a backgrounded but pivotal action in this example: the filming and posting of the arrest—a critical action that made the nexus visible and opened it to public scrutiny and protest, not just at Starbucks but in other sites of engagement. Bystanders filmed similar incidents in the US and posted these enactments of white privilege to #livingwhileblack on social media. Nexus analysis looks for core mediated actions to understand how a small action—such as bystanders pulling out cellphones to document and share social injustices—might rupture the entrenched expectations of a nexus of practice (Lewis & Tierney, 2013).

Multimodal Interactional Analysis, introduced by Sigrid Norris (2004, 2006) examines multimodality for inter-relationships in a moment of action. Multimodal interactional analysis focuses on understanding how social actors manage the complex mix of modes and meanings in a given moment. In a mediated action, some modes are foregrounded and others are backgrounded as users shift their attention among people, things, and meanings in the process of everyday living. Early literacy researcher Deborah Wells Rowe (2018) has used multimodal interactional analysis to understand how very young children orchestrate gestures, gaze, posture, scribbled images, and talk to produce complex messages that mean so much more than toddlers can communicate through mark-making or verbal dictation. This
version of mediated discourse analysis is grounded in cultural-historical activity theory (Leont’ev, 1977) and analyzes actions according to the amount of attention that competing modes require. Analysts examine moment-to-moment changes in complexity to see how activities are shaped by modes interacting with one another and by tracking the many modes that are competing for a user’s attention at the same time. A person sitting alone sipping coffee while scrolling through an iPhone social media feed might be engaged in managing the complexity of many modes (music, smells, maintaining posture and proximity to a table) but the modes of gaze and touch that are most in use are backgrounded and operate simultaneously and automatically in the action of scrolling.

**Geosemiotics**, introduced in *Discourses in Place* (Scollon & Scollon, 2003), is a version of mediated discourse analysis that focuses on the ways people make sense of the emplaced images and artifacts within the textual landscape of a place. “A place is constituted not only by the built structures, furniture, and decorative objects but also by the discourses present in that place” (Scollon and Scollon, 2003, p. 162). Geosemiotics draws on Kress’ (2003a) work on multimodality to unpack the cultural embeddedness of signage and other multimodal texts. The meanings people make of the sensory information conveyed by modes such as gaze, color, proximity, or smell depend on the cultural meanings and grammars that created and placed an artifact and the meanings and grammars that users rely on to interpret it. For modal grammars that explain how color or texture convey meaning, geosemiotics draws from Halliday’s (1975) systemic functional linguistics and Kress’ social semiotics (Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). In this sense, geosemiotics pulls from a European tradition in semiotics, linguistics, and genre theory that studies systems and structures with the intention of understanding how the design of a sign influences a user’s intended purpose. For example, the meanings of an arrow and stanchion in a coffee shop indicate where a queue to order coffee should form, that is, assuming customers interpret its meaning according to shared visual grammars of graphic design and a shared understanding of the meanings of the placement of these objects in relation to the physical layout of the coffee shop.

**Actor Network Theory** Although actor network theory is not usually associated with mediated discourse analysis, it shares many of the same commitments and assumptions about the need to attend more closely to the components in an activity. It recognizes that people, materials, and meanings jointly constitute a here-and-now action in a particular moment. Sociologist Bruno Latour’s (2005) actor network theory takes an on-the-ground perspective on interactions and social relations among individual actors but includes non-human elements as co-contributors. Such assemblages of people and things are always moving and changing, traveling in and out of a time or space. Actor network theory is interested in what holds things in place, noting that it takes remarkable resources to hold things constant as people, things, and meanings are constantly coming together and falling apart in their movements along networks. For the nexus analyst, actor network analytic perspective provides tools for mapping the trajectories of bodies, groups, and places with an emphasis on following their connections as flows or obstacles. In the coffee
shop example, a nexus analyst taking an actor network lens might be less interested in the cup as a multimodal text and more interested in the amount of energy and resources expended to enforce a store policy that monitors the lack of a cup at a table of (African-American) customers.

