

Through the Space and Time of Educational Experiences: Examining the Chronotopic Landscape in *New Kid*

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This paper applies the Bakhtinian theory of chronotope, literally “time-space,” to Jerry Craft’s graphic novel New Kid. We examine the definition of chronotope and explore its role in the ELA classroom, as well as its relation to multimodal texts and critical literacies. We argue that an awareness of chronotopic spaces can guide students as they move through the intertextuality of their everyday spaces that shape aspects of their personal and social identities. We begin by outlining our theoretical framework and conclude with an analysis of chronotope, multimodality, and critical literacies in New Kid.

Graphic novels are a form of multimodal literacies that warrant further exploration within ELA middle school (4th-7th grades) classroom spaces, especially considering the multimodality of students’ authentic literacy practices. Connors (2011) asserted that “[i]t is not enough to treat visual literacy as a curricular add-on” (p. 86); instead, teachers can utilize graphic novels as a bridge between the familiar linguistic mode primarily used in English language arts (ELA) and students’ lived multimodal literacies. Considering how the Bakhtinian theory of chronotope, or “time space”, functions within multimodal landscapes, we find it necessary to choose works that create opportunities for students to construct critical literacy within multimodal texts. For our purposes, we turn to *New Kid* by Jerry Craft (2019) as a tool for mediating critical analysis of multimodal texts while connecting to students’ educational chronotopes.

Throughout this article, we bring multimodality, critical literacy, and Bakhtin's concept of chronotope to the middle school literacy classroom. To that end, we have chosen the graphic novel

New Kid as a high-interest text for combining these concepts. A graphic novel offers a multimodal chronotopic landscape that supports the development of deep, critical connections between multimodal texts and students' own lives and the world around them.

New Kid by Jerry Craft (2019) is a counter-narrative that offers insights into a Black student's experiences within schools. *New Kid* focuses on 12-year-old Jordan Banks, who is beginning his journey at a new private school. Although he wants to go to art school, his mom believes that the private Riverdale Academy Day (RAD) School is the best place to learn, although his dad is not entirely convinced. Highlighting Jordan's artistic talents, Craft includes pages of Jordan's drawings that critique the hegemonic implications within his school and life, such as critiques of the library's choices for Black representation or of the cafeteria's hierarchical structure. Our research question is as follows: *How can Bakhtin's concept of chronotope frame a critical multimodal literary analysis of Jerry Craft's New Kid?*

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

DEFINING CHRONOTOPE

The Bakhtinian (1981) concept of chronotope, which is "literally 'time space'" (p. 84), becomes the focus of the complexities within *New Kid*. Noting that literature includes "spatial and temporal indicators [that] are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole" (p. 84), Bakhtin illustrates how literature makes visible the intricacies of chronotope within characters' journeys. Bakhtin notes one particular type of literary work, "*adventure novel of everyday life*" (p. 111; emphasis in text). Within this type of story, Bakhtin stresses two key elements that characterize and provide a basis for our analysis of *New Kid* and its institutional implications. First, a metamorphosis, or transformation, of identity must occur within the chronotopic landscape during a character's "important moments of crisis" (p. 115); in other words, a change must occur during a specific time within the literature itself, usually within the space of the interactions. Secondly, the character's chronotopic journey within the novel must relate to the character's identity development, the notion of "*how an individual becomes other than what he was*" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 115; emphasis in text). In this regard, a critical analysis of a chronotope in a novel emphasizes the transformative nature of identity development within the novel's particular place, space, and time.

Bakhtin's ideas about chronotope in literature can be applied to a potential reciprocal spatial and temporal relationship of the teacher-student(s) and student(s)-student(s) interactions within

educational spaces. For Bakhtin, literary works freeze chronotopic moments within the story and can support students' connections between the novel, their own lived literacies (Riesco, 2021; Riesco, 2022), and their intertextual and multimodal funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2004) and identity (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014) that require reading and writing of both the word and the world (Freire, 1985). Literary works can also awaken intertextual synthesis between the reader's experiences and literacies and the book itself (Egan-Robertson, 1998). In fact, Leander (2001) acknowledges the intertextual potential of chronotope when he asserts "[h]ybridization is a means of considering how co-present contexts intermingle and construct new space-times" (p. 650), or chronotopes. In his study, he shows how students make connections between their lived literacies and the historical chronotopes that they learned, creating hybridity between their different discursive understandings; additionally, Leander (2001) noted the role that teachers and parents, as representatives of the placed institution of schools, can play in supporting or dissuading this understanding of how an event's chronotope can relate to the students' lives.

