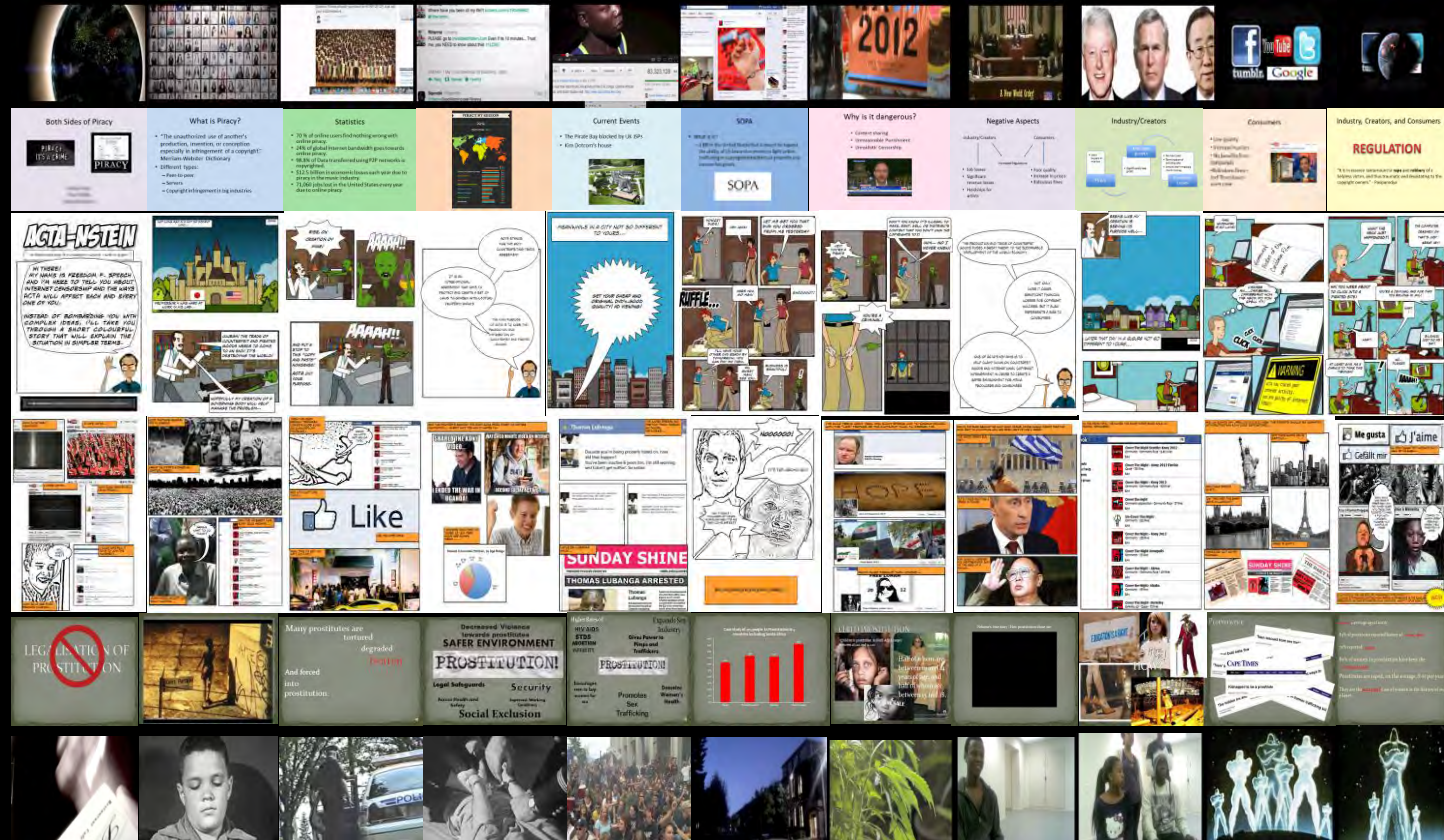


# Argument as Design

A multimodal approach to academic argument in a digital age

Cheng-Wen Huang



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**Argument as design: a multimodal approach to academic argument in a  
digital age**

Cheng-Wen Huang

Thesis Presented for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
in the School of Education  
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

February 2015

**Declaration**

I,....., hereby declare that the work on which this thesis is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university. I authorise the University to reproduce for the purpose of research either the whole or any portion of the contents in any manner whatsoever.

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## **Abstract**

This study posits that using a range of modes and genres to construct argument can engender different ways of thinking about argument in the academic context. It investigates the potentials and constraints of adopting a multimodal approach to constructing academic argument. The research is situated within a seminar, in a second year Media course. Within this context, the study identifies the semiotic resources that students draw on and examines how they are employed to construct academic argument in three digital domains, namely video, comics and PowerPoint.

Grounded in a theory of multimodal social semiotics, this study posits that argument is a product of design, motivated by the rhetor's interest in communicating a particular message, in a particular environment, and shaped by the available resources in the given environment. It proposes that argument is a cultural text form for bringing about difference (Kress 1989). This view of argument recognises that argument occurs in relation to mode, genre, discourse and medium. The study illustrates how each of these social categories shapes argument through textual analysis.

A framework based on Halliday's metafunctional principle is proposed to analyse argument in multimodal texts. The framework combines theories from rhetoric and social semiotics. It offers analysis of ideational content, the ways social relations are established, and how organising principles assist in establishing coherence in argument. The analysis of the data (video, comics and PowerPoint presentations) demonstrates that the framework can be applied across genres and media.

The significance of the study is threefold. Theoretically, it contributes towards theorising a theory of argument from a multimodal perspective. Methodologically, it puts forward a framework for analysing multimodal arguments. Pedagogically, it contributes towards developing and interrogating a pedagogy of academic argument that is relevant to contemporary communication practices.

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background to research

Studies of argument have predominately focused on verbal argument. This is primarily because, for a long time, argument has been understood to be fundamentally verbal. With the dominance of the visual in the late twentieth century, however, scholars of argument recognised the need to expand the field to include visual arguments (Blair 1996; Birdsell & Groarke 1996; Lake & Pickering 1998; Shelley 1996). Writing in 1996, for example, Birdsell and Groarke posited that “a better understanding of [the visual components of argument and persuasion] is especially important if we want to understand the role of advertising, film, television, video, multi-media, and the World Wide Web in our lives” (1996:1).

Subsequently, research into this area of inquiry has grown. In 2010, Andrews observes that “visual argumentation has become a well-established strand of enquiry” (2010:214).

Presently, in the twenty-first century, with technologies making it easier to mix visual and verbal resources, and in the wake of multimodality as a field of enquiry, there has been rising interest in argument from a multimodal perspective. In the domain of Higher Education, Archer notes that “[a]lthough there is an increasing incorporation of images into student writing in Higher Education, there has not been much exploration into what academic discourse looks like across visual and verbal modes” (2010:201–202). Similarly, Bensen-Barber (2011) observes that while there has been considerable research into multimodal composing in the United States, it not clear how multimodal composing reflects the process of forming academic arguments and academic discourse practices as a whole. This study is a response to this social situation. Situated in Media Studies, it investigates a multimodal approach to constructing and analysing academic argument.

Motivated by an interest to develop a pedagogy which is relevant to our current social, cultural, technological, and economic landscape; a pedagogy which is applicable to students’ lifeworlds, and which will have significance in their future life trajectories, my own interest in a multimodal approach to academic argument came upon recognising the potentials this approach has for students in Media Studies. Media Studies is concerned with “the role of the media in society and studies media technologies, media institutions, and the production, consumption, circulation, and content of media texts” (O’Shaughnessy & Stadler 2012:11). In this context, students are expected to be able to critically engage with various media and its content. As individuals who will potentially enter the media industry and work with various

forms of media, it is imperative that they have knowledge of how to construct responsible and effective arguments in multiple forms. Yet, within the discipline, the primary form of assessment is essay writing, which practices knowledge in use of written resources. Students in this discipline could benefit from a multimodal approach to constructing academic argument, as the practice could encourage awareness and use of resources common in the industry, and, at the same time, fulfil the goals of the discipline. From this perspective, such an approach to pedagogy can ‘kill two birds with one stone’, by combining pedagogical goals with disciplinary goals.

In sum, this study is a response to calls for research into understanding multimodal approaches to academic argument. It is also motivated by an interest to develop a pedagogy of argument that is applicable to contemporary communication practices. It recognises the potential for a multimodal approach to academic argument to foster awareness of various resources for producing argument, whilst, at the same time, adhering to disciplinary goals.

## **1.2 Aims**

As mentioned above, this study aims to explore a multimodal approach to constructing and analysing academic argument. It investigates the possibility of doing this in a second year media course. Within this context, it identifies the resources that students draw on, and how they employ the resources to construct academic argument in video, comics and PowerPoint. The overall objective is to explore the potentials and limitations, the ‘affordances’ (Kress 2010) in multimodal terms, of a multimodal approach to constructing academic argument.

Underlying multimodality is the idea that different modes offer distinct ways of engaging with the world. ‘Mode’ describes “a socially shaped and culturally given resource for making meaning. Image, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, moving image, soundtracks are examples of modes used in representation and communication” (Kress 2010:54). According to Kress, “If *image* shows the world, then that is different from words in *speech* or writing *telling* the world. In that perspective, modes offer distinct ways of engaging with the world and distinctive ways of representing the world” (2010:96). Taking its cue from Kress, this study posits that using different modes to conceive argument can engender different ways of thinking about argument in the academic context. The idea is that if image, speech and writing each allow distinct ways of engaging and representing the world, then a multimodal

approach to academic argument must offer ways of engaging with argument that is different to the verbal.

Theoretically, this study aims to contribute towards developing a theory of argument from a multimodal perspective. Pedagogically, it aims to develop and interrogate a pedagogy of recognition of resources in constructing academic argument that is relevant to contemporary practices.

### **1.3 Research questions**

In order to explore the affordances of a multimodal approach, it is necessary to investigate how multimodal academic arguments can be constructed. The following research questions guide the study:

- 1) What resources do students draw on to construct multimodal academic argument in video, comics and PowerPoint?
- 2) How are these resources employed to construct multimodal academic argument in the video, comics and PowerPoint?
- 3) What are the implications of these resources for pedagogy?

The first research question helps identify the resources that students draw on to construct multimodal academic argument in video, comics and PowerPoint. The second research question forms the crux of the study, as it examines how the resources identified are employed to construct academic argument in the various forms. The last question takes a step back and draws out the implications of the study for pedagogy.

### **1.4 Rationale for a multimodal approach to academic argument**

There are educational, democratic and economic incentives for being able to argue effectively, and to do so in a range of modes. In the education realm, argument is a valued practice because it highlights reasoning and clarity, elements that are necessary for knowledge production. As Ravenscroft and McAlister write, “we need to argue effectively if we want to participate and be effective in communities of inquiry, reason and shared ideas and refine our understanding of the world” (2008:317). For this reason, assignments in Higher Education are often designed to nurture the practice of argumentation. Reasoning and sharing ideas are increasingly taking place through multimodal means, yet studies and

practices of argument in Higher Education are still predominately verbal. A multimodal approach to academic argument offers the means for keeping up with current resources for reasoning and knowledge production. As previously mentioned, it has the potential to combine pedagogical goals with disciplinary goals.

Besides educational imperatives, there are also democratic reasons for learning to argue in a range of modes. A multimodal approach to academic argument has the potential to provide students with greater access to platforms and genres for expression. There is a longstanding history linking democracy with argument dating back to Greek democracies in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century, where rhetoric was instrumental in political deliberations and defence in cases of civil and criminal law (Brandt 1970). According to Brandt (1970), an individual's basic rights and status in a community, in classical democracy, was closely tied to being able to persuade in public. In many ways, this is still the case, since much swaying power and 'being heard' still depends on the ability to argue convincingly. Except, with the advent of the internet and new technologies, there are now more platforms and genres for civic participation. For example, YouTube is a social media platform that communicates through videos. To actively participate in the discourses disseminated through this platform, it is necessary to know how to create videos and how to compose multimodally. A multimodal approach to academic argument opens up more choices for participation and expression. In addition, the practice has the potential to prompt involvement in what Jenkins *et al.* (2009) call 'participatory cultures'. Participatory culture is a culture which encourages "artistic expression and civic engagement" as individuals act as producers, "creating and sharing creations" (Jenkins *et al.* 2009: xi). Scholars have argued that involvement in participatory cultures engenders civic participation and offers an empowered sense of citizenship (Culver & Jacobson 2012; Jenkins *et al.* 2009; Rheingold 2008; Williams & Zenger 2012). A multimodal approach to argument has the potential to foster the conditions for participation and production.

Being able to communicate effectively with a range of semiotic resources can also lead to economic incentives. Innovation, creativity and competence in information and communication technologies are types of resources that are needed for students entering into a workplace that is characterised by change and uncertainty (Sharpe *et al.* 2010; Garraway 2005). Being aware of a plurality of meaning-making resources and practices is advantageous as this knowledge can encourage diverse ways of thinking and problem-solving. The premise

is that the more resources there are to work with, the more possibilities there are for creativity and innovation.

To reiterate, there are educational, democratic, and economic incentives for a multimodal approach to academic argument. As Takayoshi and Selfe point out,

In an increasingly technological world, students need to be experienced and skilled not only in reading (consuming) texts employing multiple modalities, but also in *composing* in multiple modalities, if they hope to communicate successfully within the digital communication networks that characterize workplaces, schools, civic life, and span traditional cultural, national, and geopolitical borders (2007:3).

A multimodal approach to academic argument can be seen as having the potential to extend existing curriculum practices to account for contemporary communication practices. Current research, however, indicates that more exploration is needed to understand how multimodal academic argument operates (Andrews 2010; Archer 2010; Bensen-Barber 2011). The proposed study is timely and significant as it will 1) shed light on the nature of multimodal academic argument; 2) provide an understanding of how multimodal academic argument can extend existing pedagogies; and 3) offer a framework for analysing and assessing multimodal academic argument.

### **1.5 Overview of thesis**

The rest of the thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework that grounds the research. It begins by outlining different approaches to understanding the term ‘argument’, looking at how argument is conceived in the logic, dialectical and rhetorical tradition. Next, it proceeds to investigate key debates in literature on visual argument, addressing the question of whether images can make arguments. A theory of argument from a multimodal social semiotic perspective is then posited. From a multimodal social semiotic perspective, it is argued that argument is a cultural textual form for bringing about difference (Kress 1989). Argument, as such, needs to be seen in relation to social categories that make up text such as mode, genre, discourse and medium.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology that underlines the thesis. It begins by stating the ontological and epistemological orientations of the research. Next, it provides an overview of the site of study, a seminar in a second year media course at a South African university, and offers descriptions of the methods of data collection. A framework for analysing multimodal academic argument is proposed. Based on Halliday’s metafunctional principle, the

framework offers analysis of ideational content, of how social relations are established, and how organising principles assist in establishing coherence in argument. The limitations of adopting a multimodal social semiotic framework to data analysis are also considered.

Chapter 4 investigates ways in which academic argument can be constructed through video. It identifies the semiotic resources that are employed in two student-produced videos and examines how these resources are used to construct academic argument. The chapter illustrates how difference in argument can be established through establishing tension between modes. It demonstrates how intertextual references can be employed to produce analogy, and to appropriate ethos and pathos. Additionally, it examines how visual and written resources can assist in marking out texts cited. ‘Assemblage’ as a composition principle is also explored.

Chapter 5 interrogates ways in which academic argument can be constructed in comics. It begins by outlining the difficulties students encountered in conceiving and producing argument in two comics. The account offers insight into how difference in genre can enable reconsideration of what academic argument is and what counts as evidence. The chapter also investigates ways in which narrative can be embedded in a conceptual argument and how rhetorical strategies such as satire can produce difference in argument. The constraints of software for producing comics are also considered.

Chapter 6 examines ways in which academic argument can be constructed in PowerPoint. It presents two student-produced PowerPoint presentations that have a similar organisational structure conceptually, but differ in their approaches to presenting the argument. It investigates the affordances of resources such as bullet points, animation and hyperlinks for constructing argument. It also examines how emotions can be fashioned through a careful orchestration of images, speech and music. Moreover, it considers how the ‘live factor’ involved in PowerPoint presentations conditions the argument to be newly made in each instance of making. The chapter investigates the implications of adopting different approaches to layout design. It posits that a regulated look can arise from using a default template that provide users with placeholders to fit in content, while a less regulated look can arise from working on a blank slide. Each approach to design layout, it is argued, has its own affordances.

Chapter 7, the final chapter of the thesis, draws out the implications of the study for pedagogy. First, it offers a review of the semiotic resources drawn on to realise academic argument in the videos, comics and PowerPoint presentations investigated in the study. Next, it considers the affordances of a multimodal approach to argument. The chapter then addresses the pedagogical implications of a multimodal approach to academic argument. Specifically, it examines the implications of ‘assemblage’ as a composition principle. The chapter posits that a multimodal approach to academic argument requires a theory of pedagogy that foregrounds ‘recognition’. It argues that such an approach to pedagogy has the potential to bring about a culture of innovation and social justice.

## **Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Overview of chapter**

This chapter presents a theory of argument from a multimodal social semiotic perspective. First, it explores views of argument from the logic, dialectic and rhetoric tradition. It also considers the idea of argument as product and argument as process. Next, it investigates key theoretical debates concerning visual argument. The chapter then presents the theoretical framework that grounds the study, namely multimodal social semiotics. It is proposed that, from a multimodal social semiotic perspective, argument is a production of design. Following Kress (1989), argument is defined as a cultural textual form for bringing about difference. This view of argument understands that argument occurs in relation to mode, genre, discourse and medium, social categories that make up text. The chapter concludes with a consideration of ‘recognition’ as an approach to pedagogy.

### **2.2 Ways of understanding ‘argument’**

The study of argument, commonly referred to as argumentation studies, is a broad field of study which spans disciplines such as philosophy, law, mathematics, rhetoric and education. Definitions of argument differ depending on the discipline and traditions adopted. This section provides an overview of dominant concepts on argument which can be broadly grouped into 1) approaches which describe argument in terms of its function, and 2) approaches which describe argument in terms of its textual manifestations.

#### **2.2.1 Logic, dialectic and rhetoric**

Following the work of scholars like Wayne Brockriede, Joseph Wenzel and Jürgen Habermas, the general consensus is that there are three traditions to the study of argument: logic, dialectic and rhetoric. Argument is perceived differently in each of the traditions – as a product in the logic tradition, a procedure in the dialectic and a process in the rhetoric. Wenzel (1992) proposes that the three traditions should be viewed as three perspectives on argument, and uses different forms of the term ‘argument’ to describe the three traditions. He asserts that the logical approach is concerned with ‘*argument* as product’, the dialectical approach with ‘*argumentation* as procedure’, and the rhetorical approach with ‘*arguing* as process’. This naming reflects the idea that the three approaches to argument are in fact studying different aspects of the same phenomenon. Wenzel (1992) claims that the different perspectives are a result of different interests and purposes that govern each approach.

The logical approach to studying argument is traditionally grounded in the field of philosophy. This approach is concerned with uncovering the conditions for sound reasoning. The aim, according to Wenzel, is “to discover or develop canons of correct inference that enable us to settle on certain expressions as reliable knowledge” (1992:128). Focus is placed on evaluating arguments for their logical consistency. As an argument can only be evaluated once it is complete, it follows that logic is primarily concerned with the product of arguments. Hence, the logical approach is said to study argument as product. Wenzel states that argument from this approach is viewed as “a set of statements (premises and conclusions or evidence and claim) by which someone chooses to represent ‘meanings’ abstracted from the ongoing processes of communication” (1992:125). In other words, argument is studied abstracted from context. Definitions tend to be built on an argument’s structure, namely as premises and conclusions, or claims and evidence.

The dialectical tradition is primarily the focus of discourse analysts who are concerned with methods that are needed to bring a dialogue into critical discussion. According to Andrews (1997), reasoning from this approach tends to take the form of a question and answer format. As such, argument is seen as “a procedure or methodology for bringing the natural process of arguing under some sort of deliberate control” (Wenzel 1992:124). The primary purpose of this approach is “to understand the conditions for candid and critical expression” (Wenzel 1992:128). Emphasis is placed on critique of propositions through discussions. Tindale (2004) identifies the quarrel, the negotiation, the debate, and the inquiry as forms of argument commonly studied in the dialectical tradition. These are forms that require back and forth interaction between two actors.

The rhetorical approach is the focus of rhetoricians who are interested in understanding the conditions for effective arguments. The purpose is “to understand certain elements embedded in the process of persuasion” (Wenzel 1992:124). In other words, it is interested in “presenting arguments” (Wenzel 1992:124). It follows that rhetoric is concerned with the act of arguing in the context in which the argument occurs. From this perspective, argument is a process. In contrast to logic, which studies argument abstracted from context, context is important in rhetoric. Tindale (2004) points out that, in order to understand the effectiveness of an argument, it is necessary to have knowledge of the arguer/rhetor’s interests, the audience’s background and beliefs, and the situational context in which the argument occurs.

As such, rhetoric foregrounds the social by studying argument in its natural communicative context. Argument in this tradition is defined as “a mode of appeal, a means of persuasion, a behavior typical of symbol users communicating” (Wenzel 1992:125). A social semiotic approach to argument, as will be discussed later, leans towards the rhetorical tradition.

Besides being characterised by different interest and purposes, each of the traditions also presents different epistemological orientations. It is understood that both the logical and dialectical traditions are aimed at procuring the ‘truth’ about some matter, while the rhetorical tradition is concerned with persuasion (Blair 2012a; Johnson 2000; Perelman 1979). From this perspective, the logical and dialectical approaches can be said to hold a greater epistemological value than the rhetorical approach. This may possibly explain why the logical approach has traditionally dominated the interest of philosophers, and the study of argument as a whole. Another reason could be the connection between argument, rationality and logic.

In Western academic tradition, argument and rationality are intricately linked. Johnson, for example, describes argument as “an exercise in rationality” (2000:11). Similarly, argumentation is described by Andrews as “a result of a disposition towards the rational” (2010:11). The word ‘rational’ carries the connotation of something that is objective, a neutral entity, distilled of emotion, something that is about the ‘truth’. These are perceptions of rationality associated with Enlightenment ideals, where “rationality is typically seen as a concept that is well-defined and context independent...constant over time and place” (Flyvbjerg 1998:2). The idea that rationality is independent of social, cultural and historical context is further evoked in the belief that the rational involves mathematical and scientific reasoning. As Perelman writes, “[t]he *rational* corresponds to mathematical reason, for some a reflection of divine reason, which grasps necessary relations, which knows *a priori* certain self-evident and immutable truths” (italics in original, 1979:117). Traditionally, the logical approach, being concerned with reasoning, is seen as the approach that is most likely to attain the rational. Deductive logic, in particular, embodies the character of the rational as it claims “to hold universally without reference to audience, occasion, situation, or historical circumstances” (Blair 2012b:311). As argument is often defined in terms of premises and conclusions, or claims and evidence, there is a tendency to reduce argument to a set of moves, a formula. This perspective tends to overlook the role of the social in shaping the rational and argument.

In sum, the three approaches to argument, logic, dialectic and rhetoric, have led to the widely-held view that argument can be studied as product, procedure or process respectively. Each approach is characterised by different interest, purpose and epistemological orientations. Wenzel (1992:122) argues that a theory of argument needs to recognise that the three approaches are interrelated, collectively constituting a conceptual system. Tindale expresses a similar sentiment when he writes that “all three must play some role in a complete model of argumentation” (2004:xi). Both Wenzel and Tindale take the view that it is possible to adopt one approach at a time, thereby foregrounding one perspective over others. Wenzel, for example, quotes Brockriede (1985) in positing that

[p]erspectivism is a strategy of emphasis. It avoids unwarranted reduction: ‘from the perspectivist view, a unit of understanding is an inviolable whole, and its dimensions and relationships are only ways of focusing on one picture at a time without violating the integrity of the view under scrutiny (cited in Wenzel 1986:102–103).

Blair (2012b), however, argues that, upon scrutiny, the boundaries that set one approach from another become blurred. He points out that, although rhetoric prioritises argument as persuasion, norms of logic and dialectic still apply in the case of rhetoric. That is to say, even if techniques of persuasion are foregrounded, the argument must still be logically sound and have a dialectical tier to account for refutations in order for an argument to be effective. Likewise, both logic and dialectic, despite their different concerns, are ultimately aimed at convincing others of a belief or attitude. As such, all arguments are rhetorical. Following this, Blair asserts that it would be a mistake to assume that it is possible to foreground one approach, and background others, in any concept of argument. He concludes by suggesting that a model of argument needs to take all three approaches into account simultaneously. In his words, “it seems that any complete theory of argumentation will account for the role of each, not emphasizing any one at the expense of the others” (Blair 2012b:259).

In the logic, dialectic and rhetoric approaches to conceiving argument, argument is described in terms of its function. Logic is aimed at evaluating the soundness of arguments, dialectic at bringing about candid and critical discussions, and rhetoric at understanding the means for effective persuasion. Overlapping this approach is another, in which argument is described in terms of its textual manifestation. The next section presents another perspective on argument – as product (objective) and as process (activity).

### 2.2.2 The product/process distinction in argument

The product/process distinction is said to have a “longstanding history and foundational role in argumentation theory” (Goddu 2011:75). Blair (2012b) suggests that the norms of logic would presumably apply to the study of argument as product, and the norms of rhetoric would apply to the study of argument as process. Goddu (2011), however, criticises this distinction, contending that the labels conjure up a relationship that is flawed and non-existent. My position is that the distinction is a useful one from a pedagogical perspective. In this section, I explore various perspectives on the product/process distinction, and defend my use of the terms.

Coffin (2009) and Andrews (2010) are two contemporary scholars working in the field of education who work with the argument as product and argument as process distinction, although they appear to understand the terms differently. Coffin (2009) refers to the product/process dichotomy as the ‘product of argumentation’ and the ‘process of argumentation’ respectively. She describes the product as “the (at least temporarily) more fixed, static, and closed outcomes of the argumentation process (as manifested, for example, in formal essays and speeches)”, and the process as “the more fluid, ongoing and open ended exchanges of alternative propositions and perspectives (as manifested, for example, in face to face discussion and informal text based conferencing)” (Coffin 2009:513). Coffin’s (2009) definition, it seems to me, aligns with O’Keefe’s (1977) notion of argument<sub>1</sub> and argument<sub>2</sub> as outlined in his influential paper, *Two Concepts of Argument*.

According to O’Keefe (1977:21), there are two distinct senses to the term ‘argument’. On the one hand, an argument can be something that someone ‘makes’, ‘gives’ or ‘presents’. On the other hand, it can be something that someone ‘has’ or ‘engages in’. These are ‘two phenomena’ in which argument can occur. O’Keefe (1977) refers to the former as ‘argument<sub>1</sub>’ and the latter as ‘argument<sub>2</sub>’. The argument communicated in argument<sub>1</sub> is produced by a single individual, whereas argument<sub>2</sub> involves interaction between two or more participants, that is, it requires collaboration. In this sense, ‘product of argumentation’, as defined by Coffin (2009), aligns with argument<sub>1</sub>, and ‘process of argumentation’ aligns with argument<sub>2</sub>. As such, the product/process distinction is still relatively straightforward. What is described by both O’Keefe (1977) and Coffin (2009) can be said to be two different kinds of situations or phenomena in which argument can manifest: one in which the argument is already made, a product of a single author; another in which the argument develops as a

result of the activity of arguing, a result of a joint production. The product/process distinction, however, becomes ambiguous and complicated when, instead of describing two different phenomena, it extends to describing aspects or features of argument. In other words, when the activity is understood to be the act of arguing, and the object is understood to be the content of that act. From this perspective, argument as product is said to be a result of the process of arguing. This, according to Goddu (2011), is the standard view in argumentation theory. Andrews' (2010) use of the terms appears to align with this approach.

In *Argumentation in Higher Education: Improving Practice Through Theory and Research*, Andrews (2010) makes use of the terms 'argument' and 'argumentation' to refer to argument as product and argument as process respectively. For Andrews, 'argument' is "an overarching, more general, everyday term that refers largely to the products or manifestations of argumentation, like debates, essays, position papers, research papers, and dissertations", while "[a]rgumentation is seen as part of argument and suggests a sequence or exchange of arguments" (2010:2). This definition differs to Coffin's (2009) take on the product/process dichotomy. Argument, as the product, is used as an overarching term, which includes debates, a genre of argument which would have more likely fallen under the label 'process of argumentation' in Coffin's (2009) case, and 'argument<sub>2</sub>' in O'Keefe's (1977) case, since a debate requires interaction between two or more participants. In addition, Andrews (2010) claims that the process, 'argumentation', is considered to be part of argument. Product and process here, therefore, do not refer to two different phenomena, but one phenomenon within which product and process are understood to refer to different aspects of argument, or the action in one sense, and the result in the other. This idea is reinforced when Andrews invites scholars to consider 'argument' as the noun (product) and 'argumentation' as the verb (process). Furthermore, the notion of argumentation as the process that precedes the product is suggested when he remarks that argumentation "is the process of developing arguments, the exchanges of views, the seeking and provision of good evidence to support claims and propositions – the *choreography* of argument" (Andrews 2010:39).

This latter approach to understanding the product/process distinction has come under criticism recently. Goddu (2011) argues that although it is the norm in argumentation theory to view argument as object to be the product of the process of arguing, this approach is flawed, as it suggests a relationship between the product and the process that does not hold. He contends that arguments are made prior to the act of arguing, and thus cannot be taken to

be the product of the process of arguing. It would appear that, for Goddu (2011), the activity of arguing constitutes the presentation of a position. In presenting an argument, in the act of carrying out an argument, a position has already been adopted. From this perspective, an argument is not conceived as a result of the activity, but prior to the activity. What Goddu (2011) makes evident is a distinction between the conceptualisation of an argument and the presentation of an argument, a distinction that seems to be conflated, or entirely ignored, in the traditional concept of argument as process. Wingate also notes this amalgamation of conceptualising and presenting in the concept of argument as process when she writes that argumentation can be understood as “the development of a position, which can also be regarded as equivalent to the development of an argument” as well as “the presentation of the position through the logical arrangement of the propositions that build this position” (2012:146). I propose that it is important to differentiate between the two concepts as the development of an argument and the presentation of an argument involve two different actions. The development of an argument requires some form of internalisation, some form of reflection. This process is about the social construction of ideas. It is akin to ‘write to learn’ activities that help students to think through concepts. Traces of this reflection can be found at the draft phase of an argument. The argument as object would have undergone various transformations before being presented as the final product. The act of presenting an argument does not constitute the development of an argument, the conceptualising of the argument, but is the end result of the process of developing an argument. Although Andrews claims that he is interested in argumentation, “the seeking and provision of good evidence to support claims and propositions” (2010:39), the examples he presents appear to be final products, which probably have undergone numerous processes of drafting and redrafting to result in the end product. What is explored in his work, in my opinion, is not the seeking of evidence to support claims, but the result of that research. My view is that it is important to differentiate between the conceptualising of an argument and the presentation of an argument, as the two processes involve different actions.

Following the idea that arguments as objects are not produced by the activity of arguing, Goddu concludes that the product/process label should be discarded, as it “impl[ies] a relationship that does not exist and so distorts our perceptions of the domain of study” (2011:87). Moreover, he points out that it could be used by scholars to give ontological and intellectual primacy to one perspective of argument over another. Gilbert (2003), for example, is quoted as saying that “the process is ontologically more fundamental than the

product, since without the process the product does not come into existence” (cited in Goddu 2011:85). My position is that it is worth making use of the label from a pedagogical perspective, as it makes evident that there are final products and drafts. The idea of argument as process, in particular, is useful in highlighting that an argument is something that is to be developed, crafted, and not something that simply comes into being. Nevertheless, as Goddu (2011) reminds us, we need to give careful consideration to what we mean by argument as product and argument as process. I understand ‘product’ to refer to argument as text, as an object, and ‘process’ to mean the developing of an argument. I understand argument as process to be complex, involving an inward reflection and an outward expression. As texts, process can manifest in drafts. The act of presenting an argument is the final outcome of the process of developing an argument. To borrow Andrews’ (2010) concepts, the process is the ‘choreography’ of the argument and the presentation is the argument as ‘choreographed’.

Argument is thus a complex phenomenon. It can be described in terms of its function, as in the logic, dialectic and rhetoric tradition, or in terms of its manifestation, as in argument as object and argument as activity. Although perspectives on what constitutes argument differ in the different traditions, what is generally not contested is the mode in which argument occurs. According to Blair, argument has been taken to be “paradigmatically verbal, if not essentially and exclusively so” since Aristotle (1996:23). Similarly, van Eemeren and Grootendorst assert that “[i]n principle, argumentation is a *verbal* activity, which takes place by means of language use” (2004:1). However, at a time when communication is increasingly visually oriented, scholars of argument are recognising the need to extend the study of argument to include the visual. Blair, for example, asserts that “[a]t a time when technological and cultural developments are increasingly enhancing visual communication, it behooves us to consider whether argument can partake of visual expression” (1996:23). The next section turns towards scholarship in visual argument.

### **2.3 Visual argument**

Much of the scholarship on visual argument is situated in the field of informal logic, a strand of study within the logic tradition that is primarily concerned with argument in everyday language (Birdsell & Groarke 1996, 2007; Blair 1996, 2004; Dove 2012; Groarke 2013; Lunsford *et al.* 2007; Shelley 1996). According to Groarke (2013), informal logicians have suggested that visual arguments be analysed and assessed in a manner akin to verbal arguments. Blair asserts that a deviation from the traditional view of argument runs the risk of

“los[ing] contact not only with argumentation scholarship but also with the way the concept of argument has functioned historically” (2004:45). Informal logicians thus define argument from a logical perspective, as a two-part structure comprising claim and evidence. Argument is also taken to be propositional, that is, having the quality of being true or false. In the well-quoted paper, *Can Pictures be Arguments?*, Fleming argues against the possibility of visual arguments, contending that a picture cannot realise argument for two main reasons: firstly, it does not have “the requisite internal differentiation” that is needed to differentiate a claim from evidence; secondly, it cannot assert positions that can be “be refuted, opposed, or negated” (1996:17). This section investigates these two contentions and makes a case for the potential of the visual to realise arguments.

### **2.3.1 Can images realise the two-part argument structure?**

According to Fleming (1996), a picture is unable to realise the two-part components of argument as the visual is characterised by simultaneity. He maintains that a structure “in which conceptually-distinct ideas can be sequentially linked” is needed to realise and link the two parts of an argument (Fleming 1996:13). The verbal is sequential in nature. This characteristic enables thoughts to be broken down into bits, making it possible not only to produce two part ideas, but also form a link between the two parts. The visual, on the other hand, is simultaneous in nature, that is, meaning in an image is presented as an immediate and unified whole. Fleming asserts that this characteristic of the visual means that a picture cannot realise the two-part conceptual structure of argument. From this, he concludes that a picture lacks the internal differentiation that is necessary for it to serve as an argument.

Blair (2004) counters Fleming’s (1996) view by positing that visual arguments are better seen as enthymemes. An enthymeme is “an argument that is expressible as a categorical syllogism but that is missing a premise or a conclusion” (Hurley 1999:289). In other words, it is an argument that is missing one part of the argument structure. The missing part (either a premise or a conclusion) requires the participation of the audience to complete it. Visual arguments, according to Blair (2004), are predominantly enthymemes because they leave gaps to be filled in by the audience. While, as enthymemes, visual arguments can serve as a logical argument, Blair posits that “[t]he logic of the argument will not be complicated or subtle” (2004:52). He maintains that the support that is needed to substantiate a claim will be “simple” and “minimalist” (Blair 2004:52). Blair (2004) dismisses the possibility of visual argument serving as a dialectical form of argument as it lacks the dialectical dimension that is

required for “interaction between arguer and interlocutors who raise questions or objections” (2004:51). This is also one of the reasons why Johnson (2005) rejects the notion of visual arguments. Consequently, Blair (2004) contends that visual arguments are better seen as a rhetorical, rather than a logical or a dialectical form of argument. As he explains,

To be effective, the visual properties of a visual argument must resonate with the audience on the occasion and in the circumstances. The visual symbolism must register immediately, whether consciously or not. The arguer must know and relate not only to the beliefs and attitudes of the intended audience, but also to the visual imagery that is meaningful. The arguer needs also to be sensitive to the surrounding argumentation “space” of the audience, because so much of the argument must remain tacit or unexpressed (Blair 2004:52).

In other words, visual arguments are dependent on “the rhetorical astuteness of the arguer for their success” (Blair 2004:52). As the rhetorical dimension of argument is concerned with the arguer, audience and context, it can be argued that visual arguments are well suited in this tradition.

It is necessary to note that Fleming (1996) bases his argument on a single, still image. He seems to imply that because a picture is unable to realise the two-part conceptual structure of argument, the visual as a whole is incapable of realising argument. The concept of the visual, however, encompasses a wide range of images, from single still images, such as a photograph or a painting, to still sequential images, such as comics, to moving images, such as film. It can be said that just as the verbal mode has punctuation marks to mark one phrase or sentence from another, the visual mode has techniques, such as framing and juxtaposition, to segment images and place them in relation to each other. Fleming’s (1996) argument weakens substantially when these techniques are taken into consideration. For example, the idea that a picture cannot realise the two-part structure that is characteristic of argument can be countered when one considers the possibility of juxtaposing two pictures together. That is, if a picture can only represent one-part of an argument at a time, then the two-parts of an argument can be achieved by placing two pictures side-by-side, one part functioning as the claim and the other part functioning as the evidence.

### **2.3.2 Can images realise negation?**

Fleming (1996) claims that another reason why pictures cannot argue is because they lack the ability to negate. He points out that “an argument exists...in a specifiable context of debate, controversy, opposition, or doubt; its position is thus necessarily contestable” (Fleming 1996:12). Hence, negation is a key property of argument. Fleming (1996), however, raises

two objections to the possibility of a picture being able to negate. Firstly, he argues that a picture cannot be refuted with certainty as it is ambiguous in meaning. Secondly, he contends that the iconic quality of a picture renders it too close to the material reality to be refuted. These two assertions are explored in some depth below.

Firstly, it is said that a picture cannot engage in negation because it is ambiguous in meaning. In Fleming's words,

a picture cannot with reliability be refuted, opposed, or negated...[i]f I oppose the "position" you articulate in a picture, you can simply deny that your picture ever articulated that, or any other, position (1996:12).

Birdsell and Groarke (1996) respond to this objection by pointing out that words too can be vague and ambiguous. They provide an example of a visual argument in which it is the visual which pins down the otherwise vague statement (see Figure 2.1).

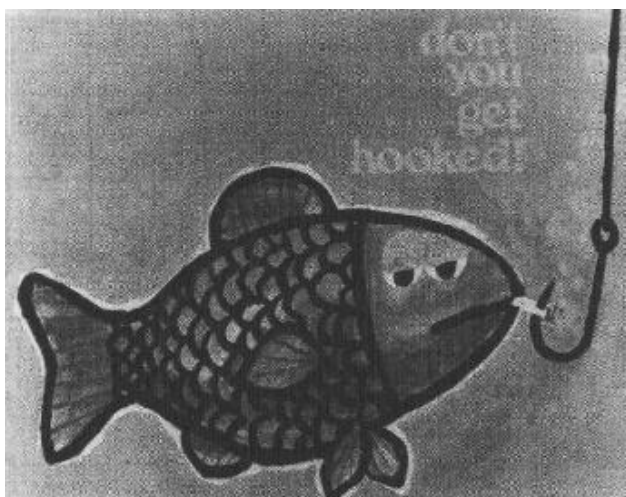


Figure 2.1. Anti-smoking Poster, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (1976 cited in Birdsell & Groarke 1996:2).

Birdsell and Groarke (1996) describe the image in Figure 2.1 as an argument by analogy – the dangers of smoking are likened to the dangers of a fish on a hook. In this image, the verbal message – ‘don’t you get hooked!’ – is vague. There is no indication of the content whatsoever. Instead, it is the visual image, the cigarette, that anchors the meaning within the context of smoking. The idea that images can be quite specific has also been posited by Kress, who argues that contrary to common-sense views about language and images, “[i]mages are plain filled with meaning, whereas words wait to be filled” (2003:4). As he explains,

In writing, I can use ‘every cell has a nucleus’ without having any idea what a nucleus actually is, does, looks like and so on. The same applies to *cell*; nor do I know what *have* actually means in that structure – other than a kind of ‘there is’. The reason for that is that words are, relatively speaking, empty of meaning, or perhaps better, the word as sound-shape or as letter-shape gives no indication of its meaning, it is there to be filled with meaning. It is that ‘filling with meaning’ which constitutes the work of imagination that we do with language (Kress 2003:3).

Kress (2003) maintains that images are ‘filled with meaning’ as representation in the visual mode requires commitment to shape, colour and position – aspects which allow us to know what ‘every cell has a nucleus’ looks like. He remarks that it is this characteristic of images and words that

leads to the well-known experience of having read a novel and really enjoyed it – filling it with our meaning – only to be utterly disappointed or worse when we see it as a film, where some others have filled the words with their very different meaning (Kress 2003:3).

Birdsell and Groarke (1996) further reason that just as words need to be read in context, images too have to be read in context. As they write, “[w]e do not expect words (at least not all words) to have solid unassailable meanings of their own. Instead, we look to companion sentences and paragraphs to ascertain contextual meanings”, similarly it is necessary to “make more of an effort to consider images in context” (Birdsell & Groarke 1996:5–8). They propose three contexts that need to be considered when examining visual arguments: immediate visual context, immediate verbal context, and visual culture. The immediate visual context refers to elements that are within the immediate context of the image. The immediate verbal context refers to captions and other verbal references in the surrounding environment which can help ascertain the visual meaning. Visual culture describes the culture convention of vision at the time in which the image is produced. The emphasis that Birdsell and Groarke (1996) place on context supports Blair’s (2004) proposal that visual arguments are better suited in the rhetoric tradition.

Once again, it is necessarily to note that Fleming bases his argument on single, still images. Besides relying on context to limit interpretations, another strategy available is to divide an argument into several distinct frames. Andrews (2010), for example, remarks that the ‘photo essay’ is able to secure and advance an argument by employing images in sequence. This, he suggests, is because sequence of images are able to secure the meaning by providing more context, inciting comparisons and contrasts, and implying logical relations through the narrative sequence (Andrews 2010:105). Sequential images, Andrews asserts, reduces

polysemy in images by “providing more context, more definition, less of a floating image that can be interpreted at will” (2010:106).

Nevertheless, Fleming’s (1996) qualms about images not being able to make specific claims should not be dismissed. It seems to be that while images are very particular at the micro-level of description, as Kress (2003) points out, they are unable to be particular when it comes to making a specific claim. Although context can place certain limitations, it is undeniable that a number of claims can be made of a single image. In addition, it is necessary to acknowledge that, as Gourlay reminds us, images are inclined to be “associative as opposed to strictly denotative”, that is, meanings in images tend to be “reliant on the reader’s individual and knowable set of personal associations” (2012:94). However, rather than seeing these characteristics as weaknesses, I argue that these are strengths. It is precisely these characteristics of the visual that make visual arguments different from verbal arguments. In Figure 2.1, for example, the claims that can be made of the anti-smoking poster can range from ‘Smoking is dangerous’, ‘Smoking is bad for you’, to ‘Smoking is addictive’. While the precise claim is not clear, it is evident from the hook and the cigarette that the message is intended to centre on the negative aspects of smoking. It can be argued that leaving space for the reader to assert his/her own claim and support is part of the appeal of visual arguments, as that which is left unsaid can sometimes be more powerful than that which is explicitly stated. In looking at scholarship on visual argument, there is a tendency to try and equate the characteristics of the visual with the verbal. I argue that there is no such need as different modes have different meaning-making potentials (Jewitt 2009; Kress 2010). Images are known to be particularly apt for eliciting emotions and “*show[ing]* what takes too long to *read*” (italics in the original, Kress 2010:1). The image in Figure 2.1 is a poster. This means that it is meant to be stuck on walls and read by passer-bys. Posters are items which one can choose to read or not to read. Hence, part of their success depends on their ability to stop a reader long enough for the contents to be read. Had the argument been overtly expressed in words, the poster would have lost its appeal, being too long to read. The use of the imagery is effective in this instance as it grabs the reader’s attention through its dry humour. Gourlay asserts that “the use of images places a heavier burden of interpretation on the reader” (2012:94). It can be argued that the level of audience participation that is required in visual arguments can sometimes render the argument more effective, as it compels the reader to recognise the underlying ideology embedded in the image, in order to identify the argument.

In other words, the work that is required to recognise the argument can make it more notable, more memorable.

Besides being ambiguous, Fleming (1996) claims that images are not capable of negation because they are too close to the material reality. In his words, “what is shown just is” (Fleming 1996:16). Images are said to be unable to refute because they depict an aspect of reality. That is, images cannot be opposed, deemed false, because they supposedly reflect reality. Berger and Mohr’s (1982), for instance, describe the photograph as “irrefutable as evidence” (cited in Fleming 1996:17). Similarly, Postman (1985) argues that the photograph “offers no opinions – no ‘should-have-beens’ or ‘might-have-beens’. Photography is pre-eminently a world of fact, not of dispute about facts or conclusions” (cited in Fleming 1996:14). Precisely because of this, however, Dove argues that images such as “photographs and diagrams may verify, corroborate or refute some claim” and, therefore, function as evidence in an argument (2012:226). In other words, images can function as one part of the argument structure, the evidence, which can be used to counter another claim. While this perspective provides the visual a role within argument studies, it still suggests that they are ‘factual’ properties that cannot be negated. I oppose this view, especially considering that there are different types of images – ones that are iconic, such as photographs, and ones that are more symbolic such as diagrams. For example, Dove notes that “photographs operate within the modality of actuality” in legal cases and science (2012:227). Here the images are taken as more or less direct representations of events that have transpired and have been used as evidence. A mathematical diagram, in contrast, “is concerned with what is possible” (Dove 2012:227), that is, it describes a situation that is probable. That which is probable suggests that the image can be accepted or refuted as being true or false. This implies that images that are concerned with that which is probable, such as diagrams and graphs, can have propositional value and can be refuted. It can be said that it is easier to critique images that are more symbolic such as diagrams, what of images that are closer to the material reality such as photographs? Here I want to turn to the complexities of the concept ‘representation’.