**What Matters in a Site of Engagement?**

_A site of engagement_ is a place where people, materials, practices, and discourses come together around a mediated action: a coffee shop is a site of engagement for the mediated action _handing a coffee cup_, but it is also a site of engagement for other actions: reading a book, talking with friends, clearing a table, and so on.

**Everyday Expectations**

Nexus analysis explains how a particular culture enacts its expectations for meaning and belonging through its nexus of practice. A _nexus of practice_ is a cluster of routine practices that make up the expected and usually unexamined ways of doing things in a particular culture. This analysis builds on Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of habitus, a shared set of engrained expectations expressed through tacit social practices and attitudes. While Bourdieu’s habitus has been used extensively to explain how social class is maintained through unspoken rules, actions, and beliefs (Reay, 2004), mediated discourse can be analyzed more broadly to reveal how cultural expectations for certain ways of interacting also produce raced and gendered exclusionary effects. To make these effects visible and available for remediation, ethnographic methods first collect evidence of patterns of the ways people use things and interact with one another in a site. Next, critical and recursive examinations of dominant patterns of activity reveal the shared assumptions and beliefs that uphold everyday routines in this place. In other words, this kind of analysis uncovers and problematizes the expected ways of behaving and using things that “everyone just knows how to do”.

The research base for the study of mediated discourse spans methodologies from several disciplines, including interactional sociolinguistics (e.g., Goffman, 1983), linguistic anthropology (e.g., Gumperz & Hymes, 1964; Scribner & Cole, 1981), and interactional approaches to critical discourse analysis (e.g., Gee, 1999). It builds on a North American linguistic anthropological tradition of ethnographic research interested in following the unfolding cultural interaction expressed through social action and environmental meanings. Methods uncover social positioning by analyzing the multimodality of actions and contexts, drawing from early studies in linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, and sociology.

within this ethnographic, interactional, and multimodal strand reconceptualized literacy as a lived set of ideological practices (Street, 1995; Gee, 1996).

**Critical Issues**

Nexus analysis uses fine-grained analysis of handling of materials in nonverbal and verbal patterns in order to uncover the social positioning and issues of power inherent in everyday practices. Some people, actions, and materials in a place are positioned as more valuable or necessary than others, justified by particular discourses. Because this justification is a visible manifestation of discourse, it can reveal how power relations work through the people, actions, and things in a nexus. Close analysis examines mundane actions and objects to track back and reveal the global identities and institutional discourses that shape participation in a culture.

This methodology aligns with other contemporary critical analytic approaches to discourse, bodies, and materials. Scollon (2001) noted that nexus analysis shares critical discourse analysis’ goal of critique that links micro-actions to macro-discourses. He argued that the focus on non-linguistic aspects of contexts complements critical discourse analysis, which connects micro-analysis of talk and text to global discourses that circulate in local situations. Like critical discourse analysis (Gee, 1999; Rogers, 2011b), it is deconstructive in that it works to uncover power relations and discourses in everyday activity. Nexus analysis draws from James Paul Gee’s (1996) notion of (D)iscourse as ways of “doing and being” to understand how people work to get recognized as pulling off identities and using valued tools in their interactions with one another. Like Gee’s enacted (D)iscourse, nexus of practice is constituted by members’ shared recognition of a common set of histories of material use and histories of social practices that are co-constructed as people go about making meaning and participating in a culture through practices of daily life, including contemporary literacies.

Nexus analysis takes a reconstructive approach to critical discourse analysis that aims to uncover power relations but also to produce more equitable change, led by participants’ goals. Examples of other reconstructive critical approaches include positive discourse analysis (Rogers & Mosley Wetzel, 2013) and participatory action research with communities (Kinloch, Larson, Orellana, & Lewis, 2016). These critical methodologies closely examine action but also mobilize action, moving beyond CDA that deconstructs discourse at a comfortable distance through primarily linguistic analysis of transcribed language in the form of speech or print. The primacy of action—both tracking action and taking action—is at the heart of reconstructive approaches, including nexus analysis, that work toward informed, critical, and on-the-ground engagement.

