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The Educational Turn of Social Networking:  
Teachers and their Students Negotiate Social Media

by

Amy Stornaiuolo

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Laura Sterponi, Chair

Professor Glynda Hull

Professor Donald McQuade

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The Educational Turn of Social Networking: Teachers and their Students Negotiate Social Media

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Amy Stornaiuolo

## Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Laura Sterponi, Chair

This two-year ethnographic study of five teachers and their adolescent students in India, South Africa, the U.S., and Norway traced how participants negotiated social media in educational settings, especially the challenges and benefits of incorporating social networking in teaching and learning. We are at a critical juncture in educational research, as texts, ideas, and people rapidly circulate around the world (Appadurai, 1996) and social networks connect audiences, authors, and texts in new relationships with heightened responsibilities and obligations (Silverstone, 2007). This dissertation study represents an effort to map how teachers and students negotiated these new relationships in a globally networked environment, in what is one of the first empirically documented educational social networking projects (Hull, Stornaiuolo, & Sahni, 2010). Using a cultural historical activity theory lens (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Engeström, 1999a), I analyzed the activity system of the networked community, looking particularly at the contradictions that participants faced in incorporating new digital and social technologies into educational spaces. Employing a multi-sited ethnographic approach (Marcus, 1995), I collected interview, observational, artifactual, and informatic data about how teachers and students used the resources of the networked community for learning and literacy development. This ethnographic study was designed to help educators identify how we might productively incorporate social media into classrooms and foster students' development of the compositional facility needed to communicate with diverse audiences across multiple composing contexts.

One of the central findings of the study is that teachers have a crucial role to play in creating opportunities for young people to develop as thoughtful and capable 21<sup>st</sup> century communicators but that this enterprise is fraught with difficulty, requiring persistence and collaboration between participants in addressing those challenges. Specifically, participants in this study struggled with the contradiction of incorporating seemingly 'social' practices into more 'academic' contexts, and teachers grappled with what role to take up in their classrooms and in the networked community in relation to these hybrid social/academic practices. While this enterprise was fraught with difficulty, however, teachers persisted across challenges, working together to open spaces for dialogue and to highlight participants' responsibilities to one another as authors and audiences. The study revealed that educationally-turned Web 2.0 tools and practices can play a generative role in expanding participants' *transliterate* capacities, flexible composing and interpretive strategies for communicating with diverse audiences across complex and varied texts.

This study contributes to a still-nascent empirical research base around how young people's communicative capacities can be supported by an educational framework that integrates digital tools and practices, particularly for adolescents whose experiences and beliefs are not always taken into account. Highlighting the generative role of contradiction and the centrality of mediational artifacts in driving innovation, this study represents an empirically grounded example of expansive learning (Engeström, 1987) in a virtual community. It also offers implications for extending the theory of expansive learning for literacy studies by demonstrating that *learning across* (horizontal or expansive learning) is a kind of transliterate practice, a form of literate action that plays an important transcontextualizing role in the world in building and sustaining connections across time and space (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). As participants in this study engaged in these transliterate practices, I argue that their artfulness and generosity in doing so illustrates a cosmopolitan stance in the world (Hansen, 2011; Hull, Stornaiuolo, & Sahni, 2010). As one of the central challenges facing educators in the current age, maintaining a stance of both openness to the new and loyalty to the known is a challenging yet ever more imperative prerequisite for learning from, about, and with others across our ever-more connected world (Hansen, 2010). This study offers implications for the ways that teachers can model these cosmopolitan dispositions – by inhabiting shared spaces, listening to others with respect, and accepting the obligation to be hospitable interlocutors, all crucially important capacities as we seek to become ethically alert citizens in and of the world (Silverstone, 2007).

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

As mobile and digital technologies have become intertwined in every aspect of our work and leisure, more and more people around the world now interact with one another online, sharing their videos, photos, music, and writing on sites like YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, WordPress, Facebook, and Twitter in rapidly increasing numbers. These participatory and collaborative Web 2.0 applications provide new opportunities for people to create, transform, and share media texts across the globe.<sup>2</sup> As one of the clearest and most ubiquitous manifestations of Web 2.0 technology, social networking has become a central meaning-making practice in these early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In light of rapid transformations in how we jointly make meaning with others in global, networked contexts, we are pressed to participate meaningfully and productively with others who are very different from us, a challenging task in our increasingly conflicted world. As literacy practices shift and develop across these intersecting local and global networks and in relation to constantly emerging technologies of communication, we have much to learn about how we might most fruitfully engage in mediated communication with others around the world.