SPACE AND TIME OF EDUCATIONAL PLACE

We highlight the concept of placed institutions because chronotopes exist within places, such as daily events, texts, or historical accounts, and for students, schools are the placed institutions with which they are exceedingly familiar. Comber (2016) delineated place and space within school and community institutions. According to Comber (2016), while schools are "'placed' institutions with architectural divisions and furniture within their spaces that contain and prescribe activities and bodily habitus for specified groups" (p. 6), school spaces are created by the placed institutions and are "relational" (p. 23) and "negotiated by participants" (p. 23). In other words, the placed institution of the school contains spaces where students interact and negotiate a myriad of chronotopic moments, creating academic influences that become a part of their lived literacies and vice versa. Furthering Comber's (2016) ecological framing of place and space, schools and classrooms also exist within a particular temporal and spatial context and symbolize "throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres); and a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman" (Massey, 2005, p. 140) inside a place itself. In *New Kid*, Jordan and his friends are constantly negotiating their identities in relation to their school institution and to each other.

CRITICAL MULTIMODAL LITERACY

In considering place and space, it is important to examine a graphic novel's relationship to multimodality, which combines two or more sign systems to create meaning. Multimodality has existed in many forms for centuries: political cartoons, comic strips, film, dance, and song lyrics paired with instrumental music are all examples of multimodal texts. Within a place and space, complex sign systems operate together for student meaning-making; students do not separate sign systems within the place and space of a school but interpret these systems as a whole. In *New Kid*, Craft (2019) builds multimodal literacies through the embodiment of complex sign systems and communication. This interaction between modes within *New Kid* better addresses the cultural and societal needs for communication and connection (Mills, 2015). Rather than rely on one sign system, a multimodal text, like *New Kid*, speaks to how individuals view and move through day-to-day spaces. Both the reader and Jordan are asked to navigate a daily barrage of modalities, and exploring these multimodalities within the ELA classroom provides students with the tools they will need to navigate and understand how different chronotopes function within their multimodal lives.

In this discussion of *New Kid*, we critically analyze the chronotope of the school setting for a few reasons. Although there are many ways to focus and direct the intertextual and multimodal chronotopes of this graphic novel, from Jordan's neighborhood experiences to his family, the chronotope connection to the place, space, and time of schools within the novel can relate directly to students' authentic experiences within their own placed institutions. Moreover, in *New Kid*, Craft's placement of spatial, visual, gestural, facial, and linguistic modes combines to center schools and students' interpretation of the placed institutions. In considering the modes as interactive with each other and the students themselves, teachers can then ask students to move beyond the analysis of the multimodal text and delve into the critical literacy of their authentic school institutions.

As Freire (1985) noted, students read the word and the world, as well as write and rewrite it, and Craft's novel about new kid Jordan Banks illustrates and models for students how a character does all of those within chronotopic moments. By framing the reading around the critical literacy of the multiple modes within a graphic novel's chronotope, students are reading to develop small steps toward critical consciousness through reflection and eventually through transformative action of their own worlds (Bakhtin, 1981; Freire, 2013; Riesco, 2022). Consequently, as an examination of the ideological implications and hegemonic structures that Craft develops with the spatial, visual, textual, gestural, and facial representations of his multimodal text (Luke, 2019), a critical multimodal literary

analysis promotes student awareness of those same representations within their own institutional systems, such as within their school communities.

For our purposes, the school and classroom space acts as a conduit for the inclusion of students' multitudinous chronotopic landscapes, blending the personal, social, and academic in a singular spatial and temporal moment that students, in our case middle school students, are learning to traverse and maneuver. As such, the concept of chronotope invites teachers to build literature around the ecological and institutional interactions within these locales, and it is within this chronotopic landscape of place, space, and time that we want to consider the critical multimodal literacy of *New Kid*.

AFFORDANCES OF A CHRONOTOPIC ANALYSIS OF *NEW KID*

NEW KID AS A CHRONOTOPIC MENTOR FOR COUNTER-NARRATIVE AND INQUIRY

We have chosen *New Kid* for our critical multimodal literary analysis for a few reasons. What makes this text an ideal choice for focusing on chronotope is that the hybridity within the school institution's singular place, space, and time is readily visible, drawn not just with written text but with visual, spatial, facial, and gestural modes as well. As Jordan is new to the school, his awareness of the distinctions between social roles, racial stereotypes, and privileged literacies becomes clear immediately through his awkward first encounters with other students and his teachers. Jordan's journey embeds itself in the metamorphosis of identity that sets up his adventure of everyday life, as Bakhtin (1981) indicated is needed for a literary work to contain the fluidity of the chronotope. Additionally, one aspect of *New Kid* is that Jordan is not the only character or agent experiencing transformation; while he does have a chronotopic metamorphosis of identity, he also influences chronotopic metamorphoses of identity within others, as well as within the institutional practices of his everyday school life. This triangulation of transformation within the multimodal counter-narrative made *New Kid* our choice for blending the graphic novel's chronotopes with the development of critical multimodal literacy for middle school students.