**Why Nexus Analysis?**

As the example of “having coffee” shows, even the most ordinary action with mundane artifacts can yield dense discursive meanings. Nexus analysis takes an action-oriented approach to critical discourse analysis that focuses on materials and movement, rather than a turn of talk, a line of print, or an ethnographic event.
Everyday actions, particularly those that make up the mundane habits of daily living, are often unaccompanied by text or talk. Nonetheless, these actions are saturated with discourse that has been submerged in familiar practices that have become routine, expected, and unremarkable. The actions one uses with materials are shaped by discourses and histories of practices that underlie our shared expectations (e.g., who may use an object or how it should be used). Such tacit expectations influence what seems possible, affecting future actions with artifacts and potential identities in the cycles that flow into and emanate from a single action. In the simplest terms, the focus is on not on what people say but what they do, particularly through taken-for-granted ways of using things that mark people as insiders and outsiders within a community.

Why nexus analysis? One might ask instead, “Why not nexus analysis?” Why wouldn’t researchers make use of technologies that collect the most robust data and track it across time and space when the necessary digital information is only a click away? In a time with wearable technologies, screen captures, and microscopic cameras, researchers might be asked to defend modal minimalism in their methodological decisions and to explain why they opt to intentionally omit image and animation and limit data collection to audio-only recordings and transcription of speech. In recent years, definitions of literacy have expanded dramatically to accommodate dynamic technologies and online cultures. Literacy research methods must also expand beyond the study of spoken and written language in an immediate context.

Nexus analysis contributes to a growing multimodal literacy research base that spans diverse theoretical perspectives: theories of embodiment (Leander & Boldt, 2013; Enriquez et al., 2016; Perry & Medina, 2015), place (Hackett & Somerville, 2017; Jones et al, 2016; Boldt & Leander, 2017; Comber, 2017), and new materialisms (Ehret, Hollett, & Jocius, 2016; Kuby, Rowsell, Rucker, & Hauge, 2017; Kuby, Spector, & Thiel, 2018; Thiel & Jones, 2017; Thiel, 2015). Nexus analysis draws on a range of methods to answer research questions across a variety of contexts and critical issues: a study of transmedia toys suggests an artifactual analysis (Rowsell & Pahl, 2007) of toy designs situated in global marketing discourses while the creation of an art project in a kindergarten seems to need a closer look at the handling and use of materials using multimodal interactional analysis (Norris, 2004). The examples in this book are drawn from my research that interrogates issues in childhood play with an emphasis on gender discourses (See Appendix A for a list of research studies mapped to methods and publications).

Overview of the Book

This book is organized by the three phases of nexus analysis: engaging, navigating, and changing the nexus (See Table 1.1).

On a micro-level, the chapter progression echoes phases within a study, beginning with first steps to select a site, gain access, settle in, and collect initial data as you
engage nexus in Chapters One through Three. Chapters Four through Seven illustrate navigating nexus in the middle stages of a study, such as how to filter your collected data to find a focus and then to use key concepts as analytic lenses. Finally, Chapters Eight and Nine look for actions with potential for changing nexus such as opening opportunities for improvisation and remaking.

On a macro level, the chapters are sequenced to align conceptually with recent turns in literacy studies and to illustrate how nexus analysis can be used with a variety of theoretical perspectives, that view literacies through different lenses as situated, spatial, embodied, artifactual, immersive, or “more-than”.

Each chapter connects an expansion of literacies with core guiding concepts. The book describes steps and processes to analyze nexus, illustrated with examples excerpted from my earlier published work with additional detail on the underlying methods. In each chapter, Examples demonstrate application of methods while Inquiry exercises suggest opportunities for you to try out methods of nexus analysis in your own context.
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Engaging Nexus of Practice, Seeking Literacies
The first step in uncovering the naturalized practices entangled in contemporary literacies is to engage a nexus as a participant in order to gain access and begin to develop a robust understanding what's going on here.

Chapter Two provides an overview of nexus analysis that demonstrates how analyzing a mediated action on micro- and macro-levels reveals multiple nexus in the ordinary and overlooked actions that make up moments of everyday life.