It is generally accepted in Media Studies that images are not objective representations; they do not depict ‘what just is’ as Fleming claims. Every product of representation is always subject to framing (O’Shaughnessy & Stadler 2012). The term ‘framing’ denotes partiality and suggests that, that which is framed can be subject to contestation. Gibbons (2007), for example, demonstrates with functional brain imaging (fMRI) how images can be rendered as

claims or evidence depending on how they are framed. Functional brain imaging is used by scientists to demonstrate specific areas in the brain that are active when certain activities are done. The images yielded are built by feeding data into technologies, thus scientists understand the images as “mediated” views of brain activity rather than “transparent” views (Gibbons 2007:178). When used in scientific journals, the images are taken as making claims about brain activity which can be disputed. However, Gibbons notes that when they appear in popular press, they are often “presented not as complex, technically mediated images but as neuro-realistic ones” (2007:178). That is, the reframing of the images turns them from visual claims into visual proofs. This suggests that images can function either as claims or evidence, depending how they are framed. What Gibbons demonstrates is that images, as representations of some thing or phenomenon, are not as Berger and Mohr (1982) claim “irrefutable as evidence” (cited in Fleming 1996:17). Scientific images very often are “mediated by medical instruments, visual conventions, media technologies, and social norms” (Gibbons 2007:178). Even in photographs that appear to represent events as they are, technological features, such as the focus and depth of field of the camera lens, can have the ability to distort relations. In addition, it must be noted that no matter how ‘real’ or ‘truthful’ an image is, all images are subject to framing. Framing, I argue, renders images as always subjective, always contestable. Living in an image-saturated age, it is ever more important to recognise the complexities of representation in the visual mode. Even though images are iconic, it is crucial to recognise that they are still representations, not reality itself. Especially when terms such as ‘photoshop’ and ‘airbrush’ have entered the vocabulary, it would be naïve and dangerous to accept images at face value. Being visually ‘literate’ in an image-saturated age, I argue, means not only being able to interpret meanings communicated in images, but also being able to assess the extent of truthfulness of the message or claim put forward by an image.

Refutation in images can, in fact, be made explicit through techniques of juxtaposition and framing. Figure 2.2 is an image that appeared in a blog post on the dangers of photoshopping. The image on the left depicts a celebrity before the image has been photoshopped. The celebrity appears haggard with visible wrinkles on her face and shoulders. The image on the right depicts the same celebrity after the image has been photoshopped. She looks visually appealing with firmer and shiner skin. Tension is established through the juxtaposition of the images. The images can be said to make an argument about the superficiality of images in

mainstream media. The image on the left visibly refutes the image on the right. The argument is realised through the tension or difference between the two images.



Figure 2.2. Before and after images of photoshopping (www.prommafia.com)

Andrews (2010) provides a similar example, where one image is from an advertisement depicting a glamorous pair of legs that ‘men dream about’, and another is from a charity campaign depicting an undernourished pair of legs belonging to that of a Biafra man. Juxtaposed together, the images can be seen as making an argument about different worlds and different values. Andrews maintains that an argument can be “made more explicit, if there is more than one image and if the differences between the images suggest contrast of a political kind” (2010:106). He calls argument that arises from juxtaposition as ‘visual argument from contiguity’. Elsewhere, Lake and Pickering (1998) have also explored the topic of visual refutation. Using three American documentary films on abortion as examples, they propose three ways in which images can engage in refutation: dissection, substitution, and transformation. Dissection involves breaking an image down and subjecting it to discursive reinterpretation. Substitution involves substituting an image with another within a larger visual frame. Transformation involves recontextualising an image into a new visual frame.

In many examples of visual argument presented by scholars (Birdsell & Groarke 1996; Dove 2012; Gibbons 2007; Groarke 1996; Shelley 1996), the verbal mode has been employed alongside the visual mode to explicate part of the argument. Johnson (2005) raises objections with this, arguing that if verbal arguments are made up of claims, then visual arguments need to be made up of visuals only. Dove, however, contends that if one takes visual arguments to

be purely visual with “no associated verbal content” then they “are probably ruled out by fiat” (2012:224). In other words, he does not believe that argument can be realised with visual content only. Given the example with the anti-smoking poster (Figure 2.1), my view is that argument employing the visual mode only is possible. The writing in Figure 2.1 – ‘Don’t you get hooked!’ – can be regarded as redundant as the notion of being hooked and its dangers are signified by the fishing line and its hook. It can be argued that the writing is not needed to interpret the argument at all. Part of the appeal of visual argument lies in the room that it leaves for interpretation. Figure 2.1 can be interpreted as a visual enthymeme where the missing component is the claim – ‘Smoking is bad for you’. The evidence of the dangers of cigarettes is implied by the lure analogy.

To sum up, Fleming (1996) claims that a picture cannot be an argument because 1) it is not capable of realising the two-part structure that is characteristic of argument, and 2) it cannot be negated. When looking at a single, still image alone, Blair indicates that the former objection can be countered by viewing visual arguments as enthymemes, where one part of the argument requires the audience’s contribution. I suggest that the two-part component of argument can be further achieved through the techniques of framing and juxtaposition. Fleming provides two reasons for why a picture cannot be negated. Firstly, he claims that images are ambiguous in meaning. To this, Birdsell and Groarke (1996) object by indicating that ambiguity is not a feature that characterises the visual mode alone. They maintain that just as words need to be read in context, images also need to be read in context. Nevertheless, my view is that it is necessary to recognise that a number of claims can be made of a single image, hence visual arguments tend to be implicit. This, I argue, is a strength of visual argument. My stance is that visual arguments and verbal arguments have different ways of putting across an argument and, therefore, are suitable for making arguments for different occasions. Secondly, Fleming (1996) claims that a picture is too close to the material reality to be negated. I oppose this view considering that there are different types of images: from ones that are iconic, like photographs, to ones that are abstract, like diagrams. The concept of representation is also problematised. As all images are liable to framing, I propose that all images are subject to contestation. Refutation in images can be made explicit through framing and juxtaposition as demonstrated by Andrews (2010) and Lake and Pickering (1998).

It would appear that part of the controversy surrounding the notion of visual argument is with the term ‘visual’. Some base their critique on the smallest unit (the single, still image), while

others base their arguments on broader forms. Some take this as visual only, while others are more flexible in their conception. Underpinning the concept ‘multimodality’ is the idea that all communication is ‘multimodal’, that is, communication involves a combination of modes simultaneously. The term ‘multimodality’ offers the possibility of shifting the emphasis off visuals alone and broadening the texts that can be considered for analysis. In addition, central to multimodality is the idea that different modes in a multimodal ensemble have different communicative functions. This shifts focus away from whether images alone can make claims or not, to how various modes can work together to produce an argument. The next section looks at argument from a multimodal social semiotic perspective.

#### **2.4 A multimodal social semiotic approach to argument**

Multimodality refers to “approaches that understand communication and representation to be more than about language, and which attend to the full range of communicational forms people use – image, gesture, gaze, posture, and so on –and the relationships between them” (Jewitt 2009:14). The term is often used to highlight the decentring of language as the privileged mode and the need to take into account modes other than language in order have a fuller understanding of communication and representation. In *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*, Jewitt (2009) outlines four interrelated theoretical assumptions that underlie multimodality. Firstly, language is taken to be part of a multimodal ensemble. This assumption presupposes that communication and representation are always multimodal. Language is not more important, but operates on equal terms with other modes of communication. Secondly, it is assumed that each mode in a multimodal ensemble has a different role in communicating meaning. This assumption rests on the idea that each mode in a multimodal ensemble is responsible for carrying part of a message. While the ‘functional load’ or information weight of each mode may not be evenly distributed, that is, some modes may carry more information weight than others, to understand the complete message, it is necessary to interpret the text as a whole. Thirdly, people orchestrate meaning through their selection and configuration of modes. This assumption highlights that individuals are active agents in making meaning; they are ‘designers’ of meaning’ (Kress 2010). The concept of ‘design’ is integral to multimodality. It describes “the (intermediary) process of giving shape to the interests, purposes, and intentions of the rhetor in relation to the semiotic resources available for realising/materialising these purposes as apt material, complex signs, texts for the assumed characteristics of a specific audience” (Bezemer & Kress 2008:174). Design foregrounds the agency/choice and interest of the designer. Lastly, multimodality grounds all

meaning-making resources in the social. That is to say, resources that are used to make meaning are taken to be “shaped by the norms and rules operating at the moment of sign-making, influenced by the motivations and interests of a sign-maker in a specific social context” (Jewitt 2009:16). Multimodality is an approach to understanding communication and representation, a lens to viewing the world of communication and representation. As such, it can be used to identify modes in a text, but not attribute meaning to them (Kress 2010). To theorise modes of communication, it is necessary to draw on a theory of meaning “that deals with *meaning* in all its appearances in all social occasions and in all cultural sites” (Kress 2010:2). Multimodality draws on social semiotics in theorising modes of communication.

Deriving from the work of Michael Halliday, social semiotics is a theory of meaning-making which is grounded in the social. The sign serves as the basic unit of meaning in both semiotics and social semiotics. Whereas the sign in semiotics is taken as “an isolate, as a thing in itself, which exists first of all in and of itself before it comes to be related to other signs”, the sign in social semiotics is understood to be socially oriented (Halliday & Hasan 1985:4). Kress (2010) notes that different strands of social semiotic theory have emerged depending on whether a linguistic or semiotic perspective of Halliday’s (1978) theory is adopted. I follow the approach as set out by Gunther Kress (Hodge & Kress 1988; Kress 1997; Kress 2003; Kress 2010), an approach which adopts a semiotic perspective of Halliday’s theory.

Multimodality as a lens to viewing the world of communication and social semiotics as a theory of meaning-making has particular implications for understanding argument. In western academic tradition, argument is understood to be a fundamentally verbal phenomenon. As multimodality recognises that the verbal is only one of many modes that communicate meaning, and that communication and representation are always multimodal, adopting a multimodal lens to the study of argument means recognising that argument is not an exclusively verbal phenomenon. This means accepting the argumentative potential of a range of modes, and the possibility of argument taking a form other than the verbal. Additionally, since multimodality assumes that each mode in a multimodal ensemble has a different role in communicating meaning, adopting a multimodal view of argument involves attending to the role various modes play in the communication of an argument. In other words, it involves investigating how different modes inform our understanding of an argument. A multimodal

approach to argument also highlights the rhetorical aspect of argument. The assumption that people orchestrate meanings through their selection and configuration of modes emphasises that people are active agents in composing arguments. It pushes argument beyond the standard formula of claims and evidence, and encourages one to view argument as design. From this perspective, individuals who construct arguments are not only arguers but ‘rhetors’, crafting and designing their argument for particular purposes. Moreover, as multimodality draws on social semiotics to theorise modes of communication, this involves situating argument in the social. That is to say, it involves recognising that argument, as a tool for rationalisation, arises and takes place in the social.

Rationality is sometimes thought of as independent of social, cultural and historical context. This, as Flyvbjerg (1998) notes, is an intellectual legacy from the Enlightenment period. This perspective neglects the role of the social in shaping the rational and argument. It is, after all, *people* who rationalise and make arguments. Tindale (2004) uses the case of *Alice in Wonderland* to demonstrate how logic is dependent on shared value and meanings. He writes,

The queens do not view experience and the language that describes it in the way that Alice does, and we share her confusion because of this unfamiliarity. The queens refuse to conform to the rules that govern communication and logic as we understand them. The White Queen, for example, wants Alice to believe impossible things, suggesting she just needs to practice to do so. She wants her to admit the value of punishing people before they commit crimes, on the grounds that Alice has benefited from past punishments. And when Alice points out, reasonably we might think, that she was punished for things she had done, the Queen observes how much better it would have been had she not done them and prior punishment would encourage this. When Alice responds to the offer of jam every other day with the remark that she does not want any today, she is told that she could not have it even if she wanted it. Jam every other day means “jam to-morrow and jam yesterday – but never jam today” (Tindale 2004:3).

Tindale’s (2004) example posits that rationalisation and argument, as a tool for rationalisation, is relative. Alice and the White Queen fail to understand each other’s logic because they come from different worlds, and therefore have different approaches to reasoning. Although *Alice in Wonderland* is fictional, the same concept can be applied to our world, where different social and cultural practices exist. The different practices result in different values and meanings across different social groups. Besides differences in values and meanings, power is another dimension that is involved in any social interaction. Flyvbjerg asserts that “rationality is context-dependent and that the context of rationality is power” (1998:2). As social semiotics is grounded in the social, it means recognising that argument is context-dependent, relative to social and cultural factors, including power. In

what follows, I outline a few theoretical assumptions underpinning social semiotics and their implications for the concept argument.

#### **2.4.1. Argument as motivated**

A social semiotic approach to argument assumes that argument is never a neutral entity, but always motivated. At the core of social semiotics is the notion of the motivated sign. The sign derives its meaning by fusing a signifier (form) with a signified (meaning). In semiotics, this link is characterised as ‘arbitrary’ (Saussure 1966). That is, it is understood that there is no intrinsic relation between the signifier and signified. The source that binds the two units is convention. Convention binds a signifier to a signified by establishing “codes, sets of rules for connecting signs and meanings” (Jewitt & Oyama 2001:134). In this sense, individuals are seen as users of a system of codes, of grammar. Social semiotics, on the other hand, assumes that the relation between the signifier and signified is motivated. The idea of the motivated sign leads to questions of who or what motivates the sign. It signifies agency in the process of sign-making. Thus, it is assumed in social semiotics that signs are *made* rather than *used*. Individuals are *sign-makers* rather than *sign-users*. The implications this has for argument is that it assumes that arguments are always motivated, constructed by someone. In other words, it is never a neutral entity. As mentioned, attached to the logical and dialectical approach to argument is the idea that argument is somehow oriented towards locating some ‘truth’ about a matter. This perspective has the tendency to create the impression that argument is a neutral entity. Argument, however, takes place in the social and therefore must be influenced by social factors such as the interest of the rhetor. As social semiotics understands the sign to be motivated, applying a social semiotic lens to the view of argument means accepting that argument is never a neutral entity, but always motivated.

#### **2.4.2 Argument as shaped by the interest of the rhetor using socially and culturally available resources**

A social semiotic approach to argument means understanding that argument is shaped by the interest of the rhetor. In social semiotics, the sign is taken to be motivated by the interest of the sign-maker using socially and culturally available semiotic resources. Semiotic resources describe

the actions, materials and artifacts we use for communicative purposes, whether produced physiologically – for example, with our vocal apparatus, the muscles we use to make facial expressions and gestures – or technologically – for example, with pen and ink, or computer

hardware and software – together with the ways in which these resources can be organized (van Leeuwen 2005:285).

In other words, they are social resources for meaning-making such as modes, media and genre. According to Kress, semiotic resources are always “made, produced, remade, ‘transformed’, as a result of social work” (2010:14). As such, semiotic resources are never ‘neutral’ or ‘isolate’ entities, but always “imbed[ded] with the meanings of the work of those who have made and remade the resources” (Kress 2010:14). From this perspective, semiotic resources always carry traces of the past; traces of those who have worked on the resources before. Despite this, meanings and usages of semiotic resources are not fixed by their past usage. It is important to note that although culturally available semiotic resources carry traces of those who have worked on the resources before, their meanings and usages are not fixed by their past employed. The sign is motivated by the *interest* of the sign-maker. The concept of interest brings subjectivity and instantaneity to the process of sign-making. In doing so, it provides grounds for change and subjectivity in each instance of sign-making. As social semiotics assumes that the sign is motivated by the interests of the sign-maker, adopting a social semiotic view of argument means recognising that argument is shaped by the interests of the rhetor, using resources that are socially and culturally available to him/her.

Interest is an important concept in the Kressian approach to social semiotics. It directs subjectivity and instantaneity to the process of sign-making in the following ways. Firstly, it acts as a prompt for the making of the sign. As Kress notes, “[i]nterest directs my attention to something that now engages me, at *this* moment” (2010:50). It is this initial interest in an object or phenomenon that prompts the individual to respond by making a sign. Secondly, it draws attention to what needs to be addressed in the immediate representational/communicational context as “my *interest* is shaped by my sense of what is relevant to attend to in my social environment right here and now, in relation to this phenomenon or object” (Kress 2010:51). This focus on the present state, in time, place and space, implies that interest is always partial. The sign, and thereby representation and communication, is partial, determined by the interest of the individual at the time of making.

As Kress writes,

*Partiality of interest* shapes the signified at the moment of the making of the sign. At the very next moment the sign-maker’s interest is likely to have changed; something else about ‘the same’ phenomenon or object has now become criterial (italics in original 2010:71).

This suggests that it is never possible to represent or communicate an object or phenomenon in its entirety. It is only ever possible to select certain critical aspects as at any moment of representation or communication. Lastly, what draws my attention and what shapes my sense of what is relevant to attend to is affected by “my history, by my experience over time in a set of communities and their culture” (Kress 2010:51). In other words, interest is shaped by the sign-maker’s accumulated socio-cultural history, ‘habitus’ in Bourdieu’s (1991) terms. This suggests that besides being partial, the sign is also subjective. The sign is subjective as interest directs attention to the self, shaping the sign according to the sign-maker’s interests, which in turn are influenced by the sign-maker’s social-cultural history. In this conception, interest is a combination of a prompt, a reflection and assessment of the individual’s immediate state and environment, as well as an expression of the individual’s social-cultural experience.

The idea of interest highlights the partial nature of argument and has important implications for understanding how argument manifests and takes shape. Firstly, interest functions as a prompt, directing the rhetor’s attention to “something that now engages [the rhetor], at *this* moment” (italics in original, Kress 2010:50). It is this initial interest in a particular issue that drives or prompts the rhetor to respond to a social event by constructing an argument. Hence, it can be said that an argument is a response to a prompt that arises from the rhetor’s interest in a social situation. Kress’s (2010) notion of ‘prompt’ here, to some extent, aligns with the Bitzer’s (1968) concept of ‘exigence’. In the seminar paper *The Rhetorical Situation*, Bitzer (1968), a rhetorician, puts forward the idea of the ‘rhetorical situation’ to describe the nature of the context which gives rise to an argument. According to Bitzer (1968), it is the sense of ‘exigence’ in a rhetorical situation that drives the rhetor to respond with a rhetorical discourse. An ‘exigence’ is defined as “an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (Bitzer 1968:6). In this sense, Kress’s notion of ‘prompt’ is akin to Bitzer’s notion of ‘exigence’, as they are both components that are concerned with stimulating an individual to argue. However, whereas Bitzer considers the exigence to arise from the situation, Kress considers the prompt to emerge from the rhetor’s interest. This suggests that a rhetorical approach to argument assumes that it is the sense of urgency in a social situation that drives an argument, while a multimodal social semiotic approach assumes that it is the rhetor’s interest that prompts an argument. In other words, in the one approach, an individual is ‘called upon’ (Trimbur 2013) to argue by a social event; in the other approach, an individual initiates an

argument as he/she ‘reacts to’ or ‘responds to’ to a social event. The notion of interest suggests that argument manifests as a result of a rhetor’s interest in responding to a communicative event or social situation.

Secondly, interest directs the rhetor’s attention to what needs to be addressed at the present moment. This suggests that argument occurs in time and space. As such, argument will always be partial as that which interests the rhetor, and that which the rhetor sees as crucial and needs to be attended to in a particular moment, may change in the next moment. This, as is in the case with a rhetorical approach to argument, highlights the importance of context.

Thirdly, the material shape of the argument is dependent on the resources that are available at the moment of making. Where there is more than one resource, there is choice. This explains how argument is attended to in different historical eras. Brandt (1970) observes that in classical Greece, where the origin of argument is rooted, argument was associated with speech, as this was the dominant mode of communication. Argument was predominately used for political deliberation and litigants in cases of civil and criminal law at this time. Only later, after the advent of writing technologies which made writing a common mode of communication, did it become associated with the written mode. The interest in visual argument also correlates with the arrival of technologies which made the visual a common mode of communication. In this sense, rather than bound to some epistemological principles, the material shape of argument is dependent on the semiotic resources that are available at the moment of making.

Lastly, what draws the rhetor’s attention and what shapes his/her sense of what is relevant to attend to is affected by “[the rhetor’s] history, by [the rhetor’s] experience over time in a set of communities and their culture” (Kress 2010:51). In other words, not only is argument partial, but it is also subjective. Even in cases where argument is purportedly using logical methods to unravel some truth, the idea of interest implies that time and space as well as the arguer’s social background will influence the shape of the argument. The notion of interest underlines the subjective and partial nature of argument.

#### **2.4.3. The form chosen to represent the argument is always meaningful**

A social semiotic approach to argument assumes that the form that has been chosen to embody the argument is the most apt in expressing the argument. This theoretical

assumption, in particular, has important implications for visual arguments. Following the idea that the sign is motivated by the sign-maker's interest using culturally available resources, the relation between the signifier (form) and the signified (meaning) is characterised as one of *aptness*. In Kress's words, "signs are motivated combinations of form and meaning...in which the form is already the best, the most apt, representation of the meaning which the maker of the sign wishes to represent" (2003:144). This suggests that the relation between the signifier and signified is not arbitrary, but one that is purposeful. Kress stresses that "[a]ptness means that the form has the requisite features to be the carrier of the meaning" (2010:55). This implies that the signifier chosen always in some ways symbolises the meaning of the signified. In this sense, the signifier can be seen as a 'metaphor' for the signified. According to Kress, "signs are the result of metaphoric processes in which analogy is the principle by which they are formed" (1997:12). Analogy, explains Kress,

translates *interest* and selects what is to be represented as the *signified* into *apt means* of representing it, the *signifier*. The result is a *sign*, formed on the basis of the relation of *analogy*. The outcome of that process is a *metaphor* (2010:71).

Thus, in social semiotics, it is assumed that all signs are metaphors. Since the signifier chosen is the most apt metaphor for the signified, this means that it is possible to make assumptions about the signified and the interest of the maker based on the form of the signifier. From this perspective, textual analysis is a meaningful practice as it provides insight into an individual's subjectivity and her/his environment at the time of sign-making.

The idea of aptness implies that the form chosen to represent the argument is always purposeful and meaningful. This point is particularly significant when considering the claim that visuals cannot argue because meanings in images are arbitrary. If the relation between the signifier and signified is one of aptness, then the sign that has been chosen to represent the argument in the visual is not arbitrary, but meaningful. If all signs are metaphors, then signs in visuals need to be interpreted as metaphors for something. In this sense, aptness means that the form chosen to represent the argument has the necessary features to be the carrier of the argument.

#### **2.4.4. Argument as 'newly made'**

Social semiotics conceives the sign as always newly made. If signs are motivated relations of signifier and signified, where the signifier is driven by the interest of the sign-maker using semiotic resources which are available to the sign-maker of a reifying culture, and which

most aptly expresses that which the individual wishes to express at a particular moment in time, in a particular environment, for a particular audience, then the sign, in each instance of making, is never the same. The idea of the sign as always newly made is important in accounting for change. According to Kress,

all and any of the examples of everyday communication speak of change: changes in forms of text; in uses of language; in the communicational and representational potentials of all elements of 'literacies'. Indeed change is one of the unchanging aspects of systems of communication (2000:54).

When individuals are seen as passive users of a rigid system of codes, change is undesirable, as it entails a relearning of codes. Conversely, when individuals are seen as active users of a system of resources who newly make signs in each instance of sign-making, change is inevitable. It is important to note, however, that despite being always newly made, the sign is never entirely new. As mentioned, the sign is made drawing on culturally available semiotic resources which have meaning-making potential as a result of their past use. Although the sign-maker transforms the resources and makes new meanings from them, this is done building onto meanings of the past. Thus, there are always traces of the past in the new. The sign, after being newly made, is fed back into available semiotic resources. In doing so, the sign-maker will also "'stamp' present social conditions into the signs they make and make these signs into the bearers of social histories" (Kress 2010:69).

The idea of the sign as always newly made implies that arguments must also always be newly made in every instance of making. It suggests that factors such as time, place and the resources used affect the way in which an argument is communicated. It also points to the fact that no argument is entirely new. An argument is always made building onto that of others. Thus, in any argument there are always traces of the past and new.

At this point, it would be appropriate to take a brief detour and turn to the notion of 'intertextuality'. A term coined by Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s, 'intertextuality' is generally understood as "[t]he explicit and implicit relations that a text or utterance has to prior, contemporary and potential future texts" (Bazerman 2004:85). Kress (2000) observes that there are two sense of the term: it can be used to mean 'reference to other texts' or 'transformation of prior text'. Although Kristeva coined the term, the concept is noted to emerge from the work of M. M. Bakhtin (Allen 2000; Fairclough 1992). Bakhtin, like Kress, situates language and text in the social. The two theorists, however, differ in their view of the

starting point. Whereas Bakhtin begins his theory of language with the smallest unit, the ‘utterance’, Kress begins with the largest unit, the text. The different take on the starting point has particular ramifications for the theorising of intertextuality.

Starting with the smallest unit, Bakhtin sees language as “realised in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in various areas of human activity” (1986:60). The utterance, according to Bakhtin, is shaped by a speaker’s relation to Otherness. It is “filled with others’ words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of ‘our-own-ness,’ varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate” (Bakhtin 1986:89). Bakhtin uses the term ‘dialogic’ to describe the continual relation of one utterance to the utterances of others. The dialogical nature of the utterance means that “[a]ny concrete utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere” (Bakhtin 1986:91). Taking this cue from Bakhtin, intertextuality emerged as a concept to account for the interrelations between texts (Fairclough 1992; Kristeva 1986).

Bakhtin’s description of the utterance echoes Kress’s account of how semiotic resources always carry traces of the work of others due to being “made, produced, remade, ‘transformed’, as a result of social work” (2010:14). However, unlike Bakhtin who sees text as built up of utterances, with the smaller units (words to phrases to sentences) leading to the larger unit (the text), Kress views language as always encountered as text, text in generic form. In his words, “we do not ever (except in language-learning, in texts or in dictionaries) meet language in the form of isolated words, or clauses, or even sentences. We encounter language as generically formed text” (Kress 2000:133). According to Kress (2000), with Bakhtin’s approach to language, which he calls the ‘constituency view of language’ or the ‘building blocks model’, the design of the text is assumed prior to the composition. Thus, it may come as a surprise after the composition of a text to see other texts of similar designs. In such an approach to language, a theory of intertextuality is needed to explain the relations between texts. Kress argues, however, that when language is seen as encountered in text that has “social purposes which successively become realized, [...] changed, modulated, in line with the intentions of the makers”, it becomes a given that the resources drawn upon to shape a particular social interaction will have been used or encountered before (2000:134). In other words, when text is seen as arising from social practice, it is assumed from the onset that the designer would draw on resources which has been “encountered before, which bear the

meanings of their social contexts, to weave a new text which, because it is woven from materials of others, everywhere and always connects with those other texts” (Kress 2000:134). Kress maintains that in this view of language, semiosis is ongoing. Text is merely “a punctuation of semiosis” – that which brings the process of semiosis to a momentarily standstill (Kress 2000:141). Thus, from a social semiotic perspective, he argues that ‘intertextuality’ becomes “redundant as a theoretical term: its theoretical function now lies in the taken-for-granted assumption of the theory of semiosis; its specific functions are now carried by terms such as genre” (Kress 2000:135). Despite this, my view is that from a pedagogical perspective, ‘intertextuality’ is a useful theoretical concept. It brings attention to how individuals can consciously and explicitly draw on other texts to build their own. Levels of intertextuality as those outlined by Fairclough (1992) and Bazerman (2004) are useful in comprehending the ‘how’ of text building. In the case of this study, it is valuable in understanding how students can consciously draw on the argument of others to enhance their own.

To summarise, a multimodal social semiotic approach to argument assumes that argument is not mode-specific. This approach to argument would attempt to understand the potential of various modes for argument, and the role different modes play in the communication of the argument. In addition, it takes argument to be socially constructed, drawing on available social and cultural resources. Emphasis is placed on the interest of the arguer in realising his/her argument using social-cultural resources that are available at the time of argument-making. This contrasts with a philosophical approach to argument, where argument is taken to be a verbal phenomenon, and propositions are seen as eternal and atemporal (Goddu 2012), that is, argument is understood as something that is to be found rather than constructed. A multimodal social semiotic approach to argument emphasises that argument is a product of design, motivated by the rhetor’s interest in communicating a particular message in a particular environment, and shaped by the available given resources at the time. The emphasis placed on the social renders this approach to argument leaning more towards the rhetorical rather than the logical or dialectical approach to argument. However, whereas the rhetorical approach to argument is primarily concerned with argument as discourse, a multimodal social semiotic approach to argument is concerned with argument as social practice. A social semiotic approach to argument sees argument in relation to social categories that make up text such as mode, genre, discourse and medium. I discuss these

categories in more detail in the next section on argument as a ‘cultural textual form’ (Kress 1989), that is, argument as a form for shaping social interaction.

## **2.5 Argument as a cultural textual form**

According to Wenzel, argument, along with other “symbolic forms” such as narrative and explanations, is a way of representing human understanding (1987:106). Similarly, in describing narrative, Branigan writes that “narrative is a strategy for making our world of experiences and desires intelligible. It is a fundamental way of organising data” (1992:1). Kress (1989) uses the term ‘cultural textual form’ to describe argument and narrative as an organising principle. According to Kress, argument and narrative “provid[e] sharply contrasting means of dealing with the same – fundamental – social cultural issues: how to accommodate difference” (1989:11). Argument accommodates difference by opening up issues for discussion. In contrast, narrative tends to accommodate difference through resolution. In this sense, it tends to produce closure. By providing the means for not only foregrounding but also preserving and accepting difference, argument has the function of producing “new cultural values and knowledge” (Kress 1989:12). Narrative, on the other hand, by tending to resolve difference, has the function of “reproducing, in an uncontentious mode, the forms and meanings of a culture” and in doing so, it is “a major means of the reproduction of social and cultural forms and values” (Kress 1989:12). Argument thus can be said to be more productive of change, while narrative more productive of stability. Even though a distinction has been made here between narrative and argument, it is important to note that the relationship between the two is complex. Andrews (2010:35), for example, notes that a narrative can convey an argument, such as in the case of fables and parables, or function as evidence to support an abstract argument, such as in anecdotes. He characterises the relationship between narrative and argument as “symbiotic”, remarking that

argument could be seen to operate at a level of generalization that is directly accessible from the narrative level (the level of particularities). It both informs by giving paradigmatic shape to a narrative, and is informed by the syntagmatic drive and direction of narrative (Andrews 1989:3).

Following Kress (1989), I understand argument to be a principle of textual organisation, a shape for interaction, which functions to bring difference into existence. ‘Difference’, for me, means disparity in positions. It is the aspect that is needed to bring a topic under controversy. The idea of difference presupposes that there are two entities engaging in dialogue. The engagement is not one of agreement, but one of disagreement. Bakhtin’s theory of

‘dialogism’, in this respect, is useful in considering argument as an interplay between two positions. Admittedly, Andrews (2010) draws on the notion of dialogism to theorise how arguments are prompted externally, and how it works within an argument internally. This is discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 6, respectively. As a principle of textual organisation, argument must necessarily exist in relation to text. For knowledge and information to materialise as text, they must adopt a material form (mode), a social textual form (genre), a lens to look at the world (discourse), and a physical form for production and distribution (medium).

According to Kress (2003), mode is the material form through which knowledge and information can materialise. As discussed previously, mode is a culturally and socially shaped resource for representation and communication (Kress 2010). Argument has been taken to be a fundamentally verbal phenomenon. A major contributing factor for this may be the logocentric bias in the West which has tended to render verbal modes (speech and writing) as epistemologically superior to other modes. This has led to deep-rooted beliefs that only verbal modes are capable of articulate, logical expression. Another reason could be the representational affordance of verbal modes that render them well suited for constructing arguments. The term ‘affordance’ is another key concept in multimodality. Kress (2010) uses the term to describe the potentials and limitations of a mode. Affordance is not a matter of perception but it is concerned with the material and cultural possibilities and constraints of a mode. Van Leeuwen (2005) uses the term ‘meaning potential’ to describe the same concept. Both speech and writing are governed by the logic of time. This means that they are linear or sequential by nature. This property makes verbal modes suitable for constructing causal relations, a key characteristic of argument. As such, the affordance of verbal modes renders them apt for constructing arguments. Nevertheless, while verbal modes may be apt in constructing arguments, it does not mean that arguments cannot be conveyed through other modes. Argument is a shape for interaction. As the screen becomes the predominant medium for communication, the principle of organisation must involve the organisation of different modes. It would be imprudent to limit the study of argument to verbal modes only as visual communication becomes dominant in our current communication landscape. In order to render the study of argument relevant to contemporary practices, it is necessary to understand the role of various modes in the construction of arguments. This is why a multimodal social semiotic approach to argument is particularly relevant to examine now.

As mentioned, mode is only one aspect of text: the aspect which provides the material form. Kress (2003) identifies genre and discourse as principles of organisation which provide text shape. Genre provides a text shape through the social action that takes place. As Kress writes, “genre is one aspect of textual organisation, namely that which realises and allows us to understand the social relations of the participants in the making, the reception and the reading/interpretation of the text” (2003:94). As a textual category that is concerned with the social relations of participants, genre is necessarily oriented toward the social. This has a number of implications. For one, this means that genre is subject to social, cultural and historical factors. Kress (2010) maintains that periods of stability produce stable genres with clear generic forms. Over time, this results in conventional, canonical forms of genre. In periods of instability, these forms become destabilised, resulting in fluid genres with blurred genre boundaries. The essay, for example, achieved great stability during the print era. It has been accepted as a form for written arguments in schooling for so long that it has come to be referred to as the ‘default genre’ for assessment (Andrews 2003). In contrast, weblogs or blogs, a genre that was born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, demonstrate “hybrid properties at multiples levels” (Herring *et al.* 2005:160).

As a social textual category, genre is not static; it evolves with social changes. Another implication for being oriented towards the social relates to the question of power. According to Kress, “[s]ocial practices take place in fields of power, and so the genres which are characteristic of a social group are not just expressions of such power, they are also arranged in hierarchies of power” (2003:85). A ‘quarrel’, for example, is a genre of argument in the everyday realm. Since this realm is accessible to everyone, it is not recognised to be of value. A ‘debate’ (as is conceived of in parliament and education), however, is only accessible to a small group of elites. This renders it to be of value. In education, Archer (2011) observes that despite its importance as an academic genre, posters do not hold the same value as written genres. She attributes this to the lesser value accorded to the visual in academia. Besides questions of value and power, English (2011) argues that genre also plays a role in constructing knowledge. She observes that in a ‘regenring’ exercise in which students had to turn an essay into a different genre such as a play or a newspaper article, “the new genres oriented the writers towards different thematic and semiotic material...and as a result, led to them ‘saying’ or being able to ‘say’ different kinds of things to the things they ‘said’ in the original essay” (English 2011:170). This suggests that different genres can enable different

kinds of knowledge making. In sum, genre is an aspect of textual organisation that shapes texts. Because of its social orientation, genre is subject to power and change.

Discourse is another aspect of textual organisation that provides text shape. Discourse shapes “the organization of content/material from a particular institutional point of view” (Kress 2003:94). It is “a way of signifying a particular domain of social practice from a particular perspective” (Fairclough 1995:14). This is done through the use of language to carry out particular activities and identities associated with particular social groups. Gee refers to this as “language-in-use” (1999:7). From this perspective, language is not just a means for communication, but also a “social practice determined by social structures” (Fairclough 2001a:14). Each social practice has its own approach to signifying meaning. Discourse is not just about signifying a particular domain of practice through language use, but also how knowledge is constructed in a particular domain. As Kress and van Leeuwen write, “discourses are socially constructed knowledges of (some aspect of) reality” (2001:4). This suggests that ways of knowing will differ from one social practice to another. Andrews and Mitchell (2001) point out that within academia, disciplines constitute contexts. Thus, different disciplines are constituted by different discourses. This means that “[c]oncepts which enable meaning to be formulated in, say, sociology, are different (though there will be overlaps) from those in, say, psychology” (Andrews & Mitchell 2001:3). For example, the notion of ‘evidence’ has different meanings from one discipline to another. In anthropology, evidence can constitute anecdotes and observations. In science, however, evidence needs to be proven through laboratory experiments. Both qualitative and quantitative data can function as evidence in Media Studies. Discourse thus not only shapes language, but also knowledge from a particular domain of social practice.

This study is concerned with argument in the academic domain. Although there are various ways of producing a multimodal argument, it is important to acknowledge that not all will be recognised and valued in this domain. This is what Kress and Selander (2012) refer to as ‘cultures of recognition’. As they write,

To learn something in a school context is to be capable of using signs according to established conventions, usually expressed as ‘set of standards’. Being able to show ‘how’ one understands something is a key issue. Thus, what is here discussed as *cultures of recognition* is related to those *signs of learning* that are seen *as*, and accepted *as*, knowledge and learning in specific context (Kress & Selander 2012:266).

In the academic domain, it is accepted that argument takes the shape of “a logical or quasi-logical sequence of ideas that is supported by evidence” (Andrews 2010:3). At the undergraduate level, the most common argument structure is the five-part arrangement for argument, which Andrews (2010) suggests may be a derivative of Quintilian’s five-part arrangement for argument. A key marker of academic argument is the practice of citation. Citation evidences prior research and indicates an allegiance to a particular academic community (Hyland 2006). Besides its ‘symbolic capital’ (Bourdieu 1991), with its emphasis on logic, evidence and citation, an affordance of academic argument is that it renders the rhetor accountable for the argument made. From this perspective, it can be said that academic argument is premised on accountability. Andrews (2003) notes that the ‘default genre’ for presenting argument in the academic domain is the essay. To render the practice of argumentation in Higher Education more applicable to contemporary communication practices, this study considers the affordances of different modes, genres and media for constructing academic argument.

Lastly, medium is another material resource that gives text form. Medium is the “material resources used in the production of semiotic products and events” and it serves the purpose of recording and distributing the semiotic products and events produced (Kress & van Leeuwen 2001:22). From this perspective, it can be said that medium is the larger structure, the frame that holds modes, genres and discourses of various kinds. Different media have different affordances. A book, for instance, is a medium that works with paper and ink. It permits the use of images and writing as modes of communication. The lightness in weight means that it is portable. Television, in contrast, can accommodate a range of modes for communication, such as visual, verbal, gestural and aural among some. The physical weight of a television, however, renders it not suitable for carrying. This constrains the receiver of the message to a fixed location. Media as technologies of communication are not ‘neutral’ entities but have social and cultural orientations. Van Leeuwen (2008), for instance, points out that the rule of use of a technology is often built into the technology. He observes that PowerPoint “has a built-in semiotics of colour which provides rules for combining colours into colour schemes, as well as rules for the textual functionality of colour” (van Leeuwen 2008:135). Rules built into media technologies in this way guide users to particular social norms of production.

To conclude, I understand argument to be a cultural textual form that shapes interaction. As a cultural textual form, argument must exist in relation to text. A text requires modes to provide

knowledge and information material form. Genre and discourse are principles of organisation that provide text shape. Genre shapes text according to the social relations between participants, and discourse shapes texts according to the social institution in which the text manifests. Medium is the technology that enables the production and the distribution of the argument as text. As texts are grounded in the social and are sites of struggle (Kress 2003), the resources employed to construct a text are unavoidably laden with power-relations. To recognise the potential and implications of these resources for constructing argument in the academic domain, I argue that this requires a pedagogy of teaching and learning that foregrounds ‘recognition’.

## **2.6 Towards a pedagogy of recognition**

Two questions that Kress (2010) raises are critical in understanding the orientation of pedagogical design. In relation to assessment he asks: ‘Is our interest in learning?’ or ‘Is our interest in producing conformity to authority around ‘knowledge’? The two questions have different implications for pedagogy. If the interest is in producing conformity to authority around knowledge, then learning is measured by the degree of *acquisition* of knowledge. This metric, according to Kress and Selander (2012), sets up two terms. Firstly, it acknowledges that there is a power difference between the teacher and the learner. The teacher assumes the authoritative role as the holder of knowledge, and the learner is the receiver of this authority, as he or she attempts to acquire this knowledge. Secondly, it privileges canonical forms of modes and genres in which knowledge is coded (Kress & Selander 2012:267). This approach to pedagogy limits access to diverse forms of meaning-making practices. In contrast, if the interest is in learning, this sets up a different metric. Kress defines learning as

the result of transformative engagement with an aspect of the world which is the focus of attention by an individual, on the basis of principles brought by her or him to that engagement; leading to a transformation of the individual’s semiotic/conceptual resources (Kress 2010:182).

Thus, if the interest in assessment is in learning, then a measurement of “the learner’s engagement with the prompt supplied by the teacher” is required (Kress & Selander 2012:267). Assessment, from this perspective, involves an evaluation of the value of the work performed by the learner. This shifts assessment from evaluation in relation to standards to “a question of ‘feed up’, ‘feed back’ and ‘feed forward’ to facilitate the learning” (Kress & Selander 2012:267). It is this understanding of assessment and learning that would necessitate a pedagogy of ‘recognition’.

‘Recognition’ is conceptualised by Archer and Newfield (2014) in three ways. Firstly, they propose that recognition is concerned with making visible semiotic resources. South Africa’s educational context is characterised by linguistic and cultural diversity. This landscape can either be viewed as “a productive, if utopian, manifestation of rich texture and potential synergy, or as a manifestation of gaps and inequities in human and material resources and in language proficiency” (Archer & Newfield 2014:3). By making visible the meaning-potential of less dominant forms of communication and representation, Archer and Newfield (2014) argue that this can bring about social justice. They posit that “[t]he opposite of recognition is blindness, an inability to notice resources because of certain ideological frameworks that prevent seeing what is there” (Archer & Newfield 2014:6). Besides social justice, it can be argued that making visible semiotic resources and their affordances for meaning-making can also set the foundation for a culture of innovation as it encourages one to explore and exploit the potentials of a given resource. In other words, recognising the semiotic potential of various resources can create the space for ‘design’.

Secondly, Archer and Newfield (2014) posit that recognition involves theorising and understanding resources through the use of a metalanguage. To discuss and analyse semiotic resources, a particular set of vocabulary or a metalanguage is necessary. A metalanguage is “an educationally accessible functional grammar” that describes various forms of meaning available for meaning-making (New London Group 2000:24). It is a language that allows for a critical analysis of semiotic systems. Metalanguages are important because they make it possible to describe the functional aspects of a semiotic system (Unsworth 2006). In this way, they enable one to understand how the resources within the system function to make meaning. This study aims to explore a multimodal approach to constructing and analysing academic argument. In doing so, it will provide a metalanguage and a framework for describing and analysing multimodal academic argument.

Lastly, Archer and Newfield (2014) posit that recognition entails integrating resources in a range of educational contexts. In a globalised age that is characterised by culturally diverse societies and blurring of social practices, it is no longer plausible to privilege dominant forms of communication and representation (Cope & Kalantzis 2000; Kress 2003; New London Group 2000). Yet, Archer observes that, “[f]ormal education often closes down access to a range of semiotic resources” (2014:189). If the aim of education is to equip students with adequate knowledge and the right ‘tools’ to survive in the working world, then it is necessary

to expose students to a range of resources. By investigating a multimodal approach to academic argument, this study makes visible the pedagogical affordances of different modes, genres and media for constructing argument in the academic domain. The next chapter presents the methodology and the case study that grounds this research.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Overview of chapter**

This research involves identifying resources that students draw on and understanding how they use these resources to construct arguments in video, comics and PowerPoint. It therefore requires analysing students' argument produced in the digital forms proposed, and putting forward a framework for analysing the texts. The chapter begins with an overview of the research methodology. It identifies constructivism as the research paradigm, and qualitative methodology as the research approach. Details on the site of study, a seminar situated in Media Studies, are then provided. This is followed by an account of the method of data collection, which consists of collecting students' textual productions, participant observation and interviews. It then proposes a framework for analysing multimodal argument based on Halliday's metafunctional principle. The possible limitations of a multimodal social semiotic framework are also explored. The chapter concludes with an outline of the ethical considerations of the research.

### **3.2 Overview of research methodology**

Research is a "mode of interrogation" that seeks to make known a subject matter which is unknown to the researcher through "coherent and systematic" inquiry (Brown & Dowling 1998:1). This process is not impartial, but inextricably intertwined with politics and decision-making (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007:5). Literature into research methodology typically identifies a researcher's philosophical underpinnings (ontological and epistemological orientations) as underlying factors that influence choice of methodology. This study seeks to explore the possibilities of a multimodal approach to academic argument in Media Studies. The aim is to contribute towards the development of a pedagogy of argument that takes into account contemporary communication practices. In this respect, this research aligns with the 'constructivist' paradigm, where the aim of an inquiry is to understand and interpret phenomena in order to improve practice (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba 2011:106). In accordance with the constructivist paradigm, I adopt a 'relativist' ontology, a 'subjectivist' epistemology, and a 'qualitative' set of methods in gathering knowledge.