Arguably, every graphic novel, and perhaps even every narrative, exhibits chronotopic spaces. The benefit of analyzing critical multimodality in time and space within the graphic novel is that the genre, in its multimodality, lends itself to a more explicit demonstration of how chronotopic moments are constructed and how characters move through them. Craft's *New Kid* could very well be an exemplar of chronotopic function of the graphic novel. The main character physically moves

from multiple physical spaces within a period of time, and every morning, Jordan wakes up knowing that he will move from one chronotope to the next and that each chronotope will require its own expectations, social norms, and accepted identities. In fact, from the very beginning, Jordan's story speaks to the challenges of moving from one chronotopic moment to the next. Chapter one opens with Jordan tumbling through space, the page's background dotted with stars. Jordan, visibly distressed and seemingly grasping for a pen that has fallen from his grip, begins his story saying, "This is how I feel every single day of my life, like I'm falling without a parachute" (Craft, 2019, p. 1). Jordan recognizes that he is moving through time and space, and he is terrified.

Within the analysis of particular chronotopes in schools, we have chosen specific elements in *New Kid* to develop students' critical multimodal literacy understandings. Each designation centers on a particular situation within the sphere of the placed institution, which itself includes temporal-spatial, or chronotopic, implications. Additionally, we consider how chronotope functions in stories that center adventures of everyday life. The chronotopic moments of Jordan's institutional journey emphasizes the chronotopic implications for transformational identity within the moment itself. Our analyses consider the multimodality of the text, not just the written text, as making affordances across modes for meaning-making.

Chronotope of the Cafeteria

On his first day at his new school, Jordan goes to the cafeteria where he and his fellow "first formers" (p. 39) discover the hierarchy of school lunch. On pages 40-41, Craft creates a multimodal representation of the cafeteria through the character of Jordan, whom Craft places as the critical illustrator in this chronotopic moment. Craft positions Jordan as a character who enacts *critical multimodal literacy* in his drawings through his observations of the hegemonic structures of the cafeteria's social hierarchy. In considering Jordan's drawing, students can see connections to their own social and racial structures created by the hegemonic practices within their educational institutions.

For example, Jordan labels his drawing "The Dude Pyramid" (p. 40), which indicates that he is illustrating only the male student population. Potentially, this concentration on the male population is that Jordan, who identifies as male, is trying to place himself within this hierarchy through which he will move during his years at RAD. This eventual move can be seen in the spatial structuring within the student placements at certain tables. Jordan portrays in a line at the bottom the move he will make from seventh to tenth grade, which all remain at the bottom of the page, although

the tenth graders do get a more significant animal in the owl than the ninth graders, who are drawn as ants. As readers move from the bottom of the page to the top, they begin to see a shift in the spatial placement of the upperclassman groups. The tables are still separated by grade level to a degree, but they are also now separated by interests and shared experiences: theater kids, the upper-class Black table, senior athletes, regular seniors, dorky clubs.

In fact, Tatum (2017) noted how younger students sit in more culturally inclusive arrangements in the cafeteria, such as the grouping of the seventh-grade students in Craft's graphic novel, but begin to group by race and social interactions as they get older, which Craft illustrates through Jordan's drawing. The idea of race segregation is seen through the depiction of the "Upper-class Black table" (Craft, 2019, p. 40). The boys at this table are represented by rhinoceroses, an animal of immense strength. Jordan's depiction of this table is one of admiration: he does not see in them the predatory nature of the junior foxes or the senior wolves or lions. He, instead, depicts the Black upperclassmen as powerful and related to himself. Interestingly, that table has the fewest number of students, potentially indicating how few Black students attend this prep school but are surrounded by Whiteness within the cafeteria.

Further, Jordan represents the seventh and eighth graders by drawing toes with fungus in their chairs, suggesting a collective dehumanization of the first formers. Not only does he illustrate their table as being next to the smelly trash, indicated visually by squiggle lines above the trash bins filled with old food, but he further suggests their dehumanized status within the school hierarchy through comparison of the drawings of the more human-like animals that he depicts at other tables. Images of humanistic owls, mice, rhinoceroses, wolves, foxes, and even worms are depicted as more human but still segregated by grade levels and by race, ethnicity, and interests. The lions are identified as the "[s]enior athletes" (p. 41) who sit in the "cool corner with windows" (p. 41). However, these lions are also depicted in another place within the drawing as they walk with their plates full of chicken legs. Their plates are significant because the only other non-animal depiction within Jordan's critique is that of the "theater kids" (p. 41), who are visually represented by chicken legs. Jordan notes that the theater kids "get stuck sitting next to senior jocks" (p. 41). By implying that no one wants to sit next to the senior athletes and pairing that with the senior athletes' plates full of chicken legs, Jordan suggests the potential bullying that exists with these cafeteria structures for "dudes" in schools. This fear of the lions is also illustrated in the table full of mice, the "[k]ids who

don't speak English that well" (p. 40), who stare fearfully as the lions walk past with their plates full of chicken legs.