Chapter Three walks through ethnographic methods with the goal of discovering what's significant in a place and what can be learned in partnership with people in that location. Because nexus of practice operate through cultural participation in lived places, analysts need to personally engage the nexus in order to deeply understand how discourses, practices, and artifacts mold people's lives and social practices (including our own practices as researchers and analysts.) Some starting questions might include:

- Am I recognizing the literacies that matter to the people in this place?
- Am I equipped to become part of this nexus? Can I belong and spend enough time to begin to see the nexus? That is, can I learn how to belong while detecting what is so naturalized that it is unrecognized and unspoken?
- What literacies constitute particular ways of belonging here?
- What would people like to see changed to make things more equitable?

Navigating Nexus of Practice, Analyzing Literacies
The next set of chapters show how to focus your inquiry and analyze your data by following pathways of three key components of nexus analysis: interaction orders, historical bodies, and discourses in place. Chapter Four demonstrates a way to filter data by tracking three sources of expectations that flow into a nexus. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven each feature one of these flows to demonstrate how analysis is shaped by that component of the nexus, by looking closely at group interactions or body actions or meanings of materials in the environment.

Chapter Four addresses an ongoing challenge for any nexus analyst: shaping and reshaping the research focus to stay responsive to the fluid goals and concerns of participants, in the case in this chapter, the teachers and children in a primary school classroom. This chapter demonstrates how a filtering process organized by the three circulating flows can focus a large set of ethnographic video data, from the
initial search for a play-based literacy-rich site of engagement to selection of key moments for closer analysis.

Chapter Five examines interaction orders to show how ways of being together are constructed modally through movement and manipulation of the built environment. Spatialized literacies materialize the power relations and spatial boundaries within a place. For example, in the school hallway, a line of students walking to class enacts an interaction order rarely seen outside of schools that materializes a set of expectations for moving together through space, without touching other bodies, single file, silently. The methods focus for this chapter draws from multimodal interactional analysis to see who gets access to literacy resources and use of particular tools, modes, and materials for producing social space and groups in a classroom makerspace.

Chapter Six examines how historical bodies learn to value, perform, and police expected ways of displaying, moving, and disciplining bodies. Embodied literacies are illustrated through fashion practices in a makeover episode on lifestyle television to understand how its exaggerated critique and explicit lessons make visible the usually tacit learning of social practices and expectations for belonging. The methods focus for this chapter features nexus analysis, using micro- and macro-analysis of action histories and trajectories to track how embodied expectations shape participation. An analysis of embodied literacies shows how bodies are remediated and normative practices are enforced in a television makeover episode and in school lessons on beginning writing.

Chapter Seven uncovers how the emplaced meanings of designed artifacts and the built environment evoke actions and anchor nexus expectations. The methods focus for this chapter features Scollon and Wong Scollon's geosemiotics, using multimodal analysis of artifacts to reveal embedded meanings and underlying discourses in a toy's designs, by tracing the artifactual literacies in character narratives, commercial designs, marketing demographics, and play histories.

**Changing Nexus of Practice, Wielding Literacies**

The last two chapters address the final phase of nexus analysis: collaborating with participants to use key mediated actions as tactics. Nexus analysis uncovers naturalized actions with the aim of critical engagement (Wohlwend & Lewis, 2011) that is, making mediated actions visible to participants but also available as tactics that can promote more opportunities for social justice.

Chapter Eight uses immersive literacies like play and drama to collaboratively improvise on nexus by collectively imagining more equitable alternatives. This chapter takes an imagination orientation to nexus that “makes do” (Certeau, 1984, p. xv), enabling participants to imagine together and explore other possibilities for actions within the current material constraints. The methods focus for this chapter features critical engagement as improvisation that can enable players to slip among the multiple nexus that are present in any site.

Chapter Nine reconfigures the relationships among people and things through more-than-human literacies such as remaking and toyhacking, illustrated with
examples from classroom makerspaces and university teacher education. This chapter takes a change orientation to nexus that recognizes nexus as lived networks that are already continuously changing. The methods focus for this chapter features critical engagement as material remaking, a tactic to keep things messy and loosen “stuck places”—anchoring attempts to lock down nexus and prevent alternative action and change.

Further Readings


CHAPTER 1 REFERENCES