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality. A relativist ontology recognises that there are multiple realities which are "constructed intersubjectively through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially" (Guba & Lincoln 1994 cited in

Lincoln *et al.* 2011:103). In other words, there is no one objective reality, but rather realities that are constructed collectively through interaction with members of the society, and subjectively through our lived experiences in the world. Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge. If social reality is taken to be multiple, constructed both collectively and subjectively, this means that knowledge must be “experiential, personal and subjective” (Sikes 2004:21). A relativist ontology can thus be said to give rise to a ‘subjectivist’ epistemology where knowledge is taken to be co-constructed. In research, this means that the researcher and the researched “are fused into a single entity. Findings are literally the creation of the process of interaction between the two” (Guba 1990 cited in Lincoln *et al.* 2011:103). A relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology favour naturalistic methods such as interviewing, observation and analysis of existing texts, as they “ensure an adequate dialog between the researchers and those with whom they interact in order to collaboratively construct a meaningful reality” (Angen 2000 cited in Lincoln *et al.* 2011:105). From this perspective, a constructivist paradigm is inclined towards interpretative approaches to gathering knowledge. Qualitative methodology is typically characterised as research “carried out in an interpretative frame in which the concern is with the production of meaning” (Brown & Dowling 1998:82). This approach to gathering knowledge is suitable for “studying things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln 2011:3).

While a researcher’s philosophical underpinnings play a significant role in underlying research, scholars have pointed out that it is important not to focus on these to the extent that the objective of the study and the research questions at hand are overlooked (Andrews 2010; Brown & Dowling 1998). Brown and Dowling, for instance, assert that, “it is no more necessary to resolve your epistemology in your empirical research than it is to incorporate a declaration of your religious affiliation” (1998:137). The research questions proposed draw on an interpretative framework. The theoretical framework that underpins this study, multimodal social semiotics, is qualitative. Multimodal social semiotics grounds all meaning-making in the social. This means that research, as a mode of interrogation, is seen as a form of social action. A social view of research recognises that research is subjective and partial, prompted by the researcher’s interest in investigating a particular issue or phenomenon, using resources that are available to the researcher at the time of the research. From this perspective, research has to be seen as bound to the researcher’s interests, socio-cultural background and the environment that underlie the research. The researcher is not detached

from the researched phenomenon but is a ‘human instrument’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985), exploring, describing and generating theory from the qualitative data. As such, Cohen *et al.* (2007) point out that qualitative research tends to be not hypothesis driven. Again, this is in accord with social semiotic approaches to research where the researcher is seen as playing a key role in interpreting text, and the research design, as Anderson notes, generally involves “extrapolat[ing] principles for improving teaching and learning from analyses of texts’ features, functions, and affordances” (2013:283). Precisely because of the central role of the researcher, however, one of the major criticisms of qualitative research is its subjective orientation (Cameron *et al.* 1992; Cohen *et al.* 2007; Scott & Usher 2011). Nevertheless, Cameron *et al.* maintain that “the subjectivity of the observer should not be seen as a regrettable disturbance but as one element in the human interactions that comprise our object of study” (1992:5). Similarly, Scott and Usher posit that the process and negotiation of meaning-making of the researcher should be seen as demonstrating “the shared and constructed nature of social reality” and capturing “the multiplicity and complexity of the life world of individuals” (2011:29). This study recognises that research is inherently subjective, contingent to the researcher’s selection and interpretation of data. It acknowledges and values the researcher’s role in research, understanding that this is what makes each study different and meaningful.

### **3.3 Site of study**

The site of study is a seminar in a 2<sup>nd</sup> year media course in which I teach at a university in South Africa. Having an understanding of how argument works across different genres and media is especially important for these students as upon entering the media industry, they will be expected to engage with a various forms of media. Exploring the affordances of a multimodal approach to argument is thus particularly relevant in this discipline. To investigate the possibilities of a multimodal approach to academic argument, a case study was designed which involved teaching and investigating a seminar titled *Composing in a Digital Age*. The seminar is embedded in a second year media course, which aims to offer students an introduction to journalism, by providing them with theory and practice in aspects of media production. The course is a core course, compulsory to all students who major in film and media. Students who do not major in film or media are usually not permitted to take the course, unless at the discretion of the head of department. Prerequisites to the course include a first year media course, which introduces students to rudimentary concepts in media studies, and a first year film course, which introduces students to basic concepts and

vocabularies in Film and Television Studies. It is thus expected that students who take the course have some basic knowledge of film and media. The course structure is made up of two components: lectures and seminars. Weekly lectures provide students theoretical underpinnings of media practices, such as questions of bias and objectivity in news, framing and agenda setting, and online media's impact on journalism in the form of citizen journalism. In conjunction with the lectures, students have to choose one seminar among many, ranging from news writing for print media, online arts journalism, writing for social media, writing for comics and sequential art, music journalism, and writing for radio. The seminars are intended to provide students with specialisation in one area of media production. Assessment in the course is divided equally, 50 per cent attributed to lectures and 50 per cent to seminars. The lecture component is evaluated through two class tests and an exam at the end of the semester. Seminar assessment is particular to the seminars.

The seminar, *Composing in a Digital Age*, covered the analysis, design and production of multimodal texts. There were a total of twenty students in the class. The students were age between 19 and 20. Female presence dominated the class. There were a total of 15 females and 5 males. Around half of the students in the class were from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. In South Africa, the term 'previously disadvantaged' refers to individuals who, due to the apartheid policy, experienced forms of social inequalities. The seminar ran once a week, for one and an half hours, for a length of 12 weeks. In the seminar, students explored the meaning-making potentials of various modes such as image, sound and colour. They were introduced to multimodal composing using the programs Windows Movie Maker, Comic Life and PowerPoint. Windows Movie Maker is a free movie-making program on Microsoft Windows that allows users to import both images (still and moving images) and sound files into its system. Once imported, the data can be edited and strung together. Effects and transitions such as zooms, fades and dissolves may be added to images. Sound files may be cropped or looped and juxtaposed with the images. When a 'movie' is complete, it may be published into a video file that is suitable for sharing on site such as Facebook and YouTube. Comic Life is a desktop publishing program that allows one to create comic pages using digital photos. Once photographs are imported into the programme, users may drop them into comic panels and add effects such as lettering, captions and balloons. PowerPoint has become an all too familiar presentation program in meetings and conferences. The program functions like a slide projector, presenting users with blank slides where they may add texts, images, sound and movie files. The students were instructed on how to use each of the programs.

They were also presented with readings followed by discussions on how to make videos, comics and PowerPoint presentations. Assessment in the seminar included one analysis paper, which made up 20 per cent of the seminar mark, and a group project, which made up the remaining 80 per cent.

The group project was a semester-long project which required students to create a multimodal text that offered an analysis and a stance on a current event issue. Students could choose to present their argument in video, comics or PowerPoint. They were given guidelines which stipulated that the project must define the significance of the subject matter to a target audience, be well-researched and supported with evidence. The assessment component itself was broken up into smaller components. This was done to provide students incentives for working consistently throughout the semester. Besides the final product which counted for 40 per cent, the other components include a synopsis (10%), a rationale for choice of media (10%), a draft plan (10%) and an individual reflective journal which the students had to keep throughout the semester (10%). The individual reflective journal took the place of what is normally known as a 'participation grade'. As long as the students fill in ten entries they were awarded a passing mark. Thereafter, the students were assessed on whether they showed reflection on their actions, or the entries were merely documentations of what was done.

### **3.4 Methods of data collection**

The main data for this study are the students' final products produced in the form of video, comics and PowerPoint presentations. In order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study, and the students' motives and perspectives, other data were collected to supplement the primary data. The use of mixed methods, according to Denzin and Lincoln, can be seen "as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry" (2011:5). The data collection methods included:

- students' textual productions
- participant observation of the classroom context
- interviews with the students

#### **3.4.1 Students' textual productions**

As mentioned, the students' final products serve as the primary data. These comprise videos, comics and PowerPoint presentations. In this study, I analyse two of each digital forms. Texts that are best for comparing and contrasting were chosen for analysis. The students' products

are analysed in order to identify the resources that they draw on to compose in the various digital forms, and how they use these resources to construct a multimodal argument. Other assignments that led up to the students' final products complement the analysis. For example, the synopsis detailing the issue at stake provides an understanding of the social situation that prompted the students' arguments. The rationale describing the students' choice of media presents insight into the resources that the students took into consideration when composing their texts. The draft plan displaying the blueprints of the students' projects is drawn on, along with the synopsis and the final product, to understand how the students went about constructing their argument. The written reflection in the form of journals entries documenting the production process offers insight into the students' perspectives on the production process.

### **3.4.2 Participant observation**

Besides collecting the students' texts, I also took note of happenings in the classroom context. According to Cohen *et al.*, the advantages of observational research are "that it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations" and allows "a researcher to look afresh at everyday behaviour that otherwise might be taken for granted, expected or go unnoticed" (2007:396). I use the classroom observations to explore how the students work together, negotiate choice of resources, and design their arguments. The observations also provide insight into the students' actions and perspectives that are not captured in their texts. As I was both the researcher and the teacher in the seminar, my observation was necessarily unstructured. The notes of the observations consist of logs that were written after each seminar.

### **3.4.3 Interviews with students**

Interviews provide an understanding of the phenomenon being researched from the students' perspective. I interviewed the students individually, despite the final project being a group project, so I would not have to divide my attention in making sure that all the interviewees are given a chance to speak. Interviewing the students individually allowed me to focus on the experiences of each student.

I used semi-structured interviews to gather information about the students' texts, their experiences of making the multimodal project, and their experiences of the seminar as a whole. Semi-structured interviews involve open-ended questions that are "flexible" and

“allow the interviewer to probe so that she may go into more depth if she chooses, or to clear up any misunderstandings” (Cohen *et al.* 2007:357). They also enabled me to cover similar grounds with each student, but modifying them where necessary.

### **3.5 Framework for analysis of argument in multimodal texts**

The primary data for this study are the students’ final textual products. I analyse these texts using a social semiotic framework. Halliday’s (1978) metafunctional principle provides the basis for a multimodal social semiotic approach to textual analysis. This principle is based on the view that language is a semiotic system which realises particular social functions. These social functions include communicating ideas and experiences of the world (ideational metafunction), conveying social relations (interpersonal metafunction), and organising the grammar in a coherent manner so that it can be communicated as a text (textual metafunction). A multimodal social semiotic approach to textual analysis extends the metafunctional principle to all modes, for example, speech, writing, images and gesture to name a few.

I draw on the metafunctional principle to think about how semiotic resources can be employed to realise argument by mapping concepts from argument and rhetoric onto this framework. From this perspective, the ideational metafunction concerns how semiotic resources are employed to present the argument; the interpersonal metafunction discloses how the rhetor positions the audience through use of particular semiotic resources; the compositional (textual) metafunction reveals how the arrangement of the semiotic resources enables the argument to be communicated in a coherent manner. Halliday’s term ‘textual’ in the latter metafunction is replaced with Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) term ‘compositional’. It is felt that the term ‘textual’ is confusing as it denotes a relationship with text or textual quality rather than coherence. The term ‘compositional’ better describes the resources that are employed to achieve coherence, and is a term befitting the design principles of 21<sup>st</sup> century texts. The strength of the framework lies in that it examines the role content plays in constructing an argument, the social relations that are inferred in an argument, and the organising principles that assist in creating coherence in an argument. The framework is shown to be applicable across genres and media, thus, when applying the framework, it is important to consider how the categories relevant to the metafunctions are realised differently in different genres and media. The framework is discussed in detail below.

### 3.5.1 Ideational metafunction – resources for reflection

The ideational metafunction is concerned with interpreting human experiences and thus offers a way of reflecting on the world (Halliday & Hasan 1985). In relation to argument, this involves identifying the way in which information is organised to reflect on an issue. This can provide insight into how the rhetor reflects on the problem. I draw on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) categories of experience, 'conceptual' and 'narrative', to think about how argument can be reflected and developed upon. A conceptual argument is characterised by a timeless quality, as concepts are presented in terms of "class, structure or meaning" (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:59). This kind of argument is quite common in academia. For example, a compare and contrast essay can be described as a conceptual argument. A narrative argument, in contrast, is characterised by processes of change, as concepts are presented as unfolding events. An argument that is made through an analogy of narrative events to events in the world of the real can be described as a narrative argument. Trimbur (2013) uses the concept *logos* from rhetoric to think about how an argument is developed and delivered, though the term is more conventionally used to think about logic and reasoning. Following Trimbur, I suggest that ways of organising information in the ideational metafunction can be seen as akin to *logos* from rhetoric.

In the previous chapter, following Kress (1989), I defined argument as a cultural textual form for bringing about difference. It is this notion of 'difference' that differentiates argument as a cultural textual form, from narrative as a cultural textual form. Thus, it is also important to consider how difference is established. In the previous chapter, I mentioned that refutation could be achieved through juxtaposition. Juxtaposition places together two signs. Difference is established when the two signs placed together oppose each other in ideational content. This is what Unsworth (2006) calls 'ideational divergence'. Superimposition establishes difference in a similar manner to juxtaposition, although the action here involves the overlaying of one sign over another.

Rhetorical strategies can also offer ways of reflecting on the world. According to Brandt (1970), rhetorical strategies function by setting up relationships between concepts. That is, they help explicate a concept by appealing to other concepts. For example, analogy is a rhetorical strategy that offers support for a given concept by finding parallels or likeness to other concepts. Personification can assist in reflecting on a given object by attributing human qualities to it. Irony can persuade one to reconsider and reject a given proposition or concept

by linking it to another that is different in meaning. Satire persuades one to reject a proposition through ridicule, while rhetorical questions can direct one to certain propositions. The example can also be considered as a rhetorical strategy. The example persuades by appealing to the specific (Brandt 1970).

### **3.5.2 Interpersonal metafunction – resources for interaction**

The interpersonal metafunction is concerned with the social relations between the actors within the text and the receiver of the text. This metafunction is seen as a “way of acting” as it deals with the function of semiotic resources in the “process of social interaction” (Halliday & Hasan 1985:20). In relation to rhetoric, the notion of ‘rhetorical stance’ to some extent corresponds with the interpersonal metafunction. The rhetorical stance, according to Booth (1963), involves the balancing of speakers, audiences and argument. It is the way arguers “coordinate presentation of self, their [audiences’] interests and emotions, and the message they want to deliver as interrelated components” (Trimbur 2013:45). I draw on Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) notion of ‘contact’, ‘distance’ and ‘attitude’ to thinking about how particular semiotic resources can evoke interpersonal relations in argument.

Contact describes the kind of interaction that is set up between the arguer and the audience. Following Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), I identify two types of interaction: demand and offer. Demand arguments call upon the audience to do something, that is, they demand some sort of action from the audience. For example, the *KONY 2012* short film produced by *Invisible Inc. Children* can be described as a demand argument. The short film makes a case for the arrest of warlord Joseph Kony and calls upon the audience to *take action* through participating in Kony 2012 campaigns and spreading the video online. The demand is realised in the written mode in the last few seconds of the film through the words “THERE ARE THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW” written in grey against a black background. Demand arguments directly request action from the audience. In contrast, offer arguments provide information to change one’s view. These are arguments that ask the audience to believe something, to adopt a particular point of view. Academic essays, for example, tend to offer information, to convince a reader of a position, rather than call for a reader to take action. It is likely that contact is established differently in different modes and media. For example, the visual mode can realise demand through a gaze or a finger pointing directly at the audience demanding some action. In the verbal, demand can be realised, as mentioned in the case of *KONY 2012*, through words such as “Thing you can do now”. In video and

comics, contact would be realised through the represented participants in the text. In PowerPoint, because of the presence of an actual speaker, it is possible for the speaker to directly call upon the audience to some action.

Distance is concerned with semiotic resources that place the audience in a particular proximity to the rhetor. It signifies the type of social relation the rhetor has with the audience and can be broadly categorised into three: intimate/personal, social and impersonal. Different semiotic resources have different ways of establishing distance. For instance, in images, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) point out that social relation can be indexed through shot distance. A close-up shot establishes an intimate/personal distance, a medium shot realises a social distance, and a long shot portrays an impersonal distance. In voice quality, van Leeuwen (2009) identifies voice volume as indexing distance. A soft voice/whisper or low voice infers intimacy, a moderate voice spoken at the level that can be overheard by others infers a social distance, and a loud voice, as that which is used in public speech, implies an impersonal distance. Similarly, in writing, Trimbur (2013) notes that distance between reader and writer can be realised through particular techniques. For instance, an intimate/personal distance is established through strategies such as the use of the first personal singular 'I', addressing the audience as 'you', the use of the collective 'we', employing colloquialisms and contractions; a social distance is established through use of "a plain, relatively formal (but not elevated or pretentious) style"; an impersonal distance is established through the use of a bureaucratic or legalistic 'tone' (Trimbur 2013:46).

Attitude is concerned with how an audience is positioned in terms of involvement and power. Trimbur (2013) suggests that the concept of attitude, to some extent, corresponds with the notion of 'ethos' in classical rhetoric. Ethos is a rhetorical appeal that is concerned with the character of the rhetor/arguer. It focuses on the persona of the rhetor and the audience's impression of this persona. In Trimbur's words, ethos "involves judgement about how credible, fair, reliable, and authoritative the [rhetor] appears to be" (2013:45). I use the concept of attitude/ethos to think about the authority and credibility of the rhetor. In this respect, modality is a useful concept to explore in relation to attitude. Modality refers to "the status, authority and reliability of a message, to its ontological status, or to its value as truth of fact" (Hodge & Kress 1988:124). Social semiotics assumes that 'truth' and 'reality' are relative to the values and beliefs of a particular social group, hence the truth value of any text is understood to be contingent on "what is considered real (or true, or scared) in the social

group for which the representation is primarily intended” (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:156). In addition, modality is taken to be applicable to the “whole class of semiotic phenomena” (Hodge & Kress 1988:121).

A multimodal social semiotic view of modality recognises that modality judgements are relative to particular discursual practices and are realised through different modes. For instance, modality in the verbal mode can be expressed through words that express degrees of certainty such as auxiliary verbs ‘may’, ‘can’, ‘must’, and adverbs ‘possibly’, ‘certainly’ and ‘maybe’. In the visual mode, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) identify eight markers of modality ranging from colour saturation, colour differentiation, colour modulation, contextualisation, representation, depth, illumination to brightness. These modality markers are relative to particular domains of practices. For example, domains such as advertising and fashion value affective meanings, thus the use of rich colour saturation and differentiation can convey high modality. In contrast, affect meanings are less valued in domains such as engineering and architecture, thus the use of rich colour saturation and differentiation can result in low modality. In voice quality, van Leeuwen (2009) suggests that pitch range can index level of confidence. He notes that men tend to use the higher regions of their pitch range to appear dominant. Women, in contrast, tend to use the lower end of their pitch range to appear assertive. Of course, other qualities such as the steadiness of the voice can also index confidence. In fact, if modality is concerned with recognising the authority and reliability of a message, then, in the academic domain, the whole practice of citation can be considered as a marker of modality.

Another resource which is important in evoking interpersonal relations is the concept ‘pathos’. The term ‘pathos’ in classical rhetoric refers to parts of the argument that arouse the audience’s emotions. I draw on the concept of pathos to consider how semiotic resources appeal to the audience’s emotions through sensory means, such as the use of endearing images to invoke empathy, or the use of fast paced music to generate excitement. Pathos can include appeals to emotions such as fear, force and ridicule.

### **3.5.3 Compositional metafunction – resources for establishing coherence**

The compositional metafunction is concerned with semiotic resources that function to establish a sense of coherence. In relation to argument, this metafunction is concerned with how aspects of an argument are communicated as a coherent whole. Two categories which

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) identify as being related to the compositional metafunction in images can be applied to argument: salience and framing.

Salience describes how aspects of an argument are emphasised or foregrounded through particular resources. In the visual mode, salience can be achieved through techniques such as size, sharpness of focus, tonal contrast, colour contrast, placement of resources (centre/margin) and perspective (foregrounding/backgrounding) (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 202). In the verbal mode, salience can be conveyed through adjectives which mark emphasis such as ‘main’ ‘crucial’ and ‘important’, and adverbs such as ‘significantly’ and ‘notably’. In the aural mode, volume (loud – soft) is one approach to achieving salience. For example, the volume of a soundtrack may be turned up to give salience to the music at a particular point in a movie. In an orchestra, salience of a certain musical instrument can be achieved with the rest of the ensemble playing softer in the background. Stress in intonation is another technique to achieving salience. A speaker, for instance, may emphasise a word or a phrase by placing emphasis on the particular word or words.

Framing, in relation to composition, is concerned with how components of an argument are grouped or separated. Resources that are employed to organise elements of a text are likely to be genre or medium-specific. For example, paragraphs and white space are organising resources of the essay genre, but not of the video genre. In comics, frames and page layout are crucial for the organisation of visual and verbal resources. In PowerPoint, the slide and slide templates can be considered as organising units. In film, framing techniques include transitional techniques such as dissolves, fades and wipes.

It is important to emphasise again that a multimodal approach to argument views text as a multimodal ensemble. In an ensemble, not all modes carry equal weight in communicating meaning – some modes have more functional load than others. When analysing the students’ texts, I do not attend to each mode equally. Instead, my attention is primarily directed towards modes that carry the dominant weight. In addition, that which I pay attention to is dependent on my interest, although certain social conventions such as reading path encourage me to read a text from a particular approach. As Kress writes

presenting an *orchestrated ensemble* does not of itself guarantee or determine my *attention*, nor my *framing* and not therefore my *interpretation*. It does however provide the ‘ground’ on which my *selection* and *interpretation* take place. The ensemble makes certain resources

available in a specific order; that is the material, the ground, from which I shape the prompt which is the basis of my interpretation (2010:161).

My attention, in my analyses, is directed towards that which is salient in particular instances of representation. The table below summarises the metafunctional framework outlined above and their associated categories.

<b>Metafunction</b>	<b>Semiotic Resources</b>	<b>Operationalised</b>
<i>Ideational (resources for reflection)</i>	Logos – ways of organising information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptual (organising content in terms of class, structure or meaning)</li> <li>• Narrative (organising information by processes of change)</li> </ul>
	Ways of establishing difference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juxtaposition (side-by-side placement)</li> <li>• Superimposition (overlying one resource over another)</li> </ul>
	Rhetorical strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analogy; personification, irony, satire, rhetorical questions, examples</li> </ul>
<i>Interpersonal (resources for interaction)</i>	Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand (call to action)</li> <li>• Offer (provide information)</li> </ul>
	Distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intimate / personal (informal address, close shot, soft voice)</li> <li>• Social (formal address, medium shots, moderate voice)</li> <li>• Impersonal (bureaucratic address, long shots, loud voice)</li> </ul>
	Ethos – establishing authority and credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• modality markers, citation, colour coordination, statistical information</li> </ul>
	Pathos – emotional appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appeal to fear, appeal to force, appeal to ridicule</li> </ul>
<i>Compositional (resources for establishing coherence)</i>	Salience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visually – foregrounding/backgrounding, size differentiation, centre/margin placement, colour contrast, tonal contrast</li> <li>• Verbally – adjectives such as ‘main’, ‘crucial’</li> <li>• Aurally – volume (soft – loud)</li> </ul>
	Framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• paragraphs, white spaces, frames, editing techniques, slide, templates</li> </ul>

Table 3.1. A multimodal social semiotic framework for analysing argument

### **3.6 Possible limitations of a multimodal social semiotic framework**

Multimodal social semiotics as a framework for textual analysis is not without its criticisms. Bazalgette and Buckingham, for example, argue that it offers meaning only on a textual level and fails to take into account of “how texts are actually produced, circulated and used in everyday life” (2013:101). In other words, it does not take into account the political economy that is involved in the process of text production and distribution. As such, the framework has limitations in terms of understanding “how broader assumptions and ideologies are sustained” (Bazalgette & Buckingham 2013:101). Admittedly, multimodal social semiotics does not seek to theorise how assumptions and ideologies are sustained, but rather how they manifest through text. Because text is closely tied to social practices such as genre and discourse, it is believed that textual analysis will provide understanding of the social conditions, the social, cultural, historical and even individual factors that affect text-making. Multimodal social semiotics as a theory foregrounds the social in shaping text. As a framework for textual analysis, it presents an approach to make explicit semiotic resources that form text. The theory can offer studies of argument a way of taking into account the social realities that shape argument, bringing attention to the role that social categories (such as mode, genre, discourse and medium) play in the construction of an argument. As a framework for analysing argument, social semiotics provides a means to uncover how ideas of the social world, social relations and compositional resources shape argument.

Bazalgette and Buckingham further point out that another shortcoming of the framework is that it “typically infers the intentions of the text’s producers and makes assumptions about its meaning based simply on an analysis of the text itself” (2013:99). A multimodal social semiotics approach to text is concerned with the way a text enables and constrains readings. Although it can be argued that, as with all literary analysis, it is never possible to infer authorial intention, the framework arguably has limitations in terms of the perspectives it offers. As an approach to text analysis, it emphasises the researcher’s viewpoint rather than the participants’. A way to overcome this shortcoming is to employ other methods alongside the textual analysis. In this study, I have drawn on both classroom observation and interviews to supplement and enhance the textual analysis. The classroom observations offer a point of view that is not captured in the text, such as students’ reactions and responses. Interviews provide a glimpse of the making of the project from the students’ perspective.

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

My research entails investigating a seminar in which I am also the teacher. This situation poses some conflicts. For one, there is a conflict in roles. The priority of the researcher differs from that of the teacher (Hammack 1997; Wong 1995). While a researcher seeks to understand a phenomenon through systematic observation, a teacher seeks help students to learn by affecting change (Wong 1995). The one role requires quiet observation, the other requires action. To mitigate the tension between the two roles, I made the decision to foreground the teacher role during the seminar. In other words, my actions in the classroom were prioritised by educational aims rather than research aims. This is generally in accordance with recommendations by scholars of teacher/researcher research (Hammack 1997; Nolen & Vander Putten 2007; Wong 1995).

Besides conflict in roles, it is necessary to acknowledge that my position as a researcher/teacher also poses some conflicts in power relations. At the start of the seminar, the students were informed of my identity and research background. They were made aware that they can refuse to take part and withdraw from the study at any time without any prejudice. The research purpose and procedures were explained and the students were given the opportunity to ask questions. They were informed that the information gathered for the research may be used in future research and publications, but that any information which might potentially identify them will not be used in any published material. All in all, informed consent was obtained from the head of department, the course convenor and the students involved in the seminar.

The next three chapters present the analysis of the student-produced videos, comics and PowerPoint presentations using the framework outlined in Table 3.1.

## Chapter 4. Ways of Constructing Academic Argument in Video

### 4.1 Overview of chapter

This chapter investigates how students construct multimodal academic argument in video. It identifies the representational resources that students draw on and how these resources are utilised to construct argument. Two student-produced videos are investigated. The chapter begins with an overview of the circumstances surrounding the making of the videos, before identifying the ideational, interpersonal and compositional resources drawn on to construct the arguments. It demonstrates that, ideationally, constructing an argument in a video is not that different from constructing an argument in a humanities essay. The presentation of information abides to a linear principle, moving from introduction to main body to conclusion. The principle of logic, claims supporting evidence, is adhered to and the practice of citation also followed. What is different is the resources employed. The different resources open up opportunities for an alternative kind of rhetorical engagement with the resources.

### 4.2. Background: social event, prompt and the production process of the videos

Burn (2007) observes how the availability of accessible video-editing software as a medium of production has presented an opportunity to shift from consumption to production. Before that, students have been mostly consumers of film and television texts. Digital video allows students to experiment with visual, aural and verbal resources, such as still images, moving images, written text, recorded audio and music. Platforms such as YouTube also make it possible to share and link videos engaging in similar topics. In this way, the argument that is constructed does not stand alone, but can be viewed in relation to others. Video is governed by the logic of time and space: meaning is made through an ensemble of semiotic resources as they unfold, both temporally and spatially, in sequence. Documentaries are one of many genres of film that can be realised through digital video. Documentaries differ from other genres of film, such as musicals, comedy, sci-fi and horror, in that they “address the world in which we live rather than a world imagined by the filmmaker” (italics in original, Nichols 2010:xi). The genre positions the audience to expect films that engage with social issues from the real world. Both of the student-produced videos examined in this chapter can be characterised as documentaries. *Truths Be Told* investigates the techniques of persuasion that are employed in the short film *KONY 2012*. Using *KONY 2012* as an example, it argues that presentation of information through social media affects our perception of the truth. *Legalisation of Marijuana* makes a case for the legalisation of marijuana, arguing that it is

banned for political rather than health reasons. Both of the videos are approximately five minutes in length. Below, I provide an account of the social event, prompt and circumstances surrounding the making of each of the videos.

#### **4.2.1 *Truths Be Told*: a case of successful group work**

Text-making, according to Kress (2010), can be envisaged as a sequence starting with a prompt. Based on the rhetor's interpretation of the prompt, and their assessment of the social environment, a message is created by drawing on available given semiotic resources (Kress 2010:122). *Truths Be Told* is a response to the social media phenomenon that was brought about by the *KONY 2012* short video. Launched on social media platforms on the 5th of March 2012 by the non-profit organisation, Invisible Children, *KONY 2012* campaigns for the arrest of Joseph Kony, a Ugandan rebel leader who, despite being charged with crimes against humanity, remains uncaptured. The video went viral on social media platforms and generated 100 million views within six days of its release ([www.visiblemeasures.com](http://www.visiblemeasures.com)). It was especially popular among university students. Sarah, Jack and Tracey, the students who produced *Truths Be Told*, interpreted the social event as one of social media propaganda. This prompted them to respond with a video that scrutinised the techniques of persuasion employed in *KONY 2012*.

When the group started out on the project, however, their initial interest was not *KONY 2012* itself, but the audience's reaction to both the video and a follow-up event related to the video, known as *Cover the Night*. For this event, supporters were asked to perform some form of charity in their individual capacity on the morning of April 20th, 2012. In the evening, they were to gather to cover the city with posters of the campaign. At first, Sarah, Jack and Tracey were interested in documenting the poster-sticking event, and interviewing individuals for their views on the video. Their synopsis initially took the shape of a narrative documentary, rather than an argumentative documentary. As the semester proceeded, however, they became more critical of the presentation of information in *KONY 2012*. This, along with the fact that *Cover the Night* turned out to be a disappointment because few people showed up for the event, led the group to shift their focus to social media propaganda, with *KONY 2012* as an example.

Of the three members of the group, Sarah, in particular, was keen to work with the video form. As she writes in her journal,

...I would like to study film production and am very interested in the creation process. The opportunity to incorporate film production into my varsity work is very exciting – will have an opportunity to develop my skills further through practice, and by learning from my group members.

At the end of the semester, she applied to enter the production stream in Film and Media and included the finished product in her portfolio. Jack and Tracey, in contrast, although excited to work with video, showed greater concern with working with the form. Jack, for example, writes in his journal that despite it being easier to “generate emotion”, making a video is “time consuming”, requires “technical skills”, and may involve “camera issues”. Similarly, Tracey notes time, equipment and editing as problems in her written journal. It is worth noting that, when the project was conceived, equipment and editing issues were not considered to be big obstacles, since ordinary cameras were readily available, and basic editing was to be covered in the tutorial on Windows Movie Maker. However, following the analysis of the videos, it surfaces that image quality matters, as it affects the audience’s reception of the argument. Recognising these constraints, Sarah, Jack and Tracey sourced a high definition camera from a friend, who also assisted in the filming. To achieve a more ‘professional’ look, they opted to work on Final Cut Pro, a licensed professional video-editing program. As none of them were proficient in the program, they obtained assistance from a friend who was external to the course.

The motivation, pleasure and engagement the students had in producing the video are visibly evident in the amount of work they put into it. The students described staying up past midnight, and even until dawn on various days to complete the project. In a journal entry Tracey writes,

Well the due date is looming but the film is looking hot. I’m exhausted but it was worth it....This has definitely been the best group project I’ve ever done – we are getting along well. TOO MANY LAUGHS!!

Tracey’s sentiments echo numerous reports about digital video that identify motivation and enjoyment as a result of working with the medium (Burn 2007; Burn & Reed 1999; Kearney & Schuck 2006; Kittle 2009; Reid *et al.* 2002; Schwartz 2009). The case presented here is an example of a success story. Not all students have good experiences of working in groups. In fact, in her interview, Tracey discloses that she generally dislikes teamwork and had been “scared” when she found out that the project involved collaboration. *Legalisation of Marijuana* presents a case in which the group dynamic worked less successively.

#### **4.2.2 Legalisation of Marijuana: complexities involved in video production and group work**

*Legalisation of Marijuana* is a response to social debates concerning the prohibition of marijuana following Barack Obama's clampdown on medicinal marijuana in the United States. Gabriel and Samira, the students who produced the video, came to know of the social event through a magazine article. Although interested in the topic, they were only prompted to respond after watching Brett Harvey's (2007) documentary *The Union: The Business Behind Getting High*. *The Union* investigates the history of marijuana and how the industry grows despite its illegal status. It examines the reasons for its present illegal status and compares it to the alcohol ban in the United States in the 1920s. The comparison of the legal status of alcohol to marijuana prompted Gabriel and Samira to interpret the prohibition as a political issue. According to their synopsis, they were interested in uncovering the "original reason for marijuana's prohibition", arguing that the "prohibition is not legitimate".

At the onset, the group comprised three members. One of the members, however, had difficulty attending regular meetings, citing medical reasons, and subsequently left the group half-way through the semester. This caused some unpleasantness between the students, and disrupted their working progress. Gabriel, unlike the rest of her classmates, was not a Film and Media majoring student. This means that she had no official training in film and media concepts. In her interview, she reveals that she had chosen the seminar as she was "excited about working with video". Samira, on the other hand, was a Film and Media major student. She had been exposed to Windows Movie Maker in the past, though never going as far as making a finished product using it. Obtaining a camera to film was an obstacle for this group. The students had originally made plans to obtain a camera from the university filming society, of which Samira was a member, and were able to have the camera for a few days. However, the information captured was not the desired result. They were also subsequently unable to procure the camera again. Filming was eventually done through Gabriel's MacBook laptop, and editing was done on the laptop's free editing software, iMovie. The image quality is not as good as it would have been if captured using a high definition camera. Nevertheless, Gabriel reasons in her journal

I could play it off as intentional image quality, giving a rougher edge to the project, making the viewer feel as if he is actually part of the 'action'. Maybe the realistic trait will draw him into the argument.

The situation presented here highlights the complexities of producing a video and working in groups. Composing in digital video is laborious. It requires planning ahead, from getting the necessary equipment, to planning the type of resources to include in the video, and how to obtain those resources. If the video relies on interviews to relay the argument, as it does in this case, it is also less controlled. Students need to plan ahead, and plot questions to elicit the appropriate answers. Although the assignment was designed with various components (such as synopsis, rationale for choice of form and draft plan) in place to assist students in the planning of their project, this did not ensure that all would go smoothly, especially when there was a break-down of communication between members of the group. Samira notes in her journal,

I was at first extremely excited to do this project, especially with the topic we chose. However, with all the problems, I was not in the mood anymore but I did not give up as this was for marks and also a group task.

The case presented here suggests that satisfaction from working on these projects is intrinsically linked with the group dynamic experienced. The next section proceeds to analyse the videos.

### **4.3 Ideational resources for reflecting on argument in videos**

In *Writing New Media*, Wysocki argues that “compositions only ever work within and as part of other, already existing, structures and practices” and that “new technologies do not automatically erase or overthrow or change old practices” (2004:8). The analysis of the videos appears to support this argument, as the organisational structure of both *Truths Be Told* and *Legalisation of Marijuana* parallel that of a humanities essay. Like a written essay that consists of a main text and a reference list, the videos have a main section, which carries the principal argument, and a section in which the credits are presented. In addition, like an essay, the main section is divided into three components: introduction, main body and conclusion. Both of the videos employ a conceptual framework in presenting their argument, but do so in different ways. *Truths Be Told* presents its argument in a more linear manner, while *Legalisation of Marijuana* adopts a dialectical approach.

#### **4.3.1 Ways of organising conceptual arguments: linear versus dialectic**

*Truths Be Told* realises its argument through a more or less linear progression. The introduction contextualises the social event, embedding *KONY 2012* within social media culture, and presents the statement of position in the form of a rhetorical question: “How has

the presentation of information through social media affected our perspective of the truth?” The main body provides evidence for the premise by identifying five strategies of manipulation employed in *KONY 2012*, using a framework labelled as ‘Noam Chomsky’s model of media manipulation’. The verbal mode names the strategy, while the visual mode provides proof through extracts from *KONY 2012*. The conclusion wraps up with a restatement of the premise – “The line between fact and fiction has been blurred”. In this way, the argument is presented in a logical sequence, moving from claim to evidence.

*Legalisation of Marijuana*, in contrast, realises its argument in a more dialectical manner. The introduction begins by situating marijuana within law. Like *Truths Be Told*, the premise is implied through a rhetorical question – “Why is it after decades of active campaigning, its [marijuana’s] legal status is *still* being denied?” The main body investigates the reasons for marijuana’s ban through a dialectical approach as interviews are juxtaposed with extracts from the prompt video, *The Union*. The interviews mostly air the views of students, and their knowledge concerning the health and legal status of marijuana. These views include that marijuana is illegal because of its “status as a drug”, “the government can’t tax it”, “it’s toxic”, “bad for our health”, and it renders people mentally unstable. They present general claims made about marijuana, functioning to disclose myths or common views. The video extracts, on the other hand, are employed as ‘the expert voice’, providing explanations for uncertainties expressed in the interviews. Marijuana’s ban is situated within politics, as it is pointed out that laws on marijuana change over the years according to the political viewpoint. The health and legal status of marijuana are also compared to that of alcohol. In this way, a rapport between the interviews and video extracts is seemingly established through the juxtaposition of the two resources. The interviews appear to take on the role of asking questions, and the video extracts provide the answers. Where the argument starts losing its plausibility is when the interviewees’ comments are used in place of the video extracts, ‘the expert voice’. The conclusion, for example, does not wrap up with a return to the narrator, as is the common practice, but ends with one interviewee commenting that “it’s all about taxation” and another, shaking his head, saying, “it shouldn’t stand”. The audiences are to infer from this that politics is a reason for the prohibition of marijuana. Given the structure that has been established between the sourced video and the interview extracts, leaving the voice that has been presented as the non-expert to sum up the argument renders it less convincing.

### 4.3.2 Ways of establishing difference

Argument is a cultural textual form that produces difference by opening up issues for discussion (Kress 1989). I have suggested that the idea of difference presupposes that there are two entities engaging in a dialogue of disagreement. The two videos differ in the way they establish the conditions for difference. *Truths Be Told* establishes difference through ‘constitutive intertextuality’ (Fairclough 1992). *Legalisation of Marijuana* establishes difference through creating tension between the visual and the spoken mode ideationally.

Difference in *Truths Be Told* is established through paralleling the discourse structure of *KONY 2012*, but setting up a tone in opposition to it. The introduction begins with a turning globe, accompanied by the narration stating, “The world has never been more connected”. It then cuts to a collage of individuals with the shot zooming out to encapsulate more and more individuals in the frame. This is accompanied by the narration “96% of all people born in the new millennium are part of a social network”. These people, according to the narrator, are “constantly sharing, commenting and posting information online through social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook” (see Figure 4.1).

The opening sequence strongly echoes the discourse structure of *KONY 2012*. The turning globe and the collage of individuals are images abstracted from the video. The turning globe, in particular, is an introductory image from *KONY 2012*, and has been used as a front image to the video on YouTube. Those who have watched *KONY 2012* should be able to infer the reference to it from the image, especially since the narration also parallels the video. *KONY 2012* also begins with comments on the social media phenomenon – “Right now there are more people on Facebook than there were on the planet two hundred years ago. Humanity’s greatest desire is to belong and connect”. However, whereas *KONY 2012* sets up a celebratory tone, hailing the phenomenon as “changing the way the world works”, *Truths Be Told* adopts a cautionary tone – “Word of mouth is becoming world of mouth”. A technique of intertextual reference, Bazerman notes, is to employ “language and forms that seem to echo in certain ways of communicating, discussions among people, types of document” (2004:87). Fairclough uses the term ‘constitutive intertextuality’ to describe the “configuration of discourse conventions that go into [the] production [of a text]” (1992:104). Through intertextual references, the two videos are able to find a point of commonality to engage in dialogue. Difference emerges when opposing views on the point of commonality


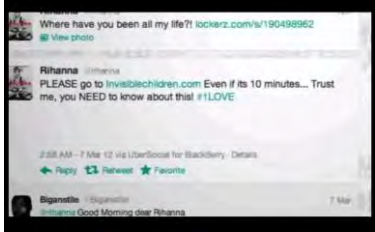
Time	Visual	Verbal	Sound
00:00:01  ↓	 Turning globe	<i>Narrator</i> [Female]: The world has never been more connected.	Soft mellow guitar in the background
00:00:05  ↓  ↓	 Zooms out Jump Cut   Zoom out	96 % of all people born in the  new millennium are part of a social network.	Soft mellow guitar in the background
00:00:10  ↓  ↓  00:00:18	 Zoom In     Zoom Out	Constantly sharing, commenting and posting information online through social media platforms such as  Twitter,  YouTube and Facebook.	Soft mellow guitar in the background       Male singer (bass tone): “today”

Figure 4.1. Establishing difference through constitutive intertextuality

are expressed. This, in many ways, echoes Andrews' (2010) account of how 'dialogism' (Bakhtin 1981) can be employed to understand how arguments are triggered. Dialogism is concerned with the interrelationship between utterances. As argumentation centres on the linking of propositions, Andrews suggests that the concept grounds argumentation too. He writes,

Usually it is the case that a state of affairs, or the particular position of someone on a particular issue, prompts a reaction on the part of the protagonist. The protagonist, or initiator of the argument, takes a position that is at odds with the original position: it might be directly opposed to the original position or tangentially different (differences of position can be anything from 1 degree to 180 degrees away from the existing point of view or state of affairs). Whether the new position or proposition is 1 degree or 180 degrees away from the status quo (or somewhere in between), a dialogue is set up between the two positions (Andrews 2010:13).

Thus, in this case, it can be said that the inference to *KONY 2012*, realised through constitutive intertextuality, establishes a dialogue between the two videos.

*Legalisation of Marijuana*, in contrast, establishes difference through creating tension between the visual and the spoken word. The video begins with a close up shot of a matchstick being lit which leads to wisps of smoke swirling on the screen. Corresponding with the action, the crisp sound of the matchstick striking against the matchbox is made salient by it being the only audio track. As the first shot in the video, it can be read as visual metaphor for 'lighting up' an argument on marijuana. The shot is then followed by a series of other shots. First, in black and white, a shot of a boy looking down, followed by a policeman standing beside a police car, and a shot of policemen cuffing a man from behind. Then, in colour, a shot of a protest event involving a crowd of marijuana smokers. Accompanying these images is the narration, "Throughout the years, the claims we have against marijuana's potential side effects have collapsed one by one. So, why is it, after decades of active campaigning, its legal status is *still* being denied?" (see Figure 4.2).

In this sequence, there is what Unsworth (2006) calls 'ideational divergence' as the contents of the visual and verbal mode clash with each other. The visual mode presents a discourse of criminality, through images of arrest and protest. The verbal mode, conversely, establishes a discourse that support is legalisation of marijuana. The opposing views expressed by the two modes present the conditions for difference. Multimodality assumes that meaning is made through a combined reading of all the modes. Hence, although engaging with different discourses, the visual and verbal mode must be read together to make a single utterance.



Bakhtin's (1981) notion of 'heteroglossia' is useful in thinking about how a single utterance can be 'double-voiced'.

Heteroglossia...serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions (Bakhtin 1981:324).

Bakhtin is speaking in relation to the novel in the above extract, but the concept can also be drawn on to think about how different modes can project the interest of different parties and thereby result in friction. In the given example, the visual mode projects the government's position while the verbal mode projects the producer's position. Since voiceover commentaries, being associated with the voice of the producer, tend to carry more weight in documentaries, the audience is encouraged to side with the position adopted by the verbal mode rather than the visual mode. In other words, although two positions are presented, the unequal weighting of the modes, as a result of conventions of the genre, results in the audience being more likely to lean more towards one side than the other.

#### **4.3.3 Rhetorical strategies for argument: rhetorical questions and analogy**

Rhetorical strategies invite engagement with argument, through linking that which is being contested in the argument to patterns of experience in the ideational world. Metaphor, pun and allusion are among some rhetorical strategies employed to assist in conceptualising the argument in the two videos. In this section, I pay particular attention to rhetorical questions and analogy as rhetorical devices.

Both *Truths Be Told* and *Legalisation of Marijuana* present their premise in the form of a rhetorical question rather than a direct statement as is more common in academic essays. A possible reason may be that a question appears less confrontational than a direct assertion, as it seemingly gives the audience space to think for themselves. Despite the impression of choice or room for thought, a rhetorical question is loaded, designed to direct the audience to a particular answer. As Brandt says, a rhetorical question is "most often argumentative, because it is a way of calling attention to an axiom of some sort, to a proposition that is so obvious, in the context, that it cannot even be argued for by the usual means" (1970:131). The use of a rhetorical question can also be seen as a strategy to arouse the audiences' curiosity, to 'hook' them, as they are then encouraged to continue watching. Documentaries, as Nichols notes, "stimulate epistophilia (a desire to know) in their audiences" (2010:41).

While rhetorical questions are not common in the essay genre, they are frequently used in television genres. Bezemer and Kress maintain that “the social potentials of different media in effect mean that the change from one medium to another brings about a change from one social context to another” (2008:183). Although the assignment requires a multimodal academic argument, it would appear that the students are aware that, in working with new genres, rhetorical strategies need to be adjusted accordingly to suit the new social context.