Through Jordan, Craft critiques the hierarchal structures that exist within high schools, offering insight on how students can begin to critique the power structures that exist within their own school communities. To have students connect to their own experiences within the cafeteria, teachers can develop questions that support critical multimodal literacy and the relationships that exist between the multiple modes. Furthermore, students can analyze this scene through the lens of chronotope—what this moment of frozen time and space suggests about the invisible social power structures within schools that the cafeteria drawing makes apparent. In examining the image, students can discuss the visual, spatial, gestural, and linguistic significance by making connections between the modes, rather than looking at the design as separate modes. Consequently, essential questions (McTighe & Wiggins, 2013) that teachers may pose to engage students in critical multimodal literary analysis are listed below (Figure 1):

FIGURE 1

- What power structures can we see within the spatial sitting arrangements of the cafeteria?
- Who has or lacks power within the cafeteria structure, and how is this illustrated?
- How does the cafeteria's visual structure mirror and influence the power dynamics within a school?
- How are adolescent identities developed through the illustration and through our individual school social structures?
- How can we combat stereotypes of school social structures?
- What can we do in the cafeteria, as a representative of institutionalized structures, to counter the exclusion and judgment students feel from certain groups?

In considering these questions about the cafeteria, teachers can use Jordan's art as a springboard into students' thinking about their school social structures, not just the cafeteria as a symbol of the placed institution but the social interactions of different groups or even the structures of the classroom environment. Completing a critical analysis of the school announcements or a critical multimodal analysis of the yearbook, for example, can offer insights into which groups are privileged and what structures are created by this privileging on their campuses. In questioning the privileging of certain groups, teachers ask students to make visible the hegemonic structures within the school institution, creating voices that question and problematize the authoritative voices (Bakhtin, 1981). Through Jordan's illustration, Craft offers an opportunity to see how

representations within a particular chronotope can create hybrid connections to the students' understandings of power structures.

Chronotope of Microaggressions

Within schools, the chronotope of microaggressions (Pierce, et al., 1978) toward BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students has been highlighted by scholars (Allen, 2013; Compton-Lilly, 2020; Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017; Keels et al., 2017; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Kohli et al., 2018; McCabe et al., 2013; Steketee et al., 2021). These microaggressions from teachers and students alike create hostile educational environments. In a longitudinal study, Keels et al. (2017) determined that, amongst college students, continued exposure to microaggressions was “detrimental for students’ academic achievement and mental health” (p. 1337). The study also notes the need to further study the effects of microaggressions within K-12 institutions.

In *New Kid*, Craft exposes this microaggressive chronotope in a few ways, but most strongly through Ms. Rawle, Jordan’s homeroom teacher who offers performative justice but lacks self-awareness as she interacts with BIPOC students at RAD. One example of Ms. Rawle’s obliviousness to her microaggressions is her continued calling of Drew Ellis by the name “Deandre,” a former student of hers whom she claims, “was a real handful” (p. 60). Keels et al. (2017) referred to the concept of microinsults, a subcategory of microaggressions, as “indirect verbal and nonverbal behaviors that convey stereotypical beliefs” (p. 1318). The teacher’s association of Drew with Deandre, both Black students, illustrates her stereotypical beliefs that Drew, like Deandre, is placed into the same troublemaking category for her, even though it is Drew’s first day of school at RAD.

Beyond Ms. Rawle, Jordan notes in a conversation with Drew how other students call him “Maury” (p. 88), who is another Black student at the school. In fact, in a later scene, Maury, whose dad is a CEO of a Fortune 500 company (p. 129), receives a book from the librarian, who says Maury will relate to the main character, DaQuell, who “gr[ew] up in poverty without a father” (p. 129), making an erroneous and cringeworthy assumption about the experiences of Black students. Craft illustrates Maury’s facial expression as he looks askance at the librarian’s assumption about his home life. Maury’s facial expression conveys confusion while the librarian looks on with smiley face emojis surrounding her head. A tear rolls down her cheek as she tells Maury that he’ll “really identify with DaQuell, the protagonist” because “he has suffered so much, growing up in poverty without a father” (p. 129). The illustrations of the librarian’s overwrought emotions and the inclusion of emojis speaks to her assumptions about Maury and her role in “helping” him. When Maury corrects her

assumption, she turns to give the book to Drew, illustrating her incapability to separate the two Black students as individuals with varied life experiences.

Additionally, Maury is nicknamed “Oreo” (26), a microinsult that excludes Black students from both Black and White racial groups (Tatum, 2007). Further, Craft continues this microinsult of misnaming into the adult realm when Mr. Garner, a Black teacher who teaches pre-Algebra and has worked at RAD for 14 years, is told by another teacher, “Good luck next season, Coach Rick. I hope we go undefeated” (Craft, 2019, p. 61); Mr. Garner is not a coach at all and stands with arms crossed in disbelief at his colleague’s misnaming. In this frame, Mr. Garner and Jordan stand together, watching the other teacher leave. Mr. Garner had just previously explained to Jordan that his experiences of being misnamed were “only because [he is] new” (p. 61). Mr. Garner’s interaction with the other teacher seems to verify and solidify Jordan’s suspicions. He is not being misnamed because he is the new kid. He is being misnamed because he has not been afforded individual identity. Jordan nervously excuses himself from the situation, backing away from Mr. Garner while biting his lip anxiously. Jordan parts with, “Uh, I’m gonna go now” (p. 62), indicating a discomfort with what has been clearly revealed.