While a growing number of adults now use social networking sites<sup>3</sup> for extended periods every day (Kohut et al., 2011; Madden & Zickuhr, 2011; Nielson, 2011), adolescents and young adults participate on these sites with greatest frequency (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010; Lenhart et al., 2011). Despite widespread media concern about the impact of these social networking sites on adolescents' social development, the majority of young people report positive experiences on them and feel more connected to others (Hampton, Goulet, Ranie, & Purcell, 2011; Smith, 2011). These social networking sites also function as critically important resources for meaning making for young people, offering access to a broad range of texts, ideas, and knowledge (Lam, 2009). As adolescents come of age in this era of "networked publics" (boyd, 2008), they are often at the frontlines of communication, devising new strategies for negotiating social complexities and pushing the boundaries of communication and representation. However, since adolescents' engagement with social networking sites is relatively recent and primarily self-sponsored, we do not yet know a great deal about the impact of these social networking practices on learning or literacy development. We know even less about how these technologies are being used in educational spaces or how teachers might best utilize social networking for learning purposes in their classrooms. This study seeks to address this serious gap in our knowledge base by exploring teacher and student beliefs and literacy practices in an educationally focused social networking program called Space2Cre8 (S2C8).

Educational scholars agree that being literate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires developing flexible strategies, skills, and dispositions that facilitate the negotiation of constantly changing tools and practices across networked spaces (Alvermann & McLean, 2007; Coiro, Knobel,

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<sup>1</sup> This study was part of the larger Kidnet project, which was led by Glynda Hull and generously supported by the Spencer Foundation, UC Links, Mike Wood, and David Pearson and the U.C. Berkeley Graduate School of Education.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term "Web 2.0" (O'Reilly, 2005) in the sense that Davies and Merchant's (2009) do: "The distinction of Web 2.0, of which social networking software (SNS) is a major part, can be attributed to a shift of emphasis towards user-generated content coupled with mechanisms that enable and enhance user interaction" (p. 4).

<sup>3</sup> Like Christine Greenhow (2011), I use the more conventional term "social networking sites" to emphasize that people are creating new network connections on these sites (rather than the term danah boyd and Nicole Ellison (2008) prefer, "social network sites," which emphasizes the role of social networks in articulating already existing social relationships).

Lankshear, & Leu, 2009; Doering, Beach, & O'Brien, 2007; International Reading Association, 2009; Leu, 2000; National Council of Teachers of English, 2009). Educators are working to redefine literacy, recognizing that the printed word is one representational resource among many and that people engage with a complex range of textual forms that integrate multiple semiotic modalities (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2007; Leander & Lewis, 2008). One of the most significant changes for these "new literacies" is in the newfound prominence of writing in people's everyday lives, particularly writing in digital environments (Brandt, 2009, 2012; Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, & Macgill, 2008). Literacy scholars argue that one of our primary goals needs to be to "articulate the new models of composing developing right in front of our eyes" (Yancey, 2009b, p. 7). Social media is now a central context for this "Age of Composition" (Yancey, 2009a) as people connect with others by integrating written texts with video, music, and images in creative combinations to design multimodal compositions (Hull & Nelson, 2005) and to compose in brief, social bursts (Haas, Carr, & Takayoshi, 2011). This study addresses shortcomings in what we know about the mediational role of these networks and their role in semiotic practices, especially around composing in these new contexts.