Analogy is another rhetorical strategy employed. An argument using analogy is created by setting a parallel between two different entities. In other words, it invites interpretation through comparison. *Truths Be Told* employs this strategy to strengthen its premise. After drawing attention to the strategies of manipulation employed in *KONY 2012*, the conclusion closes with the declaration, “The line between fact and fiction has been blurred”. The claim is juxtaposed with images extracted from the well-known Disney movie *Aladdin* (1992) (see Figure 4.3). Deception is a central theme in the movie – many of the characters make use of deception at one point or another. In particular, the main protagonist, Aladdin, is a petty thief who makes a living through theft and trickery. He can be said to be the slyest of all the characters. When trapped in the Cave of Wonders, he is able to trick the Genie into freeing him without using any of his three wishes. Later on, he is able to trick Jafar, the evil character in the narrative, into imprisoning himself in a lamp. Having identified the strategies of manipulation employed in *KONY 2012* in the main body, the reference to Aladdin at this point sets up an analogy between the two entities: Aladdin and *KONY 2012* are alike in that both of them employ trickery. In the chosen segment, Aladdin is impersonating a prince. He is presented throwing gold coins to a crowd. Everything, from his attire to the gold coins he tosses to the crowd, is fake, conjured through magic by the Genie. If Aladdin and *KONY 2012* are alike in that both make use of tricks, then, through analogy, *KONY 2012* must be a sham like Aladdin. Just as Aladdin is disguised, *KONY 2012* is disguised. The analogy extends to the crowd too. If Aladdin is comparable to *KONY 2012*, then the crowd is comparable to the audience. The inference is that, just as the crowd is blinded by Aladdin’s attire and gold, the audience is blinded by the presentation of information in *KONY 2012*. In this sense, the analogy also serves as a warning to the audience – do not be blinded by outer appearance, the presentation of information, as the crowd is blinded by Aladdin’s material goods.


Time	Visual	Verbal	Sound
00:02:27		[silence]  <i>Narrator</i> [Female]: The line between fact  and fiction  has been  blurred.	guitar stringing, building up to a climax
↓			
00:02:13			

Figure 4.3. Conjuring analogy through intertextual reference

The verbal and visual modes in this segment play an equal role in unlocking the analogy. The verbal mode offers a general statement, but one which is essential in providing direction in which to interpret the visual meaning. That is, to interpret the visual segment from the viewpoint of deception. The visual mode unlocks the analogy through intertextual reference to a movie. As such, it channels the verbal meaning to be understood in light of a specific situation. Fairclough uses the term ‘manifest intertextuality’ to describe the “heterogenous constitution of texts out of specific other texts” (1992:85). According to Fairclough, “[i]n manifest intertextuality, other texts are explicitly presented in the text under analysis; they are ‘manifestly’ marked or cued by features on the surface of the text, such as quotation marks” (1992:104). This may be the case with writing, but in this instance, as with many assemblages of visual and audio texts in the digital age, there are no cues signalling a ‘direct quotation’. Recognition of the intertextual reference depends wholly on the audience’s exposure to

popular culture. As Adami maintains, in the age of copy-and-paste, “a rhetoric of the implicit shapes the politics of communication in elitist terms, assigning meaning-makers the responsibility of communicative success/failure while discharging sign-makers from obligations of being clear, cohesive, coherent and explicit” (2012:131). The producers’ use of *Aladdin* in this instance echoes Williams’ (forthcoming) findings that, among student composers, there is the assumption that conventions and contexts from popular culture can be relied on as shared references among their audiences/peers.

In sum, the student-produced videos present two ways of organising argument: linear and dialectic. Argument is realised in *Truths Be Told* through a linear progression, moving from the statement of position in the introduction to providing evidence for the position stated in the main body to a restatement of the position in the conclusion. In *Legalisation of Marijuana*, the argument is realised in a dialectical approach as interviews, which offer questions on marijuana, are juxtaposed with sourced video extracts, which offer answers for the questions asked. Two ways of establishing difference are also presented. Difference is established in *Truths Be Told* through constitutive intertextuality. In *Legalisation of Marijuana*, difference is established through ‘ideational divergence’ (Unsworth 2006), as the content of the visual mode clashes with the content of the spoken mode. The two rhetorical strategies examined in this chapter are the rhetorical question and analogy. The use of a rhetorical question to present the premise seemingly provides the audience with agency, as they are encouraged to reflect upon the issue at stake through the questions. It also reflects the conventions of the genre.

#### **4.4 Interpersonal resources for establishing social interactions in video**

A multimodal social semiotic approach to argument assumes that argument takes place in the social. To assume argument as a social activity is to accept that it always occurs in relation to others, that there is always a “*me with others*” (Kress 2010:51). Considerations must then be given to the audience, and to how the producers construct themselves in relation to the audience. This section investigates how *Truths Be Told* and *Legalisation of Marijuana* make contact with and position the audience, how authority and credibility on the subject matter is established, and how the audience is moved to commit to the argument through particular emotional appeals.

#### 4.4.1 Establishing social relations in demand and offer arguments

The distance we establish from people in our everyday interactions indexes the type of social relation we have with them (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). In both *Truths Be Told* and *Legalisation of Marijuana*, the distance established can be characterised as ‘social’. This distance is projected through the use of a moderately loud voice, spoken in an even, measured manner. The speech pattern is one that is characteristic of documentaries. The use of formal register also positions the audience at a social distance. Despite both positioning their audience at a social distance, the two videos differ in how they make contact with the audience in this proximity.

*Truths Be Told* is a demand argument. Its primary purpose is to call upon the audience to take action, and to be responsible in how they share information on social media. Greater steps are thus taken to establish an affinity with the audience. For example, there is frequent use of the collectives “we” and “our”, in order to evoke a sense of solidarity with the audience – “How has the presentation of information through social media affected our perception of the truth”, “the onus is on us”, “we have to be responsible” and “we have to remove our blindfolds”. In binding the audience to the producer, it makes it easier for the producer to impart their quest onto the audience.

Besides language, images are also employed to establish affinity. Archer (2013) maintains that a closer social distance can be established by using images that the target audience are acquainted with. *Truths Be Told* is a response to a specific prompt – *KONY 2012*. Its target audience is university students, young adults like the producers themselves, who have watched *KONY 2012*. Intertextual references to images from the video (the turning globe and various images drawn on as evidence in the main body) create an environment of familiarity, as do references to well-known faces, such as George Bush and Bill Clinton (see Figure 4.8), and intertextual references to popular culture resources such as Disney’s *Aladdin*. A sign-maker’s choice of semiotic resources can foster conditions that lead to a favourable uptake of information (Archer 2013). As the audience can relate to the people and social situations on the screen, using such resources can encourage a positive reception of the argument.

A noteworthy aspect of *Truths Be Told* is the addition of an interview segment and a pictorial meme in the credits section. The interviews and meme are resources that the students had wanted to include in the main section of the video but were unable to do so because they did

not ‘fit’ the flow of the argument. Because work had been put into recording the interviews and searching the memes, the students felt a need to display them. To mitigate the tension between their interest in displaying their work and their interest in displaying a compact argument, the students made the decision to include these resources in the credits section. The effect is that it renders the credit section more akin to a ‘behind the scenes’ segment, which is quite common for this kind of genre. Accordingly, a more informal or personal proximity is established in this section. In the credits section, the tone is made lighter with the sarcastic acknowledgement “And, of course, to every social media platform for an abundance of badly conducted interviews, terribly misinformed new articles and a myriad of tweets, shares, posts, comments and memes”. The adjectives “abundance”, “badly”, “terribly” and “myriad” disclose the producers’ partiality and, in doing so, project a personal proximity, as the audience is provided insight into the producers’ views on social media. In the interview segment, despite not being seen on screen, the interviewer’s presence is made evident through her voice as she poses questions to the interviewees, and through the interviewees as they direct their gaze at a space off screen. The interviewer’s position, off screen but close to the camera, establishes an intimate proximity, urging the audience to identify with the interviewer. The alternation of low and high angles, and of medium and close-up shots to capture the various interviewees also evokes a sense of casualness and realism.

A pictorial meme of Jason Russell, the director and narrator of *KONY 2012*, further solidifies the informality. Donned in an iconic red Kony t-shirt, Jason Russell is depicted in the centre of the image. Superimposed on the top and bottom of the picture are the words “SOCIAL AWARENESS” and “OF MY PENIS”, respectively. The meme’s origin in popular culture is suggested in the crude phrasing and the bold white font in which it is written. These signifiers are not only signs for ‘coolness’, but also an indicator of everyday speech (see Figure 4.4). Given that the video is an academic assignment, the choice of the meme may seem inappropriate. However, it can be argued that the meme was included with the target audience in mind. Young adults are likely to identify with the style and language of the meme. This suggests that the producers were composing for an audience beyond the assessor.

The meaning of the text is constructed through intertextual references. The meme is employed as a “direct quotation” (Adami 2012) in the video – it has been extracted from the Internet as is. The meme itself, however, is a ‘remix’, and can be considered as an “indirect quotation” (Adami 2012), that is, a (mis)citation, where the original material has been

transformed. The image is the original text. Its meaning in its original context is changed or transformed by the writing superimposed over it. The new transformed text has a dual function: it serves both to mock *KONY 2012*, and acts as a reference to a social event concerning its director. In slang, the phrase ‘of my ass’ is used to convey disbelief or contempt for something. In this instance, ‘ass’ has been substituted for ‘penis’ for a specific reason. *KONY 2012*’s viral status resulted in it being the subject of much media scrutiny and criticism. Purportedly as a result of the stress caused by the scrutiny, the director had a mental breakdown and was detained by police for allegedly masturbating in public. The mention of ‘penis’ alludes to this event. Besides this, it can also be seen as a reference to phallic notions of self-promotion. Either way, the effect is that it undermines the serious tone of *KONY 2012*, ridiculing the video and its goals. Positioned at the top, ‘social awareness’ is the ‘Ideal’ message (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006) – the message intended by the original image. Positioned at the bottom, ‘of my penis’ is the ‘Real’ (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006) – the ‘reality’ of the situation.



Figure 4.4. Establishing affinity through the use of memes

To summarise, the contact that *Truths Be Told* makes with its audience is one of demand – it calls upon its viewers to be responsible in how they share information on social media. Two social relations are realised in the video. In the main body, a social proximity enables the argument to be presented in a ‘polite’ and ‘semi-formal’ manner. This distance shows respect for the audience. A more personal proximity established in the credits section closes the distance, allowing the producers to form a friendlier, more intimate relation with the audience. The distance changes the audience from acquaintances to peers.

In contrast to *Truths Be Told*, *Legalisation of Marijuana* is an offer argument. It sets out to persuade the audience by offering information. The producers position themselves *addressing* the audience, rather than aligning *with* the audience. For example, as seen in Figure 4.5, the

interviewer’s physical presence is made present on screen as she positions herself next to the interviewee. The sequence is edited so that the interviewer’s remarks follow on to clarify and elaborate the interviewee’s comment. The interviewer situates herself in a frontal position, talking *to* the camera, clearly addressing the audience. This places the audience at an arm’s length, a social distance, from the producers. What is interesting about this sequence is that the offer of information does not come from the narrator or from the interviewee, but from the interviewer. It is the norm in documentaries for the interviewer to ask questions, not offer information. It can be argued that the interviewer’s interjection in this instance presents a subject attitude that lowers the modality of the argument being communicated.

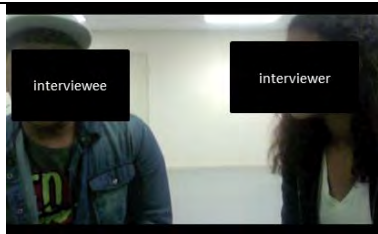
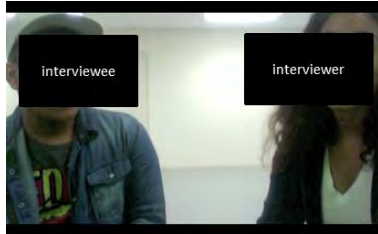


Time	Visual	Verbal	Sound
00:01:33		<i>Interviewee</i> [male]: Um, they conducted a study, and, on monkeys.	Soft guitar and vocal soundtrack
	cut		
↓		<i>Interviewer</i> [female]: What they didn’t tell you, they’d actually put	
		a mask, a gas mask on the monkey, and they’d suffocated them.	
↓		When when they don’t have oxygen, the first thing that dies is your brain cells.	
00:01:46			

Figure 4.5. The interviewer ‘offering’ information to the audience

Besides the physical distance exhibited, there are other factors that also play a role in the creation of an arm’s length distance. For example, the unclear grainy texture of the images, the low colour differentiation, the greyish hue that was probably brought about by the low camera quality, and the occasional unclear articulation of words, all obstruct the audience

from easily receiving the information and following the argument. The uninviting environment for consuming the visual content results in a more distant social proximity.

To conclude, both of the videos examined position their audience within a social distance but they engage with their audiences differently within this proximity. To call upon the audience to respond to the demand being put across in *Truths Be Told*, more attempts are made to establish an affinity with the audience. The audience is positioned more as peers.

*Legalisation of Marijuana*, in contrast, is an offer argument. In offering information to the audience, it sets up a power dynamic between those who are giving the information and those who are receiving the information, that is, those who are addressing and those who are being addressed. In other words, it sets up a relation between those who know and those who do not. Demand and offer arguments in this way position the audience differently. The next two sections proceed to examine how authority and credibility are established in the two videos.

#### **4.4.2 Ethos: establishing authority and credibility in video**

Ethos centres on the persona of the rhetor. It is concerned with how the rhetor projects an authorial and credible self. The degree of authority the rhetor expresses on a subject can be critical in convincing the audience of the rhetor's certainty about that subject. *Truths Be Told* projects an assertive attitude through a number of resources. Verbally, a sense of certainty in the subject matter is conveyed through the modal verb 'had to' – "Within 6 days, [*KONY 2012*] had reached 100 million views. In order to achieve this, the video had to be made in a certain way". The modal verb expresses force and conveys that the video, *KONY 2012*, is manipulative. The same modal verb is used to project a sense of obligation in taking action – "we have to be responsible" and "we have to remove our blindfold". This gives the impression that there is no other way. Aurally, the clear articulation and steady pacing of the narration presents a sense of candidness which projects confidence. Visually, high colour saturation and differentiation of the images convey a sense of commitment and definitiveness. The use of black as a background on to which other images are laid also projects a sense of formality and seriousness. When the black background is combined with white writing, it bestows a sense of authority on the written words. Modality is contingent to specific domains (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). Documentaries foreground actuality thus a 'natural' colour scheme is traditionally valued. Although the colour schemes convey an assertive attitude, it can be argued that the high colour saturation and differentiation presents a filmic quality that lowers the modality.

Compared to *Truths Be Told*, *Legalisation of Marijuana* projects a less assertive attitude. Despite the confident attitude expressed verbally through attitude markers (“Why is it after decades of active campaigning, its legal status is still being denied?”) and modal verbs (“Why can’t anyone see past the controversial reputation that the drug possesses?”), and aurally through stresses in intonation (“Marijuana is believed to slow down mental faculties”), these resources are overshadowed by the unassertive attitude expressed by other resources. For example, visually, the grainy texture and greyish hue of the images present a ‘newsreel’ quality, which traditionally possesses high modality in documentaries. The overt haziness of the images conveys a lack of certainty. As the haziness hinders clear vision, this can be considered as ‘visual hedging’. Poor editing also contributes to the expression of an unassertive attitude. There are some images in the video that appear to be a result of unclean cuts, rather than intentional inclusion. For example, as seen in Figure 4.2, the shot of the striking of the matchstick is followed by a shot of a boy looking down, then a shot of a policeman standing beside a police car. The shot of the policeman is appropriate as it introduces the complex relationship between marijuana and the law. However, the shot of the boy looking down appears to be unrelated to the argument, and can only be explained as a result of an unclean cut or editing of images. Poor editing, in this way, lowers the assertiveness of an argument.

Besides the poor image quality and editing, the voiceover narration also projects a lack of authority. Documentary voiceovers are commonly referred to as ‘voice-of-God’ or ‘voice-of-authority’ commentary (Nichols 2010:74). The reference to ‘God’ and ‘authority’ points to the significance of the voiceover as a resource for establishing authority. According to Nichols (2010), the agent for this ‘He-Who-Knows’ role has traditionally been masculine. This is the key reason why the producers of *Legalisation of Marijuana* had opted not to narrate the video themselves. Feeling that their voice did not sound ‘authoritative enough’, they sourced a male’s voice for the narration. Nonetheless, when the narrator stumbles over words, this projects hesitancy. The durational variation and degree of fluctuation in the speech also affects perceptions of authority. To project an authoritative voice, documentary narrators usually narrate in a steady voice with measured rhymes – as in *Truth be Told*. These qualities signify ‘non-emotional’ and are characteristic of ‘serious’ and ‘formal’ contexts (van Leeuwen 1999:173,175). The narrator in *Legalisation of Marijuana*, however, occasionally stretches the duration of the words – “it is compleetly naturaal” – and mixes in

a degree of fluctuation that is more characteristic of informal speech. The lack of seriousness tends to lower the modality of the argument.

To summarise, it would appear that image quality plays a critical in projecting authority. A more assertive attitude is conveyed in *Truth be Told* as a result of a better image quality, while the poorer image quality in *Legalisation of Marijuana* projected a less assertive attitude. This points to how camera quality or medium as the technology of production can affect the authority of an argument. Linked to authority is credibility. Next, I examine how credibility can be established through citation.

Credibility is concerned with gaining the audience's trust. Both *Truths Be Told* and *Legalisation of Marijuana* make use of citation as a means of establishing credibility. Citation in academic writing has the function acknowledging the original source "by naming its author and showcasing that author as expert" as well as "supplying credibility to an author within a particular field of study" (Hess 2006: 284–285). In student writing, however, Johnson-Eilola and Selber (2007) assert that plagiarism arises from a culture of evaluation that views citation as a marker of value. They observe that "teachers still often expect their students to produce what are considered to be thoroughly 'original' texts – texts that make a clear distinction between invented and borrowed work, between that which is unique and that which is derivative or supportive" (2007:375–376). This kind of assessment value sets up a hierarchy where the cited text is valued less than the 'original' text. Johnson-Eilola and Selber suggest that plagiarism occurs "[b]ecause students still recognize the primary value placed on original text, they sometime hide their borrowings and appropriation" (2007:380). They advocate for a culture of evaluation that values 'remix' or 'assemblage' – "text built primarily and explicitly from existing texts" – as a text-making practice (Johnson-Eilola & Selber 2007:381). They reason,

If a piece of the assemblage is valued primarily for its function rather than its place in a hierarchy, students are no longer pushed so hard to hide the citations of their sources. In fact, if skills at making assemblages are made the focal point, then teachers would want to put great value on the ability of students to find exiting chunks of text they can reuse (Johnson-Eilola & Selber 2007:400).

*Truths Be Told* and *Legalisation of Marijuana* present two approaches to remixing or assembling. The manner in which the texts are assembled affects the perceived value of the argument constructed. In reinterpreting and dialogically engaging with the cited sources, *Truths Be Told* produces an argument that is 'original'. *Legalisation of Marijuana*, on the

other hand, by employing large chunks of texts as direct quotations, results in the argument coming across as a ‘derivative’, or an imitation, of the source argument.

The use of sources in *Truths Be Told* is akin to constructing argument in a written academic essay. Credibility is established through the use of statistics, screen captures of actual data, appeals to authority and written citation. The citation occurs through the visual, verbal and written mode. Statistical claims such as “Within 6 days, it had reached 100 million views” are employed to appeal to the logos, giving the impression that the assertions made are factual. In the given example (see Figure 4.6), the claim is accompanied by a bar graph. The bar graph illustrates the claim through a comparison of other viral videos, such as ‘Susan Boyle: Britain’s Got Talent’ and ‘Lady Gaga: Bad romance’, which took nine and 18 days respectively to reach the target views. In this sense, it extends the claim by providing more detailed and specific information. Importantly, a logo next to the graph indicating the origin of the source presents the information as valid and trustworthy. The bar graph is likely to have been extracted as is from the source, rather than reconfigured. As such, it can be seen as evidence to support the claim. The logo is the visual marker of the citation.

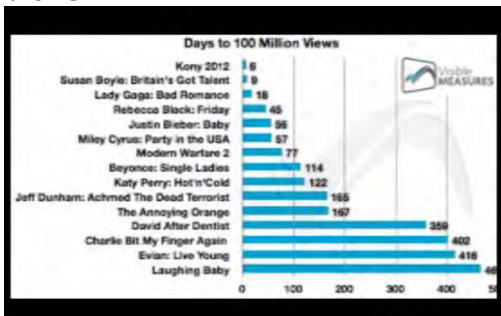
Time	Visual	Verbal	Sound
00:00:42  ↓  00:00:49	Zoom In to top ‘Days to 100 Million Views’ 	<i>Narrator</i> [Female]: Within 6 days, it had reached 100 million views.	Music soundtrack

Figure 4.6. Graph functioning as evidence and extension of verbal claim



Figure 4.7. Citing image clips with writing superimposed

Screen captures of actual data (Twitter tweets, YouTube videos, Facebook posts, Internet articles) are also visual citations that offer a sense of authenticity and function as evidence for the hype surrounding *KONY 2012*. With the exception of internet articles, the other sourced texts – Twitter tweets, YouTube videos, Facebook posts – all have recognisable generic features that allow the target audience to recognise the texts’ origin. From this perspective, the generic features are the visual markers of the citation. The integration of sources here involves ‘manifest intertextuality’ (Fairclough 1992). The sourced texts are used as is, and manifestly marked by visual features on the text. The topic of framing cited text is discussed further in Section 4.5.2. Legitimacy is also provided to the analysis of *KONY 2012* through an appeal to Noam Chomsky’s authority as a media critic and scholar, by verbally citing the framework as “Noam Chomsky’s model of media manipulation”. It is necessary to note that Noam Chomsky himself did not propose such a model, but internet sources have accredited the work to him. Many of the students turned to internet sources in their research for this assignment. Some of the information is more appropriate or accurate than others. In this respect, the educator’s role in raising awareness of source types, and determining whether sources are reliable or not, emerges as critical. Written citation, by means of superimposing the phrase “Footage taken from the original Kony 2012 video” in red over the video extracts further conveys a sense of integrity and professionalism, as this is a practice that can be observed on news media (see Figure 4.7).

The use of sources in each of these instances involves a degree of reinterpretation. In most cases, the images are the sourced text, employed as direct quotations, and functioning as evidence to support the verbal claims. The verbal claims, in restating or elucidating the sources are moulded to suit the context of the argument. From this perspective, there is a degree of reinterpretation or engagement with the sourced text. The reinterpretation and engagement with the sourced text allows *Truths Be Told* to put forward an argument that is ‘original’.

Compared to *Truths Be Told*, *Legalisation of Marijuana* makes less use of sourced texts since it is predominately composed of raw interview footages. However, when it does use sourced texts, these are drawn on in large chunks. *Legalisation of Marijuana* appropriates a significant amount of video extracts from *The Union* to build its argument. Although *The Union* is cited in the credits section, the clips themselves are not visually or verbally marked as distinct within the video. Of course, this is fairly common in remix culture. However, in

this case, the lack of attribution has the effect of lowering the credibility of the argument. The purpose of drawing on *The Union* is to appropriate its status as an authoritative and reliable source. It has the function of both ‘the expert voice’ and ‘evidence’. Nevertheless, since both *Legalisation of Marijuana* and *The Union* are narrated through male voices and the graphics in both videos are characterised by a greyish hue, without attribution it is easy to mistake the one video for the other. Short of any visual or aural marker, the appropriation of status can be lost to the audience. Furthermore, the sourced text is drawn on in large chunks and inserted as is – there is no reinterpretation that takes place, for example, through voiceovers. The argument, from this perspective, emerges as a ‘derivative’ or an imitation of *The Union*. Many scholars argue that remixing is not plagiarising since it involves the appropriation of text in order to create new meanings (Hess 2006; Knobel & Lankshear 2008; Lessig 2008; Williams forthcoming). However, when a text is intentionally sourced, yet something ‘new’ is not done with it and there is a blurring of boundaries between sourced texts and produced texts, it runs the risk of appearing more as plagiarism than citation.

In effect, both videos involve cutting and pasting from other sources – *Truths Be Told* more so than *Legalisation of Marijuana*. However, whereas there is one part citation (usually through the visual mode) and one part interpretation (usually through the verbal mode) in the former, in the latter, the sourced text is inserted raw, whole and unprocessed. By reinterpreting and engaging with the sourced texts, *Truths Be Told* uses the sources in a manner that renders the argument ‘original’. In contrast, *Legalisation of Marijuana* employs large chunks of sourced texts as direct quotations, and relies on much of these texts to construct its argument. This results in the argument coming across as a ‘derivative’.

#### **4.4.4 Pathos: appropriating emotions**

Lunsford *et al.* (2007:49) argue that argument is about discovering a truth that leads to conviction whereas persuasion is about knowing a truth that leads to action. According to them, there is a significant difference between the two. As they write,

Your readers may agree that contributing to charity is a noble act, but that conviction may not be enough to persuade them to part with their spare change. You need a spur sharper than logic, and that’s when emotion might kick in (Lunsford *et al.* 2007:50).

*Truths Be Told* sustains its argument by appealing to fear, while *Legalisation of Marijuana* responds to counter-arguments with ridicule.

*Truths Be Told* appeals to the audience’s fear of not knowing, or fear of being blinded by forces larger than themselves. 36 seconds into the introduction, doubt is cast upon the reliability of social media content with the question, “But do you *really* know who you are listening to?” (see Figure 4.8). The question is provocative, and creates doubt in the minds of the audience with regard to the information they encounter. Accompanying the narration is a well-known shot of George H. W. Bush presenting a speech before the U.S. congress. The phrase “A New World Order!” is superimposed at the bottom of the image. In politics, the term ‘new world order’ is linked to notions of global governance. It is also used in relation to conspiracy theories, to describe a secret force that is conspiring to create a totalitarian one-world government. Its use here implies that social media content can be used as propaganda, somehow conspiring to keep the masses misinformed. The shot is followed by a series of profile pictures of well-known world leaders, such as the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon; former United States Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice; and current United States Secretary of States, John Kerry. These images are employed to suggest that even sources that are taken to be reliable are questionable. The images and narration cue the audience to be wary of *KONY 2012*.

Time	Visual	Verbal	Sound
00:00:36		[pause]	Male singer (bass tone): “and I”
↓	Tracking from left to right		
		[Female Narrator]: But do you <i>really</i> know	Soft mellow guitar in the background
↓	Tracking from right to left		
00:00:40		who you are listening to?	

Figure 4.8. Appropriating emotions through intertextual referencing

The shot of George Bush (first image of Figure 4.8) is often used in popular culture to represent situations involving conspiracy. Appropriating this image allows *Truths Be Told* to appropriate feelings associated with its uses. A quick search of the image through Google Images finds it matching a video published on YouTube in 2010, titled *The Illuminati & Dajjal*. In this video, the United States is presented as the Dajjal, “an oppressor to those who do not follow him” (*The Illuminati & Dajjal* 2010: 05:41). According to the video, the Dajjal acts as “a false messiah”, tricking the masses into followings a “false religion” where “that which resembles paradise will, in fact, be hell, and that which resembles hell will, in fact, be paradise” (06:38). The intertextual reference, in this context, allows the image to take on another, more ominous, layer of meaning, as an analogy is set up between the politicians and the Dajjal, and between social media content and the Dajjal doctrine.





Time	Visual	Verbal	Sound
00:04:22		<i>Interviewer:</i> Alcohol causes more deaths, alcohol is a drug also	Laugh track
↓		<i>Interviewee:</i> Yeah, it's a drug, but it's different. Alcohol is not, is not more addictive...than, than weed	
↓		<i>Interviewer:</i> Alcohol is addictive,	
00:04:35		<i>Interviewee:</i> Cause, I think with alcohol you can stop at any stage	

Figure 4.9. Appropriating sound to evoke ridicule

Whereas *Truths Be Told* appropriates emotions of fear, *Legalisation of Marijuana* stirs emotions through ridicule. *Legalisation of Marijuana* is one of the few student products in this seminar that presented an oppositional view. The opposition comes from an interviewee who appears to argue that marijuana makes one violent and is addictive. Although both issues are dealt with at a later stage, through the extracted videos from *The Union*, at the time of responding, the producers ridicule the interviewee's comments. For example, when the interviewee remarks that marijuana makes one feel "a mix of power" (suggesting violence) the response is interjected with an animated image of a muscular figure emerging to form a superhero-like figure. The animated image brings in comic relief, but at the same time makes light of the interviewee's comment. Following the image, the interviewer interjects, challenging the interviewee's claim with the questions, "Do you smoke? Do you have proof of that?" The questions are meant to discredit the interviewee, implying that his claims lack the grounding that is needed to warrant attention. However, it can be argued that the opposite effect occurs, since the questions disclose the interviewer's subjectivity, and present her as defensive. Figure 4.9 presents another example in which ridicule is employed.

In Figure 4.9, the interviewer can be heard attempting to convince the interviewee that alcohol is more lethal than marijuana. The interviewee responds by saying that "alcohol is not more addictive", reasoning "cause, I think with alcohol you can stop at any stage". To this, the producers respond with a laugh track accompanied by a shot of a monkey shaking its head, then another of a monkey dressed in a tuxedo, pulling its face and swinging its arms. The laugh track is an appropriation of sound from the sitcom genre. Its use here encourages the audience to react as one would in sitcoms when laugh tracks are employed – to laugh along. The images accentuate the ridicule by responding to the interviewee's argument with actions from a monkey, implying that his intelligence is on par with animals. In this way, the interviewee's argument is brushed off as foolish, and not worth considering. The next section examines the resources for constructing coherence.

#### **4.5 Compositional resources for establishing coherence in video**

Argument, as a cultural textual form for producing difference, is realised through textual organisation. Academic argument is about the organisation of parts into a logical or quasi-logical sequence of ideas, supported by evidence. Compositional resources are central to structuring parts of an argument into a coherent manner. This section examines resources

employed to frame the larger structure of the argument as well as devices in framing sourced texts.

#### **4.5.1 Framing devices: voice, music and editing devices**

*Truths Be Told* realises its argument in a more or less linear progression, with each of the sections (introduction, body and conclusion) clearly marked out by framing devices, such as the spoken voice, music and editing. Each of the sections, for example, is marked by a different voice (female, male, and female, respectively). The three narrators correspond with the three producers of the video. Although this is an unconventional approach, and runs the risk of disorienting the audience, in this instance the configuration (beginning and ending with a female voice) prompts the audience to connect the question raised in the introduction (“How has the presentation of information through social media affected our perception of the truth?”) with the claim in the conclusion (“The line between fact and fiction has been blurred”). The spoken voice, as such, not only functions as a framing device, but also a linking device.

Like the spoken voice, each of the sections is also characterised by a different music soundtrack, creating a different ambience in each section. The soft mellow drumming of the guitar in the introduction presents a laid back atmosphere, easing the audience into the topic. A change to percussion instruments (overlaid with singing) in the main body increases the pace and instils a sense of urgency. The audiences are cued for the main points of the argument (the restatement of the premise, and the call for action in the conclusion) by a climax point, which is indexed by an increase in volume before the main points are uttered. This is also the case when the soundtrack builds to a climax leading to the producers’ final remarks in the conclusion. The rhythmic strumming of the guitar in the conclusion retains the sense of urgency but, void of a singer, it allows the audience to focus more on the message being delivered. In this way, music functions as a framing device, a resource to appeal to emotion, and an index marker of climax points.

Yet another framing device employed is editing. In film, editing techniques, such as wipes, fades and dissolves, are generally used at scene changes, and can therefore be considered section dividers of the video form. *Truths Be Told* draws on one or two of these resources to indicate section breaks. For example, as seen in Figure 4.10, an iris wipe is employed to signal the end of the introduction. An iris wipe is a wipe where the image boundary is in the

shape of an iris. In this case, the shot onto which the transition transposes is an image of a globe. The use of the iris wipe at this point is particularly apt as the transition graphically echoes the shapes it transposes onto. The globe is a reoccurring image in *Truths Be Told* and is symbolic of *KONY 2012*. The iris wipe can be seen as echoing the globe theme. As such, it not only has a framing function, but also a rhetorical one. Bordwell and Thompson (2013) identify editing as being able to affect mood, sense of time and space.



Time	Visual	Verbal	Sound
00:00:42	 <p>Iris wipe</p>	<p><i>Narrator</i> [Female]:</p> <p>How has the presentation of information through social media</p> <p>affected our perception</p>	<p>bass voice: 'and I do, why'</p>
↓		<p>of the truth?</p>	
00:00:40			

Figure 4.10. An iris wipe as a framing device (*Truths Be Told* 2012)

Other framing devices include sound and location. *Legalisation of Marijuana* realises its argument in a dialectical manner with the juxtaposition of narration and interviews. The sections are distinguished by a change in location, participants and sound. The narrative segments, for example, are marked out by non-diegetic sound, that is, sound not from the site of location. These include the voiceover commentary and music soundtrack. The interviews are marked out by the location (the university campus), the interview participants, and diegetic sound (sound from the location), which include the interviewees' unrehearsed speech and ambient sound (background noise).

This section has looked at devices employed to mark larger sections of the video. The framing devices here can be seen as working on the level of spaces or paragraphs, indicating sections of text. Smaller framing devices, however, are also necessary to mark one image from another. The next section explores the framing of sourced texts.

#### **4.5.2 Visual citation: framing sourced texts**

In writing, a distinction between words written by the author and words sourced is usually indicated through quotation marks. This resource is not available, or is not a common practice in video; therefore citing images with writing superimposed over them, as demonstrated in *Truths Be Told*, emerges as central in distinguishing between images produced and images sourced. The display of a logo or generic features of a source from popular culture, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube interfaces, can also be indicators of quotation marks, as previously discussed.

Although *Legalisation of Marijuana* does not visually indicate the sources it draws upon as direct quotations, within the drawn video extracts themselves, that is, the video produced by *The Union*, quotations of a visual source are indicated by a frame. For example, when discussing the history of marijuana, the accompanying images are displayed through a television screen (see Figure 4.11). The screen acts as a framing device, akin to quotation marks, suggesting that the images are sourced. The presentation of the images in black and white (grey) further implies that they are archival evidence. The manner in which the video cites the article that it bases its claims on is also worth noting. The article is cited through a visual display of the source, where both the title and date of publication are visible. Words quoted are highlighted in yellow, and the page number is also indicated. The citation communicates not just the contents of the article, the conceptual ideas, but the font, image and layout that are displayed through the visual citation also offer a glimpse into the social practices of the period. This approach to citation allows the audience to view the text as a material product. Citing written artefacts in this manner appears to be a common practice in video. Elsewhere, for example, in the documentary *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media* (1992), the source is also cited in a similar fashion (see Figure 4.12).





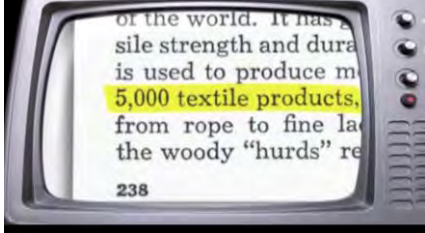
Time	Visual	Verbal	Sound
00:01:47		<i>Narrator [male]:</i> When looking at the history of marijuana,	Music track: light guitar
↓		which is also known as cannabis, is how very much legal it once was.	
↓		Popular Mechanics magazine had actually prepared an article	
		entitled 'New Billion Dollar Crop'.	
		Hemp was touted as being able to produce more than 5 000 textile products from its thread-like fibre	Change in music track: piano

Figure 4.11. A television frame acting as quotation marks (*The Union*, cited in *Legalisation of Marijuana 2012*)

As seen in Figure 4.12, Noam Chomsky is discussing how the title of his book, ‘Manufacturing consent’ came about and he says, “Well, the title is actually borrowed from a book by Walter Lippmann written back in 1921”. Upon mention of the book and the author, the book, as a material product, and a profile image of the author are shown visually. Besides an actual view of what the book looks like, the visual display of the book also offers the title of the book. The profile image of the author allows the audience to attach a face to the name.

Then, as Chomsky goes on to mention selected phrases from the book, the particular words mentioned are highlighted from passages in the book. Colour differentiation, in this way, marks out the phrases which Chomsky cites. The examples presented here illustrate that, citation through the visual mode enables one to sense the material quality of the sourced text through visual display.

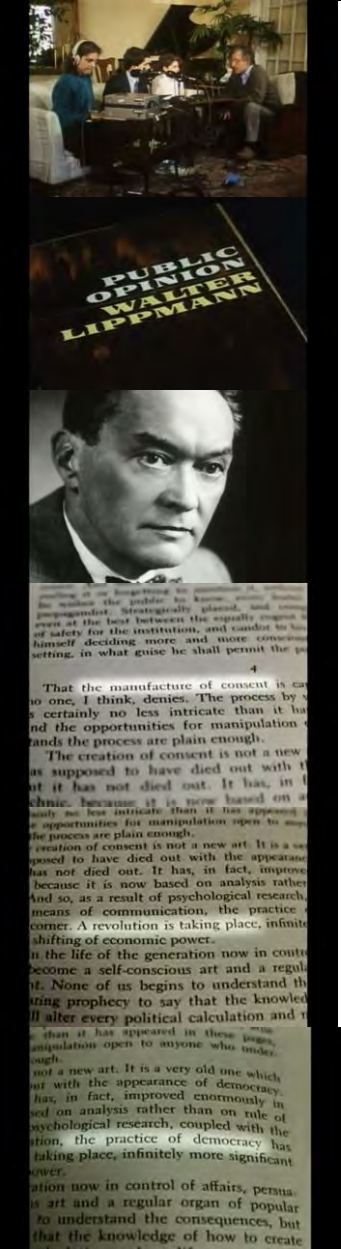
Time	Visual	Verbal	Sound
00:23:47  ↓  ↓  00:24:01		<p><i>Male speaker</i> (Chomsky): Well, the title is actually borrowed from a book</p> <p>by Walter Lippmann,</p> <p>written back in 1921,</p> <p>in which he described what he called the manufacture of consent as</p> <p>a revolution in the</p> <p>practice of democracy.</p>	(voiceover)

Figure 4.12. Citing written extracts through colour differentiation

#### **4.6 Concluding comments**

This chapter has explored how students construct multimodal academic argument in video. It emerges that ideationally, the composition of a multimodal argument is not that different from a verbal argument. Producing an argument through video still involves a linear principle. Ideas are communicated through a logical or quasi-logical sequence supported by evidence. The various modes available for composition, however, allow for different aspects of the argument to be realised through different modes. For instance, a claim or proposition can be communicated through verbal narration, while the accompanying images can offer evidence to support the claim. This chapter has also explored how constitutive intertextuality and ideational divergence between two modes can establish difference in argument. In addition, it has discussed how image and voice quality can affect ethos in video. Assemblage surfaces as a composition principle in the two videos. This composition principle urges students to make new meanings from existing resources. The videos analysed in this chapter show how students are able to engage with existing resources in interesting ways. Through intertextual references, the students played with establishing visual analogies, and with appropriating credibility and emotions from popular cultural resources. Assemblage as a composition principle points towards a cultural practice that values remixing.

## Chapter 5. Ways of Constructing Academic Argument in Comics

### 5.1 Overview of chapter

This chapter examines how students construct multimodal academic arguments in comics. Drawing on two student-produced comics, it identifies the semiotic resources drawn upon, and the manner in which they are employed to construct academic argument. The aim is to better understand the affordances of the genre for producing academic argument and how the resources of the genre can offer different ways of thinking about academic argument. The chapter begins with an account of the conditions surrounding the making of the comics, identifying the social event, the prompt and the difficulties the students encountered. It then explores the ideational, interpersonal and compositional resources employed by the students to construct academic argument. The chapter demonstrates how using different genres to conceive academic argument can prompt reconsideration of what constitutes an academic argument. It also touches on issues with copyright.

### 5.2. Background: social event, prompt and the production process of the comics

Comics are not a genre commonly used in academics, but they have the potential to be engaged in interesting ways for constructing argument as demonstrated by Scott McCloud (*Understanding Comics* 1994), Won-Bok Rhie (*Korea Unmasked* 2002) and Art Spiegelman (*Maus* 1991). Comics typically employ a combination of words, images, frames and layout to make meaning. As images in sequence that function to “narrate a story or dramatize an idea” (Eisner 1985:5), comics are governed both by the logic of space and the logic of time. Images and words within a single frame are spatially arranged, and the single frames are sequentially and spatially laid out on a page. Meaning-making in comics requires spatially arranging resources in a temporal sequence. The two student-produced comics examined, *ACTA-NSTEIN* and *Kony 2012*, are based on an assignment that required students to produce an argument offering an analysis of a current issue.

*ACTA-NSTEIN* is a response to the ‘Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement’ (ACTA). At the time of the assignment, in early 2012, internet piracy and censorship were widely talked about topics in Media Studies and on social network platforms. This was a result of protests against the ‘Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement’ (ACTA) in Europe, organised service blackouts on sites such as Wikipedia and Google in objection to the ‘Stop Online Piracy Act’ (SOPA) bill in the United States, and the shutdown of the popular file hosting service,

Megaupload Ltd., on account of copyright infringement. These social events prompted the students who produced *ACTA-NSTEIN* to be concerned with the “the effect of governmental and organisational policies regarding internet censorship, and their tumultuous effect on us as consumers of media” (Synopsis). In their synopsis, the students expressed an interest in examining both ACTA and SOPA. The scope was later narrowed down, and the final product, *ACTA-NSTEIN*, deals only with ACTA. ACTA is an intellectual property enforcement agreement created to counter the trade of illegal counterfeit goods across borders. The multinational treaty aims to establish international standards for prosecuting intellectual property right violations. The producers of *ACTA-NSTEIN* argue that “the problem...with trying to place controls on the internet is that it includes such a vast and intangible realm of networks, encompassing billions of people across the world, all of whom use the internet for various reasons that cannot simply be classified into sections of violations or sanctions” (Synopsis). This prompted them to respond with a comic that demonstrates how the treaty can affect individuals in an everyday situation.

The comic *Kony 2012*, like the video *Truths Be Told* from the previous chapter, is a response to the short-film *KONY 2012* by Invisible Children. Whereas *Truths Be Told* responded to the event by scrutinising the techniques of persuasion employed, the comic investigates the effectiveness of social media campaigning. It argues that supporting a cause on social media is futile as it leads to minimum or no practical effect. In what follows, the chapter will outline some conceptual and practical difficulties the two groups encountered in producing the comics.

### **5.2.1. Difficulties encountered in conceptualising argument in comics**

For the students who made *ACTA-NSTEIN*, Amina, Tom and Ibrahim, by far the trickiest part of the task was how to produce an academic argument in the form of a comic. They saw two paradoxes in this task. Firstly, there appeared to be a misfit between the genre and the discourse they were asked to engage with. Comics are generally characterised by humour while academic discourse tends to be serious. Thus, as Ibrahim laments, “the idea of making an academic argument did not seem functional in our [genre] of choice”. It was brought to the students’ attention that, although comics tend to feature humour, the subject matter and the discourse employed need not be comical. For example, Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* (2003) concerns the experiences of a holocaust survivor; Scott McCloud’s series of non-fiction comic books *Understanding Comics* (1994), *Reinventing Comics* (2000) and *Making Comics*

(2006) offer an understanding of comic book culture; and Won-Bok Rhie's *Korea Unmasked* (2002) uncovers the inner workings of Korean culture and society through comparison to other Asian countries such as China and Japan. Rather than jokes, where the comic effect comes from whimsical punch lines, humour in comics typically arises from rhetorical strategies, such as verbal and non-verbal puns, parody, allusion and intertextual references (Kaindl 2004:174). The students were presented with examples of some of these works in their readings. Thus, although difficult, they acknowledged that it is 'not impossible'. As Amina writes,

...I do not think it is impossible to have an "academically" structured comic exist together with forms of fictional creativity. I also do not think that this "academically" structure[d] text has to lose its value if placed within this form.

Drawing back on the main feature of the course – multimodality – I think this term is encouraging us to explore creative avenues within the academic world. I think that whilst our ideas for our comic might be within the frame of a generalised notion of what a comic is (funny, light-hearted, read for recreational purposes, etc.), we just need to anchor ourselves back into the academic sphere and figure out a way to completing this challenge (Amina's individual journal).

Secondly, the students had difficulty in conceiving academic argument in narrative form. As Tom writes in his journal, "the idea of a narrative as a means to express a[n] academic issue was also a problem that took a while to work around". When the students presented their draft in the form of a script, their narrative presented an implicit argument where an understanding of the argument required inner knowledge of the social event. Although creative, it failed to meet the guidelines of the assignment, which stipulated that the social event needed to be analysed, and the significance of the subject matter defined and supported with evidence. The students were asked to consider how they could reconstruct their narrative so that it was more in line with the requirements of the assignment. This presented the students with a dilemma as they saw a narrative as involving fictional creation, but argument and evidence as factual. For them, there seemed to be a clash in having to bring in factual information or 'evidence' into a narrative form. As Tom writes, "Making something in the form of a comic that has academic evidence or backing proved to be hard". In the end, they mitigated the tension between their interest to meet the requirements of the assignment and their interest to present their argument through a fictional narrative by juxtaposing narrative with exposition. In Ibrahim's words,

...eventually we managed to create something along the lines of a comic argument through a narrative, that was explained through three scenes that are separated by a narrator. The comic

represented the light-hearted aspect and the use of the narrator and character allowed us to express the seriousness of our topic through comic (Ibrahim's individual journal).