Eventually, both Drew and Jordan subvert the microaggression of misnaming by using “laughter...as an act of resistance” (Vitanova, 2004). In private conversations, they call each other by the wrong name when saying goodbye, poking fun at the misnaming while combating the authoritative voices that are stereotyping them and other Black students. In making this type of microaggression visible, Drew and Jordan are combating the oppressive authoritative perspectives within the school that sees students within their racial groups. Through each of these scenes, students can see how these microinsults are perpetuated well beyond the chronotopic landscape of the student population and can make connections about the individual effect of these microinsults through the multimodality offered within the comic panels.

In considering these scenes for critical multimodal literacy, teachers might ask questions from Figure 2 of students.

FIGURE 2

- What are microaggressions?
- How do microaggressions manifest within school systems?
- What is the effect of the microaggressions as seen through a multimodal lens?
- What policy or policies may create microaggressions and stereotyping of students?
- Where have we seen microaggressions in our own lives?
- How can we combat microaggressions?

Chronotope of Whiteness

The chronotope of microaggressions (Pierce, et al., 1978) connects clearly to the chronotope of Whiteness within Craft's graphic novel. In critical Whiteness studies, scholars work to "disrupt[] racism by problematizing Whiteness as a corrective to the traditional exclusive focus on the racialized 'other'" (Applebaum, 2016, para. 2). Owen (2007) also points to the privileging of Whiteness as a cultural paragon and its role in upholding racially unjust systems. If the culture of Whiteness continues to serve as the model for social correctness and acceptability, minoritized groups can lose cultural agency. Craft highlights the chronotope of Whiteness within the space of the school through Jordan's conversations with white teachers and white students. The rules and social norms that govern these conversations speak to the privileging of Whiteness within the school and the implicit expectation that every student, regardless of racial and cultural identity, should willingly comply.

While almost all of the white characters, at some point, embody the privileging of Whiteness, no characters represent Whiteness so much as the characters of Andy and Ms. Rawle. By highlighting the microaggressions of Andy and Ms. Rawle within the book, we take a step toward understanding white privilege and power. Going one step further, teachers can problematize Andy's white privilege and Ms. Rawle's assumptions about Drew and Jordan, including her declaration of colorblindness at the end of the graphic novel, as perpetuating racism within the institutions.

Andy's character, specifically the ways in which he appropriates language, make him a caricature of Whiteness. By combining the visual and linguistic, Craft conveys Andy's continued cluelessness and other characters' reactions to Andy's sense of superiority. Andy, dressed in a green button-up shirt and red sideways cap, calls out to Jordan and Ramon, a Nicaraguan student, at lunch. Andy breezily greets them saying, "Hola, Ramon" and "Wassup, Li'l G?" Ramon, whose mouth is clenched and terse, side-eyes Andy without acknowledging his presence. After sitting down at the table, Andy takes a bite of a taco, mentioning to Ramon that he "bet[s] his mom's are a lot better"

(p. 42). Again, Ramon does not reply verbally. Craft chooses, instead, to highlight Ramon's frustration through visual and gestural cues. Ramon rubs his temples and offers a silent "sigh" while Jordan looks on, nervously biting his lip. Both Ramon and Jordan realize the discomfort of the situation, but Andy, in his privilege, is unable and unwilling to recognize the tension and hurt he has caused.

In this scene, Craft illustrates Andy's white superiority, which often moves beyond microaggressions to bullying. Through appropriation and stereotyping, Andy oppresses Jordan and Ramon from responding to his insensitive comments and actions. It is especially important to note that Andy engages Jordan and Ramon with a full repertoire for communication; Andy's words, gestures, facial expressions, and size on the page overpower Jordan and Ramon, who only respond with facial expressions and body language. While Craft illustrates a nervous Jordan and a beleaguered Ramon, he draws Andy as a dominant figure, positioning him as larger and more looming in certain frames.