Despite the widespread and rapidly increasing use of social media in the day-to-day composing lives of adolescents, educational institutions have remained reluctant to incorporate new textual and communicative practices that challenge the fundamentally print-focused ideology so pervasive in our schools, creating an ever-widening chasm between youth's in- and out-of-school practices (Davidson & Goldberg, 2009; Sefton-Green, Nixon, & Erstad, 2009; Snyder, 2009). While virtually all U.S. schools are now connected to the Internet, over 70% of school districts ban social networking (C. Lemke et al., 2009; Snyder & Dillow, 2011; Wells & Lewis, 2006). Students and their families report a persistent digital disconnect between the digital tools available outside of school and those integrated in schools (Speak Up, 2010a, 2010b). Ironically, most administrators and teachers support integrating of technology in classrooms and recognize the importance of turning such Web 2.0 tools as blogging and wikis to educational use (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; C. Lemke et al., 2009). However, the reality is far short of the rhetoric, with many teachers focusing more on the technology itself than on transforming their curricular goals and practices to take into account what Lankshear and Knobel (2007) call "the ethos stuff," the collaborative, distributed, and participatory logics that accompany the "technical stuff." And while teachers and administrators report understanding the value of particular digital practices (e.g. blogging), the majority state that social networking and attendant practices like chat and messaging do not have a place in the classroom (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; C. Lemke et al., 2009).

Certainly the reasons for this difficulty in instantiating rich digital integration in instruction are complex, historically rooted, and multi-faceted. Luckin and colleagues (2009) describe a number of difficulties in integrating new technologies in classrooms, issues including "regulation (filtering, surveillance, control, checks, use policies, gatekeeping activity), temporal (timetabling), spatial (lack of 'open' access) and technical constraints (hardware quality, multiuser reduction in connectivity speeds, system bottlenecks, outdated software), and personal effectiveness (lack of criticality, low information literacy skills)" (p. 88). It is not surprising that introducing new Web 2.0 tools and practices, laden with the ethos of collaboration and distributed expertise, would bring to the surface a number of tensions and contradictions – around the purposes of schooling, what counts as literacy and learning, and who defines what counts. Schools, functioning as mechanisms of sorting and exclusion (Bourdieu, 1974), generally center the teacher as the authority and expert (Reder & Davila, 2005), privilege learning by print

(Snyder, 2009), and devalue young people's out-of-school literacies (Alvermann & McLean, 2007). Reproduced over long periods of time and across the world, these historically embedded beliefs about what school looks like and how it operates are threatened by the educational inclusion of networked technologies that highlight collaboration, participation, and distributed expertise as valued practices. This study explores these struggles, as teachers and students negotiated multifaceted tensions and challenges over time.

As young people grapple with these challenges, research has shown that they need the support of an educational framework to critically, ethically, and competently engage with others across cultural and ideological differences using digital technologies, developing the competencies that will enable them to participate fully in our increasingly networked, mobile, and globally interconnected world (Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2010; International Reading Association, 2009; Jenkins et al., 2006; National Education Technology Plan, 2010; Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, 2009). Jenkins and colleagues (2006) argue convincingly that educational institutions play an increasingly central role in ensuring all children have access to new textual and communicative forms in a supportive environment. Mounting evidence reveals that youth around the world with limited opportunities to participate in digital practices fall further behind in developing these competencies (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010), rendering educational institutions increasingly important in providing access to these digital technologies. However, simply providing technology itself is not enough – there needs to be an accompanying critical framework for understanding and interrupting dominant ideologies around textuality, authorship, and adolescent literacies. Furthermore, young people need a critical framework that helps them articulate and reflect on the ethical implications of their participation in digital practices (Jenkins et al., 2006) and their role as global citizens (Balistreri, Di Giacomo, Noisette, & Ptak, 2011).

A key goal of such an educational framework is developing global awareness, which the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning (2009) defines as learning from, collaborating with, and understanding others from diverse nations, cultures, religions, and lifestyles through open dialogue, in multiple languages, in a spirit of mutual respect. Mansilla and Gardner (2007) call this *global consciousness*, which they define more generally as “a way of *being* in the world today” (p. 48; emphasis in original). A recent report by the College Board touted global competency as a key concern – that young people need to “have the right skills, aptitudes and dispositions necessary to navigate and excel in a highly fluid, globalized and increasingly competitive environment” (Balistreri, Di Giacomo, Noisette, & Ptak, 2011, p. 6). However, despite regular calls for the importance of strategies, skills, and dispositions related to intercultural communication and global awareness in reports and policy documents, little emphasis or value is placed on global awareness or consciousness in U.S. literacy education (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011). There appears to be a disconnect between what educators and policy-makers understand to be important and the on-the-ground reality of many classrooms.