The case presented here illustrates how 'interest' (Kress 2010) is a composite of both internal and external factors, having both subjective and social orientations. Bringing in exposition by means of a first person narrator was, for the students, a means of lowering the risk of not meeting the assessment criteria, the social factors. Thesen describes risk as "an analytical space of bringing into focus the tilting point between self and other, where the other refers to ideas, beliefs, spaces, relationship, audiences and forms" (2013:15). In my view, risk taking is essentially about appeasing the self rather than the other. If the aim was not to satisfy individual desires and interests, the 'safe' route would be taken whereby the norms of the social are adhered to. From this perspective, high levels of risk taking can be seen as tilting the point of interest towards the self (the individual), and low levels of risk taking as tilting the point of interest towards the other (the social).

In retrospect, at the root of the paradoxes that the students experienced may have been the use of the term 'academic' to describe the type of argument that was expected. The term is in essence an 'orientation' sign (Kress 2010), to remind the students of the social environment or the domain for which the argument is being produced. There are various possibilities for producing a multimodal argument in comics, but not all will be recognised or valued within academic culture. In Higher Education, the 'academic argument' is valorised. This is the form of argument that is accepted and recognised as showing the 'signs of learning' (Kress & Selander 2012). In the *Composing in a Digital Age* seminar, drawing from Andrews (2010), an academic argument is presented as a logical or quasi-logical set of ideas that is supported by evidence. In addition, as with most undergraduate assignments in the humanities, citation is emphasised. Citation is a key indicator of academic discourse. Citing sources not only offers the rhetor a means of achieving credibility and authority, but it is also a means of showcasing accountability by indicating the origin of the sources and the research undertaken. In class, ways of citing in video, comics and PowerPoint were explored. For example, with comics, a student had proposed that the author of a work cited could be presented 'visiting the comic', entering at particular points to deliver a quote. The use of the term 'academic' was intended to remind the students of the following two features: 1) the argument must be logical (claims made have to be supported with evidence), and 2) signs of background research must be made evident through citation/referencing. For the students,

however, it would appear that, at times, what they associated with being academic clashed with what they associated with comics.

For Amina, Tom and Ibrahim, the term ‘academic’ connotes seriousness. This clashed with a key characteristic of comics – humour. The idea of ‘evidence’ was also problematic. The students associated evidence with factual information. In exposition, the idea of evidence is easy to factor in, but in narrative, a form which the students associated with fiction and creativity, the concept became complicated. German philosopher Martin Heidegger posits that, “we moderns can learn only if we always unlearn at the same time” (1993:374). These words have resonance in this case, as it seemed that in order for the students to push the boundaries of what is possible, it was necessary for them to shed some learned assumptions about comics and academic argument.

### **5.2.2 Legal concerns**

Mia and Kelvin, the students who produced *Kony 2012* the comic, indicated less of a struggle in conceiving academic argument in comics compared to the previous group. Instead, the difficulties they encountered involved more practical matters, such as time management and potential copyright infringements. As Kelvin notes, “[Mia] and I both agree that the final stages of the project have been the most gruelling in terms of putting the comic together changing the photos on Photoshop so that we don’t infringe on the copyright laws” (Individual Journal). A limitation with the program Comic Life is that it only works with digital images. It cannot build images from scratch. This means that to create a comic using the program, the students either have to hand-draw their image, scan it, and upload it as an image file, or work with existing digital images. This limitation is the reason why the students who produced *ACTA-NSTEIN* opted to work on another program. The images in *ACTA-NSTEIN* are digitally assembled. In Mia and Kelvin’s case, they worked with Comic Life using available digital images. Where possible, the students were encouraged to use open-source images such as those provided by Creative Commons. If, for some reason, they could not or chose not to, they were encouraged to modify the images, since copyright laws, as Johnson-Eilola & Selber (2007) point out, only protect surface-level expressions of a text. As a means of eluding copyright regulations, Mia and Kelvin modified their images using Photoshop.

In projects such as this, where students are encouraged to experiment with various resources and modes, there are legal concerns, particularly as copyright become more regulated. The written mode or words can be protected against intellectual property right violations through citation, but the same cannot be done for music and images in terms of copyright regulations. Music and images are commodities in the age of corporate globalisation. Technically, usage of these resources requires payment. A number of scholars have raised concerns about how copyright regulations restrict creative activity and cultural production (Haupt 2008; Lessig 2004, 2008; McLeod 2005). In *Stealing empire: P2P, intellectual property and hip-hop subversion*, Haupt (2008) considers the possibilities for agency in this environment. Two approaches can be identified. One approach is to adopt a counter-culture standard, and attain resources through peer-to-peer (P2P) platforms, such as Napster. The other approach is to adopt an open standard approach, and attain resources through open-content licensing platforms, such as the Creative Commons. Culture jamming, sampling and mashups are examples of the counter-culture approach. The former approach, which allows students to, in Haupt's terms, 'steal the empire', raises the possibility of legal ramifications. In the latter approach, there are limitations in terms of the types of resources that are available through open-content licensing platforms. It also places restrictions on intertextual play with mainstream texts. In the seminar, the issue of copyright was brought to the students' attention and they were encouraged to use open-content resources, however, they were not penalised for not doing so.

Before moving onto the analysis, it is worth noting that many of the students who worked on comics saw this as the least likely genre they would have considered experimenting with. Mia, for example, writes

... it must be said that I would have never ventured into comic drawing without this multimodal project and I am glad to say that it has helped in developing not only my problem solving skills but has also challenged my creativity and made me balance academics and alternative modes of presentation (Mia's Individual Journal).

Mia's journal entry also suggests that, possibly because of the uncommonness of comics in academia, working with the genre has encouraged her to push the boundaries or reconsider meaning-making in this domain. The next section examines the comics produced.

### **5.3 Ideational resources for reflecting on argument in comics**

Both *ACTA-NSTEIN* and *Kony 2012* can be seen as conceptual arguments that draw on elements of narrative. This section investigates ways of embedding narrative into a

conceptual argument, ways of establishing difference in an argument, and rhetorical strategies that can be employed to construct argument in comics.

### **5.3.1 Ways of embedding narrative in a conceptual argument: horizontal versus vertical**

Julia Kristeva (1986) uses the terms ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ to describe dimensions of intertextuality. According to Kristeva, in a horizontal dimension of intertextuality “the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee”, while in a vertical dimension of intertextuality “the word in the text is oriented towards an anterior or synchronic literary corpus” (Kristeva 1986:36–37). In other words, the horizontal dimension involves dialogue between that which is before and after in a chain of utterances within a text, while the vertical dimension involves dialogue between a text and other texts. These concepts are drawn on to characterise the two approaches to embedding narrative in the conceptual arguments explored here.

The argument in *ACTA-NSTEIN* is realised through a juxtaposition of exposition and narrative. The exposition is predominately communicated through the verbal mode, and the narrative through the visual mode. Page one of the comic (see Figure 5.1) begins with the title of the comic, ‘ACTA-NSTEIN’, positioned at the top of the page. The title is a play on the word ‘Frankenstein’. In popular culture, the term is often used to refer to the grotesque creature created by eccentric scientist, Victor Frankenstein, in Mary Shelly’s novel *Frankenstein*. The intertextual reference through the play on the name sets up an analogy between ACTA and the Frankenstein monster. The tag line that follows – “The threatening rise of a censorship monster – nobody is safe!” – elucidates the threat of the monster and, in doing so, explicates the comic’s position in relation to the treaty. In this sense, the tagline can be seen as the statement of position. Following the title and tagline, the reader is introduced to the narrator, ‘Freedom F. Speech’. Dressed in a green shirt with a black tie and glasses, Freedom F. Speech tells the reader that he is there “to tell [us] about internet censorship and the ways ACTA will affect each and every one of [us]...through a short colourful story”. The word ‘short’ connotes simplification, and ‘colourful’ connotes fun. The phrasing of the sentence suggests that the comic is not weighty or dull, despite tackling a serious issue. The tone is that of an educational comic. Freedom F. Speech subsequently becomes the voice of the exposition, appearing in between narrative segments to offer information on ACTA, such as the what and why of the treaty, and arguments against it. The last words of the comic also

come from that of the character. The comic concludes with him calling upon the audience to “make a difference” by participating in protest activities.

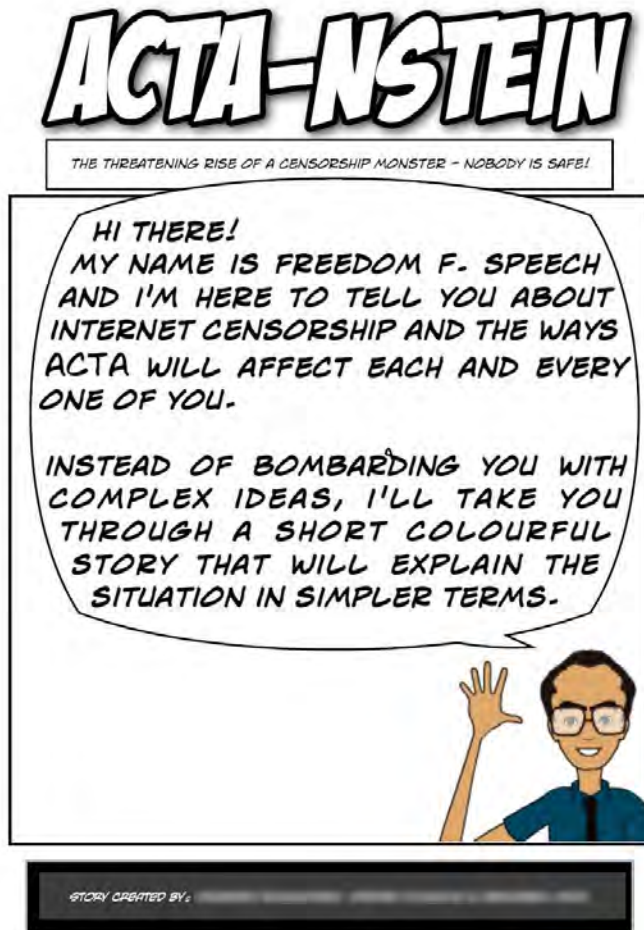


Figure 5.1. Exposition relayed through ‘Freedom F. Speech’

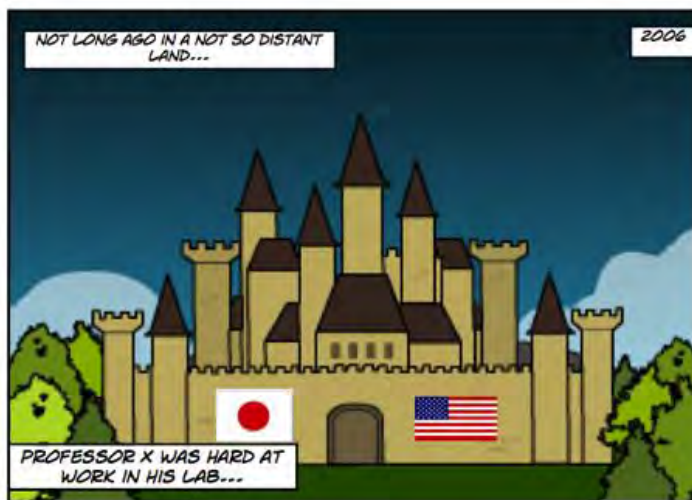


Figure 5.2. Establishing shot

The narrative extends the claim that nobody is safe from the censorship monster, Acta-nstein, by providing an imagined scenario in which the monster appears to arrest a student performing the most mundane task, searching online for information for an assignment. It has the function of anecdotal evidence. Since ACTA has not been passed into law yet, there is no real situation in which someone has been prosecuted. The use of a fictional anecdote to back up the claim therefore seems appropriate in this case. The narrative is made up of four segments. Each segment is separated by the appearance of Freedom F. Speech to offer information about ACTA. The first segment establishes the setting, orienting the audience as to the who, when, what and where of the narrative. Set in 2006, the monster, Acta-nstein, is created in a castle in a “not so distant land”. Its creator, Professor X, instructs it to “ACTA out” his purpose, to “put a stop to the ‘copy and paste’ nonsense”. Minute details become key to divulging information. For example, in the establishing shot, two flags hanging outside of the castle, one of Japan and one of the United States, signify the countries involved in initiating the treaty (see Figure 5.2). The second segment depicts Acta-nstein acting out his purpose as intended, capturing a character in the act of selling pirated goods. The third segment sees the equilibrium disturbed, as the narrative is complicated by Acta-nstein’s failure to distinguish between ‘piracy’ and ‘censorship’. He apprehends a student searching for information to complete a film review assignment online. The last segment concludes with protesters gathered outside of Professor X’s castle, calling for Acta-nstein to be destroyed “before it destroys us”.

The two parts, the exposition and the narrative can, in fact, stand independent of one another. Placed together though, they complement each other, the one part extending the other. For example, the narrative ends with protesters calling for the destruction of Acta-nstein. Following this, Freedom F. Speech appears to offer advice on how the reader can take action to prevent the treaty from becoming law. In this way, the exposition draws conceptual ideas from the narrative for use in the world of the real, actualising the call for action. With the two components placed side-by-side, the one following the other, the positioning or layout of the exposition and narrative can be described as ‘horizontal’. In this structure, each component takes a turn to make a point. The one component builds onto the other.

*Kony 2012* the comic also draws on elements of narrative to convey its argument. Rather than a narrative consisting of a story with a beginning, middle and end structure, the elements of narrative here are better described as ‘anecdotal’, that is, stories of isolated incidents. There

are a number of anecdotes in this comic. The placement of these anecdotes in relation to the conceptual ideas can be described as ‘vertical’. Instead of a horizontal juxtaposition, as in the case of *ACTA-NSTEIN*, the placement here involves a vertical overlapping, with the anecdotes embedded or carried by the conceptual ideas. The comic begins with the launch of *KONY 2012* on YouTube. Through screen captures of the video on YouTube, and comments on Facebook, it offers an idea of the number of viewers the video has attracted, and the reactions to it in the days that follow. The comic pronounces, “1 click was all it took to join the movement”. Yet despite the hype around the video, and the number of people joining the campaign online, the comic argues that this had little practical effect – Joseph Kony is not arrested, and the support online does not materialise into physical presence at the *Cover the Night* event, an event in which supporters were to put up *Kony 2012* posters in particular locations. The comic concludes – “Clicking is making an easy promise: Making a difference in the world requires more than sitting behind a computer”. The statement of position is only overtly pronounced at the end of the comic.

The anecdotes in *Kony 2012* are predominately realised through the visual component of the comic, while the verbal component realises the conceptual ideas. The anecdotes help accentuate the verbal claims made. For example, accompanying the conceptual idea, “Kony gets on with his daily routine”, a tongue-in-cheek anecdote is presented of him pondering his plans for the day (see Figure 5.3). The anecdote turns the concept into a scenario, but one that presents a different meaning to the conceptual component. According to Kress, “(Complex) signs and ensembles of signs are read conjointly so that the contradictions which inevitably exist in such ensembles produce the reader with the means of making sense of any one sign and of the sign-complex overall” (2010:74). The two disparate meanings of the two components in no way render the message incoherent, but rather produce sardonic humour through the irony that emerges from reading the components as a whole. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the two components are not of equal importance. Embedded in the conceptual component, the anecdote is not key to establishing the argument, but accentuates the claim by offering a different way of seeing the situation. As such, the relation between the two can be described as ‘vertical’. In a vertical structure, it can be difficult to differentiate fact from fiction, since there is no clear boundary between the fictional anecdotes and the conceptual ideas. From this perspective, this structure is perhaps more suitable for readers who are already familiar with the social event.



Figure 5.3. Vertical placement of narrative

In sum, *ACTA-NSTEIN* and *Kony 2012* present two ways in which narrative can be embedded in a conceptual argument. The argument in *ACTA-NSTEIN* is realised through a juxtaposition of exposition and narrative. I have described the positioning of the narrative in relation to the exposition as ‘horizontal’. In this structure, the narrative extends the conceptual ideas, expanding the meaning. The argument in *Kony 2012* is realised through an overlapping of conceptual and narrative elements. The narrative elements offer a different perspective on the situation, or a different way of understanding the conceptual ideas. I have used the term ‘vertical’ to describe this kind of structure and suggested that it is better suited for readers with inside knowledge of the social event. For audiences who are able to understand the argument, this type of structure creates the sense of ‘being an insider’. In *ACTA-NSTEIN*, the narrative functions as evidence. In *Kony 2012*, the function of the anecdotes is primarily rhetorical. The next section examines how difference is realised in order to create argument.

### 5.3.2 Ways of establishing difference in argument

Difference is the state or point of dissimilarity. It is a key ingredient of argument – the substance that is needed to establish tension. *ACTA-NSTEIN*, like *Legalisation of Marijuana* from the previous chapter, establishes difference through ‘ideational divergence’ (Unsworth 2006). In this case, however, the clashing of ideas or content occurs within the same mode and utterance. The opening segment of the exposition (Figure 5.1) begins with the character voice introducing himself and the purpose for the comic. He says, “Hi there! My name is Freedom F. Speech and I’m here to tell you about Internet censorship and the ways ACTA will affect each and every one of you”. In this utterance, two concepts are at odds with each

other and, incidentally, both concepts are embodied by fictional characters. In the exposition, freedom of speech is embodied by the character voice, Freedom F. Speech. In the narrative, internet censorship is embodied by the censorship monster, Acta-nstein. The two characters never cross paths, but their existence creates tension between the exposition and the narrative.

In *Kony 2012*, difference is established through juxtaposition. Figure 5.4 illustrates a case where two images of contrasting nature are juxtaposed, one placed on top of the other, to create tension. The top image presents a medium up shot of about five to six children smiling and waving at the camera in an African village. Superimposed over the image in an orange frame are the words “Just another normal day in Uganda”. The bottom image presents a long shot of a mass gathering in a city. Superimposed over this image, again in an orange frame, are the words, “While protests ensued in central park!!” Difference is relayed through the clash in ideational content: few people versus many people, village (Uganda) versus city (Central Park in the United States), ‘normal’ versus ‘protests’. The written mode in both cases plays the role of ‘anchorage’ (Barthes 1977), ascribing specific meanings to the location and action. The juxtaposition draws out the argument that the *KONY 2012* movement has had minimal practical effect. Andrews (2010) describes this approach to establishing difference as ‘argument by contiguity’. This idea of difference through juxtaposition can also be extended to rhetorical strategies that create incongruity, such as irony, satire and parody. In the previous section, as seen in Figure 5.3, the different take on what it means to ‘get on with one’s daily routine’ creates tension between the anecdote and the conceptual component. It is this difference in meaning that results in the tongue-in-cheek humour. This notion of difference through incongruity is explored further in the next section on satire/irony as a rhetorical strategy.



Figure 5.4. Establishing difference through juxtaposition

### 5.3.3 Rhetorical strategies for argument: personification and satire/irony

Rhetorical strategies create the conditions for argument to be linked to patterns of experience in the ideational world. Two rhetorical strategies that will be focused on in *ACTA-NSTEIN* and *Kony 2012* are the use of personification and satire/irony respectively. In *ACTA-NSTEIN*, both the narrator, Freedom F. Speech, and the monster, Acta-stein, are abstract concepts or entities that have been attributed human characteristics through personification. As the personification of the ideal ‘freedom of speech’, Freedom F. Speech’s role as the narrator is given authority and credibility as he embodies all that is identified with the concept – choice, democracy and autonomy. Considered as positive attributes in the West, these qualities paint a picture of a narrator who is just and informative. In personifying ACTA, the threat of the treaty is made imminent. That is, personified as Acta-nstein, ACTA is no longer a concept on paper, but a monster that can physically apprehend offenders of the treaty. The use of personification as a rhetorical strategy elevates the concepts beyond ideologies, turning them into beings to whom the readers can relate.

Having the narrator materialise as a personified concept is a common feature in the student-produced comics. For example, in another student-produced comic, concerning rhino poaching, the narrator appears as a personification of a rhino. There has been a tendency to associate the narrator or main protagonist with the author in traditional literary criticism practice. Barthes, however, famously denounced this tradition in the seminal essay *The Death of the Author* (1977). According to Barthes, the reading of a text in relation to the author is flawed, considering that a “text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture” (1977:145). In other words, for Barthes, the author is ‘dead’ on account of intertextuality. This idea of the death of the author is exemplified with the personification of an animal or concept as the narrator. In *ACTA-NSTEIN*, Freedom F. Speech’s physical presence foregrounds him as a fictional character, separate from the author.

In *Agency and the Death of the Author: A Partial Defense of Modernism*, Trimbur makes a case for keeping “a version of the author alive and kicking” (2000:295). He notes that, in compositions studies, the notion of agency has come to fill the vacancy left by the death of the author. Agency, from a social semiotic perspective, is associated with choice. It can be seen as rhetorically motivated action that involves the selection and shaping of resources according to the sign-maker’s interest (Kress & Selander 2012). Despite the individual consciousness involved, it is recognised that “at each stage the social enters in the guise of

the interests of the sign-makers” (Kress & Selander 2012:267). In other words, a social semiotic approach to agency recognises that individual interests are grounded in the conditions of the social, influenced or shaped by social factors. Given the underlying role of the social in text-production, Trimbur argues that “the notion of the author is necessary and useful because it describes a way to resist the forms of conformity that threaten agency” (2000:286). He contends that “[i]n late capitalist society, the author still figures as a key site of self-defense within market relations, a self-formed position of struggle to control the conditions and products of work” (Trimbur 2000:296). Following Walter Benjamin, he posits that rather than doing away with “individualistic ideologies of the author and [taking] up a ‘social view’ of writing. The task... is to *socialize* the author as producer” (italics in original, Trimbur 2000:296). The idea of the author as producer puts into perspective the work of the social and, at the same time, acknowledges the work of the individual. This view of the author places ideas such as interest, agency and design more in harmony with the social.

Whereas *ACTA-NSTEIN* makes use of personification as a rhetorical device, *Kony 2012* employs humour to assist in the uptake of the argument. Lunsford *et al.* liken the use of humour in argument as “the sugar that makes the medicine go down” (2007:56). According to them, humour can be used to deal with sensitive or controversial issues. It can allow readers to be more open to a proposal by putting them at ease as well as help in the suspension of judgements and prejudices. However, humour can sometimes promote laughter over reflection (Lunsford *et al.* 2007:56–57). Satire and irony are rhetorical strategies employed to produce humour in *Kony 2012*.

Satire persuades the audience to reject the attitudes, values or behaviours of a particular subject through ridicule, and is commonly associated with social criticism (Wilson 1979). As a strategy for social critique, it is fundamentally concerned with judgement. As Test writes, satire “asserts that some person, group, or attitude is not what it should be” (1991:5). Figure 5.5 demonstrates an example of how satire is used to critique the effectiveness of social media campaigning, through an anecdote involving Joseph Kony and another international war criminal, Thomas Lubanga. The anecdote is told across two pages. The first page begins with Lubanga engaged in a conversation with Kony via a social media platform. The site of the conversation, Facebook, is suggested by the generic features of the platform, realised through the colour (namely, the blue header, with the green dot next to Lubanga’s name indicating his online status) and the layout (the profile image on the right and the writing on

**Thomas Lubanga**

**THE WORD SPREAD SO FAR THAT PANIC ENSUED ON SOCIAL NETWORKS.....**

Duuude you're being properly hated on, how did that happen?  
You've been inactive 6 years bro, I'm still working and I don't get nuthin'. So unfair.

I know right? They've even got a day named after me, they're gonna cover cubes with my face. pretty awesome. I'm not gonna lie...

Yeah yeah... But seriously bro, how did you do it and how can I get there?

Dude think about it, at least you don't have 100 American soldiers looking for you in the forest...

Good point... Sorry bro, don't think I would actually want to be you right now... Hang on, there's someone at the door...

**LITTLE DID LUBANGA KNOW.....**

**SUNDAY SHINE**

**THE NEWS YOU CAN COUNT ON**

**WORLD EXCLUSIVES**

**THOMAS LUBANGA ARRESTED**

**Thomas Lubanga**  
Has been terrorizing the Democratic Republic of Congo by kidnapping

Customs have been asked about the Kony 2012 video indeed, some wonder whether its release and its success may have pushed the ICJ to act where they could, since Kony has been



**AND THE CHASE AFTER KONY ENDS...**

Figure 5.5. Satire as a rhetorical strategy

the left). Lubanga initiates the conversation, asking Kony how he has come to be “properly hated”, despite being inactive for 6 years. Lubanga whines, “I’m still working and I don’t get nuthin’. So unfair”. The implication is that fame, even if it is disreputable, is a desirable state. Kony, in response, acknowledges that it is “pretty awesome”, but points out, “at least you don’t have 100 American soldiers looking for you in the forest”. Lubanga concedes and shortly thereafter the conversation is brought to a standstill by someone at his door. In the next frame that follows, news of Lubanga’s arrest is made known through the front page of a newspaper, ‘Sunday Shine’. This news is critical to establishing the satire in the situation.

The second page of the anecdote presents Jason Russell and Thomas Lubanga’s reactions to the arrest. In a frame with a diagonal line separating the two actors, Russell is depicted crying out, “NOOOOOO!” “It’s the wrong guy!” Lubanga, on the other hand, is shown with the sarcastic remark, “You think?! Millions of views for Kony and it’s me they come after?!” It is necessary to note that the image chosen to represent Russell at this point, Russell with a placid expression, stands in contrast to the verbal response and the type of balloon used to capture the response. In comics, the frame of a speech bubble is critical to establishing the volume and quality of voice. The jagged lines of Russell’s speech bubble in this instance connote ‘scream’. The disparity between the visual and the verbal components may possibly be that the students were not able to find an expression of Russell suitable to match the situation. This points towards a limitation of working with sourced images.

A common feature of satire is irony. Irony typically involves “discrepancy between mental representations and state of affairs” (Kreuz & Roberts 1993:98). The irony that emerges from the described anecdote is twofold. Firstly, there is the objective of the *KONY 2012* movement. The aim of the campaign is to make Joseph Kony ‘famous’ so that he can be arrested through the intervention of world leaders. The anecdote illustrates, however, that it is Lubanga who is apprehended as a result of the campaign rather than Kony. The irony in this situation arises from the difference in the aim and the result. Secondly, there is Lubanga who, at the onset of the conversation, sought fame. By making the front page of the newspaper, he achieves fame, but at the cost of his freedom. The irony in this case emerges from the discrepancy between the fame Lubanga envisaged and the fame he received. According to Kreuz and Roberts, “[i]n satire, the multiple representations are constructed only when the audience goes beyond the narrative and considers issues external to the story” (1993:101). The anecdote can be considered a satire of social media activism when the shortcomings

identified with the *KONY 2012* campaign are seen as an extension of the shortcomings of social media campaigning. In this sense, it can be argued that the use of satire as a rhetorical strategy requires more work from the audience to get to the implied meaning. The contradictions that arise from the anecdote make a mockery of the effectiveness of social media campaigning and, at the same time, produce a wry sense of humour. We see from this example how irony, and, by extension, satire, is realised through the juxtaposition of incongruous elements that play off against each other. Difference is therefore inevitable. From this perspective, rhetorical devices that involve incongruity can be considered as techniques for establishing difference.

Before concluding the section, it is worth noting the risk involved when employing rhetorical strategies that involve incongruity, such as satire, irony, sarcasm and parody. In describing irony, Fowler maintains that it “postulates a double audience, consisting of one party that hearing shall hear & shall not understand, & another party that, when more is meant than meets the ear, is aware both of that more and of the outsiders’ incomprehension” (2009:295). The idea of the ‘double audience’ can probably be extended to the rhetorical strategies of satire, parody and sarcasm, since they share the characteristic of incongruity. The implication is that, when employing such rhetorical devices, there is the risk of side-lining some audiences. Lagerwerf (2007), for example, observes how advertisements containing irony or sarcasm are at risk of being misunderstood, and even publicly denounced, if the audience fails to pick up on the intended message. Yet, interestingly, rhetorical strategies that involve incongruity feature frequently in student productions (see Buckingham 2003; Rogers & Winters 2010; Williams forthcoming). There may be a number of reasons for this.

Buckingham, for example, notes that parody presents students with “a sanctioned space for play, in which it becomes possible to speak the unspeakable, to flirt with what may be clearly recognised as politically incorrect” (2003:165). Irrespective of the reasons, what this points to is a tendency or preference for a rhetoric of the implicit. The implication, from an assessment point of view, is that it puts more pressure on the marker/teacher to understand the text. Since resources from popular culture are often drawn on in student texts, this can be problematic when there are gaps in this area of knowledge. Inadvertently, this places the students at risk if their work is not understood.

In sum, this section has explored personification and satire/irony as rhetorical strategies. The use of personification in *ACTA-NSTEIN* provides a form for abstract concepts, transforming

them into characters to whom the audience can relate. Although the personification of the narrator makes evident the disconnect between the author and the narrator, I have argued that the two entities are not entirely disassociated in the sense that the narrator embodies the author's interest. My view is that from a social semiotic perspective, it is important to acknowledge authorial agency, given ideas such as interest, design and agency. I have suggested that Trimbur's (2000) notion of the author as producer is in harmony with these concepts, and with ideas of the social that grounds social semiotics. Satire was another rhetorical strategy explored. *Kony 2012* employs satire to critique the effectiveness of social media activism in a humourous, sardonic manner. I have proposed that the use of satire requires more work from the audience to construct the meaning and encourages an implicit rhetoric. I have suggested that this can be problematic from an assessment point of view, if the teacher fails to recognise the argument.

#### **5.4 Interpersonal resources for establishing social interactions in comics**

This section investigates the semiotic resources employed to construct interpersonal relations in *ACTA-NSTEIN* and *Kony 2012*. It begins with an exploration of the semiotic resources employed to position and make contact with the audience, paying particular attention to the role of the narrator. Next, it considers how layout, colour and shape, among other resources, are employed to establish authority and credibility. The section ends with a look at the emotional appeals employed to persuade the audience to buy into the argument.

##### **5.4.1 Utilising distance in 'demand' and 'offer' arguments**

*ACTA-NSTEIN* positions its audience in a closer social relation than *Kony 2012*, possibly because it is a demand argument while *Kony 2012* is an offer argument. The distance established in *ACTA-NSTEIN* can be characterised as 'far personal'. This is a distance where "subjects of personal interests and involvements are discussed" (Hall 1966 cited in Kress & van Leeuwen 2006:124). Visible from the chest upwards, Freedom F. Speech's position places the audience at an arms'-length, within touching distance. In the opening passage (Figure 5.1), with his palm held high, a smile on his face and eyes looking directly at the audience, Freedom F. Speech's gesture, facial expression and gaze also signal a close visual connection with the audience. This personal proximity is reflected verbally through the narrator's address, in his use of the first person singular 'I' when talking about himself, and second person 'you' when addressing the audience. The personal distance established urges the audience to align with the aims of the comic, to take up on the call for action.

*ACTA-NSTEIN* is a demand argument. It calls upon the audience to “make a difference” in the bureaucratic control of information on the internet by engaging in various ACTA protest activities (see Figure 5.6). The verbal declaration “Make a difference... I’m doing my part” sets the narrator as an example and personalises the call to action. That is, the narrator is presented as someone who acts on his words, rather than someone who simply preaches. This call for action is visually signalled by a hand holding a petition paper in the air. To persuade the audience to align with its call for action, attempts are made to connect to the audience, and to transfer the comics’ concerns onto the audience. Verbally, this is done by reminding the audience how the issue at stake concerns them too. For example, the comic begins with Freedom F. Speech saying that the purpose of his presence is to inform the audience of how “ACTA will affect each and every one of you”. The implication is that the comic has been created for the sake of the audience. In the narrative, linking phrases, such as “Meanwhile in a city not so different to yours” and “Later that day in a suburb not so different to yours”, remind the audience of how the narrative event can manifest in their own lifeworlds. The comic’s target audience are the producers’ peers and classmates, university students like themselves. Visually, props such as a computer, a homework assignment involving a film review, webpages such as the Google search page, and even the warning sign signalling the breach of internet activity create an environment with which the audience can identify (see Figure 5.7).

Whereas *ACTA-NSTEIN* calls upon the audience to act, *Kony 2012* offers advice. *Kony 2012* is an offer argument. It seeks to inform the audience of social media activism, using the *KONY 2012* campaign as an example. The argument constructed in the comic culminates in the claim, “Clicking is making an easy promise: making a difference in the world requires more than sitting behind a computer”, and the advice “Want to stop Kony? Act!” In accordance with the contact, the comic establishes a ‘social’ distance, that is, a distance reserved for impersonal affairs. In this case, frames, font and punctuation are critical in establishing the distance. In comics, frames that box in words signify the voice of the omniscient narrator. As the voice of the omniscient narrator, the orange frames that capture the conceptual components in *Kony 2012* present an impersonal distance. When the frames are juxtaposed with the casual font (Comic Sans) and colloquial use of punctuation (double exclamation marks!!, double questions marks??, and ellipses...), the formality is minimalised and a distance that is better described as ‘social’ is established. The more detached, social distance complements the satirical tone of the comic.



Figure 5.6. Demand: calling upon the audience to take action



Figure 5.7. Establishing affinity through props

In sum, *ACTA-NSTEIN* positions its audience at a personal distance while *Kony 2012* positions its audience at a social distance. Different semiotic resources are employed to construct the different social relations. In *ACTA-NSTEIN*, Freedom F. Speech's visual proximity and interaction with the audience through the gaze, gesture, and verbal address position the audience at a personal distance. The personal distance established encourages the audience to align with its call for action. *Kony 2012*, in contrast, constructs a social distance through the use of frames, font and punctuation. As a piece of social commentary that offers information on social media activism, it can be said that the social distance established is apt for the occasion.

#### **5.4.2 Ethos: establishing authority and credibility in comics**

In order to convince the audience to accept an argument, the rhetor needs to demonstrate that s/he is qualified to speak about the subject matter. In *ACTA-NSTEIN*, the personification of 'freedom of speech' not only elevates the concept beyond a belief, but it also lends the narrator a sense of authority, given that this is a concept that audiences from democratic cultures will accept and respect. Personified as the narrator leading the argument, the audience is urged to accept the authority and truthfulness of Freedom F. Speech's claims. The use of black-and-white to capture his speech further strengthens the credibility of the figure. This is bolstered by the sense of transparency that is conveyed through the clear white background panels that frame the represented elements. The layout of his speech also projects a sense of authority. Listing is an organisational structure that constructs a sense of hierarchy. The use of bullet points to explicate a point gives the impression that the claims made are solid and systematic (see Figure 5.8). It presents the impression that the argument is based on reason. Trimbur and Press, in a forthcoming chapter on modality, posit that fact-construction is "never a matter...of the words on the page saying what they mean", but rather that through a combination of semiotic resources that "readers *learned to believe* were autonomous and authoritative representations of reality" that allow certain claims to appear impartial, objective and authoritative. The layout here is one which readers have learned to trust through the likes of educational textbooks.

Projecting an assertive attitude is not enough to persuade the audience to accept an argument. The rhetor also needs to build a sense of trust. *ACTA-NSTEIN* establishes credibility through visual signifiers and, conceptually, through acknowledging the counter-argument. The personification of freedom of speech as the narrator in *ACTA-NSTEIN* means that the

producers need to give the concept a human form. The producers make use of visual signifiers to present a trustworthy figure to the audience. Not only is Freedom F. Speech presented as a male figure, a gender traditionally associated with authority, but he is depicted wearing a pair of glasses, a short-sleeve shirt and tie. A pair of glasses is a signifier of someone who is knowledgeable and qualified to talk about the subject matter at hand. Shirt and tie is a dress code associated with business affairs. Donning the attire projects a sense of formality and shows respect for the audience. It is interesting to note that the producers have chosen to present the narrator in short sleeves rather than long sleeves. A short-sleeve shirt connotes a sense of formality yet one not so formal as to distance the audience.

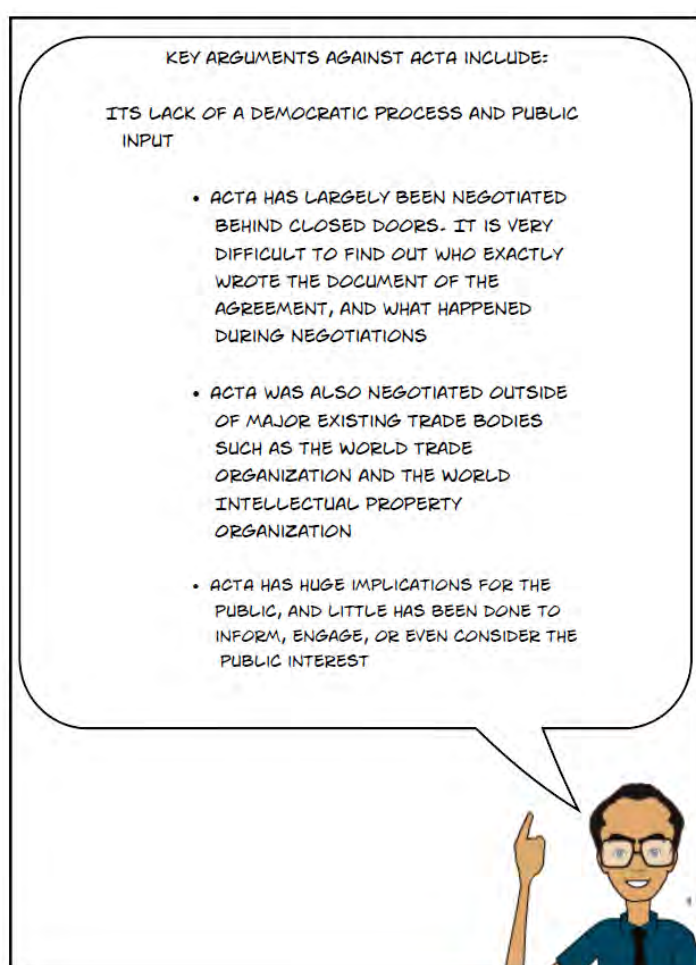


Figure 5.8. Layout as a means of establishing authority

An approach to establishing credibility is to demonstrate the ability to treat a topic fairly. This can be done by acknowledging both sides of an argument. In *ACTA-NSTEIN*, the audience is informed of the purpose for the formation of the treaty, which includes aiming to “clamp down counterfeit goods and international copyright infringement”. It is acknowledged that counterfeits pose “a great threat to sustainable development of the world economy”, entail

“significant financial losses”, and are “a risk to consumers”. The producers confidently use words that ascribe a positive attitude towards the treaty, such as “safe” and “effective”. The acknowledgement of arguments for the treaty makes the shift against it more convincing, as it gives the impression that the producers have weighed the pros and cons to reach the conclusion that the cons far outweighs the pros. In this way, it conveys to the audience that the argument constructed is based on reason.

In *Kony 2012*, authority is projected through rectangular frames that box in words signalling the presence of an omniscient narrator. With the frames superimposed over the larger panels containing the images, the frames are presented as labels, ascribing specific meanings to the images layered beneath. The sense of authority associated with these frames is heightened by the colouring in of the frames in orange and the thick underlining of the frames – resources that render the frames salient. Yet, despite the assertive attitude projected through the frames, it can be argued that, overall, the comic conveys a low sense of modality, hence lowering the credibility of the argument. As the argument culminates in the concluding claim, the audience is offered the advice – “Want to stop Kony? Act!” The key word, ‘Act’, is presented in a round jagged frame that is commonly associated with discount price stickers (see Figure 5.9). In addition, red and yellow are colours associated with low-cost brands. The shape and colour association thus tend to lower the modality of the advice, projecting a sense that the advice is in some way ‘cheap’. A lack of uniformity in the overall layout of the comic also expresses a sense of disorder. The sense of disorder is echoed in the images, as some are presented as screen shots, some as comic sketch, some in colour and some in black-and-white. These factors combined tend to lower the sense of modality in the argument.



Figure 5.9. Shape and colour projecting a low modality

In *Kony 2012*, screen shots are important resources for establishing credibility. Screenshots project a sense of reliability, akin to photographs, by giving the impression that they capture an aspect of online reality. In this way, they are seemingly impartial. This is, of course, not

the case. In Figure 5.10, for example, it is evident that each screen shot has been carefully selected. From a particular video with a particular title, to the video stopped at a specific point so that the image reflects what the producers' wish to communicate, it is apparent that what is displayed is a result of a prudent selection process.



Figure 5.10. Screenshots project a sense of reliability

Despite the sense of reliability projected through the screenshots, it can be argued that, overall, *Kony 2012* appears less credible than *ACTA-NSTEIN*. This is due to the low sense of credibility projected through other resources. For example, spelling errors in the comic communicate a sense of tardiness. Failing to indicate the origin of a source also renders some resources unreliable. For example, Figure 5.11 displays a pie chart indicating the interest in Invisible Children (the *KONY 2012* video) by age range. 13–20 year olds dominate the chart with 59%. However, as the origin of the source is not specified, one is left to wonder whether the ratio indicated is reliable or not. This is especially the case when the chart is read in relation to the verbal component – “I wonder how many of those 13–20 year olds use social media”. The “I” in the verbal component gives the impression that the chart may have been conceived by the producers, rather than independently sourced. This renders the numbers in

the chart unreliable. Thus, despite the sense of factualness communicated through the screenshot, the argument in *Kony 2012* appears less convincing, due to the low sense of credibility projected through the ensemble of resources.

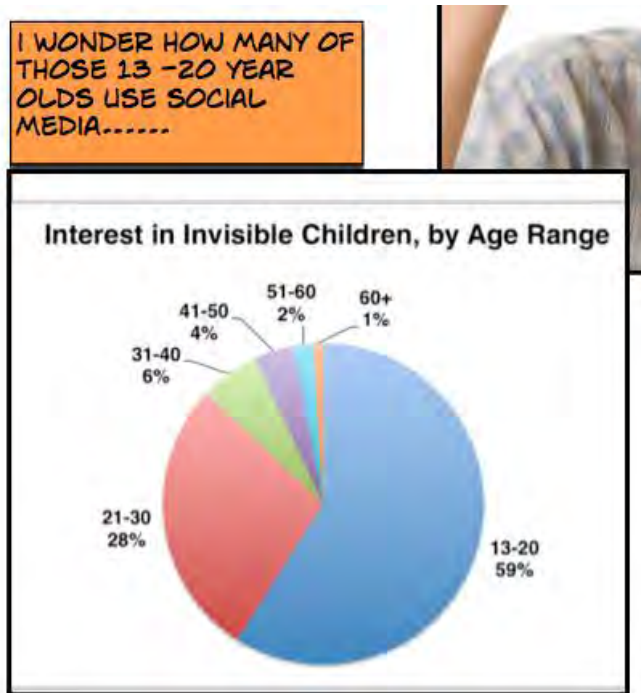


Figure 5.11. Lack of citation lowers credibility



Figure 5.12. Appeal to force

#### **5.4.4 Pathos: appeals to force and humour**

The two comics appeal to two very different emotions to help sustain their argument. *ACTA-NSTEIN* appeals to force, while *Kony 2012* appeals to the audience's sense of humour through satire.

*ACTA-NSTEIN* appeals to force to persuade the audience to take up on the call for action. The threat of the force is expressed verbally through words such as “threat”, “abuse” and “censorship”. These words arouse a sense of fear. Visually, the force is conveyed through images of various individuals in handcuffs and behind bars. The visual display of a warning sign also evokes a sense of alarm and urgency (see Figure 5.12). The threat of the force becomes part of the argument: if we do not take action/protest, we will lose our freedom. We do not want to lose our freedom. Therefore, we should take action. The emotion appeal thus speaks to the consequences of what would happen if action is not taken.

*Kony 2012*, in contrast, appeals to the audience's sense of humour through satire. Satire creates sardonic humour and persuades one to reject an argument through ridicule. As mentioned previously, rhetorical strategies that employ an implicit rhetoric, such as satire, create a ‘double audience’ (Fowler 2009) – those that grasp the intended meaning, and those that do not. In this way, the use of satire constructs the audience in ‘elitist’ terms, as Adami (2012) puts it. Similarly, Buckingham notes that satire's charm lies in that it “enable[s] children to present themselves as sophisticated viewers, who are able to ‘see through’ the medium, and hence to differentiate themselves from those who (by implication) cannot” (2003:109). It follows that the use of the rhetorical strategy urges the audience to position themselves as intelligent readers. That is, it constructs those who are able to understand the implicit rhetoric and agree with the argument proposed as the ‘intelligent insider’, while those who do not understand the rhetoric and those do not agree with the argument as the ‘foolish’. The use of satire thus urges the audience to accept the argument by appealing to their sense of wit, and to their desire to be part of the ‘elite’.

#### **5.5 Compositional resources for establishing coherence in comics**

This section is concerned with the resources that are employed to build unity and coherence in the two comics. It considers how page layout, colour and frames are employed to group elements of the text, allowing the argument to be communicated as a meaningful whole.

### 5.5.1 Page turning as a transitional device

Page layout in comics is just as important a resource in constructing argument as the visual and verbal resources. Layout plays a key role in structuring an argument and retaining the audience's attention. The page can be considered as the largest structuring unit in comics. As Eisner states,

[p]ages are the constant in comic book narration. They have to be dealt with immediately after the story is solidified. Because the groupings of action and other events do not necessarily break up evenly, some pages must contain more individual scenes than others (1985:63).

In *ACTA-NSTEIN*, it is evident that the producers have carefully considered the affordances of page layout as components of the argument are strategically placed on particular pages to ensure a smooth reading. For example, the comic begins on a single page, where the front cover/title of the comic is placed on the same page as the introduction of the comic (see Figure 5.1). The purpose for doing this is not only to cue the audience to turn over the page, but also to ensure that the narrative on the next page is kept as a whole by appearing on a double page. At the end of the double page, with the turning of the page, the argument shifts back to exposition form. According to Eisner, "when the reader turns the page a pause occurs. This permits a change of time, a shift of scene, an opportunity to control the reader's focus" (1985:63). Page turning, in this way, can be considered as an 'invisible' transitional device, assisting in the shift from exposition to narrative and from narrative to exposition.