Additionally, Andy's description of the student population of RAD indicates his white entitlement, labeling his classmates as "anime dork," "computer geeks," "awkward kids" (p. 28), and more and telling Jordan to "keep away" (p. 28) from these groups. Andy's warnings to Jordan signal an expectation of assimilation. In his labeling, Andy implies that to be like these specific classmates is to step outside of the accepted social and cultural norms of the school. In order for Andy to accept Jordan, Jordan must comply with the traits and characteristics that Andy deems desirable. In Andy's continued "othering" of students within the novel, teachers should ask students why Andy does not get in trouble for his actions and what systems are in place to protect his behavior. Andy himself questions Drew, "Why is everyone always so sensitive about everything" (p. 198), echoing real-life arguments. The panels on p. 198-199 illustrate an increasingly frustrated Drew, who finally stands up to Andy when he makes another comment to Ramon: "Your mom make chalupas, or is that just a Taco Bell thing?" Drew, who is shown rolling his eyes and gripping his cafeteria tray, calls out Andy's misinformed and harmful cultural assumptions. He tells Andy to ask about how Ramon feels about the comments, rather than making the assumption that Ramon is laughing with him at his so-called jokes.

This challenge from Drew to allow verbal space for Ramon is met with accusations against Drew's athletic ability. Andy angrily responds by attacking Drew's newly earned quarterback position, saying "...The only reason you beat me out is because..." (p. 199), implying that Drew's

position was awarded based on race, not merit. This scene centers on Andy as a symbol of Whiteness who simply cannot see the racially charged behaviors he exhibits with his classmates; in other words, Andy does not recognize his actions as racist because he does not recognize the white privilege of his microaggressions.

During this confrontation, Andy then pushes Drew, who pushes him back. When Andy slips on an apple on the cafeteria floor, Ms. Rawle charges forth, immediately blaming Drew and not asking questions about the incident. In a full-circle moment, Jordan stands up for Drew by standing on the table and commanding Ms. Rawle's and everyone's attention, and in doing so, many of the socially stratified cafeteria inhabitants follow suit (p. 202-208), including two teachers. Later, Ms. Rawle confronts Jordan about his journal full of critical artwork about the school and asks him why he is so "angry" (p. 218), seeing his art as an attack on the school and herself. Rather than ask Jordan to explain his illustrations, which feature guides to sitting in the cafeteria and wry commentary on the types of books offered to Black students, Ms. Rawle reverts to a colorblind mentality (Bohonos, 2019; Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019), telling him "being different is a blessing" (p. 220). Ms. Rawle's colorblind mentality does not see race as a factor in the struggles of Jordan and his fellow BIPOC students. Still, Jordan's challenge of "would you teach at a school in my neighborhood, you know, so you could be special" (p. 221) asks both white teachers and students reading the graphic novel to make visible the privileging of race and its role in the power structures at the school and in the classroom. In developing lessons around these characters, teachers might consider the questions in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3

- What voices are dominant within the multimodality of school structures?
- What role does Whiteness play in the disciplining of students?
- What role do white norms play in the discipline structure and policy?

Chronotope of Transformation

As noted in the theoretical framework, a character's identity transformation within a crisis plays a role in the development of a particular chronotope. While Jordan certainly has transformative moments within the graphic novel—he eventually makes peace with being at RAD—other interesting moments of transformation happen to the other characters, which allows readers to consider whom Jordan has influenced during his year as the new kid.

First, returning to the cafeteria scene, Craft has depicted a separate and unequal hierarchy for the boys in the cafeteria. However, throughout the graphic novel, Craft offers moments of Jordan's life that moves toward the desegregation of that hierarchal structure, at least among the seventh graders. For example, Jordan's grandfather takes him to eat over Thanksgiving break (pp. 111-115). When his grandfather asks about the friends he has made at the new school, Jordan starts with Liam. In telling his grandfather about Liam (p. 112), Craft has illustrated Jordan moving from an upright position to a slouched position with his eyes looking around to make sure no one can hear him. He then whispers to his grandfather that Liam is "you know...white" (p. 112). This change in Jordan's body movement, facial expression, and volume hints at the tension Jordan feels at attending his prep school, which is a majority white prep school. He then states to his grandfather that Liam is "just like you or me," his surprised tone hinting at the uncomfortable racial tensions with which he is forced to contend at RAD.

This racial tension becomes even more prominent when Jordan speaks about Drew, whom he says is "Black" but notes that "it took us a while to connect" (p. 113). When his grandfather asks why they did not connect sooner, Jordan's expression changes to one of thoughtful confusion, and he states that confusion to his grandfather. However, the reader understands that while Jordan and Liam have a convergence of interest in gaming, Jordan and Drew's connection comes from their shared experiences as two new Black students at a largely white institution. After hearing about Jordan's friends, Jordan's grandfather declares that they are "the Three Musketeers" (p. 113), but Jordan asserts that "it's usually just me and Liam, or me and Drew" (p. 113). Again, Jordan's grandfather asks for an explanation, and Jordan is portrayed once again as being confused—brow furrowed, mouth turned down—unable to offer explanations. Offering an analogy about Chinese food selections, Jordan's grandfather makes Jordan realize that he can bring his friends together, rather than keeping them separate. Jordan even notes that he "didn't know that [bringing friend circles together instead of keeping them separate] was legal" (p. 114), probably due to the hierarchal system of the school itself.