In this brief introduction, I have highlighted some of the central tensions and beliefs around educational social networking that set the context for this dissertation study. As people participate in these global, networked communities online, especially adolescents, they engage in new literacy practices that are not yet being incorporated into schools successfully, despite a pressing need for a critical educational framework. While scholars have theorized about the role of social networking in learning environments, there is scant empirical evidence exploring how these networks shape and are shaped by adolescents' literacy practices or how teachers integrate

social networking into their pedagogical practices. This ethnographic study addresses this empirical gap through extended qualitative inquiry into one cross-cultural educational network.

### **The Present Study**

In the following chapters, I trace how five teachers in India, South Africa, Norway, New York, and California worked together with their adolescent students to develop an international community via the private social network Space2Cre8 (S2C8) over the course of two years. My research questions focus on 1) how teachers' practices with and beliefs about educational social networking changed over time; 2) how teachers understood the social network in relation to youth's learning and literacy practices; and 3) the ways in which the social network played a role in youth's composing practices. In the next two chapters, I lay the theoretical and methodological groundwork for studying how teachers and students worked together to make meaning across virtual and physical spaces and how ideas and texts traversed the networked community. In Chapter Two, I situate the study in a sociocultural theoretical framework that understands literacy practices to be socially embedded ways of engaging in a world characterized by global flows, textual multiplicity, and linguistic and cultural diversity. I then review the literature on the uses of social media in education, teachers' incorporation of digital technologies in classrooms, and adolescent literacy practices across multiple contexts in order to illustrate how little we know about the impact of incorporating social media into educational spaces. In Chapter Three, I describe the methods I used in this multi-sited ethnographic study and the data sources I analyzed across six sites of data collection from 2009 to 2011.

In the subsequent three findings chapters, I tell the story of how the participants in the S2C8 networked community changed their practices over time, illustrating how they worked together to jointly address what they perceived as key problems in the community. In Chapter Four, I argue that the teachers grappled with several competing discourses and motives around social networking, most especially their beliefs about social networking as a student-driven space, but that over time several of them began to frame the network as a community engaged in dialogue about difference. This shift in understanding the purposes of the S2C8 network emerged as one central discourse genre – the student-created videos – served as an important mediational resource for both students and teachers and helped teachers collaboratively articulate 'what this community is all about.' In Chapter Five, I trace how three teachers collaborated with each other and their students in the emergence a new communicative genre, the response video, which helped shift participant practices from individual composing (expressive work that was more explicitly self-focused) to co-composed pieces that were collaborative, participatory, and fundamentally intertextual. As I analyze the three turning points that facilitated the emergence of this genre, I demonstrate how the response video made space for difficult conversations and illustrated the radical heteroglossia at play in networked composing. In Chapter Six, I focus on the New York site in detail in order to trace how the shift to collaborative composing and a turn toward social action facilitated a rich interchange with students in the India site, leading to the development of what I call transliterate practices, composing intertwined across modes, media, audiences, and authors.

In the final chapter, I discuss the findings and implications of the study, including the finding that teachers have a crucial role to play in creating opportunities for young people to develop as thoughtful and capable 21<sup>st</sup> century communicators. I argue that while this enterprise is fraught with difficulty, teachers must persist across challenges in order to open spaces for dialogue and highlight our responsibilities as authors and audiences, crucially important

capacities as we seek to become ethically alert citizens in and of the world (Silverstone, 2007). I then discuss a number of theoretical and practical implications of the study, including implications of the study for cosmopolitanism in education (Hansen, 2011) as teachers and students artfully and hospitably developed these capacities in the activity system of the S2C8 networked community via their participation in a cycle of expansive learning (Engeström, 1987).

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

*To become fully literate in today's world, students must become proficient in the new literacies of 21<sup>st</sup>-century technologies. As a result, literacy educators have a responsibility to effectively integrate these new technologies into the curriculum, preparing students for the literacy future they deserve.*