In *Kony 2012*, the producers neglected to take into account the page as a structuring unit. Each page of the comic is printed on a single-sided page and, in many instances, like the principle of one paragraph holding one idea, each single-sided page contains a separate idea. This renders the reading monotonous. When the readers have been cued to read each page as a single unit containing a separate idea, and a shift is then made where the argument is communicated across two pages, it can take a moment for the reader to register that the two pages should be read as a single unit. For example, in the satirical anecdote involving Joseph Kony and Thomas Lubanga (Figure 5.5), it is evident that the two pages are meant to be interpreted as a whole. It can be argued that the argument is more effective when the two pages of the anecdote are placed adjacent to each other, as it renders the link between the two pages more apparent. On separate pages, the flow in the argument is disturbed by the break required by the page turning, and from the conditioning of the reading pattern in the pages prior.

### 5.5.2 Colour and frames as framing devices

The use of colour in *ACTA-NSTEIN* and frames in *Kony 2012*, to structure components of the argument are worth mentioning. In *ACTA-NSTEIN*, besides the content, exposition and narrative can be distinguished by the colour scheme. The world of the narrative is characterised by colour, the exposition by black-and-white. Colours, as Kress and van Leeuwen (2002, 2006) observe, have values attached them that are specific to a given culture or domain. In academia, black-and-white (the colour of alphabetic print culture) has a higher modality than colour. It is the colour of austerity, and that which is trusted to capture the ‘objective truth’. As such, it can be argued that the use of black-and-white to frame the factual part of the argument is suitable. Conversely, in western comics, colour has a higher modality than black-and-white. As McCloud states, “[w]e live in a world of colors, not just black and white. Color comics will always seem more ‘real’ at first glance” (1994:192). Certainly, there is also a greater value attached to colour comics largely due to commercial factors – comics in colour are more expensive to print than black-and-white comics. Colour expresses fun and vibrancy. Thus, it seems appropriate to have it frame the creative, fictional aspect of the argument. In this way, the colour scheme not only functions as a framing device, but also reflects interpersonal attitudes associated with the two components.

In *Kony 2012*, the satirical anecdote involving Joseph Kony and Thomas Lubanga presents an interesting instance in which frames are employed to create division and unity at the same time. Needless to say, frames are a basic ingredient of comics. They are the basis on which the represented world is constructed. As Eisner writes,

[t]he fundamental function of comic (strip and book) art to communicate ideas and/or stories by means of words and pictures involves the movement of certain images (such as people and things) through space. To deal with the *capture* or encapsulation of these events in the flow of the narrative, they must be broken up into sequenced segments (1985:38).

It is the role of frames to create the required segmentation in comics. *Kony 2012* offers an example where frames are used to simultaneously divide and combine. In the anecdote involving Joseph Kony and Thomas Lubanga, the division of a regular four-sided panel into two diagonal frames strategically separates Russell and Lubanga’s reactions but, at the same time, presents them as a whole. This composition renders it easier to present and identify the double irony in the situation.



Figure 5.13. The use of frames to create division and unity

## 5.6 Concluding comments

This chapter has explored how students construct multimodal academic argument in comics. Because the discourse conventions of comics are different from that of the essay, working in this genre has called attention to what defines academic argument, what its key characteristics are. A glimpse of the affordances of this genre for producing argument is provided through the resources that the students employ. For example, it would appear that comics encourage students to engage in narrative as a means of producing argument. Comics also inspire students to play with rhetorical strategies that they normally would not consider in essay writing, such as personification and satire. This chapter has demonstrated that personification allows students to exploit the potentials of visual signifiers to establish distance and ethos. Satire enables students to engage in humour as a means of persuasion. Furthermore, the students appear to develop awareness for the delivery of an argument as they take into account page layout, colour and frames as resources for building unity and coherence. This chapter has also indicated how medium as the technology of production can place limitations on the semiotic resources drawn upon. The program introduced to the students, *Comic Life*, only permits them to work with existing images. However, the students who produced *ACTA-NSTEIN* demonstrate that this can be overcome by taking the initiative to search for the program that best suits their needs. Conceptually, there can be risks involved for students who play with rhetorical strategies that produce implicit rhetoric, such as satire, irony and parody. The assessor can potentially be placed as the ‘outsider’ and fail to understand the meaning should there be a gap in cultural knowledge.

## **Chapter 6. Ways of Constructing Academic Argument in PowerPoint**

### **6.1 Overview of chapter**

This chapter examines how argument is constructed in two student-produced PowerPoint presentations. The purpose is to better understand the potentials and constraints of PowerPoint for constructing academic argument, how the semiotic resources provided by the technology can offer ways of conceiving and playing with argument in the academic context. The chapter begins with considerations of the discourses of technological determinism surrounding the use of PowerPoint. It then provides an account of the conditions surrounding the making of the two student-produced PowerPoint presentations, before examining the ideational, interpersonal and compositional resources the students employed to construct their argument. The chapter highlights the need to recognise that each semiotic resource has its own potentials and constraints that make it more apt for performing certain communicative roles than others. It draws attention to the fact that a semiotic resource never works alone, but always in relation to others in order to make meaning. In other words, it foregrounds communication as involving an ensemble of resources.

### **6.2 Discourse of technological determinism surrounding PowerPoint**

Unlike video and comics, students generally have a greater exposure to academic content delivered through PowerPoint. Its use in higher education is so prevalent that it has been observed that “to refrain from using it is sometimes seen as a mark of seniority and privilege” (Parker 2001:6). PowerPoint, as a slideshow, permits the placement of text and images on a series of rectangular panels that project information slide by slide. As such, the slideshow is governed both by the logic of space and the logic of sequence. As a presentation tool that is combined with speech, the logic of time is also added. Despite its prevalence in academic and business settings, criticisms of the software are rife. Edward Tufte (2003), in particular, is well-known for his critique of PowerPoint. In *The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint*, he argues that PowerPoint slideware replaces serious analysis with superficial information. He claims that the cognitive style characteristic of the standard default presentation leads to

foreshortening of evidence and thought, low spatial resolution, a deeply hierarchical single-path structure as the model for organizing every type of content, breaking up narrative and data into slides and minimal fragments, rapid temporal sequencing of thin information rather than focused special analysis, conspicuous decoration and Phluff, preoccupation with format not content, an attitude of commercialism that turns everything into a sales pitch (Tufte 2003:4).

Tufte's argument, and indeed many of the arguments made about PowerPoint, tend to reify the software, giving it a kind of agency. They fall into a discourse of what Shwom and Keller (2003) call 'victimology', where PowerPoint assumes the role of "the villain that oppresses its users, and almost by default absolve[s] the presenter from taking any personal responsibility for providing significant content and communicating that content clearly" (cited in Craig & Amernic 2006:148). While the logic of the slideshow may lead to the dissemination of information in a particular manner, it is necessary to acknowledge that factors, such as the reduction of evidence and thought, elevation of form over content, and attitude of commercialism, are conditions of the human, the social, not the technology itself. Kress stresses that, "it is both a common and a serious error to treat technology as a causal phenomenon in human, social and cultural affairs" (1998:53–54). Technology, he says, "is socially applied knowledge, and it is social conditions which make the crucial difference in how it is applied" (Kress 1998:54).

Adopting a social semiotic view, Zhao, Djonov and van Leeuwen describe PowerPoint as a "complex multimodal practice that comprises three interrelated dimensions: the software's design, the multimodal composition of slideshows, and the slideshow presentation" (2014:351). They argue that to understand PowerPoint as a semiotic technology, a technology for making meaning, it is necessary to explore all three dimensions and their relationships. This thesis is concerned with how the semiotic resources afforded through the technology can offer ways of conceiving argument. It is concerned with how the slideshow considered, together with the presentation, can be employed to deliver argument. Thus, both the slideshow and the presentation are taken into consideration. In particular, the visual display and the accompanying speech are the main resources attended to. Gesture, a central meaning-making resource in presentations, has been for the most part omitted from the analysis, primarily because it did not surface as a key meaning-making resource in the construction of argument in this particular context. This is largely due to the fact that the students were not experienced presenters. They mostly delivered the argument through reading the presentation scripts or the presentation slide. Gesture, in this way, carried less weight, or 'functional load' (Kress 2003), in the communication of the argument.

Besides the view of PowerPoint as a complex multimodal practice, slideshows are also said to epitomise what van Leeuwen (2008) describes as 'new writing', or what Kress (2003) terms 'writing in the age of screen' (Djonov & van Leeuwen 2014; Zhao *et al.* 2014).

According to Djonov and van Leeuwen, ‘new writing’ differs from ‘old writing’ in two respects. First, the logic of new writing is governed by space. Accordingly, there is a blurring of boundaries between language and image. Second, new writing is said to be “more tacitly regulated” by “rules built into semiotic technologies such as office software”, where spelling and alignments are automatically corrected (2014:235). The analysis from this chapter will illustrate how properties of ‘new writing’, or ‘writing in the age of screen’ underlie the two PowerPoints investigated. The next two sections offer an account of the social event, prompt and circumstances surrounding the making of the two student presentations.

### **6.3. *Both Sides of Piracy*: social event, prompt and the production process**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, internet piracy and censorship were extensively discussed in Media Studies, and on social media platforms, following a series of events. These events include protests against the ‘Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement’ (ACTA) treaty in Europe, organised service blackouts on popular sites such as Wikipedia and Google in objection to the ‘Stop Online Piracy Act’ bill, and the shutdown of the popular file hosting service, Megaupload Ltd., on account of copyright infringement. Whereas the group who produced *ACTA-NSTEIN* in the previous chapter chose to frame the social event as one concerning internet censorship, focusing on ACTA, the students who produced *Both Sides to Piracy* (Ayanda, Thomas and Lisa) framed the social event as one concerning piracy. For them, the ‘Stop Online Piracy Act’ bill acted as the prompt. The bill was proposed to broaden the scope of United States law enforcement to include the online space, for the purpose of fighting online copyright infringement and counterfeit goods trafficking. In response to the bill, the students argue that “[the] regulation has gone too far”. They make a case for the need to find possible solutions to piracy. Below, I outline three events that occurred during the production process that brings attention to audience interest, group work as a resource and the potential place of the essay in a multimodal project.

#### **6.3.1 Factoring audience interest**

From the conception to the presentation of the argument, audience interest was a key consideration for the students. Like other groups, Ayanda, Thomas and Lisa had considered a number of other current events at the time, before resolving on the issue of piracy. The students eventually settled on this topic because they believed it would appeal to the audience more than other topics considered. In their synopsis they disclose,

The first reason why we want to take a look at this issue is the most obvious one; piracy is relevant to everyone. Whether it is through downloading illegally or through the regulations that are enforced to prevent piracy, each and every one of us is affected by it... university students are the largest demographic that engages in piracy... Since our audience is other fellow students, this topic becomes extremely relevant and important to reflect on.

Not just in deciding on the topic, but throughout the production process, the audience was a constant consideration. There were frequent references to the audience in the students' journals. Thomas, for example, writes, "doing it on PowerPoint will be a challenge because I don't want it to seem boring to the audience when we present" (Individual Journal). Kress posits that "[a]ll signs are made with two perspectives and interests: *mine* in relation to *my* representation and interests; and *yours* in relation to *communication* and to the need of factoring in your interest and the requirements of power" (italics in original, 2010:72). The idea of factoring in the interest of the audience is especially relevant in the case with PowerPoint presentations, as they are made to be delivered before a live audience, where their reactions can influence the presenter's delivery. Even though, in most cases, the presentation is unidirectional, uninterrupted by audience interjections during the presentation, the presenter can be affected by signals from the audience, such as nods, laughter, mutterings and yawns. While the presentation is not likely to diverge too much from what was planned, the audience's live reaction can sometimes lead to spontaneous deviation such as the shortening of content or the elaboration of a point through an anecdotal account. The live factor involved in presentations conditions argument through PowerPoints to always be newly made in each instance of presentation. This is discussed further in Section 6.6.2 of the chapter.

### **6.3.2 Group work as a resource: a means of overcoming gaps in digital literacies**

At the onset of the project, the students expressed wariness about working in groups.

Thomas, for example, recounts in his journal,

[w]e were assigned to our groups today. It seems a bit weird being in groups at [university]. I [have] only ever done group work once before in 1<sup>st</sup> year and it was okay, it seemed easier when I was in school and I actually knew whoever I was working with fairly well.

While Thomas's reservation came from not being familiar with the people in his group, Ayanda's reservation came from fear of letting the group down. As she writes, "I am very unsure of my performance in this group given that I have not had any experience of creating notes in PowerPoint" (Ayanda's Individual Journal). Despite the students' uncertainties, group work did not become an obstacle. Conversely, it can be said that it became a strength

as the students came to recognise each other's qualities. They assigned and adopted roles and tasks in which they were adept. Ayanda, for example, took on the role of organiser, Thomas offered his knowledge of the internet and peer-to-peer networks, and Lisa took on the responsibility of bringing together everybody's work by compiling the final presentation. In this way, recognition of each other's strengths allowed the group to work smoothly.

Besides assigning each other suitable roles, the students also demonstrated a willingness to teach and learn from each other. Ayanda discloses that both Thomas and Lisa had been patient in showing her how to use PowerPoint. Whether making video, comics or PowerPoint, knowledge of digital technology is required. Digital divide, however, is a pertinent issue in the South African context. In research into students' access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTS) in South African Higher Education, Brown and Czerniewicz (2010) found that digital divide in South Africa is primarily characterised by access and opportunity. According to them, "digital apartheid is alive and well" (Brown & Czerniewicz 2010:357). As a result of social inequalities, there is a large group of students who enter university without having much knowledge in the use of ICTS. In such a context, technology can hinder the success of the implementation of a multimodal social semiotic approach to argument, as this leaves students not only having to deal with issues of academic literacies, but also digital literacies. In the case of Ayanda, Thomas and Lisa, group work became a means of dealing with disparities in technological knowledge. This points towards the possibilities of peer-to-peer learning serving as a means of bridging gaps in digital literacies.

### **6.3.3 The potential place for the essay in multimodal projects**

Although this thesis makes a case for a multimodal approach to academic argument, arguing that different modes for conceiving argument can engender different ways of thinking about argument in the academic context, it is by no means suggesting that this practice should supplant the place of essay writing in higher education. The essay has specific affordances that have allowed it to thrive in academia. Andrews (2010), for instance, notes that the essay is characterised by explicitness. It is particularly apt for providing ideas supported by evidence, and linking elements into meaningful sequences in an explicit way (Andrews 2010:161). Because of these affordances, the essay genre is valuable even in a multimodal project.

Thomas reflects in his journal,

After doing the draft plan, I feel that it would [have] been a lot easier had we done our entire argument in essay format initially. Our information was a bit fragmented so we found it slightly difficult to get the information down and link it properly.

At the start of the project, the students were required to write a synopsis. Most groups presented this in the form of an essay. During the course of the semester, however, as the topics evolved with time and research, the students were not required to rewrite their synopsis. It would appear, though, that this step is important, as it helps students to organise ideas and more clearly outline the logic in their argument. In general, the groups who had a clearer synopsis to begin with had an easier task of framing their argument in the later stages. Andrews observes that the term ‘essay’ is derived from the French word ‘essai’, meaning an ‘attempt’, although this “derivation from words meaning ‘first drafts’ or ‘attempts’ is not reflected in the current use of the term to describe finished assignments submitted for assessment or examination” (2010:158). In my view, there is a good reason for the essay to reclaim this role of ‘drafts’ or ‘attempts’ in multimodal projects such as this. Employed as a draft, the essay can act as a tool to help students structure their thoughts and argument.

There are other pedagogical affordances of incorporating the essay into a multimodal project. English (2011) has explored the affordances of recontextualising disciplinary information from the essay to a different written genre, such as a play or a children’s book. She argues that the ‘regenring’ process can stimulate learning, as it prompts reflection in the remaking of the material. More importantly, she observes that different genres embody different kinds of knowledge and, subsequently, different kinds of reflection. According to English, the essay provides “a closed context in which a student writer can reflect on the meaning (‘truth’ or otherwise) of certain (relevant) selections from the ‘body of knowledge’” (2011:170). This prompts “reflection on knowledge as a ‘thing’” (English 2011:170). In contrast, in genres such as a play, “knowledge is represented as *process* characterized by actions, experiences and embodied attitudes and opinions and which therefore produce a very different kind of reflection” (English 2011:170). As ‘regenring’ requires students to move from one kind of knowledge making and reflection to another, this may demystify genres, and engender awareness of how genres shape knowledge. Moreover, the process of regenring from the essay to a more everyday genre can help students form a link between disciplinary knowledge and knowledge of the everyday (English 2011). This speaks of the possibility of knowledge transfer from the academic context into the everyday. The practice can also perhaps help

sustain students' interests. In the seminar 'Composing in a Digital Age', one of the liveliest discussion sessions was one that considered citation in everyday genres. The students were excited to see that what they considered as a purely academic practice was very much present in box office movies and music videos. English's notion of 'regenring' points to the affordances of having the essay serve as a 'prompt' genre from which the multimodal text is transformed into a multimodal project such as this one. I now turn to the conditions surrounding the making of the second student-produced PowerPoint, *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*.

#### **6.4 *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*: social event, prompt and the production process**

In contrast to other groups, who derived their topics from current issues on global social media, the students who produced *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*, Kate, Amy and Nicole, chose to focus on a local issue. Various reports and debates concerning prostitution surfaced in the media during this time, following a call for the decriminalisation of prostitution in South Africa by the African National Congress Women's League. The students' response to this situation was to say "NO to prostitution" (Synopsis).

Kate, Amy and Nicole had initially chosen video as the form in which to deliver their argument. They later changed to PowerPoint, as time became an issue for them. However, during the production process, they acknowledged that they may have underestimated the amount of work and time that was required to construct an argument in PowerPoint. As Nicole writes,

The change from video to PowerPoint was thought to be a good change however; it turned out to be more of a challenge. As a group, we lack creativity in PowerPoint. It is new to us all and so it became time consuming because while doing the project we were learning about the program and what more it offered. We had all used it previously but not in the creative multimodal way, we are trying to achieve in this project (Individual Journal).

In an attempt to do something different in their presentation, and to experiment with the different modes explored in the seminar, the students included three short videos in the PowerPoint. The first video consisted of writing overlaid on images, with a soft guitar soundtrack. The second video comprised of images and narration against a poignant piano soundtrack. Because of some technical mishap the students experienced during the making of the video, they were not able to include the pre-recorded narration with the soundtrack as a single file. Consequently, the narration was recited live to the audience on the day of the presentation against the video with the images and piano soundtrack. The effect was

surprisingly powerful. The last video comprised of writing on images with a music soundtrack that had lyrics to it. The three different videos, with the different approaches to presenting information, made the presentation particularly distinctive. Needless to say, conceiving and compiling the videos required a substantial amount of time and effort.

There were other factors that the students noted as being time-consuming. These include the matter of having to negotiate ideas as a group. As Kate says, “PowerPoint is extremely time-consuming, especially when you have to do it as a group. Everyone had different ideas and wanted to do different things so it was difficult to make progress quickly” (Individual Journal). In addition, syncing the prepared speech to the content of the PowerPoint required practice, especially in the case of the video that necessitated live narration. Amy recounts in her journal, “We all worked very well on the speeches together and tried very hard to correspond the speeches with the exact timing of our PowerPoint”. The students also described getting side-tracked by the design aspect of the PowerPoint application. Interestingly, the students mentioned that they were more familiar with PowerPoint as a platform for offering information rather than argument. Thus, at times, they were distracted by the possible ways to present information rather than the argument. In Nicole’s words,

We do not usually associate an argument with a PowerPoint presentation; we associate it with points and information. Therefore, we may have lost track that we were trying to make an argument and not just a pretty PowerPoint. Sometimes getting carried away with small insignificant things threw us off track because we were focusing on pictures and not what was being said (Individual Journal).

Nicole’s account here echoes research into the use of PowerPoint in the university, where lecturers have also been noted to “agoniz[e] over the choice of design template, color scheme, page layout, and mode of slide transitions”, that is, being overly concerned with the design aspect of PowerPoint software application rather than the message itself (Craig & Amernic 2006:156). It also reinforces claims that PowerPoint is more often used as a tool for presenting educational content, or transferring knowledge, than for constructing argument (Craig & Amernic 2006; Djonov & van Leeuwen 2014). Djonov and van Leeuwen attribute this partly to the marketisation of Higher Education, which has led to views of universities as providers and students as consumers of knowledge, and partly to the ‘bullet point’ factor in PowerPoints.

Bullet points are a key feature of PowerPoint. They are the “default option for presenting information in the body of a slide” (Djonov & van Leeuwen 2014:232). According to

Fairclough (2001b), bullet points encourage the use of a listing syntax that sets up a non-dialogical relationship between the addresser and the addressee. Argument, however, presupposes a dialogical relationship between two disparate positions. Thus, it would appear that this feature of the PowerPoint is not conducive to producing argument. Nevertheless, the fact that PowerPoint is widely used to deliver arguments, from doctoral proposal defences to academic seminars and conferences, suggests that it can be employed, and presenters are keen to employ it, as a resource for constructing argument. The bullet point is only one feature of the PowerPoint. PowerPoint, as Zhao *et al.* (2014) posit, is a complex multimodal practice that encompasses the software, the slideshow and the presentation. Section 6.6.3 of this chapter will illustrate how the bullet point, combined with other semiotic resources, can construct argument.

Before moving on to the analysis, it is worthwhile noting the external help the group sought. As with the group that produced the video *Truths Be Told*, who reached out to their social networks for assistance in filming and editing, this group reached out to their acquaintances for information. Kate mentions in her journal that, in order to find relevant information concerning prostitution in Cape Town and South Africa as a whole, she had contacted an acquaintance who worked with rape victims of prostitution. In fact, the inclination to seek external help was a general trait among many of the groups in the seminar. This trait suggests that students are prone to draw on resources available to them, including their social networks, when working on group projects. This attitude differs from working on individual written assignments, where from my own teaching experience, students are less inclined to ask for help in general. Group work, in this way, appears to produce a different working ethic. The next section proceeds to the analysis of the two student-produced PowerPoints, *Both Sides of Piracy* and *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*.

### **6.5 Ideational resources for reflecting on argument in PowerPoint**

Both of the PowerPoint presentations are conceptual arguments, although in *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* elements of narrative are drawn on to construct the argument. Conceptual arguments are arguments that involve analytical or symbolic classification. This section considers the ways in which the two conceptual arguments are organised, how difference is established in the arguments, and the rhetorical strategies that are employed to realise the arguments.

### 6.5.1 Ways of organising conceptual arguments

Both of the student-produced PowerPoint presentations have elements of Quintilian's five-part arrangement for argument. The arrangement has been noted to be applicable to both speech and writing (Andrews 2010; Brandt 1970). Andrews (2010) further observes that it may have provided the basis for the modern 'five-paragraph essay'. The five-parts comprises: 1) the *exordium*, which serves as an introduction by announcing to the audience the subject and purpose for the argument; 2) the *narration*, which provides a narrative account of events or statement of facts relevant to the argument; 3) the *confirmation*, which functions as the core of the argument by offering logical arguments as proofs; 4) the *refutation*, which deals with possible counterarguments; and 5) the *peroration*, which acts as the conclusion, summing up the argument. A sixth part is identifiable in the student-produced PowerPoints with the inclusion of a reference list.

*Both Sides of Piracy* begins with the presenters announcing to the audience that "the popular conclusion about piracy has been that it is bad for the creator because it benefits the end user and not the creator". They say that they are "here to present the positive effects of piracy". The announcement, said against the title slide headed, 'Both sides of Piracy', serves as the introduction (*exordium*). The topic is solidified in the next slide with a definition of piracy from the Merriam-Webster online dictionary. Peer-to-peer servers, such as Wikipedia and YouTube, and the replication of copyrighted goods are all identified as types of piracy. A statement of facts (*narratio*) follows, as a picture of the piracy landscape is painted through revelations of various statistics concerning piracy. These include that "70% of online users find nothing wrong with online piracy" and that there are "71,060 jobs lost in the United States every year due to online piracy". The relevance of the topic is situated within current events and the prompt (Stop Online Piracy Act) is introduced. Before disclosing the core argument, the counterarguments (*refutatio*) are reviewed with a discussion on the "negative aspects" of piracy. These include that piracy leads to economic losses for the industry/creators, poorer quality of content for the consumers, and difficulty for smaller artists to be signed up by companies. The core of the argument (*confirmatio*) presents the "positive aspects" of piracy. It is argued that piracy leads to greater concert attendance and product promotion. Some of the claims made in the previous section (*refutatio*) are overturned, as statistics of increased sales of songs on iTunes, and examples of independent artists and applications (games) that have gained success from free platforms, are presented. It is recognised that, despite the positive aspects, "there is still a push for bills such as [the

Stop Online Piracy Act] to come through”. To “prevent the need to push these extreme bills”, the conclusion (*peroratio*) wraps up with proposals of possible solutions to the issue of piracy. A reference list included in the final slide situates the argument within academic discourse. Figure 6.1 offers an overview of the argument in the slideshow.

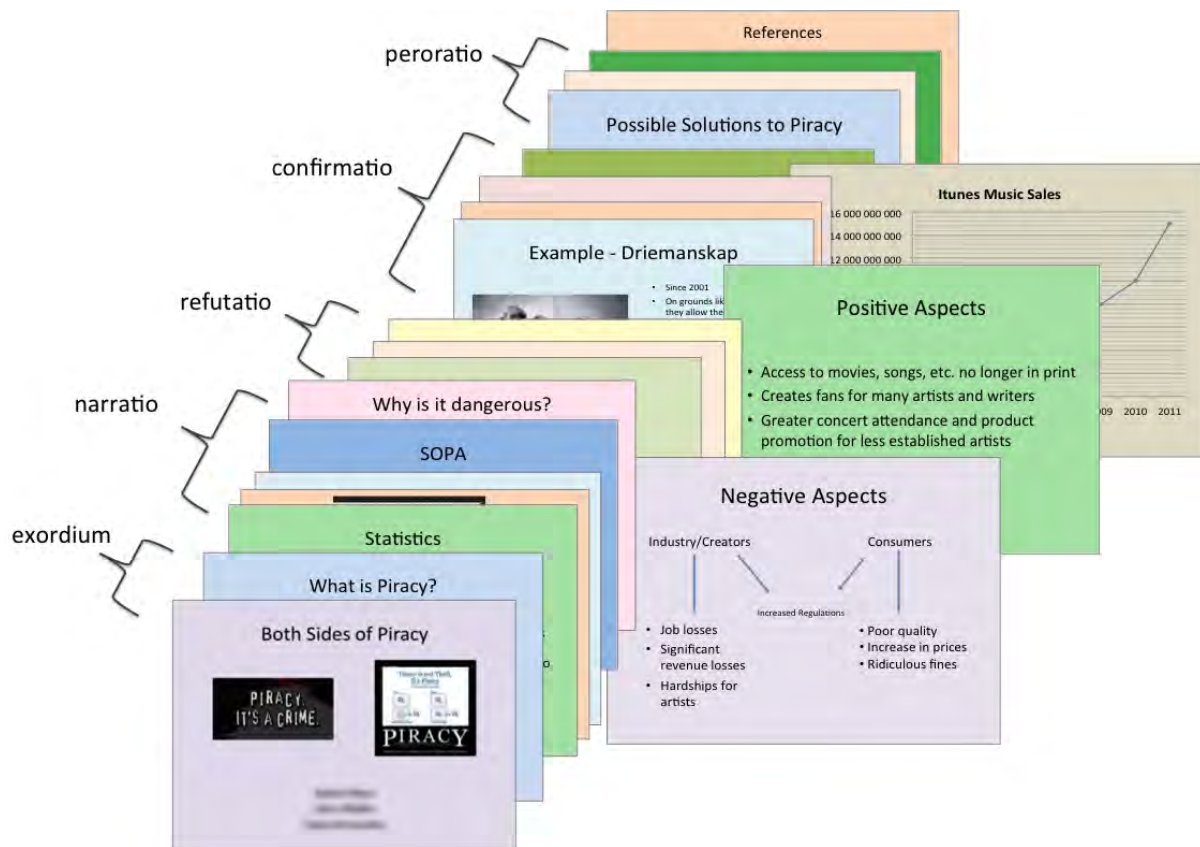


Figure 6.1 *Both Sides of Piracy* slideshow

Although argument is present, it must be said that internally, at the horizontal or sentence level, the logical relations between parts of the argument are less explicit. This can be attributed to the internal composition of the slides, and the use of speech as a mode in the presentation. The argument is presented across 21 slides. Each slide is a different colour. This has the effect of framing each slide as a single, separate unit. Some colours are repeated, but the corresponding slides are not linked in any way. Bullet points are the primary resource employed to organise slide content. Bullet points, as Djonov and van Leeuwen observe, are unlike “lists with numbers or letters, which suggest chronological or other priority amongst items”; instead, they communicate an “unordered series of items” (2014:233). The unordered series of items are not unrelated though. They present a relationship that involves

membership – that is, the list of items “relate to one another in some way, but the nature of that relationship remains unstated” (Shaw *et al.* in Tufte 2003:5). In *Both Sides of Piracy*, the use of bullet points to list membership results in an inclination to clump a list of claims together, unsupported by evidence, on a single slide. While the evidence is provided later in the presentation on a separate slide, this leaves the logical relations between the claim and the evidence unspecified. To give an example, in the ‘positive aspects’ slide, three assertions are made, listed via bullet points (see Figure 6.1). A series of examples are provided on separate slides thereafter, but there is no explicit indication as to which example corresponds with which claim. One of the examples, placed 16<sup>th</sup> in the slide sequence, offers a graph that demonstrates increase in sales of music online. This example refutes a counter claim made in slide 8 (the ‘negative aspects’ slide) regarding economic losses. Without an entity connecting the two components, the refutation is, by and large, implicit. In this case, speech would have been appropriate in acting as a linkage, except that in *Both Sides of Piracy*, the speech often echoes what is written on the slides. As such, the writing on display seems to serve as a ‘speech note’ for the presenters. Admittedly, this often leaves connections between parts of the argument implicit.

*Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* follows a similar organisational structure to *Both Sides of Piracy* on the macro-level. Like *Both Sides of Piracy*, *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* is composed of a six-part argument structure, but elements of narrative are embedded in the conceptualisation of the argument. The introduction (*exordium*) begins with a title slide that announces the topic of the argument, ‘Legalisation of Prostitution’. The impression is given that the presenters’ mean to make an argument for the legalisation of prostitution, until – in chorus with the proclamation, “Prostitutions should not be legalised and we are going to show you why” – a red stop sign appears superimposed over the written words. What follows is a video clip that offers a narrative account (*narratio*) of the prostitution landscape. Through writing on still images, the audience is told that “Prostitution is an act of violence against women which is intrinsically traumatizing” and that “About 80% of women have been raped during transaction”. The images on which the writings are superimposed portray a solemn narrative of the profession. Like *Both Sides of Piracy*, the counter-position (*refutatio*) is presented prior to the main body of the argument. The counterarguments observed include that legalisation of prostitution may lead to a safer working environment, and access to health and safety for the individuals in the profession. The main body (*confirmatio*) presents reasons for why prostitution should not be legalised. These include that prostitution leads to higher

rate of sexually transmitted diseases and promotes sex trafficking. Like *Both Sides of Piracy*, some of the claim made in the previous section is refuted in this section. To sustain the argument, the audience is presented with the life story of a prostitute named ‘Nekome’. Before concluding the argument, there is a return to what can be seen as the *narratio*, as the argument is situated within current events and more statement of facts are offered. This time, though, the facts are focused only on statistics surrounding rape and abuse of prostitutes. The purpose for doing so may be to stress the gravity of the issue, making the call for action in the conclusion more urgent. Through another video, the conclusion (*peroratio*) offers proposals on how the audience can “get involved and help”. The lyrics, “Get up, stand up, stand up for your rights”, from Bob Marley’s song “Get up, Stand up” are clearly audible in the soundtrack. Like *Both Sides of Piracy*, a reference list is included in the final slide to position the argument within academic discourse. Figure 6.2 presents an overview of the argument in the slideshow.



Figure 6.2. *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* slideshow

Compared to *Both Sides of Piracy*, the argument is more explicit in *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*. Not only is the statement of position, ‘stop legalisation of prostitution’, reiterated numerous times in the presentation, but the connections between claims and supporting evidence are also more apparent. The spoken mode plays an important role in making the connections. The argument is communicated across 13 slides, with three videos embedded. All the slides have the same background colour scheme. This presents the slideshow with a sense of uniformity and allows for a more fluid progression from slide to slide. Whereas slide content is ordered using bullet points in *Both Sides of Piracy*, a ‘pin-board’ approach governs the presentation of slide content in *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*. Like the bullet list, the pin-board approach links information by membership, but, instead of being listed, the items are spatially arranged around the subject that links them. It has the look of a mind-map without the connecting lines. In the case of *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*, different fonts and sizes are employed to write the separate items, and this gives primacy to certain items over others. The written items that are pinned are not visible all at once, but appear one by one through the animation feature. In addition, rather than functioning as a ‘speech note’, as in the case with *Both Sides of Piracy*, the written items act more as key words prompting speech. For example, on a slide presenting the negative effects of prostitution, among some phrases pinned around the word ‘PROSTITUTION’ at the centre are “expands sex industry”, “gives power to pimps and traffickers” and “demotes women’s health”. The phrases are, in fact, claims about the negative effects of prostitution. As each phrase appears, the presenter elaboration more on that which is displayed. For instance, accompanying the phrase “expands sex industry” is the following speech:

Contrary to the claim that legalisation will control the expansion of the sex industry, it has been proven with a case study done in the Netherlands, where it has been legalised, that prostitution, that the industry, has increased by 25%.

Contained in this speech is refutation of a counter-position and evidence for the claim that prostitution expands sex industry. Being freed up to talk around the writing on display, rather than conforming to it, allows the presenter to employ speech as an entity to connect parts of an argument. This approach to using speech renders connections between parts of the argument in *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* more explicit.

To summarise, *Both Sides of Piracy* and *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* are similar in their organisation of argument on the macro-level. Not only do they both contain a six-part structure, but they also both position the *refutatio* preceding the *confirmatio*. In the arguments

explored in the previous chapters, few of them engaged with possible counterarguments. In instances where counterarguments are discussed, this is done so briefly. This is not surprising since the counter position is, as Andrews notes, “a characteristically weak area for undergraduates, who tend to devote most energy to constructing the main line of their argument” (2010:34). Yet interestingly, in both of the PowerPoints explored here, the counterarguments are reviewed in some detail. What is more, they are discussed prior to the main line of the argument, and often refuted in the main line of the argument. In this way, it appears that the counterarguments are being used to set off the main line of argument.

Admittedly, this approach to composition is also common in essay writing, although at the undergraduate level students tend to follow the five-part argument structure in the order that it is proposed. The fact that two groups of students employed a similar structure suggests that there is something about PowerPoint logic that cues them to follow this approach. According to Kress, “*Ordering* rests on and suggests an interpretation of the ‘priority’ among phenomena” (2010:123). Because of the sequential nature of writing, that which is ordered first tends to have precedence. Thus, in the essay, it seems fitting to develop the main body prior to mentioning the counter-position. However, unlike essays, presentations occur in real time. That which is said last or closer to the recent is more likely to be remembered. In other words, it can be said that priority in presentations lies in temporality. The student may have felt that it is better to deal with the counter-position before the main argument so as to avoid an anti-climax near the end. This structural approach allows the presenters to end the argument on a strong note. From a multimodal social semiotic perspective, resources are seen as being constantly remade in the social-semiotic work of interaction. The remaking, however, is “never wilfully, arbitrarily, anarchically but precisely, in line with what [is needed]” (Kress 2010:8). In this case, it would appear that, irrespective of the technology, faced with composing an academic argument, the students turned to a structure they were familiar with from essay writing. However, they did not strictly abide by this structure, but refashioned it to suit the context. This exemplifies how semiotic resources are transformed in the social-semiotic work of interaction in line with what it needed for the occasion.

### **6.5.2 Ways of establishing difference in argument**

Although *Both Sides of Piracy* and *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* follow a similar organisational structure, they differ in their approach to establishing difference. Difference is concerned with the point of incongruity. It is a condition that is needed to bring a subject to

contention. In *Both Sides of Piracy*, difference is established through contrasting conjunctions, while in *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*, difference is established through superimposition.

### 6.5.2.1 Argument through contrasting conjunction

Conjunctions have the function of connecting two or more sentences, clauses or parts of clauses. In argument, conjunctions that show contrast, such as ‘but’ and ‘yet’, can help evoke difference as they bring into conversation two contrasting positions. At the start of *Both Sides of Piracy*, the audience is presented with a title slide that displays the title of the presentation on the top centre, two images adjacent to each other in the middle, and the names of the presenters at the bottom centre (see Figure 6.3). It can be argued that difference is present in the slide through the juxtaposition of the images. The image on the left displays the words “PIRACY. IT’S A CRIME” in white against a black background. It communicates a stance against piracy. The image on the right, on the other hand, takes a stance for piracy, as it argues that piracy is about imitation, “mak[ing] a COPY” rather than theft, which is said to involve “remov[ing] the original”. The reader is asked to consider: “Imagine Your Car Gets Stolen, but it’s Still There in the Morning”. As the two images communicate two contrasting ideas, it can be argued that difference is evoked.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognise that, in real time, the difference is not likely to be noticed. While it is possible to register promptly the stance reflected through the image on the left, some time is needed to fathom the argument or stance put forward through the image on the right. With the slide on for less than a minute, it is difficult for the audience to pick up on the argument put forward. The size of the image also makes it difficult for the audience to read the image. What the audience can read while the image is on display is the word ‘PIRACY’. As the colour orientation of the two images is similar (white writing against a black background), at first glance, the impression is given that they are taking a similar stance. In this way, the sense of friction or difference is less apparent in the visual display.

Rather than the visual display, difference in *Both Sides of Piracy* is more evident in the spoken mode. Alongside the presentation of the title slide, the presenter says,

...the popular conclusion about piracy has been that it is bad for the creator because it benefits the end user and not the creator. But, since musicians have become inventors of things, they have looked into online piracy with a different eye. It is possible that piracy can benefit them as well.

The word ‘but’ in the speech is key to establishing difference. ‘But’ is a conjunction that is commonly employed to connect two contrasting concepts. That is, it functions as a connector, linking ideas that exemplify contrast. As a connector, the conjunction ‘but’ forms a link between the two positions/voices and, in doing so, sets up a dialogue between them. Besides being the linking element, it also acts as the “contrary point” (Andrews 2010:14), the site where the shift in position occurs. From this perspective, the conjunction can be seen not only as a connector, but also a catalyst for igniting friction.


Visual	Spoken
<p>Slide 1:</p>  <p>The visual content of Slide 1 is a title slide titled "Both Sides of Piracy". It features two side-by-side images. The left image is a dark rectangle with the text "PIRACY. IT'S A CRIME." in white, bold, sans-serif font. The right image is a white rectangle with the text "Piracy is not Theft, It's Piracy" at the top, a small diagram in the middle, and "PIRACY" in large, bold, black letters at the bottom. Below these images, there is some faint, illegible text.</p>	<p>Um, okay, so, this is the first time that I'm presenting, I'm Ayanda... and I'm going to present both sides of the privacy story.</p> <p>And...the popular conclusion about piracy has been that it is bad for the creator because it benefits the end user and not the creator.</p> <p>But, since musicians have become inventors of things, they have looked into online piracy with a different eye. It is possible that piracy can benefit them as well.</p> <p>We are here to present the positive effects of piracy...the relations involved, and how the relations affect the people they are trying to protect.</p>

Figure 6.3. *Both Sides of Piracy* title slide

As mentioned in the theoretical framework chapter, Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of ‘dialogism’, which is concerned with the interrelation between utterances, is useful in shedding light on the dialogical nature of argument. Chapter 4 discussed how Andrews (2010) employs the notion to consider how argument is triggered externally. Dialogism is equally useful in reflecting on how difference materialises within an argument internally. According to Bakhtin,

The linguistic signification of a given utterance is understood against the background of language, while its actual meaning is understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, point of views and value judgements (1981:281).

This notion of an utterance being fraught with opposition and tension with other utterances on the same theme is useful in thinking about how difference manifests within the internal structure of an argument. Certainly, Andrews (2010) draws on it to consider the internal structure and movement of an argument on the horizontal or forward-moving plane. Andrews explains, “[m]ore often than not, arguments move dialogically, taking their cue for the next statement or point from the previous one and positioning themselves different from it. Again, the articulation can be at anywhere between 1 and 180 degrees” (2010:13). As connectors or structural markers, conjunctions are central to indicating the degree of difference between the forthcoming statement and the statement prior. Andrews stresses that “[h]owever monologic an argument seems, it is always predicated externally in relation to other positions and arguments and always operates internally in dialogic or multi-voice mode” (2010:14). In the above utterance, there are two positions or voices present: one which views piracy in a negative light and one which views piracy in a positive light. The contrasting conjunction ‘but’ acts as the link, bringing two positions or voices in conversation with each other. In *Both Sides of Piracy*, difference is present in both the visual and verbal mode, although the verbal mode can be said to play more of a central role in establishing difference. In *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*, this is the reverse. The next section looks at how difference can be established through superimposition.

#### **6.5.2.2 Argument by superimposition**

Superimposition is an affordance of the PowerPoint software, realised through the animation feature. *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* begins with a title slide, headed ‘LEGALISATION OF PROSTITUTION’, written in white. Against the slide, the presenter says, “Prostitution is illegal in South Africa, yet driving through the streets of Cape Town, we see prostitutes lining up on our sidewalks”. The contrasting conjunction ‘yet’ in the speech establishes tension and, spoken alongside the title slide, gives the impression that the presenters are arguing for the legalisation of prostitution. This is until a few second later, when a red stop sign appears superimposed over the heading, along with the statement of position, “Prostitutions should *not* be legalised and we are going to show you why” (see Figure 6.4). The incongruity created through the overlapping of two different modes, and the colour contrast (red against white), creates tension, thereby producing the conditions for difference.

The superimposition essentially brings the counter position into the visual display. The incongruity that occurs through the superimposition not only involves a clash in mode and

colour, but it also involves an ideational clash. The red sign is a symbolic signifier for a position counter to the written mode that is on display. By superimposing the red sign directly over the writing, it brings into dialogue the two contrasting positions. That is, it establishes an ‘ideational divergence’ (Unsworth 2006) between the visual and the written mode. The spoken mode, in echoing the position adopted by the visual mode verbally, reinforces the anti-legalisation position.

Visual	Spoken
<p>Slide 1:</p>  <p>Animation</p> 	<p>Prostitution is illegal in South Africa, yet driving through the streets of Cape Town, we see prostitutes lining up on our sidewalks. Since 2010, the FIFA world cup, there have been suggestions of legalizing prostitution</p> <p>Prostitution should <i>not</i> be legalized...and we are going to show you why</p>

Figure 6.4. Establishing difference through superimposition

To conclude, the two PowerPoints present two different approaches to establishing difference. Difference is established in *Both Sides of Piracy* through the contrasting conjunction ‘but’. I have suggested that the conjunction not only functions as a connector linking two different positions, but it also acts as a catalyst in generating tension. In *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*, difference is established through superimposition. The superimposition of the visual over the written mode creates the ideational divergence that is needed to establish difference in argument. The superimposition brings action or movement to the title slide, which is relatively uncommon in regular PowerPoint presentations. This contrasts with the standard static visual display in *Both Sides of Piracy*. Difference establishes the conditions for argument. To establish the conditions for relating the argument to patterns of experience in the ideational world, rhetorical strategies are necessitated. The next section examines ‘the example’ as a rhetorical device in argument.

### 6.5.3 'The example' as a rhetorical device

The argument in both of the PowerPoints makes extensive use of the example as a persuasive device. The example is not recognised by classical rhetoricians as figurative language, but Brandt (1970) argues that it has persuasive or argumentative force. He observes that the example has two functions: on the one hand, it can be employed as explanatory, presenting examples that clarify the preceding statements; on the other hand, it can take the form that induction takes in argument (Brandt 1970:127). Brandt says that, while it is important to discern the illustrative example from the argumentative example, it is necessary to recognise that the two functions will have overlapping areas, since “[t]hat example which clarifies a concept cannot help having some persuasive function, and the converse is surely true also” (1970:128).

*Both Sides of Piracy* employs numerous examples in an argumentative manner. For instance, the presenter claims that a positive effect of piracy is that it promotes “Greater concert attendance and product promotion for less established artists”. Following this statement, an example of a South African hip-hop band, ‘Driemanskap’, is provided (see Figure 6.5). The slideshow presents “bullets of information” (Kress 2003:16), while the accompanying image, besides revealing the number of members in the band, also provides nuance of the ‘vibe’ of the band. The presenter states that Driemanskap “have been playing together since 2001”. On platforms like MySpace, they “allow the public to download their music for free”. The presenter discloses that the group is under an independent label, and that they have a great following online. Although not explicitly stated, the inference is that Driemanskap benefited from piracy online. The example, in this way, can be seen as evidence for the statement proposed.