As Jordan continues his year at RAD, Craft begins to show more panels that contain both Drew and Liam with Jordan (pp. 127-128; pp. 132-133; p. 177; p. 209; pp. 226-234). This concept of overcoming tensions through the transformative act of friendship is also shown in Jordan's befriending of Alexandra, "the weirdest kid in [his] grade, maybe even the WHOLE SCHOOL" (p. 183). Alexandra, like Liam and Drew, becomes a part of Jordan's friendship circle, as illustrated on

pages 224-225 at the start of chapter 14. Jordan's change after his grandfather's analogy about not having to choose between friends impacts not just Jordan's life at RAD but also the lives of others, especially those who are considered outcasts due to how others perceive them.

Taking his grandfather's advice, Jordan's inclusivity becomes a catalyst for depictions of other character changes as well. First, Ashley, to whom Jordan gives a sweet potato pie for her secret Santa gift, bridges a food cultural divide when she bakes with her dad her own sweet potato pie—a pie that she had never encountered before Jordan gifts her one. Further, another character who gets a transformation is Andy, who has bullied Jordan, Drew, and other students throughout the year. Seeing Andy sitting dejectedly on the retaining wall at the school as everyone else is signing yearbooks, Jordan offers an olive branch to Andy, who first calls Jordan "Lil'G" but corrects himself by saying, "I mean, 'Jordan'" (p. 242). Once again, the transformative power of friendship and, in Andy's case, forgiveness, is depicted in Jordan's move from his friends to Andy's lone figure. Finally, potentially another transformative moment rests with Ms. Rawle, who accuses Jordan of angrily isolating himself from the school through his artistic creations. When he points out that he doubts she would want to go to a place where she was considered different, Craft's depiction of her wiping her nose (p. 221) indicates her emotional response, suggesting that she has perhaps begun to understand the harm she has done and move toward a potential transformation herself.

Within these moments of transformation that Jordan has helped to create, teachers can ask students to also consider the school setting as a character that has transformed. Figure 4 offers questions that teachers can consider in analyzing the school as a character.

FIGURE 4

- How does Craft's depiction of the school in the early pages compare to his depictions later?
- What changes can we support within our own community to make it better for all its members?
- What transformative actions are happening within the school community?
- How can we collaboratively plan and enact change within our discourses and systems?
- What changes need to happen within our communities, and how can we support those changes?

The school, thanks to Jordan igniting the transformation process, has changed not only for him but for many others as well, albeit in different ways. Furthermore, the other characters are representatives of the school itself and deserve further analysis in considering the school's transformation.

Within Craft's graphic novel, students can begin to see how they, like Jordan, can transform their own communities through reflection and action (Freire, 1970), creating an opportunity for their enactment of social justice. After all, teaching for social justice through critical multimodal literacy offers students a space where they can have "rich learning opportunities...coupled with larger efforts to question the social, economic, and institutional barriers" (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009, p. 375) that exist within their school communities.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEXT COMPLEXITY

VALUING MULTIMODALITY AND GRAPHIC NOVELS AS AUTHENTIC COMPLEX TEXTS

According to Common Core State Standards (2010), text complexity is ostensibly a guideline that may exclude many young adult and graphic novels from inclusion in the ELA classroom due to the quantitative nature of text complexity (e.g., Lexile, grade-leveling, etc.); however, in considering book choices through the lenses of chronotope, complexity is highlighted in the multimodality and intertextuality of graphic novels. Students can make complex connections between what they read and their lived experiences to critique existing social structures. As Glaus (2014) noted:

The problem with evaluating texts based solely on a number is that it has been popular for so long that many educators are either unaware of qualitative evaluation of texts or the systems established in some schools continue to consider only quantitative evaluations. Today, complexity means many things, creating space for new and exciting conversations about texts. (p. 408)

Buehler (2020) furthered Glaus' conceptualization of text complexity by redefining it as "as something that's there to find in a text (in its substance and style) as well as something that readers make as they interact with texts and each other" (p. 22). Within *New Kid*, Craft (2019) counters stereotypes and assumptions that are made within the placed institutions of schools, allowing for the application and analysis of critical multimodal literacy through intertextuality- which we define as the relationships and connections made between a text and other texts or experiences that inform interpretations and meanings (Kristeva, 1986)-between the graphic novel and the students' lived literacies. Text complexity ultimately relies on what a reader will bring to a text's experiential understanding of other texts, the multimodal world, and their multimodal lives. In turn, that experience shapes the reader's understanding of how the text functions within their own space and time.