-2009 International Reading Association Position Statement

### Theoretical Framework

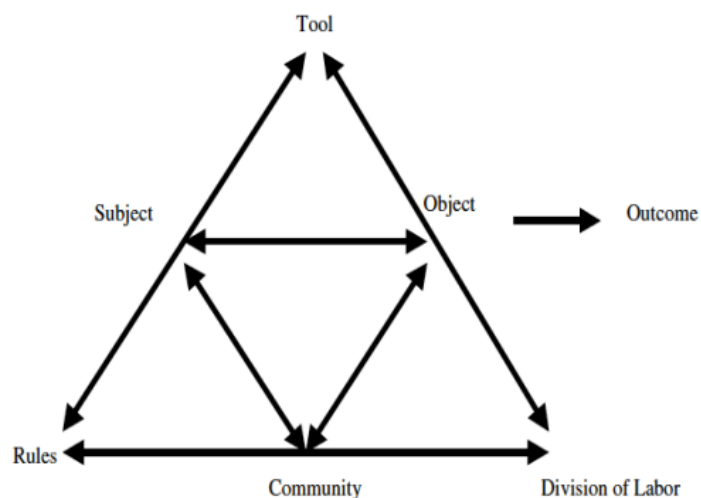
Our globally connected world is veritably defined by the cultural flows of people, goods, ideas, and resources across contexts (Appadurai, 1996), and this study is grounded in an understanding of these global flows as a central context for people's meaning making. As we encounter circulating mediated images and texts from around the world, often in the digitally networked spaces in which we now participate, we draw on an increasingly diverse range of symbolic resources in our meaning making, recontextualizing them for our own everyday purposes. This study is grounded in a theoretical framework that understands people to be engaged in important acts of symbolic creativity (Willis, 1990) that can be exchanged, collaborated, and shared with extended and unanticipated audiences across geographic, ideological, cultural, and aesthetic differences (Hull & Nelson, 2009). In this study I traced the ways that these global flows served participants as resources for what Appadurai calls the construction of "imagined selves and imagined worlds" (p. 3) in their learning and literacy development. In the Space2Cre8 project, which connected teachers and adolescents who inhabited very different life worlds, participants worked together to create the networked community, imagining the design of the online network and the rules and norms for participating there. But they also imagined themselves as global communicators, constructing together what that meant in this educational online space and opening new possibilities for developing different literate identities.

Drawing on an understanding of literacy as culturally and historically situated (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Cole, 1996), this study holds that literacy practices are socially embedded ways of participating in the world through our engagement with a variety of sign systems, including but not limited to written texts. As our technologies of literacy continue to change, so too do the representational resources we have available to us (Kress, 2003). With the ready availability of digital tools, we can now more easily make meaning across multiple modes, combining written text with image and music to create multimodal compositions designed to suit our communicative purposes (New London Group, 1996). Kress (2000) has described these multiple modes as socially produced, regular cultural resources through which we make meaning of material. The New London Group (1996), arguing that all meaning making is fundamentally multimodal, offers an example of how we design texts using a mix of five historically available modes of meaning (linguistic, audio, spatial, visual, and gestural) in various multimodal combinations. As we use these semiotic resources in our everyday sense-making practices, greatly facilitated now by the ubiquity of digital and mobile technologies, sociocultural theories of learning help us investigate relationships between the social, cultural, historical, material, and ideological dimensions of people's meaning making practices, offering particular promise for theorizing how we make meaning with, through, and across our various social networks.



At the heart of sociocultural theory is the understanding that all human activity is mediated by cultural tools – whether material ones like a pen or symbolic ones like language – in particular cultural contexts (Wertsch, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). One of the most powerful theories for understanding how our mediational means – or the cultural tools we use in interaction – function to transform activity is cultural historical activity theory (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Engeström, 1987, 1999a). As Gutiérrez (2007) argues, cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), through its focus on the historical and ecological relationships in mediated activity, challenges essentialist and deficit views of learning and invites analysis of multiple local and distal factors that influence literacy development. By conceptualizing learning as participating in mediated activity, CHAT provides a complex framework for understanding both individual and social practices in dynamic and interconnected relationships over time. This theoretical approach, by not separating individuals, environment, and mediational means and by situating activity within cultural and historical contexts, helped me to understand the activity system of Space2Cre8 as situated within time and space and interwoven with multiple voices and discourses from past, present, and future.