Visual	Spoken
<p>Slide 13:</p> <div style="background-color: #e0f0ff; padding: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Example - Driemanskap</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since 2001</li> <li>• On grounds like MySpace, they allow the public to download their music for free.</li> <li>• Other lesser-known artists upload their music for download under this page to grab attention and gain followership.</li> <li>• Greater followership, more popular.</li> </ul> </div>	<p>An example is ‘Driemanskap’, which is a South African hip-hop band. They have been playing together since 2001. And on grounds like Myspace, they allow the public to download their music for free, and their record label is an independent label.</p> <p>And lesser known artists upload their music on their page so that <i>other</i> people, who are followers of the group, can actually download the link. So their page is like a link between, you know, been lesser known artists and the public. So, in that way, there is a promotion</p> <p>And they have great followership, and then, which makes them popular.</p>

Figure 6.5. The example as a rhetorical device

In another instance, the example has the function of refuting a counterargument proposed. One of the claims made about piracy in the ‘negative aspects’ section is that it leads to decrease in sales. This claim is refuted in the ‘positive aspects’ section, where the presenter indicates through a graph the increase in sales of songs on iTunes, an online music vendor operated by Apple Inc. Once again, no direct link is made, but the inference is that piracy has not affected sales. Instead, it may have indirectly helped sales through product promotion. As such, the example refutes the claim about sales being affected, and functions as evidence for the assertion that piracy helps product promotion. In total, five examples are provided in the ‘positive effects’ section. Each of the examples has been prudently chosen to demonstrate that piracy has not generated economic losses, but rather gains for both the artist and the industry. The examples, in this sense, are carefully selected evidence with persuasive force. According to Brandt (1970), the example persuades by appealing to the more specific.

The example is also employed in *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* as a rhetorical device. One of the three videos played in the PowerPoint offers a narrative account of a teenager who was forced into prostitution as a result of poverty and lack of education. Titled “Nekome’s true story: How prostitution chose me”, the video serves as evidence for the claim – “Many prostitutes are tortured, degraded, beaten and forced into prostitution”. The video offers an example of how prostitutes are abused and involuntarily driven into prostitution. The focus on a single individual personalises the argument, and brings in a human factor to which the audience can relate. Section 6.6.1 further explores how the semiotic resources in the video work to fashion emotion.

## **6.6 Interpersonal resources for establishing social interactions in PowerPoint**

This section examines the interpersonal resources employed to construct argument in the two PowerPoint presentations. It begins with a consideration of how audiences can be persuaded to take up the argument through emotional appeals. Next, it considers how live narration can draw the audience into a closer social relation. The section proceeds to examine the implications of delivering the argument before a live audience, before concluding with a consideration of how authority and credibility can be conferred through a combination of resources available through PowerPoint.

### 6.6.1 Pathos: orchestrating emotions through images, speech and music

Orchestration is concerned with “the processes of *selecting/assembling/designing* the semiotic ‘materials’ which seem essential to meet the rhetor’s *interests* and which will be given shape as the semiotic entity of *text* as an *ensemble*, through the processes of *design*” (Kress 2010:162). To put it simply, it is concerned with how semiotic resources come together as a text. ‘Nekome’s Story’, from *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*, is highly emotive, largely due to the careful orchestration of the modes in the presentation. Three modes dominate the narrative: speech, image and music. The speech primarily communicates the ideational content as it provides an account of the specifics in Nekome’s life story. The visual display, composed of a montage of still images, offers a snippet of life as a prostitute. As such, it acts as a backdrop to Nekome’s story. The piano soundtrack, ‘Kiss the rain’ by Yiruma, played alongside the speech and visual display, adds ambience to the narrative.

The narrative begins with one of the presenters contextualising it. She says, “This is the true story about Nekome, who is a survivor of prostitution. She’s escaped prostitution now. We’re gonna speak from her voice...about her story”. At about the time that Nekome’s name is mentioned, an extreme close-up image of a female with her hands covering her face, revealing only one eye, is presented. Following the contextualisation, faint piano keys gradually fade in. The presenter then goes on to say, “Okay, she starts off saying, many people think that prostitution is a choice. Prostitution is...*not* a choice. It chose me”. Alongside the recitation of the last two sentences – “Prostitution is...*not* a choice. It chose me” – the piano crescendos and hits a high note. This coincides with a dissolve into a second image that depicts, from a low angle, females walking in a red-light district. A transcript of the opening sequence is provided in Figure 6.6.

The modes and semiotic resources in this sequence have been carefully orchestrated. The last two sentences of the speech are made salient through the slightly longer pause before the phrase “not a choice”, and the stress on the word ‘not’. The melody of the piano building up and hitting a high note at this point arouses a tear-jerking emotion. Said to coincide with the change in image, the ‘not’ in the narration negates the life depicted in it. The image communicates a sense of despondency and forlornness. These feelings are further accentuated by the flickering of the screen, along with the melancholic piano melody. The words and feelings are left hanging in the air as the presenter pauses some time before starting on the next sentence. It is clear from this extract that the presentation has been “‘scored’ with care

and precision. The modes involved have been chosen with rhetorical intent for their affordances and the orchestration has been designed with the characteristics of the specific environment” (Kress 2010:161).






Image	Speech	Music
<p>1</p>  <p>dissolve</p>	<p>Okay, this is just a true story about Nekome, who is a survivor of prostitution. She’s escaped prostitution now. We’re gonna speak from her voice... about her story.</p>	<p>[Piano sound track – ‘Kiss the rain’ by Yiruma]</p> <p>No Sound</p>
<p>2</p>  <p>dissolve</p>	<p>Okay, she starts off by saying, many people think that prostitution is a choice. Prostitution is... <i>not</i> a choice. It chose me.</p> <p>[PAUSE: <i>Screen flickers...</i>]</p> <p>And then she says, my story is about the voice that is inside of me that was rid.</p>	<p>soft high (treble) key gradually fades in</p> <p>Melody crescendos and hits a high note</p>
<p>3</p>  <p>dissolve</p>	<p>You deserve more, as I lay on my back counting dots on the ceiling...pretending I wasn’t being molested.</p>	<p>Melody moves from high note to low note</p>
<p>4</p>  <p>dissolve</p>	<p>My story is about a childhood cut short, quickly interrupted by sex, drugs, neglect,</p>	<p>Cords appear</p>
<p>5</p> 	<p>and mental abuse.</p>	

Figure 6.6. Orchestration of modes

### 6.6.2 Factoring live performance in PowerPoint

In video and comics, social relations are established through resources that illustrate distance conceptually, such as shot distance and volume of sound/voice. In PowerPoint presentations, the live factor involves a physical distance between the presenter and the audience. In the case of *Both Sides of Piracy* and *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*, a social distance is initially established as the presenters stand at a computer, less than a meter away from the audience. In *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*, as the presentation progresses, the audience is drawn into a closer social relation. Here, the resources employed in ‘Nekome’s Story’ play a critical role in re-establishing the social relation.

In *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*, the live narrative that takes place in ‘Nekome’s Story’ allows the presenters to establish a closer social relation with its audience. At the start of the narrative, the use of an extreme close-up image draws the audience in to the position of a close confidant (Image 1 of Figure 6.6). As the presenter proceeds to narrate the story on behalf of the protagonist, Nekome, the presenter’s voice comes to embody that of Nekome. A blurring of boundary between the two transpires. As the presenter narrates, the impression is given that the victim could have been the presenter, the audience, or someone they know. The live narration brings Nekome’s presence into the classroom and personalises the argument. *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* is a demand argument. It calls upon the audience to “get involved and help” in various ways. The intimate social relation established renders the demand more compelling.

The theoretical framework in Chapter 2 proposed that as multimodal social semiotics assumes that a sign is always newly made, a multimodal social semiotic approach to argument must assume that argument is also always newly made in every instance of making. This notion of argument as being ‘new’ in every instance of making is made especially evident through the live factor in PowerPoint presentations. *Both Sides of Piracy* is an ‘offer’ argument. Not only do the presenters offer two sides of the piracy argument, but they also offer possible solutions to curb the situation, so that “extreme bills” like the Stop Online Piracy Act do not arise. Admittedly, the information that is offered has been strategically premeditated. Both the slideshow and the accompanying speech have been designed prior to the presentation. Nevertheless, unlike video and comics, where the final product becomes temporarily fixed in text, presentations only become fixed *after* the presentation. This means that *during* the presentation, that which is planned can be open to change, even if it is only a

subtle change. Even though the presentation is unidirectional, uninterrupted by audience interjections, the audience's mere presence sets up a dialogical relationship that compels the presenter to speak to them as if they are engaged in conversation. This prompts spontaneous changes when the planned content is considered in relation to the live audience. For example, in offering information about a current event issue, the presenter had scripted the following speech.

Pirate bay: In November last year, ISP's were asked to voluntarily block The Pirate Bay because of the damage it was accused of doing to the UK economy. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, 2012, it was ruled by the High Court.

On the day of the presentation, however, these were the actual words uttered.

Okay so, these are some current events that have happened quite recently. The first thing is the pirate bay, which is a peer to peer network, on the internet which is, it's a *massive*...where you can download...it's like DC, which is on the internet...and in the UK a court order was issued literally a couple of weeks ago now, for it to be...blocked... so, that's quite a big move in terms of restrictions, restrictions from the ISP.

In the actual utterance, information such as dates and the reason proposed for the block of the website have been omitted. Instead, there is addition of information such as that Pirate Bay is a peer-to-peer network. The network is also likened to 'DC', the university's intra-network. Since only members of the university community will understand the reference, the address here signals communication to an 'in' crowd. The presented speech is more conversational, and the content slightly altered on account of the audience. This suggests that, subject to the conditions of the environment, argument designed in PowerPoint can undergo spontaneous change.

Gabriel (2008) observes that a criticism of the use of PowerPoint in the classroom is that it can impede improvisation. He writes,

PowerPoint can substantially limit a lecturer's ability to deviate from a preconceived lecture plan, improvise or develop a new line of thinking in the course of a lecture. Like a set of rails fixed on the ground, PowerPoint slides lock the thinking process along a single linear path, blocking impromptu variations and digressions; in short, improvisation and exploration (Gabriel 2008:258).

In most presentations, some degree of preparation is usually involved. The sequential logic that governs PowerPoint slides may prescribe a linear progression of content, but this path is no different from notes planned for a speech or lesson plans for a class. To diverge or not, to improvise or not, is not subject to the software, but to the presenter. If desired, the presenter can easily escape from the slide view and skip a few slides, or pause the progression of the

content with a side anecdote. I have attended presentations where, to elaborate on a point, the presenter distracted from the slideshow to offer examples from the internet. Contrary to claims that PowerPoint impedes improvisation, the example here suggests that control of the direction a presentation takes is subject to the presenter. The fact that a presentation is a live performance leaves it open to human conditions such as spontaneity. From this perspective, it can be said that argument through PowerPoint is more malleable compared to video or comics, as it can be designed on the spot, in time with the presentation, and in the co-presence of the audience. The idea that argument is always newly made is highlighted in PowerPoint in particular as, subject to the environment and audience in each instance of presentation, the argument is never entirely the same. In other words, the live factor involved in PowerPoint presentations conditions the argument to being newly made in each instance of presentation. The next two sections consider resources for constructing authority and credibility in PowerPoint.

### **6.6.3 Ethos: establishing authority and credibility in PowerPoint**

Bullet points, colour and mathematical symbols are some resources that can visually convey a sense of authority in an argument. Bullets points are the default resource for presenting content in PowerPoint. According to Kress, information presented through bullets is

- more insistent,
- more urgent,
- more official (2003:16).

Bullet points ‘fire’ bullets of information, “abrupt and challenging, not meant to be continuous and coherent, not inviting reflection and consideration, not insinuating themselves into our thinking. They are hard and direct, and not to be argued with” (Kress 2003:17). By presenting information as definite and uncontested, bullet points can project a sense of authority. However, their use to present information has been much criticised. Shaw *et al.* (1998), for instance, argue that “[b]ullet points leave critical relationships unspecified” (cited in Tufte 2003:5). Gabriel posits that they “obscure contents and assume an unquestioned authority that conceals weaknesses in analysis, argument and structure” (2008:264). Despite the criticisms, it is necessary to recognise that bullet points, and lists in general, have specific affordances. Citing Feyerabend (1987), Gabriel posits that “(properly constructed) lists are ‘basic ingredients of common sense’ and indeed early forms of theory” (2008:264). He identifies Aristotle, Max Weber and Burkes as prominent figures who made use of lists to

develop theories. Besides potential building blocks of theory, Gabriel observes that lists can help structure thinking, act as punctuation points in presentations, and possess mnemonic and aesthetic qualities (2008:264). The point is that lists and bullet points, like any other resource, have constraints and potentials that make them more apt for communicating certain kinds of content than others. Identifying their potentials and limitations can help bring awareness of how to better use them. In addition, although bullet points are the default resource for presenting content in PowerPoint, it is necessary to recognise that they are not the only resource. Combined with a range of other resources, critical relationships in PowerPoint can be established. This is demonstrated in the example in Figure 6.7.

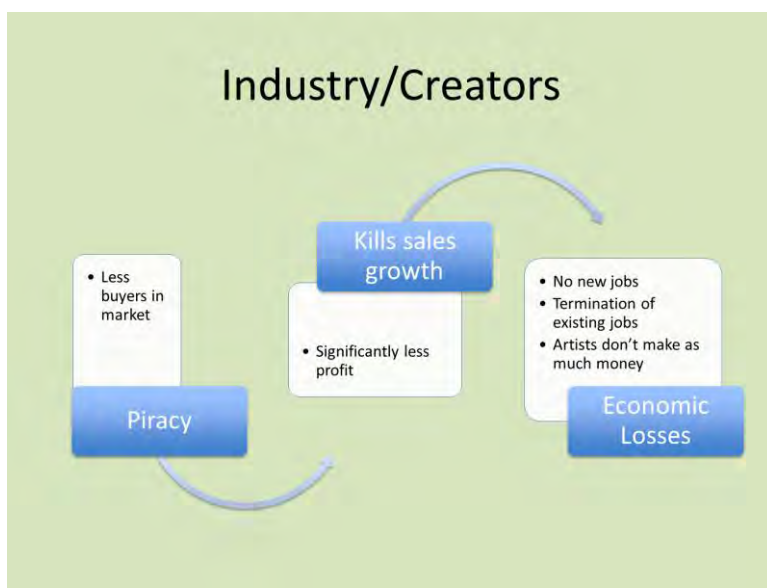


Figure 6.7a. Explicating a cause-and-effect relation

Figure 6.7 is a slide from *Both Sides of Piracy*. It presents a diagram that communicates the causal relation between piracy and economic losses. Three key concepts, represented by units of writing in blue text boxes, are made salient in the diagram: “Piracy”, “Kills sales growth” and “Economic Losses”. Curve arrows linking the concepts help form a causal relation between the three concepts, allowing the separate units of text to be interpreted as a whole. In other words, with the curve arrows, the three separate units of writing can now be read as a complete unit: Piracy kills sales growth, which leads to economic losses. Information captured in overlapping text boxes above and below the units of writing serve to elaborate on the key concepts. For example, above the “Piracy” text box are the words “Less buyers in the market” presented through a bullet point. The relation between the two units of text can be read as: Piracy means there are less buyers in the market. Each bullet identifies a single

point to be communicated. With the text box “Economic Losses”, there are three points: “No new jobs”, “Termination of existing jobs” and “Artists don’t make as much money”. Written as sentences, the three ideas to be communicated through the points would have been too cluttered and tedious to read. The bullets help distinguish the separate points by marking them out visually. As such, the bullets help render the writing more suitable for visual display. The structure and simplification of the diagram makes visible the cause-and-effect relation in the argument proposed. In addition, by presenting the argument as compact, neat units, the diagram projects a sense of authority. This contrasts with the accompanying speech.

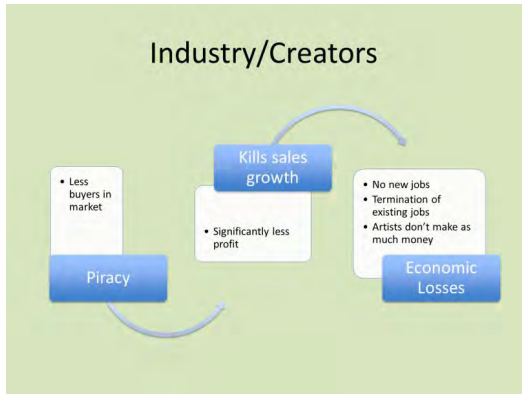
Visual	Spoken
<p>Slide 9:</p>  <pre> graph TD     Piracy --&gt; LessBuyers[Less buyers in market]     Piracy --&gt; LessProfit[Significantly less profit]     LessBuyers --&gt; KillsGrowth[Kills sales growth]     LessProfit --&gt; KillsGrowth     KillsGrowth --&gt; EconomicLosses[Economic Losses]     EconomicLosses --&gt; NoNewJobs[No new jobs]     EconomicLosses --&gt; Termination[Termination of existing jobs]     EconomicLosses --&gt; ArtistsMoney[Artists don't make as much money]     </pre>	<p>So, how it affects the industry or creators of the original work.</p> <p>Um, this is a graph showing how...because piracy is...becoming so prevalent, obviously this applies to the market that are actually paying for the things...which leads to...um decreases in the growth of sales...so, that means that there is way less profit...so, world-wide, forty two billion dollars are lost each year, in the music industry alone, due to piracy. Um, because of these...economic losses, that, that have a kindda of a after effect, so...no new jobs are created...because people don’t want to invest...um, creative content, so jobs are being taken away. Examples are like technicians, artists, producers...anyone that is involved in any of this. They’re not going to invest any more money in it. So, um...ya, then also, artists, for example, smaller artists...companies don’t want to take the risk with people that do not assure them revenue, so they aren’t given a chance. So, it is kindda harder for them to come into the industry.</p> <p>Um, and then, so, there is an international organisation, with about...80 countries, that tries to keep a safe and legal digital world between the software industry and its hardware partners and stuff, and, they have done research saying that um, forty, four hundred thousand jobs can be created each year, if...there was a ten per cent reduction in piracy, which is a huge number, if you think about it...</p>

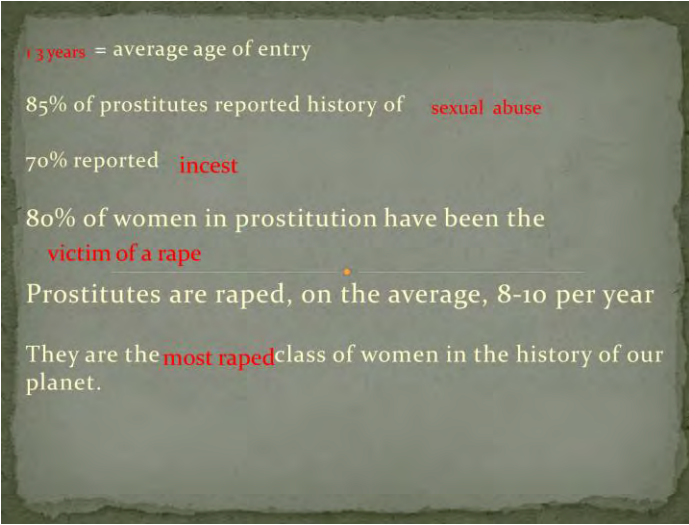
Figure 6.7b. Explicating a cause-and-effect relation

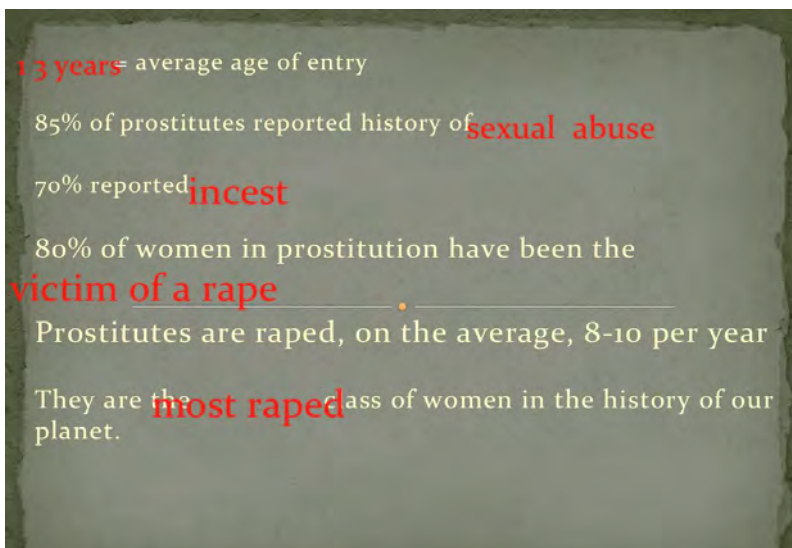
The speech that accompanies the slide, besides explicating that which is displayed, provides additional information such as “forty two billion dollars are lost each year in the music industry alone, due to piracy”; examples of people affected including “technicians, artists, producers”; and that research suggests that “four hundred thousand jobs can be created each year, if there was a ten per cent reduction in piracy”. The information divulged through the speech helps fortify the argument that piracy leads to significant economic losses.

Characterised by markers of conversational speech such as “um” “ya” and some mumbling, the accompanying speech is less neat and less assertive than the diagram. Although the argument is lead by the speech uttered by the presenter, it is necessary to recognise that it is the slide that is called to attention. The audience not only sits facing the screen but the screen also dominates the room. Except for the voice that guides the slideshow, the presenter’s presence is barely discernible. As the centrepiece in the room, the diagram is able to mask the hesitations and lend the presentation a degree of authority. This is not only because the diagram presents the argument as a neat, organised unit, but the display of the slide itself also projects a ‘not to be argued with’ ambience. As Craig and Amernic put it,

the display of slides is a powerful activity. Slides are often shown embedded in a luminescent square of light, surrounded by darkness. This seems to disallow any discussion of their truth status – and it privileges them by imposing a well-demarcated frame (2006:155).

Besides bullet points and the structuredness of a text, colour and mathematical symbols are other resources employed to communicate authority. Figure 6.8 is a slide from *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*. It offers statistical information about sexual abuse and prostitution. The information on the slide is presented all at once. The presenter initiates the delivery of the content through speech with the phrase, “According to the U.S. state department of health and safety”. Attributing the information to the U.S. Department of Health and Safety at the onset affords the content credibility. As the presenter goes over each line on the slide, key words highlighted in red are enlarged through the animation feature. For instance, with the line “13 years = average age of entry”, the presenter says, “the average age of entry into prostitution was thirteen years of age”. Upon uttering “thirteen years of age”, the writing on display – “13 years” – grows larger in size. In this way, writing is treated as a moving image. The use of the equal sign in place of the verb “is” brings forth a mathematical discourse. As the presenter goes on to report the statistics using a listing syntax, climaxing at “*And the shocking fact that...*”, a notion of ‘addition’ is evoked. The last line, “they are the *most raped* classes of women, in the history of our planet”, appears to present the sum of all that is said before. Like bullet points, numbers and equations can come across as hard and absolute. Such is the rhetorical power of numbers that a statistical discourse can confer a sense of unquestioned authority. This, combined with the use of red – a colour associated with the teacher’s correction and the commanding stop sign – communicates a ‘not to be argued with’ attitude.

Visual	Spoken
<p>Slide 11:</p> 	<p>According to the U.S. state department of health and safety, they did a report, that the average age of entry into prostitution was thirteen years of age.</p> <p>85 per cent of prostitutes reported sexual abuse. 70 per cent reported incest. 80 per cent have been victims to rape.</p> <p>And the shocking fact that on average, prostitutes are raped 8 to 10 times per year...</p> <p>They are the <i>most raped</i> classes of women, in the history of our planet.</p>



Slide after speech

Figure 6.8. Projecting authority through colour and statistical discourse

*Both Sides of Piracy* and *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*, like the arguments explored in the previous two chapters, made use of screen captures as a resource to establish credibility.

Figure 6.10 presents an interesting approach to presenting screen captures, enabled through the animation feature of the PowerPoint software. As previously mentioned, examples can possess argumentative force. Figure 6.9 is a slide from *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* that seeks to demonstrate the prominence of the prostitution issue in current events. In total, eight screen captures of headlines of online articles are presented. Each of the headlines put forward links prostitution to abuse. The examples support the main claim put forward that

“many prostitutes are tortured, degraded, beaten and forced into prostitution”. In this way, the examples serve as evidence to the claim. The screen captures are presented one by one, one piling on top of another, through the animation feature. This projects a sense of abundance. The examples, as such, not only illustrate but also persuade through quantity.



Figure 6.9. Screen captures as a resource for establishing credibility

Another resource employed to establish credibility is intertextual referencing. Referencing another text enables one to appropriate attitudes associated with the referenced text. The hyperlink function in PowerPoint enables one to create links to websites, documents or slides within the presentation. This allows the presenter to make references to other texts through the click of a button. Figure 6.10 provides an example from *Both Sides of Piracy* in which the hyperlink feature enabled the presenter to appropriate the credibility of an authorial figure. In Figure 6.10, the argument is put forward that the ‘Stop Online Piracy Act’ bill is “dangerous”. Three reasons are listed via bullet points. In the speech that accompanies the slide, the presenter elaborates on each point. On the slide, below the three bullet points is a screen capture of Wikipedia founder, Jimmy Wales. Upon clicking on the image, the audience is directed to YouTube, to a clip of Jimmy Wales discussing how the ‘Stop Online Piracy Act’ bill will affect Wikipedia and freedom of speech, on CNN. In this approach, the hyperlink allows the presenter to appropriate the voice of Jimmy Wales to establish credibility.


Visual	Spoken
<p>Slide 7:</p> <div style="background-color: #f9d5e5; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;"> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Why is it dangerous?</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content sharing</li> <li>Unreasonable Punishment</li> <li>Unrealistic Censorship</li> </ul>  </div>	<p>So, here are... some of the dangers... if it were to happen...</p> <p>So, content sharing is, we would not be able to use Youtube, Facebook or Twitter like the way we are using it now, because everything would have to be reviewed before it will have to, before it could be posted.</p> <p>And then unreasonable punishments, um, if you...it's like, it will be a felony offence...for you to post a copyrighted song or video, so if you were to send me a song on Youtube, you would become a felon...and if your video has 2500 views, that means you are a felon... you could be fined 1000 US dollars and you would have a criminal record... and that's like, um, could be a problem in your life for getting jobs and stuff...</p> <p>And then, there is also unrealistic censorship. So, it gives the ISPs...like the right to look at what you're looking at. So, here is a video that I downloaded here, and it's talking about... this...</p> <p>[VIDEO played through hyperlink: Wikipedia founder on CNN discussing how SOPA can affect Wikipedia and freedom of speech]</p>

Figure 6.10. Establishing credibility through hyperlink.

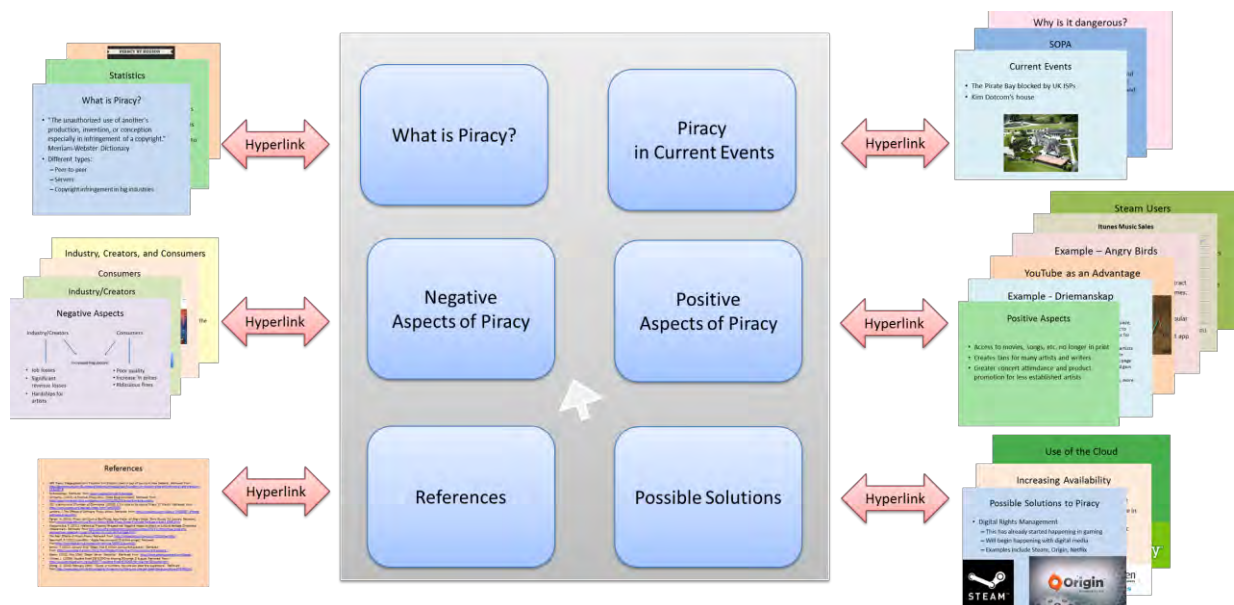


Figure 6.11. Freeing up point of entry via hyperlink.

In effect, the resources that are employed to establish credibility in the two PowerPoints here are no different from the resources employed in the videos and comics explored in the last two chapters. What is different is the manner in which the resources are presented. The animation feature enabled through PowerPoint software allowed the presenters in *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* to present screen captures of headlines. While the screen captures themselves already confer credibility through the aspect of online ‘reality’ captured, the animation feature further enforces the believability by evoking a sense of abundance. The idea is put forward that the claim posited must be valid due to the number of sources supporting it. In *Both Sides of Piracy*, the hyperlink feature enabled the presenter to appropriate the credibility of an outside source through the click of a button. The hyperlink supports links to websites, documents and the slide presentation itself. This opens up various possibilities for intertextual references to occur. A criticism of PowerPoint is that the sequential logic of the slides forces a linear logic, limiting digression (Gabriel 2008). The affordance of the hyperlink to make links within the slideshow itself means that, if desired, it is possible to create various paths to accessing content in the presentation. To take *Both Sides of Piracy* as an example, the six parts of the argument (introduction, statement of facts, refutation, main body, conclusion and reference list) could each have been represented by a text box on a single slide (see Figure 6.11). Working from this main slide, the presenter can choose the point of entry and the direction which the argument will take, by hypertexting the boxes to the relevant slides. This breaks the linear logic of the slides and offers the presenter choice of direction. The last section of this analysis considers resources for constructing layout.

### **6.7 Compositional resources: template versus blank slide design**

*Both Sides of Piracy* embodies the standard approach to organising content in PowerPoint. The slides, for the most part, are constructed from the default template offered by the software. The template provides the presentation a sense of conformity and structuredness. In Figure 6.12, for example, three levels of hierarchy are visible on this slide. The heading ‘SOPA’, featuring the topic of the slide, is the first level of hierarchy. This can be seen as akin to the ‘topic sentence’ in the essay. The second level of hierarchy is marked by a bullet point with the question ‘What is it?’ The question functions as a lead-in to the body of the text. The third level of hierarchy, a division of the bullet prior, presents the answer to the question. A key feature of writing in the age of screen is that writing is frequently

accompanied by image (Kress 2003). The last piece of information on this slide is an image that spells out the acronym SOPA.



Figure 6.12. Designing from a template layout.

Although multimodal social semiotics foregrounds the rhetor's agency to design, it also recognises that the rhetor's choices are as much designed by their own interests as by the social. The layout design here can be attributed largely to individual choice, but also partly to the software design in guiding the presenters to this choice. In investigating the interrelatedness between normativity and software, Djonov and van Leeuwen posit that PowerPoint interface "creates asymmetries of access, making some options easier to access than other, and thereby functioning to guide users in the semiotic practice of designing and presenting slideshows" (2012:128). PowerPoint software is set with a number of default functions. Upon opening the software, users are faced with various template options; upon typing on text boxes, bullet points are the default resources. Djonov and van Leeuwen argue, that while the software may seem to offer users with an array of choices, the default functions, in fact, steer them towards certain norms. In this way, "PowerPoint's default layout options, through their presentation and the possibilities for combining difference graphic and typographic elements they make available, [...] function to guide users in the semiotic practice of designing slide layout" (Djonov & van Leeuwen 2013:17). This highlights how social norms built into PowerPoint software can be disguised as choice.

Compared to *Both Sides of Piracy*, the layout design in *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* has a less regulated look. Although the background graphic that is present in all the slides is selected from the template option, the default grids that came with the template have been

ignored or deleted. This, in essence, leaves the presenters with a blank slide from which to design their argument. Without grids directing the user to fill in content in specified areas, the presenters must rely on their own design and aesthetic senses. In this case, keeping in mind the orientation of the assignment, the presenters have consciously chosen to flaunt the rules that regulate PowerPoint software, and exploit its affordances. Figure 6.13 offers an example of what can be achieved when this happens.

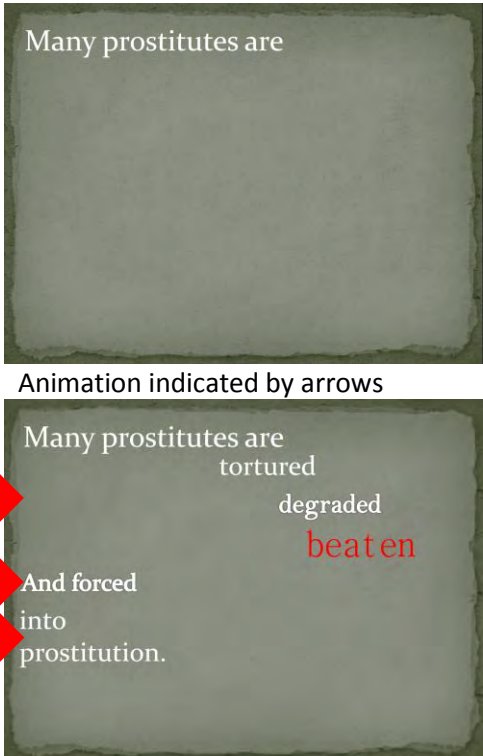
Visual	Spoken
<p>Slide 3:</p>  <p>Animation indicated by arrows</p>	<p>We had a recording that says...</p>

Figure 6.13. Designing from a blank layout

The slideshow in Figure 6.13 begins with the words “Most prostitutes are”, aligned against the top-left side of the screen. A few seconds later, the words “tortured”, “degraded” and “beaten” appear, one following the other, each word pushing the other a little further down and a little further to the left side of the screen, until it culminates in the last word, “beaten”, written in red and slightly larger in size compared to the two words prior. Then, beginning in the middle-left side of the screen, the words “And forced” appear, followed by “into prostitution.” beneath it. Kress posits that, in writing for the age of screen, “the *textual entity* is treated as a *visual entity* in ways in which the page never was” (italics in original, 2003:165). This is exemplified in this slide, where there is a distinct blurring of boundaries

between the visual and the written mode. The writing still follows the logic of sequence and the logic of time, although time is subject to the control of the presenter by means of the animation feature, which presents the words one after the other. The effect is that it forces the audience to follow the writing at the pace set out by the presenter. As such, the careful coordination and spatial arrangement of the words give the presenter a degree of control over the audience's focus and attention. Tufte describes the method of line-by-line 'slow reveal' as a "dreaded build sequence" that leaves the audience "stupefied" as they are made to wait for the presenter as he/she unveils and reads out a line one by one (2003:23). In this case, though, the outcome is surprisingly effective because of the unusual spatial arrangement of the words and, in part, due to the absence of a spoken component. Originally, the students had made a recording that echoed the words on the slideshow, but as a result of some technological mishaps, this was not played on the day of the presentation. Instead, the slide was shown with the visual component only. In a dimly lit, enclosed space, the carefully timed words have visual resonance. The intensity of the words is further amplified by the silence in the air.

In sum, *Both Sides of Piracy* and *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* illustrate two potential approaches to layout design in PowerPoint. The template option provides users with placeholders to fit in content, while the blank slide option essentially leaves users with a blank canvas to work from. Each approach has its own affordances. The template approach can be said to be less risky. It provides the user with socially accepted approaches to presenting content. This option, for instance, ensures that all presentations come with a title slide, which guarantees each presentation title. In this study, for example, the video *Legalisation of Marijuana* from Chapter 4 and *Kony 2012* the comic from Chapter 5, have no official titles attached. The template option offers layout as configured by a professional, although it may not be known to the user which options are best for which occasion (Djonov & van Leeuwen 2013). Compared to the template option, the blank slide can be said to be riskier, as it requires the user to rely on his/her own design and aesthetic sense. This can allow the user to push the boundaries of what is socially accepted, and produce exciting, innovative work, as demonstrated in *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution*. This option, however, can also be hazardous if the user is not attuned to design and aesthetics. The next section concludes the chapter with a consideration of the affordances of producing argument through PowerPoint.

## 6.8 Concluding comments

This chapter has examined how two groups of students approached constructing academic argument in PowerPoint. Occurrences that transpired during the production process signal the possibilities for group work to function as a resource to bridge gaps in technological knowledge. Knowledge of technologies is central to a multimodal approach to academic argument, but in the South African context, there are huge disparities in digital literacies. The students' keenness to ask for help and learn from their peers points towards the possibilities for group work to overcome disparities in technological knowledge. The production process also highlighted the potential place for the essay to be integrated into a multimodal project. I have suggested that the essay's aptness for structuring thought and argument makes it suitable as a draft.

Insight into the pedagogical affordances of PowerPoint for constructing argument is offered through the resources outlined in this chapter. PowerPoint encourages students to consider a range of resources for constructing argument, such as bullet points, colour, animation, hyperlink and even ambience. These are resources that are not ordinarily encountered (some not able to be realised) in written arguments. The different resources prompt students to consider different approaches to constructing academic argument. For instance, the students employed the animation feature to produce argument through superimposition. By overlapping two different modes that embody opposing views, the technique of superimposition is able to bring two contrasting positions into dialogue. The hyperlink feature was also drawn on to establish credibility. Hyperlink enables direct citation by linking one to the original source. I have proposed that the feature may also present possibilities for different entry points into presenting an argument through in-text hyperlink, that is, hyperlinking slides within the presentation. Perhaps the most distinct affordance of PowerPoint is that students are called upon to engage with oral presentation. Assignments in Media Studies, and Humanities in general, have privileged written assignment, while oral skills have been largely neglected. The students were not confident speakers, as they have rarely, if ever, spoken before a crowd. Ayanda, for instance, begins her speech confessing, "Um, okay, so, this is the first time that I'm presenting". Constructing an argument through PowerPoint encourages students to practice oral delivery. This means learning to speak before a crowd, and to be more aware of resources such as gesture, posture and speech delivery in presentations.

This chapter has posited that it is important to recognise the affordances, the potentials and constraints, of a semiotic resource for meaning-making. The bullet point, for instance, may not be apt for creating dialogical relations, but can function as punctuation points, marking out points to be made visually. I have argued that it is important to recognise that semiotic resources do not work in isolation. They work with other resources to communicate a message or argument in a multimodal ensemble. This chapter demonstrates that the bullet point, combined with other resources, can establish critical relationships. On the whole, presenting an argument through PowerPoint can prompt students to practice and experiment with presentation resources (that which is employed live in the presentation), display resources (that which is shown on the screen), and the coordination between the two. The following and final chapter draws out the implications of a multimodal approach to academic argument for pedagogy.

## **Chapter 7. Conclusions and Implications: Towards a Pedagogy of Recognition**

### **7.1 Overview of chapter**

This last chapter of the thesis draws out the implications of the study for pedagogy. It begins with a review of the semiotic resources drawn upon to realise argument in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Next, it outlines the affordances, the potentials and limitations, of a multimodal approach to academic argument. The chapter then addresses the implications of this approach to academic argument for pedagogy. It posits that a multimodal approach to academic argument requires a theory of pedagogy that foregrounds recognition. It argues that such a pedagogy has the potential to bring about a culture of innovation and social justice. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the contributions of the study.

### **7.2 A review of the semiotic resources for constructing multimodal academic argument**

This study has sought to investigate a multimodal approach to constructing and analysing academic argument. It has done so by interrogating how students produce academic argument in video, comics and PowerPoint, in a particular context, using textual analysis. The textual analysis was executed using a framework based on Halliday's metafunctional principle, which offers simultaneous analysis of the role ideational content plays in constructing argument, the way that interpersonal resources position the audience in relation to an argument, and how organising principles create coherence in an argument. The framework combines theories from both rhetoric and social semiotics. Its strength lies in that it can be applicable across genres and media. Below, I offer a review of the ideational, interpersonal and compositional resources that were employed to realise argument in the texts explored in this study.

#### **7.2.1 Ideational resources for reflecting on multimodal academic argument**

Ideational resources for constructing argument are concerned with resources that help reflect on issues in the world. Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) categories of experience, I have posited 'conceptual' and 'narrative' as two approaches to reflecting on an argument. I have proposed that a conceptual argument is characterised by a timeless quality, and structures information according to class, structure or meaning, while a narrative argument is characterised by processes of change, and structures information as unfolding events. The arguments explored in this study have been conceptual, although some have

drawn on elements of narrative as support. The videos in Chapter 4 illustrated two approaches to organising conceptual arguments: linear and dialectical. In a linear progression, the argument is construed in a more or less logical sequence, moving from claim to evidence. In a dialectic approach, a rapport occurs between two parties or ‘voices’. The one part takes the role of asking questions, and the other the role of providing answers. In the video, *Legalisation of Marijuana*, this structure was realised by juxtaposing interviews with sourced video extracts, that is, placing side-by-side two different types of image resources. The comics in Chapter 5 revealed two approaches to embedding narrative in conceptual arguments: horizontal and vertical. In a horizontal approach, the narrative extends the conceptual information, building onto the conceptual ideas. In the comic, *ACTA-NSTEIN*, this structure was realised by juxtaposing exposition with narrative. A vertical approach, in contrast, embeds narrative within the conceptual information. The narrative does not expand on the conceptual information, but offers a different insight into the conceptual ideas proposed. I have suggested that this structure is better suited for an audience with inside knowledge of the social event that prompted the argument. In Chapter 6, the organisation of the arguments in the PowerPoints took the shape of the classic Quintilian five-part arrangement. The students, however, reorganised the usual order of the parts, and added a sixth component (the reference list), to address the requirements of argument for the academic domain.

The organisational structures are not unique to the genre and media employed, although it can be argued that they played a role in their realisation. For example, the linear progression of argument in *Truths Be Told* is made possible because the video, as a medium for distribution, presents information in a sequential manner. With *Legalisation of Marijuana*, the students were able to realise a dialectical argument owing to digital video’s capacity to use different types of image resources. As mentioned, a question and answer rapport is established by juxtaposing raw material (interviews) with sourced texts. In the comic *ACTA-NSTEIN*, the book as the medium of distribution played a critical role in the success of the horizontal placement of narrative. The way the narrative extended the conceptual argument was fortified by the placement of the narrative on pages that coincided with page turning. In Chapter 6, the reorganisation of the five-part structure may be a result of PowerPoint as a presentation genre where the ‘live factor’ impels one to end off on a high note.

Besides ways of organising conceptual argument, this study also investigated ways in which difference in argument can be realised. Following Kress (1989), I have defined argument as a cultural textual form for bringing about difference. I have proposed that difference is the ingredient that is needed to create tension, and to bring a topic under controversy. The texts in this study have illustrated various ways of achieving difference. Difference can be accomplished by creating ideational divergence within the same mode, or between two different modes. Within the same mode, the students have demonstrated that difference can be realised through contrasting conjunctions in the verbal mode, and juxtaposition of two images with different ideational content in the visual mode. Between different modes, difference can be realised through superimposition or the overlapping of one mode over another. I have further suggested that rhetorical strategies that create ideational incongruity, such as irony, satire and parody, may also function as resources for establishing difference.

Various rhetorical strategies for reflecting on an argument have been explored in this study. Chapter 4 disclosed how analogy can invite interpretation of an argument through comparison. Chapter 5 illustrated how personification can encourage reflection of an abstract concept by attributing human qualities to it, how irony can persuade one to reflect on and discard a given proposition by linking it to another with a difference in meaning, and how satire can prompt rejection of a proposition through ridicule. Chapter 6 demonstrated how the example can be argumentative by appealing to the specific. It also illustrated how a narrative as an example can personalise an argument. Although rhetorical strategies are not bound to any genre, it is necessary to acknowledge that certain genres orient one towards the use of certain rhetorical strategies. For instance, as mentioned in Chapter 4, to stimulate a desire to know, documentaries often employ rhetorical questions as a persuasive device.

In sum, this study has identified organisational structures, difference, and rhetorical strategies as resources for reflecting on argument. Organisational structures provide ways of reflecting on the logic of an argument, the *logos*. The notion of difference offers insight into how tension is established in argument, and rhetorical strategies provide ways of reflecting on an argument by making links between concepts. The next section reviews the resources for interaction.

### **7.2.2 Interpersonal resources for constructing social relations**

Interpersonal resources for constructing argument are concerned with resources that position the audience in a particular social relation to the rhetor. Drawing from Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) notion of 'contact', I have posited 'demand' and 'offer' as two types of interaction in arguments. I have characterised a demand argument as one that calls the audience to some action, and an offer argument as one that is concerned with distributing information. The analysis of the texts in this study have demonstrated how, in order to persuade the audience to take up a call for action, demand arguments tend to make more effort to establish an affinity with the audience, while offer arguments tend to position the audience within a standard social distance. The social relations are realised variously through different modes and semiotic resources. Chapter 4, for instance, demonstrated how, visually, having the interviewer positioned in a frontal position addressing the audience can establish a social distance with the rhetor. Chapter 5 illustrated how, verbally, the use of 'I' and 'you' can draw the audience into personal proximity. Chapter 6 revealed how, aurally, live voiceover narration can create an intimate social relation.

This study has also examined various resources for establishing ethos in argument. The videos in Chapter 4 disclosed how image quality, editing and voiceover narration, among other resources can confer authority. It also demonstrated how statistical data and written citations, that is, visually marking out the origins of a source through writing, can establish credibility. The comics in Chapter 5 indicated how ethos can be established through visual signifiers that present the narrator as an authorial figure, through particular placement of frames, and through certain colour coordination. Conceptually, it revealed how ethos can be achieved through personification and acknowledging both sides of an argument. The PowerPoint presentations in Chapter 6 disclosed how visual resources, such as bullet points, visual structure (layout), colour and mathematical symbols, can create ethos. Interestingly, in all the chapters, screen capture surfaced as a resource for establishing credibility. Screen captures project credibility by encapsulating an aspect of online reality. This resource appears to have emerged with the online space as a new space for social interaction.