Specifically, the graphic novel's structure and features, its panels and frames, its use of explicit thought and speech, and visual elements like color and hue all become a part of the text complexity of multimodal works. For instance, in *New Kid*, Craft offers students a reflection of educational spaces that lets them reframe the familiar through Jordan's potentially unfamiliar perspective. While traditional print text asks students to construct meaning based on their prior experiences, graphic novels, such as *New Kid*, offer an in-the-moment representation of narrative events. These familiar spaces through which students move daily, such as home, school, and social environments, are numerous, and graphic novels like *New Kid* allow for a visual, linguistic, gestural, and spatial mirroring of students' chronotope and the ways in which they move through those chronotopes. As students read and analyze the chronotopic elements of the graphic novel, they can begin to examine their own chronotopic roles and critically evaluate the structure of those spaces. Students can ask themselves how chronotopes shape their environments and how the social norms of those environments shape their identities.

CHALLENGING THE LINGUISTIC MODE THROUGH THE COMPLEX AFFORDANCES OF MULTIMODALITY

Looking at the text complexity within *New Kid*, Craft not only offers a critique of racial and social bias in schools but also argues against the support of traditional linguistic literacy measures through a quantitative value system that disregards multimodal literacies. Through Jordan's experiences, Craft critiques and challenges this mainstream belief in linguistic literacy as the only form of complex knowledge enhancement through his development of Jordan and his art.

For example, early in the graphic novel, Jordan's mom believes that Jordan's attending RAD School is "necessary" (p. 96) so that he can learn "the rules" (p. 97) of society, rather than going to art school. After a parent-teacher conference, Jordan's mom asserts that "in order to be successful in corporate America, you have to know how to play the game" (p. 96). Before this comment, she has noted that her publishing company employs "1,200 employees" but only "forty-eight" (p. 96) are Black. With this conversation, her epistemological understanding that a standard education that privileges linguistic modes, rather than the multimodality of an art school, is more valuable to her son's future. A reiteration of Jordan's mom's overvaluation of linguistic modes happens when the librarian devalues graphic novels to Jordan's friend Alex, telling him, "I've picked out the perfect books... Real books, Alex. Not those silly graphic comics" (p. 129). Once again, Craft takes on the critic's role, emphasizing a question about our epistemological valuing of linguistic modes as the only

path to authentic learning and text complexity. In the end, however, Jordan's artistic efforts are centrally positioned on the cover of the yearbook (pp. 233-236), suggesting that multimodal literacies can and should become valued within placed institutions of schools. Figure 5 lists questions teachers might ask about schools privileging of linguistic modes.

FIGURE 5

- What modes do we use to learn?
- What modalities do we value in education?
- How do graphic novels offer text complexity and encourage complex thinking in students?
- How is the linguistic mode privileged over multimodality in education and society?
- What does multimodality have to do with our literacy practices?
- What are the ways in which we read and compose in education and our lives?
- How can we value multimodality within education systems?

CONCLUSION

In *New Kid* (2019), Jerry Craft offers complexity through the potential examination of multimodalities by combining gestural, visual, spatial, and linguistic modes for students to make meaning (New London Group, 1996). Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) discuss the representation of meaning through multimodal signs—both in analysis and in the creation of the sign—as a “complex one, arising out of the cultural, social and psychological history of the sign-maker, and framed and focused by the specific environment” (p. 9). Further, the complexity of multimodalities ignites different affordances in the interpretation of a text, creating both transformation and transduction (Kress, 2003), within the meaning-making of the chronotopic landscape within the graphic novel. In considering the social futures of our students, who are immersed in multimodalities yet not necessarily taught how to interpret modes together, the affordances of graphic novels allow students to frame their spontaneous knowledge (Vygotsky, 1986) about multimodality into one that considers how these modalities work together to support meaning-making. Teaching graphic novels in ELA middle schools engenders the development of students' metacognitive awareness by making visible how different modes interact to shape meaning within the chronotopic sphere of the graphic novel, making students' interpretations more authentic to their lived literacies.

The multimodal affordances of this particular graphic novel allow students to explore the critiques that Craft, through Jordan and his friends, makes about school chronotopes. As a literary

chronotope that discusses the metamorphosis of adventures in everyday life (Bakhtin, 1981), *New Kid* has a hybridity and intertextuality that encourages contemporary students to make connections between the text and their lived chronotopic moments. Jerry Craft's Jordan and his friends take chronotopic journeys that lead to their transformations. Even Andy, in the end, a representative of student Whiteness, and Ms. Rawle, as a representative of institutionalized Whiteness, are offered points of reflection and change. The school itself transforms into a place, through the student population's evolution, that values students' modes of learning and supports their adolescent identity development.

Examining these chronotopic moments in *New Kid* creates cognitive tension in students that bolsters learning and development through critical multimodal literary analysis. In their reading of *New Kid*, students are provided with a place and space (Comber, 2016) to question the authoritative discourse of institutionalized practices, which subsequently opens up educational space for further inquiry and action. *New Kid* and Jordan's story ultimately supports a critical adolescent identity that continues to explore and reflect on the institutionalization of structures that students will face throughout their lives and offer the means to transform those real-life chronotopes to better their social and cultural lives.

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