I found theorization by third generation activity theorists (Engeström, 1999a) to be particularly helpful in exploring how diverse contextual and historical factors play into what might be considered a “new” practice like social networking. Extending Vygotsky’s (1978) insights about all human activity as goal directed and mediated by tools, Engeström (1987) proposed adding contextual layers (rules, community, division of labor) to Vygotsky’s mediational triangle of subject, object, and tool (see Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1: Engeström’s (1987) Model of Activity Systems. From Barab, Evans, and Baek (2004).**

For Engeström, like Vygotsky, the subject (an individual or group whose point of view is taken up analytically) always works to transform an object (a goal toward which activity is oriented). This process is always mediated by culturally and historically constructed tools, either material tools (like a pencil or shovel) or semiotic ones (signs and symbols). Engeström added three additional contextually mediating factors to this mediational triangle – community, rules, and division of labor – that form a new set of triangles at the bottom of the figure. The community, which is an organization or other group relevant to the activity, plays a mediational role for the

subject and object. The rules of the community mediate how the subject operates in activity by virtue of the norms and conventions that members construct and follow, which may be formalized rules (e.g., systematic or written) or informal ones (e.g., tacit norms that people follow). Also, the community works toward its goals via the division of labor that creates positions for participants as they engage in individual and collaborative work.

In tracing the impact of global flows across the activity system of Space2Cre8, I found Engeström's (1987) six contextual elements to constitute a powerful heuristic. That is, I have understood these six contextualizing factors of an activity system not to function as separate elements but as a set of lenses to bring to bear on complex activity over time. Similar to the way that Barab, Schatz, and Scheckler (2004) found CHAT served as a generative framework for understanding the ecology of their online teacher network, I have found these lenses to be a set of flexible conceptual tools for understanding the "horizontal, concurrent, and contradictory forms of movement and change across contexts" (Gutiérrez, 2007, p. 119). I conceived of these six elements as shifting dimensions of activity operating in transactive relationships with one another across a complex, changing ecology (Barab, Evans, & Baek, 2004). To illustrate the usefulness of these tools as a lens, I offer one example of how these six elements could help illuminate activity in S2C8. I took teachers as the *subject* of my analysis and identified their *object* as increasing youth participation on S2C8. They used a variety of *tools* (such as videos and blogs) in working toward their joint goal, and the larger *community* (made up of researchers, students, and school stakeholders) became important in mediating their efforts. Teachers felt obligated to their colleagues to have their students participate regularly and wrote to apologize if too much time went by without interaction (implicit *rules*). Each took up different roles (*division of labor*) in coordinating student interactions on the network (for example, Jackson went online to generate more student activity directly whereas Amit formed a teacher email group to facilitate interaction more indirectly). Over time, these elements shifted as teachers worked together to create a new object, with new divisions of labor and new tools. Using this framework provided a useful theoretical lens in understanding these shifts over time.

I turn now to discuss the five main principles of activity theory, as described by Engeström (2001), in order to illustrate its usefulness as a theoretical framework for understanding participants' learning and literacy development in this global, networked context. The first principle of CHAT is that a collective, object-oriented, and artifact-mediated activity system is taken as the central unit of analysis. We can understand individual or group actions to be *part of* the larger system of activity, understood in relation to a system as a whole (and in relationship to other activity systems). CHAT theorists define activity as a coherent, stable, and long-term collaborative endeavor directed toward a goal or object and comprised of many individual and collective actions over time. In this study, I looked at the evolution of the networked Space2Cre8 community as the overarching activity system, with other activity systems (i.e., the school programs located in each country) as embedded within the larger whole. This view of activity systems as interactive nodes in networks helped make a range of phenomena available for integrated analysis (Engeström, 1999b).

The second principle of CHAT involves the multivoicedness of any activity system. Drawing on insights from Bakhtin (1981, 1986), CHAT scholars argue that any activity system is made up of many points of view and traditions, with people and communities carrying histories in their beliefs, artifacts, and rules. I have found it useful in this study to understand how ideas and texts traveled and endured by incorporating more fully a theory of dialogic semiotics (Prior & Hengst, 2010) into this CHAT framework. By incorporating Bakhtinian insights about

synchronic and diachronic elements of sign use, Prior and Hengst explore how people's semiotic performances are "re-represented and reused across modes, media, and chains of activity" (p. 2). In the Space2Cre8 network, for example, hybridity and remixing were central features of networked composing, as participants used materials from the social network and popular culture to generate new texts and ideas over time and across modalities. Prior and Hengst's theory of semiotic remediation offered me a way to examine "semiotic trajectories and chains across time and place" (p. 19) by highlighting both material and discursive transformations of signs. In the process of reframing or recontextualizing other texts and voices, participants in the S2C8 community infused them with their own interpretations and discourses, a process that Bakhtin argues is dynamic and ideologically charged. This open, unbounded, and dynamic struggle between viewpoints leads to our ideological development – we learn through this process of recontextualization "new ways to mean" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 346). This process of semiotic remediation was particularly visible as participants recontextualized discourses and artifacts across globally connected contexts. The third CHAT principle highlights this recontextualization through a focus on historicity. We must look at how activity systems are shaped and transformed over time, including tracing the history of objects, actions, and ideas.