Another interpersonal resource examined was pathos. Chapter 4 illustrated how it is possible to appropriate emotions by drawing from images in popular culture. It also revealed how it is possible to cue the audience's reaction through sound conventions, such as a laugh track. Chapter 5 indicated how an implicit rhetoric can construct a 'double audience' (Fowler 2009)

and position the audience in ‘elitist’ terms (Adami 2012). An implicit rhetoric can persuade one to accept an argument by appealing to the audience’s desire to belong to the group that ‘knows’. Chapter 6 demonstrated how emotions can be fashioned through a careful orchestration of images, speech and music.

To summarise, this study has identified contact, distance, ethos and pathos as resources for constructing interpersonal relations in argument. Contact considers the type of interaction that the rhetor establishes with the audience, whether it is to demand action or impart a point of view. Distance positions the audience in particular social relations to the rhetor. Ethos is concerned with how the rhetor establishes an authorial and credible self, and pathos is concerned with the emotions that are fashioned to persuade the audience to accept an argument.

### **7.2.3 Compositional resources for constructing coherence**

Compositional resources for constructing argument are concerned with resources that establish coherence. This study has revealed a range of compositional resources for constructing academic argument in video, comics and PowerPoint. Chapter 4 identified voice, music and editing as framing devices employed in the student-produced videos. This chapter also paid particular attention to how sourced texts can be framed. In direct quotations or ‘manifest intertextuality’ (Fairclough 1992), the text cited is ‘manifestly marked’ by features on a text. The chapter illustrated how images in videos can be explicitly marked through logos that indicate the source of origin, or by simply overlaying writing on the images. It demonstrated how a written text can be cited through visually showing the page or passage from which the citation takes place and visually marking out the words cited through colour differentiation. This approach to citation allows an embodied sense of the text sourced as it enables one to see the materiality of the quoted text. A particularly interesting approach to citation was presented in *Legalisation of Marijuana*, where the cited text was shown through a television screen, which acted as a framing device akin to quotation marks.

In Chapter 5, frames, colour, layout and page turning surfaced as key compositional resources in the student-produced comics. The comic, *ACTA-NSTEIN*, for instance, demonstrated how the shift from exposition to narrative is made successful through a combination of careful page planning, colour coding and the use of page turning as a transitional device. Frames are crucial to the realisation of meaning in comics. Comics construct meaning through employing

images in sequence. It is frames that help in demarcating one image from another. *Kony 2012* the comic offers an example of how diagonal frames can create division and unity at the same time.

Chapter 6 presented the template and the blank slide as two approaches to layout design in PowerPoint. The default function of the software orients the user towards the use of templates. The template option provides the user with socially accepted approaches to layout design by directing the user to fill in content in designated spaces on the slide. The blank slide option, on the other hand, allows the user to design the layout. The students who produced *Stop Legalisation of Prostitution* have demonstrated the possibilities this option can offer through designing their slides and presentation in unconventional ways.

In sum, compositional resources are concerned with resources that organise the contents of an argument into a coherent whole. Most of the compositional resources highlighted here are particular to the genre or medium. This suggests that various genres and media can orient one towards the use of particular resources. The next section draws out the affordances of adopting a multimodal approach to academic argument.

### **7.3 A reflection on the affordances of a multimodal approach to academic argument**

Theoretically, this study has sought to put forward a theory of argument from a multimodal perspective. Drawing from multimodal social semiotics, it has posited that argument is motivated, shaped by the interest of the rhetor using socially and culturally available resources. This view of argument recognises that the form chosen to represent an argument is always meaningful and that argument is always made in a specific time and place, that is, it is always ‘newly made’. As mentioned, following Kress (1989), I have posited that argument is a cultural textual form for bringing about difference. Argument, from this perspective, is seen as manifesting in relation to mode, genre, discourse and medium – social categories that make up text. The analysis of the videos, comics and PowerPoint presentations, in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively, have drawn out the affordances of this approach to understanding argument in the academy. These affordances are outlined in the section below.

#### **7.3.1 Mode and argument**

A multimodal social semiotic perspective of argument assumes that argument is not mode-specific. This view shifts attention away from debates about whether non-verbal resources

can make argument or not, and towards focusing on the role modes play in constructing argument. This approach to argument is useful in that it highlights the affordances of a mode for realising a certain aspect of an argument. In Chapter 4, for example, the videos demonstrated that the spoken mode is apt for explicating the statement of position and making claims, while the visual mode, through direct quotation, is able to provide evidence to support claims. In Chapter 5, the comics revealed how the written mode is apt for communicating abstract or conceptual ideas, while the visual mode can confer authority through visual signifiers, establish credibility through offering proof such as screen shots, and even assist in establishing affinity through creating a visual environment with which the audience can identify. The PowerPoint presentations in Chapter 6 indicated that the spoken mode can function as a linking device, thus rendering it apt for making logical relations explicit. The visual and the aural mode (music), on the other hand, can be effective for evoking pathos. Recognising that argument is not mode-specific, prompts notions of which modes are best for realising which aspect of argument. In other words, it renders it possible to exploit the affordances of particular modes for carrying out certain aspects of an argument. By fostering awareness of modes and their affordances for producing argument, I argue that this can better prepare students for argumentation in the contemporary age.

### **7.3.2 Genre and argument**

The longstanding tradition of using the essay to present arguments in the Humanities has led to fixed or stable notions of what an academic argument ought to look like. This is demonstrated in Chapter 5, where students' struggles to conceive an academic argument in comics arise from their learned perceptions of the academic argument from the essay perspective. For them, an academic argument is that which is serious, and that which involves exposition and factual evidence. This clashed with their understandings of comics, which they took to be characterised by humour, fiction and narrative. The case here echoes other studies that have shown that different genres have different orientations for producing different kinds of knowledge (Archer 2006; English 2011). In this way, offering students opportunities to experiment with a range of genres for presenting academic argument can open up prospects for questioning and recognising the purposes and uses of genres. It may also offer alternative approaches to learning. As English posits, "working with disciplinary materials in unconventional ways can enhance not only disciplinary understanding but its epistemological relevance" (2011:196).

Besides shaping knowledge in certain ways, genres also orient individuals towards particular thematic and semiotic material (English 2011). As this study has shown, documentaries use rhetorical questions as a figurative device, and the voice as a resource for establishing ethos. Recognising the importance of the voice for establishing ethos is a reason why the students who produced the video, *Legalisation of Marijuana*, opted to source a voice for their narration. Comics instigate the use of resources that produce humour, such as satire and irony. Recognising comics' thematic orientation towards humour is a reason why the students who produced *ACTA-NSTEIN* struggled with conceiving academic argument through comics. PowerPoint presentations, as a visual presentation genre, have a disposition towards display. This disposition is a reason why the students focused more on visual resources for argumentation, rather than physical resources such as posture and gesture. Multimodal genres, from this perspective, can allow play with rhetorical strategies and ways of realising aspects of an argument that are not ordinarily considered in essay writing. By providing diverse approaches to playing with and presenting academic argument, the thematic and semiotic orientation of various genres can encourage new ways of conceptualising and engaging with academic argument.

Although I have advocated for a multimodal approach to academic argument in this thesis, it is necessary to stress again that I am by no means proposing that the practice should displace essay writing. The essay has specific affordances that render it appropriate as an assessment genre in the academic context. In Chapter 6, I posited that the essay's aptness for structuring thought and argument makes it particularly suitable in serving as a draft in a multimodal project. Besides acting as a tool to assist students in organising their thought and argument in a logical, coherent manner, I have also suggested that the practice of 'regenring' (English 2011) an essay to a multimodal genre may create opportunities to discuss similarities and differences between disciplinary practices and everyday practices. By forming links between disciplinary knowledge and everyday knowledge, there is the possibility of knowledge transfer from the academic to the everyday.

### **7.3.3 Discourse practices and argument**

The focus of this study has been on argument in the academic domain. Among other conventions, the discourse practices of academic argument involve arranging knowledge in a logical or quasi-logical sequence supported by evidence (Andrews 2010), and engaging in what Seligmann (2012) calls the 'honesty principle' through the practice of citation.

Academic argument reflects the rationalist paradigm (Andrews 2010), which has certain affordances. With its emphasis on logic, evidence and citation, academic argument is able to render the rhetor accountable for an argument made. This has particular implications for students studying Media, where ethics is key. Media Studies involves the study of the ethical conduct of media houses and journalists. According to Claassen,

for many years media organisations did not have guidelines on ethics, a situation that only started changing in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when criticism about the lack of transparency and accountability at newspapers and other media brought a new awareness of the importance of ethical journalism. (2007:131–132)

Today accountability is recognised as a principle of media ethics. As Krüger says “[j]ournalists should be prepared to explain and answer for their work, their audiences and to the public at large” (2004:13).

On the surface, the practice of constructing an academic argument may seem different to journalistic practices, which emphasise reporting. The students’ videos in Chapter 5, however, show similarities between a multimodal approach to academic argument and investigative journalism or documentaries with political agendas, such as Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick’s (1992) *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*, Davis Guggenheim’s (2006) *An Inconvenient Truth*, and Michael Moore’s (2002) *Bowling for Columbine*. Because of shared human experience, it can be argued that the idea of organising material in a logical or quasi-logical sequence supported by evidence is not particular to argument in the academic context. For instance, the practice of citation is also followed in journalism. It is the norm for information sourced from experts or different news agencies to be acknowledged. Citation may be perceived as an academic practice but it is, in fact, quite common in everyday texts – though it may not be recognised or described as such. Archer (2013), for instance, notes how citation can occur in music as ‘mixing’, in fine arts as ‘collage’, and in architecture as ‘tracing’. Academia may be a different domain to journalism but they share the principle of accountability. They are likely to share similar approaches to treatment of the principle because that is the nature of the social where there is constant borrowing of knowledge, practices and resources from various areas. By assisting students to see the link between academic argument and accountable reports in journalism, this presents the possibility for forming connections between disciplinary practices and workplace practices.

To conclude, from a pedagogical perspective, a multimodal approach to academic argument may prompt discussions of the affordances of the practice and recognition of how argument manifests or may manifest in everyday genres. In doing so, this may assist students in feeling less alienated from disciplinary practices. As mentioned, the exercise of identifying citation in everyday texts was one of the most invigorating sessions for the students in the seminar. Huang and Archer (2012) posit the view of convention as design resources. That is, viewing convention not as fixed social practices, but as resources that can be shaped and reshaped according to the requirements of a particular genre. It is proposed that this notion of convention can prompt the use of one genre to reflect on another. In the same way, by viewing discourse conventions as design resources, this can encourage reflection on how discourse conventions are realised in various domains. This presents the possibility for knowledge transfer from one discourse practice to another.

#### **7.4.4 Medium and argument**

Medium as the technology of distribution and production allows the materialisation of modes and semiotic resources. Providing students with the opportunity to work with different media can create a space for them to experiment with various resources for constructing argument. This study has made visible how certain media can enable and constrain the use of particular semiotic resources for producing argument. Chapter 4, for instance, shows how digital video as a tool for production enables students to work with moving images, still images, written text, recorded audio, music and editing devices. It permits one to consider music, voice and editing as framing devices; screen shots and voiceovers as resources for creating ethos; and music and images as resources for creating pathos. As a medium for distribution, digital video enables the argument produced to be shared on social media platforms such as YouTube. As mentioned, ways in which information is organised in an argument is also largely determined by the features of the medium.

The comics discussed in Chapter 5 demonstrate how the book, as the medium of distribution, enables the consideration of page turning as a transitional device. They also illustrate how the technology employed to produce the comics can place particular constraints on the resources used. *Comic Life* does not enable the user to construct images. It only works with available digital images. I have suggested that this technological constraint may have been the reason why, in *Kony 2012*, there was an instance in which there was a misfit between the visual and the verbal mode.

Chapter 6 showed how PowerPoint enables the consideration of bullet points, animation, hyperlink, video and ambience as some of the resources available to construct argument. As a presentation software, slide contents are often not constructed to be stand-alone entities, but to be delivered live through a presenter. This means that to fully experience and grasp a PowerPoint presentation, the audience is required to be present during the presentation. Chapter 6 further highlighted that the medium is not just a technology for production and distribution, but that it is built around particular social norms. It is proposed that the default functions built into PowerPoint software guide users in socially accepted practices to constructing presentations slides. Despite this, I have argued that it is important not to fall into a discourse of technological determinism when discussing medium. Medium as a technology for production and distribution may position the user to draw on particular resources to construct meaning, but it is necessary to recognise that the manner in which it is used, and the resources that are drawn upon are subject to the user and not the technology. Allowing students to experiment and be familiar with properties of a medium can prompt consideration of what medium is best for delivering arguments for particular occasions.

To summarise, a multimodal social semiotic approach to academic argument recognises that argument occurs in relation to mode, genre, discourse and medium. In relation to mode, I have argued that argument is not mode-specific. Each mode has its own affordances for communicating aspects of an argument. A multimodal approach to argument is concerned with the ensembles of resources in a text for communication. I have maintained that fostering awareness of modes, and their affordances for argumentation and communication in general, can better prepare students for communication in the contemporary environment. In relation to genre, I have argued that different genres enable different ways of realising academic argument. By providing alternative approaches to engaging with argument in the academic domain, this can prompt refreshing ways of conceptualising and engaging with academic argument. In relation to discourse, I have suggested that there are similarities between academic practices and media practices. My view is that by making explicit links between disciplinary practices and workplace practices, this may provide opportunities for knowledge transfer from one domain to another. Lastly, in relation to medium, I have posited that providing students with the opportunity to work with various media for producing argument enables them to experiment with different resources for constructing argument. It can also prompt consideration of the potentials and limitations of certain media for distributing

argument for certain occasions. The next section draws out the implications of this study for pedagogy.

#### **7.4 The pedagogical implications of a multimodal approach to academic argument**

It has emerged from this study that multimodal academic argument has a disposition towards ‘assemblage’ as a principle of composition. Intertextual theory recognises that, “[a]ll utterances depend on or call to the other utterances”, that “no utterance itself is singular”, but is always “shot through the other, competing and conflicting voices” (Allen 2000:27). It calls attention to the “relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence” involved in all text-making practices (Allen 2000:5). The notion that all text-making involves weaving the utterances of others has led to Barthes (1977) famously proclaiming that the author is dead, on account of intertextuality. Yet, academia is a somewhat hypocritical world. Despite taking for granted intertextuality as a theory of text-making, in practice there is still an emphasis on ‘the author’ and ‘originality’. As proposed in Chapter 4, it is this belief in originality that pushes students to hide citations, thus leading to plagiarism (Johnson-Eilola & Selber 2007). As a composition principle that emphasises text-building from existing texts in order to solve a communication problem in a new context, Johnson-Eilola and Selber (2007) argue that ‘assemblage’ can move one away from the hierarchy that is created between ‘original’ and ‘borrowed’ texts, and away from the need to hide sourced texts. They propose that plagiarism in student texts could be less of an issue if value is placed on rewarding students for their skills to situate texts and create new meanings from them.

It is necessary to recognise that although assemblage shifts attention away from originality, this does not mean there is no agency, or no attribution of work done by an individual. Assemblage as a composition principle foregrounds the author as producer (Trimbur 2000), the designer who brings together available resources to create new meaning. Chapter 4 presented two approaches to assemblage through the videos *Truths Be Told* and *Legalisation of Marijuana*. By reinterpreting the sourced texts, *Truths Be Told* was able to create a new argument, a new meaning from existing texts. *Legalisation of Marijuana*, in contrast, by inserting the sourced texts as raw and unprocessed, and therefore failing to engage and reinterpret the sourced texts, created an argument that appeared to be a derivative of the sourced argument. The examples here highlight that assemblage is not just about reusing resources, but it is also concerned with appropriating existing resources to make new meaning. From this perspective, the work of the individual is not sacrificed. Assemblage, as a

composition principle, recognises the ability of an individual to design culturally and socially available resources to create new meaning.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to acknowledge that assemblage as a social practice has legal implications. Copyright infringement is a legal concern of a multimodal approach to academic argument. In Chapter 5, I drew on Haupt (2008) to consider the possibilities for agency in an age of corporate globalisation. The one approach is to ignore the rules and adopt a counter culture standard, as has been done so in this study. Although the issue of copyrights was addressed with the students in the seminar, and they were encouraged to use open-content resources, they were not penalised for not doing so. The alternative approach is to adopt an open standard approach, and only employ resources that are available through open-content licensing platforms. This approach, however, places restrictions on intertextual play with mainstream texts. As discussed in Chapter 4, for example, the argument through analogy is made possible only through the audience's recognition of the sourced text employed as comparison. It can be argued that popular cultural texts function better as points of reference because of their presence in mainstream media. As copyright only covers the surface-level expression of a text, Johnson-Eilola and Selber (2007) have suggested changing the surface-level of a text as a way to skirt copyright infringement. However, this is only a partial solution. Perhaps, as academics come to recognise and value assemblage as a composition principle, and multimodality as a text-making practice, there is the possibility for them to lead the way to create a legal space to appropriate image and sound, in the same way as writing.

A multimodal approach to academic argument, with its emphasis on recognising the affordances of various modes, genre and media for constructing argument and recognising assemblage as a composition principle, impels one towards a pedagogy that foregrounds recognition. The theoretical framework in Chapter 2 brought attention to how Archer and Newfield (2014) conceptualised recognition. Firstly, they posit that recognition is about making semiotic resources visible. Making visible semiotic resources and their affordances for meaning-making can prompt a culture of innovation, as it encourages one to explore and exploit the potentials of a given resource. The idea of resource can be extended to encompass embodied resources, such as group work. This study, for example, illustrated how group work came to serve as a resource for overcoming gaps in digital literacies. From an equity point of view, making various semiotic resources visible also offers recognition to less dominant forms of communication and representation. From this perspective, a pedagogy of

recognition can bring the question “What gets recognised and by whom?” (Kress & Selander 2012:268) to the fore.

Secondly, Archer and Newfield (2014) suggest that recognition involves theorising and understanding resources through the use of a metalanguage. A metalanguage is important as it provides a set of vocabularies for discussing and analysing semiotic resources. This study has been able to recognise and interrogate various digital resources for constructing multimodal argument from the metalanguage proposed through the framework for analysis.

Lastly, Archer and Newfield propose that recognition entails integrating resources in a range of educational contexts. This study has observed that digital divide can be a hindrance to a multimodal approach to academic argument. Yet, precisely because digital divide is a key issue in South Africa, it creates more of a reason to bring the digital into the education realm. That is, if digital divide exists because of social inequities, it is the responsibility of the educator and the university to ease this divide by integrating technology into the curriculum, and thereby exposing students to digital resources. One student in the seminar, for instance, mentioned that she had never made use of PowerPoint prior to the seminar. By bringing digital resources into the curriculum, she was able to gain exposure to them. In her interview, she reflected that she had been able to draw on this knowledge for use in her social life. From this perspective, integrating a range of resources can ease social inequalities and be a form of empowerment. By applying the notion of recognition to pedagogy, I argue this can potentially pave the way for a culture of social justice and innovation.

Before concluding, a note needs to be made about the limitations of a multimodal approach to academic argument. Despite the rewards of adopting a multimodal approach to constructing academic argument, it is necessary to acknowledge that the practice may not be suitable for all contexts. This study is based on a seminar with specific orientations. Being small in size, with only 20 students, and embedded in a Media course that deals with topics such as framing and accountability, the nature of the course and seminar made it suitable to adopt a multimodal approach to academic argument. As emphasised throughout the analysis, constructing argument in video, comics and PowerPoint is time consuming. It took 12 weeks for the students to complete the multimodal projects; thus, such an approach to argument may not be appropriate or feasible for certain curriculums.

#### **7.4 Concluding comments**

This thesis has been about recognising the affordances of various modes and genres for constructing academic argument. Specifically, it has been about recognising how academic argument can be constructed in video, comics and PowerPoint. The significance of this study is threefold. Firstly, it has made a theoretical contribution by positing a theory of argument from a multimodal social semiotic perspective. From this perspective, it has argued that argument is a product of design, motivated by the rhetor's interest in communicating a particular message in a particular environment and shaped by the available resources in the environment. It has also proposed that adopting such a view of argument means accepting that argument is a cultural text form that occurs in relation to social categories of text.

Secondly, the study has made a methodological contribution by proposing a framework and a metalanguage for analysing and discussing multimodal arguments. Based on Halliday's metafunctional principle, the framework offers an analysis of how ideational, interpersonal and compositional resources work to construct and shape argument. The framework combines theories from both rhetoric and multimodal social semiotics. This study has argued that the strength of the framework lies in that it can be applied across genres and media.

Thirdly, the study has made a pedagogical contribution by presenting approaches to constructing argument that is suitable for contemporary communication. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 made visible ways in which academic arguments can be constructed in video, comics and PowerPoint respectively. Through the seminar that grounds this study, it has also shown how it is possible to integrate a multimodal approach to academic argument into a Media Studies curriculum. It is hoped that the affordances outlined in this study can prompt further research into the possibilities of a multimodal approach to academic argument in other disciplines.

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# Appendix: Comics

## ACTA-NSTEIN

# ACTA-NSTEIN

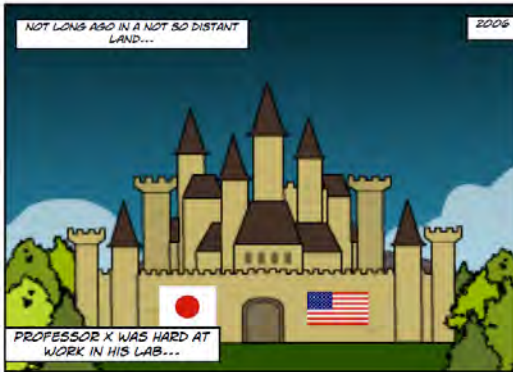
THE THREATENING RISE OF A CENSORSHIP MONSTER - NOBODY IS SAFE!

HI THERE!  
MY NAME IS FREEDOM F. SPEECH  
AND I'M HERE TO TELL YOU ABOUT  
INTERNET CENSORSHIP AND THE WAYS  
ACTA WILL AFFECT EACH AND EVERY  
ONE OF YOU.

INSTEAD OF BOMBARDING YOU WITH  
COMPLEX IDEAS, I'LL TAKE YOU  
THROUGH A SHORT COLOURFUL  
STORY THAT WILL EXPLAIN THE  
SITUATION IN SIMPLER TERMS.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS BY: [REDACTED]



ACTA STANDS FOR THE ANTI-COUNTERFEITING TRADE AGREEMENT

IT IS AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT THAT AIMS TO PROTECT AND CREATE A SET OF LAWS TO GOVERN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

THE MAIN PURPOSE OF ACTA IS TO CURB THE PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF COUNTERFEIT AND PIRATED GOODS.

MEANWHILE IN A CITY NOT SO DIFFERENT TO YOURS...

GET YOUR CHEAP AND ORIGINAL DVD'S-GOOD QUALITY! HD VIEWING!

HOWZIT DUDE!

HEY JACK!

LET ME GET YOU THAT DVD YOU ORDERED FROM ME YESTERDAY

HERE YOU GO MAN!

SHOOOOOT!

RUFFLE...

I'LL HAVE YOUR OTHER DVD READY BY TOMORROW, YOU CAN PAY ME THEN.

AH, SWEET MAN! SEE YOU.

BUSINESS IS BEAUTIFUL!

HEY! YOU'RE A PIRATE

DON'T YOU KNOW IT'S ILLEGAL TO MAKE, RENT, SELL OR DISTRIBUTE CONTENT THAT YOU DON'T OWN THE COPYRIGHTS TO!

UHM... NO I NEVER KNEW!

YOU'RE A CRIMINAL!

THE PRODUCTION AND TRADE OF COUNTERFEIT GOODS POSES A GREAT THREAT TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORLD ECONOMY

NOT ONLY DOES IT CAUSE SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL LOSSES FOR COPYRIGHT HOLDERS, BUT IT ALSO REPRESENTS A RISK TO CONSUMERS

ONE OF ACTA'S KEY AIMS IS TO HELP CLAMP DOWN ON COUNTERFEIT GOODS AND INTERNATIONAL COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT IN ORDER TO CREATE A SAFER ENVIRONMENT FOR MEDIA PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS

SEEMS LIKE MY CREATION IS SERVING ITS PURPOSE WELL...

LATER THAT DAY IN A SUBURB NOT SO DIFFERENT TO YOURS...

2012

MAN, HOMEWORK IS SO LAME!

Homework  
Analysis of the  
Pirates of the  
Caribbean Film  
Review

CARABE AN...CARIBBEAN...  
CARIBBEAN? HOW THE HECK DO YOU SPELL IT!

CLICK  
CLICK

**WARNING**  
ACTA has traced your internet activity.  
you are guilty of internet PIRACY!

WHAT THE HECK JUST HAPPENDED?!

THE COMPUTER CRASHED! OH THAT'S JUST GREAT HEY!

HA! YOU WERE ABOUT TO CLICK INTO A PIRATED SITE!

YOU'RE A CRIMINAL AND FOR THAT YOU BELONG IN JAIL!

WHAT!

SILENCE! JUST DO AS I SAY!

AT LEAST GIVE ME A CHANCE TO THINK THIS THROUGH!

NO.. PLEASE

AAAAH!



ACTA WAS INITIALLY ESTABLISHED TO BE QUITE AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH, AND THIS ENCOURAGED COUNTRIES SUCH AS AUSTRALIA, CANADA, NEW ZEALAND, MOROCCO, SINGAPORE, SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES TO OFFICIALLY SIGN THE AGREEMENT INTO LAW

HOWEVER, THE AGREEMENT SOON ABUSED ITS POWER OF IMPLEMENTATION AND WAS HEAVILY CRITICISED.



#### KEY ARGUMENTS AGAINST ACTA INCLUDE:

##### ITS LACK OF A DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND PUBLIC INPUT

- ACTA HAS LARGELY BEEN NEGOTIATED BEHIND CLOSED DOORS. IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO FIND OUT WHO EXACTLY WROTE THE DOCUMENT OF THE AGREEMENT, AND WHAT HAPPENED DURING NEGOTIATIONS
- ACTA WAS ALSO NEGOTIATED OUTSIDE OF MAJOR EXISTING TRADE BODIES SUCH AS THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION AND THE WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
- ACTA HAS HUGE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC, AND LITTLE HAS BEEN DONE TO INFORM, ENGAGE, OR EVEN CONSIDER THE PUBLIC INTEREST



##### ITS LACK OF CLARIFICATION

- THE AGREEMENT BLURS THE LINES BETWEEN PIRACY AND COUNTERFEITING, AND DOES NOT CLEARLY DEFINE THESE TERMS
- THE TERM "COUNTERFEIT" DESCRIBES FAKE GOODS MADE IN EXACT IMITATION WITH THE INTENTION TO DECEIVE OR DEFRAUD
- THE TERM "PIRACY" DESCRIBES THE ACT OF REPRODUCING MOVIES, MUSIC, BOOKS OR OTHER COPYRIGHTED WORKS WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM THE COPYRIGHT OWNER

THIS LACK OF DEFINITIONS MEANS THAT THERE IS NO CLEAR STANDARD TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN LARGE-SCALE COMMERCIAL INFRINGEMENT AND ORDINARY, UNINTENTIONAL ACTS OF INFRINGEMENT

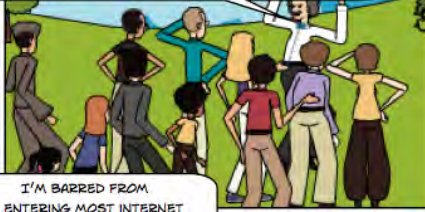


##### ITS UNFAIR PENALTIES

- UNDER THE HEADING "CRIMINAL OFFENSES" IN SECTION 4, ARTICLE 23 OF THE AGREEMENT, IT STATES THAT AT LEAST "WILLFUL TRADEMARK COUNTERFEITING OR COPYRIGHT OR RELATED RIGHTS PIRACY ON A COMMERCIAL SCALE" AND "IN CASES OF WILLFUL IMPORTATION AND DOMESTIC USE" SHOULD BE PUNISHABLE UNDER CRIMINAL LAW
- THIS IS JUST A WHOLE LOT OF FANCY WORDS BASICALLY SAYING THAT YOU'RE BOUND TO END UP AS A CRIMINAL SOMEHOW EVEN IF YOU USE INFORMATION FOR PERSONAL PURPOSES ONLY



LET'S SIGN THESE PETITIONS AND MARCH IN PROTEST AGAINST ACTA! LET'S DESTROY THE MONSTER BEFORE IT DESTROYS US!



I'M BARRED FROM ENTERING MOST INTERNET SITES. HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO ACCESS ONLINE INFORMATION NOW?!

ACTA HAS TURNED INTO A MONSTER!



WE DON'T FEEL SAFE ANYMORE. THE INTERNET WAS ONE OF THE FEW PLACES WHERE WE COULD ACT FREELY

YOU CAN'T SACRIFICE THE RIGHTS OF FREEDOM FOR COPYRIGHTS!

MAKE A DIFFERENCE... I'M DOING MY PART.



- ACTA's censorship provisions are extremely troubling.
- ACTA appears to be an all-encompassing law that tries to monitor both the digital and market environment, but it ends up just approaching copyright enforcement as the exchange of unauthorized information on the internet.
- Although ACTA was only signed by some major countries, it is a global issue that would cause problems in accessing information worldwide.
- In the end, ACTA is really just a monster!
- But you can protest against ACTA and help safeguard your human rights!
- There are a number of ways you could help stop ACTA.
  - You could voice your concern to your governmental officials.
  - Educate your friends – even if you just make them read this comic!
  - Protest and petition! Here are some helpful links:
    - <http://www.godis.org>
    - <http://www.thepetitionsite.com>
    - <http://www.stopacta.org/>
  - You can also use social networking sites as a platform to voice your concern!
    - Search "Stop ACTA" on Facebook and join the numerous groups dedicated to bringing ACTA to an end!

THE END...

ACTA STILL NEEDS TO BE FURTHER NEGOTIATED FOR A FINAL VOTE INTO LAW

JUST TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE THOUGH, WE INCLUDED A LIST OF REFERENCES USED TO CREATE THIS COMIC!



- **Stop ACTA**
  - <http://www.stopacta.com/>
- **The European Commission**
  - <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/tackling-unfair-trade/acta/>
- **The Electronic Frontier Foundation**
  - <https://www EFF.org/issues/acta>
- **Public Knowledge**
  - <http://www.publicknowledge.org/issues/acta>
- **Forbes article by Erik Kain**
  - <http://www.forbes.com/sites/erikkain/2012/01/23/if-you-thought-acta-was-bad-just-wait-until-you-visit-acta/>
- **Keep the Web Open**
  - <http://keepthewebopen.com/acta>
- **Executive Office of the United States Trade Representative**
  - <http://www.ustr.gov/acta>
- **The Greens – European Free Alliance**
  - <http://efc.act-on-acta.eu/fundamental-rights>
- **Pixton**
  - [www.pixton.com](http://www.pixton.com)
- **Comic Life 2**
  - [www.comiclife.com](http://www.comiclife.com)

# Kony 2012

**KONY 2012 VIDEO LAUNCHED!**



**3 DAYS LATER....**



40,415,176

**1 WEEK LATER....**



78,131,257

**KONY 2012 INVADDED ALL NEWS FEEDS...**



**1 CLICK WAS ALL IT TOOK TO JOIN THE MOVEMENT...**



**HEY, WHAT'S THIS?**



**KONY 2012 HAD EVEN REACHED FLORIDA....**

**JUST ANOTHER NORMAL DAY IN LISIANDRA**



**WHILE PROTESTS ENSUED IN CENTRAL PARK!!**



**EVEN THE MOST RANDOM TEENAGER COMES ACROSS KONY 2012 GROUPS ON FACEBOOK!**



**AAAAHH NO LETS GET RID OF THIS!**



**AND THE INTEREST FOR KONY 2012 GROWS....**



**AAAAHH WHAT TO DO TODAY?**



**KONY GETS ON WITH HIS DAILY ROUTINE...**

**AND WITH JUST ONE CLICK....**



**Like**

**HIS JOB WAS DONE.**

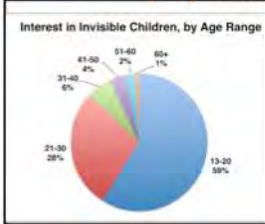
**NOW TIME TO GET ON WITH HIS LIFE!!**



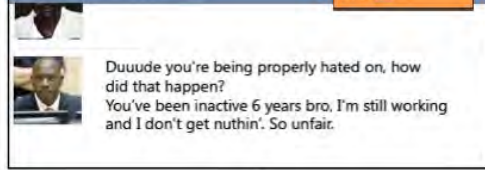
AND THE PROTESTS AGAINST THE KONY 2012 VIDEO START TO GATHER MOMENTUM... ALBEIT NOT THE WAY IT HOPED TO.



I WONDER HOW MANY OF THOSE 13-20 YEAR OLDS USE SOCIAL MEDIA.....



THE WORD SPREAD SO FAR THAT PANIC ENSUED ON SOCIAL NETWORKS...

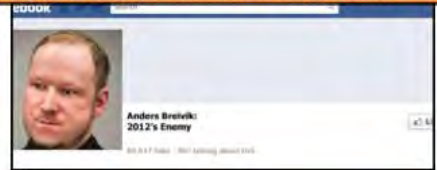


LITTLE DID LUBANGA KNOW....



AND THE CHASE AFTER KONY ENSUES...

THE 2012 TREND WENT VIRAL AND SOON SPREAD OUT TO WORLD ISSUES, WITH THE "LIKE" FEATURE AS THE DOMINANT TOOL TO SPREAD THE



AND IN THE BUZZ AROUND THE KONY 2012 VIDEOS, OTHER WORLD ISSUES TAKE THE BACK SEAT TO A DICTATOR WHO HAS BEEN INACTIVE FOR 6 YEARS:

THE GREEK BANKS RUN DRY...



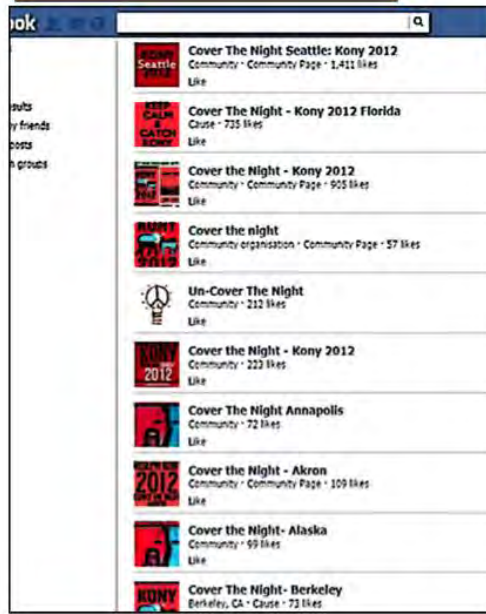
PUTIN TAKES ANOTHER 6 YEARS IN POWER



KIM JONG-IL LEAVES HIS INEXPERIENCED SON AT THE HEAD OF A NATION...



IN THE MEAN TIME, THE COVER THE NIGHT EVENT RUNS WILD ON SOCIAL NETWORKS!



AND ON KONY'S DAY APRIL 20TH 2012, WHEN THE STREETS SHOULD BE SWAMPED WITH PROTESTING KONY 2012 SUPPORTERS.....



NEW YORK SEEMS QUIET...



NOT MUCH GOING ON IN SEATTLE...



DID THEY GET THE RIGHT DATE IN LONDON?



PARIS IS EMPTY!

THINGS DID NOT GO AS PLANNED



SO EVEN THOUGH THE "LIKE KONY 2012" VIRUS HIT THE WORLD...



KONY 2012 WAS MADE 9 YEARS AGO! ALL THE MONEY GOES INTO THEIR OWN POCKETS TO MAKE A FILM WITH GEORGE CLOONEY IN A COUPLE OF YEARS.

Video is Misleading



I TRAVEL TO UGANDA EVERY YEAR AND HAVEN'T FELT THREATEND IN AGES!

HOW MUCH DID THE LIKE BUTTON CHANGE KONY'S ACTIVITIES? CLICKING IS MAKING AN EASY PROMISE: MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD REQUIRES MORE THAN SITTING BEHIND A COMPUTER. WANT TO STOP KONY?

**ACT!**

## Both Sides of Piracy

1

### Both Sides of Piracy




2

### What is Piracy?

- “The unauthorized use of another's production, invention, or conception especially in infringement of a copyright.” Merriam-Webster Dictionary
- Different types:
  - Peer-to-peer
  - Servers
  - Copyright infringement in big industries

3

### Statistics

- 70 % of online users find nothing wrong with online piracy.
- 24% of global internet bandwidth goes towards online piracy.
- 98.8% of Data transferred using P2P networks is copyrighted.
- \$12.5 billion in economic losses each year due to piracy in the music industry.
- 71,060 jobs lost in the United States every year due to online piracy.



5

### Current Events


- The Pirate Bay blocked by UK ISPs
- Kim Dotcom's house



6

### SOPA

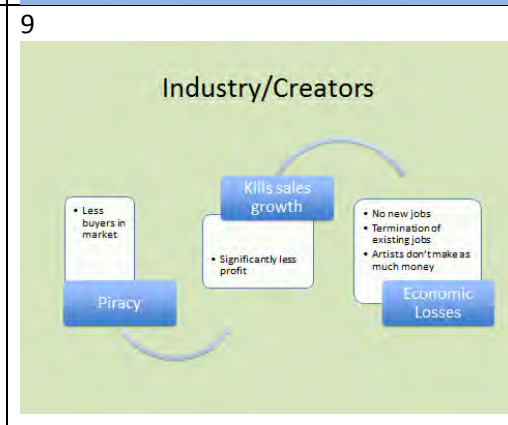
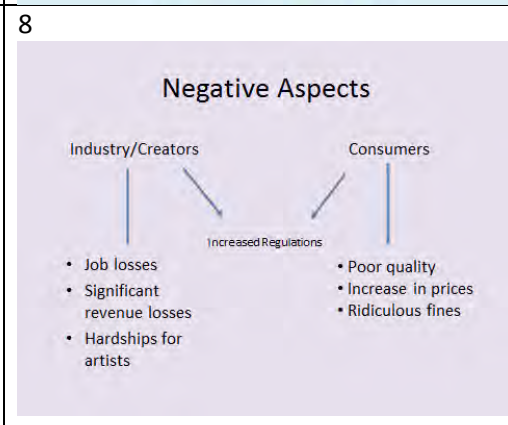
- What is it?
  - a Bill in the United States that is meant to expand the ability of US law enforcement to fight online trafficking in copyrighted intellectual property and counterfeit goods.



7

### Why is it dangerous?

- Content sharing
- Unreasonable Punishment
- Unrealistic Censorship

## Both Sides of Piracy

<p>10</p> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Consumers</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low quality</li> <li>• Increase in prices</li> <li>• No benefits from companies</li> <li>• Ridiculous fines – Joel Tenenbaum court case</li> </ul> 	<p>11</p> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Industry, Creators, and Consumers</h3> <h2 style="text-align: center; color: red;">REGULATION</h2> <p>“It is in essence tantamount to <b>rape</b> and <b>robbery</b> of a helpless victim, and thus traumatic and devastating to the copyright owners.” - Pasipanodya</p>	<p>12</p> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Positive Aspects</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to movies, songs, etc. no longer in print</li> <li>• Creates fans for many artists and writers</li> <li>• Greater concert attendance and product promotion for less established artists</li> </ul>																		
<p>13</p> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Example - Driemanskap</h3>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since 2001</li> <li>• On grounds like MySpace, they allow the public to download their music for free.</li> <li>• Other lesser-known artists upload their music for download under this page to grab attention and gain followership.</li> <li>• Greater followership, more popular.</li> <li>• Have own videos.</li> </ul>	<p>14</p> <h3 style="text-align: center;">YouTube as an Advantage</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “ultimate word of mouth”</li> <li>• File sharing and posts gave exposure of his books.</li> <li>• User found other useful material, which resulted to business bloom</li> </ul> 	<p>15</p> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Example – Angry Birds</h3>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the fans' path/time and attract</li> <li>• ‘Channels’ not games; ‘fans’ not users</li> <li>• Becoming equally popular as US popular TV series</li> <li>• Most downloaded app on Facebook</li> </ul>																		
<p>16</p> <h3 style="text-align: center;">iTunes Music Sales</h3>  <table border="1"> <caption>iTunes Music Sales (Approximate)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of Songs Sold</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>2004</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>2005</td><td>~1,000,000,000</td></tr> <tr><td>2006</td><td>~2,000,000,000</td></tr> <tr><td>2007</td><td>~3,000,000,000</td></tr> <tr><td>2008</td><td>~5,000,000,000</td></tr> <tr><td>2009</td><td>~8,000,000,000</td></tr> <tr><td>2010</td><td>~10,000,000,000</td></tr> <tr><td>2011</td><td>~15,000,000,000</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Number of Songs Sold	2004	0	2005	~1,000,000,000	2006	~2,000,000,000	2007	~3,000,000,000	2008	~5,000,000,000	2009	~8,000,000,000	2010	~10,000,000,000	2011	~15,000,000,000	<p>17</p> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Steam Users</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40 million users</li> <li>• 1504 games in total</li> <li>• In 2011, Steam served out over 780 petabytes of data</li> <li>• Steam’s increased popularity has increased the amount of games that take full advantage of Digital Rights Management (DRM)</li> </ul>	<p>18</p> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Possible Solutions to Piracy</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital Rights Management             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– This has already started happening in gaming</li> <li>– Will begin happening with digital media</li> <li>– Examples include Steam, Origin, Netflix</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  
Year	Number of Songs Sold																			
2004	0																			
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## Both Sides of Piracy

19

### Increasing Availability

- Continue increasing availability world wide
  - iTunes Store and others like it are not available in countries like ZA
  - There are however stores like the Nokia Music Store and Look & Listen's online section



20

### Use of the Cloud

- More and more people gain access to the internet everyday
- There are many services that allow for music and other digital media to be streamed directly to a device



21

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## Stop Legalisation of Prostitution

1



2



3

Many prostitutes are  
tortured  
degraded  
**beaten**

And forced  
into  
prostitution.

4

**Decreased Violence  
towards prostitutes  
SAFER ENVIRONMENT**

**PROSTITUTION!**

**Legal Safeguards**      **Security**

Access Health and Safety      Improved Working Conditions

**Social Exclusion**

5

Higher Rates of:      Expands Sex Industry

**HIV/AIDS**      **Gives Power to Pimps and Traffickers**

**STDS**      **ABORTION**

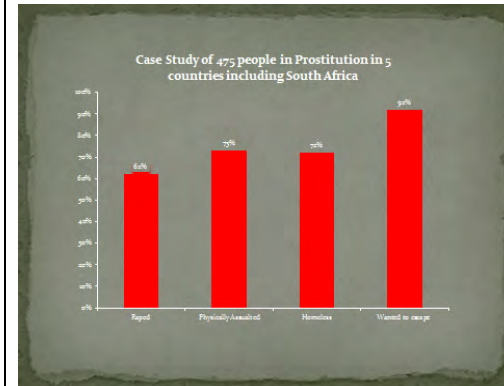
**INFERTILITY**

**PROSTITUTION!**

Encourages men to buy women for sex      Promotes Sex Trafficking

Demotes Woman's Health

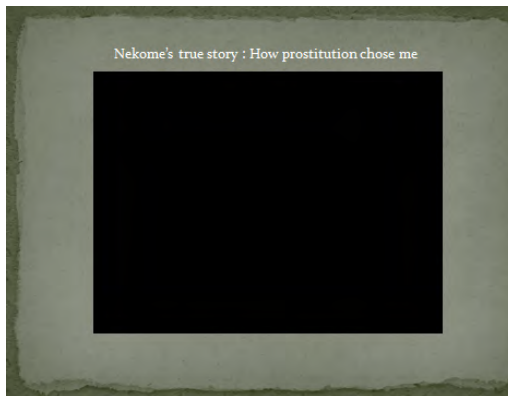
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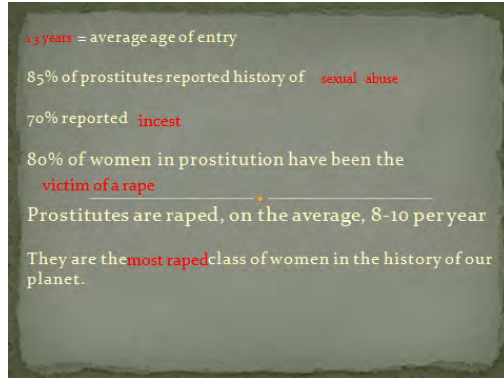


## Stop Legalisation of Prostitution

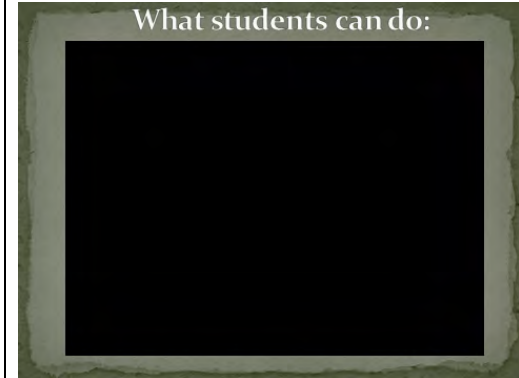
10



11



12



13