The fourth principle of activity theory, about the central role of contradictions in generating change and development, proved highly salient to this study. For CHAT theorists, contradiction is a central facet of mediated activity, for it is through contradiction, and the role of mediating artifacts in addressing those contradictions, that learning and development occur. However, contradictions are not merely problems or conflicts but "historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137). Contradictions, rather than being fundamentally problematic, can be generative in opening up opportunities and prompting new solutions. Cole and Engeström (1993) argue that "activity systems are best viewed as complex formations in which equilibrium is an exception and tensions, disturbances, and local innovations are the rule and the engine of change. When an activity system is followed through time, qualitative overall transformations may also be found. (pp. 8–9). Understanding how the contradictions in the S2C8 activity system were historically rooted helped me analyze the problems that arose when the teachers tried to "fit" the social network into existing curricula without changing any of the participation structures or goals for the activity. In particular, I found the idea that these contradictions could serve as generative sources of innovation and change to be a powerful theoretical tool in tracing how new practices arose in the study (i.e, qualitative transformations of the activity system).

Finally, the fifth principle of CHAT, the possibility of expansive transformations in activity systems, served as a powerful theoretical benefit of using this framework for the study. Engeström (2001) argued how these expansive transformations can occur:

Activity systems move through relatively long cycles of qualitative transformations. As the contradictions of an activity system are aggravated, some individual participants begin to question and deviate from its established norms. In some cases, this escalates into collaborative envisioning and a deliberate collective change effort. An expansive transformation is accomplished when the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualized to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity. (p. 137)

As he explains, an expansive learning cycle emerges from the contradictions when individual efforts to effect change shift into a collective change effort. When the collective group's goal is re-visioned, opening a "wider horizon of possibilities," then innovation and learning may occur.

As participants in this study worked collectively to address the contradictions that faced them, they made the contradictions more visible and thus opened up new possibilities for effecting collaborative change.

I found the idea of expansive learning to be powerful in this study for two reasons: the importance of artifacts in collective practice and a definition of learning that includes horizontal learning (across boundaries). First, I found that the focus on artifacts as centrally important for learning helped me make sense of the different kinds of artifacts the S2C8 participants created and how participants used them. Expansive learning involves both internalizing cultural practices and externalizing cultural beliefs by creating artifacts, and it is this cycle of internalization, externalization, and reflective analysis that proved particularly useful for understanding how participants learned in the S2C8 project. As young people worked with their teachers to create new artifacts, I attended to how they made meaning across the cultural flows of information and innovated through their collective practices. Both Engeström (1999b) and Prior and Hengst (2010) argue that much empirical work focuses on processes of internalization or on the artifacts themselves and little on *processes* of externalization, or how people work together to create new artifacts. In this study, I attended to how young people internalized and externalized cultural beliefs, especially as they worked together in new configurations to constitute and address contradictions through their collective work with mediating tools (especially artifacts like videos).

The creation of these new artifacts involves what Engeström (1987) calls sideways, or horizontal learning. Engeström argues that in an expansive cycle, we can imagine learning not just as a vertical process – the traditional understanding of learning as a temporal-historical trajectory as humans develop competence, gain expertise, and move upward. Learning is also a horizontal process, what Engeström has called a sideways or socio-spatial movement across boundaries (Engeström, 2001). Drawing on Bateson’s notion of learning as taking place across levels, Engeström (1987) describes learning as shifting from Learning I (rote learning) to Learning II (most school learning, or learning to learn) to Learning III (reorganization of consciousness through engagement with inner contradictions). While both Level II and III learning involve struggling with contradictions, only at the third level of learning can we use artifacts to both create and resolve contradictions. These “tertiary artifacts” can include imagined worlds or new ways of being in the world—both of which I argue the Space2Cre8 project afforded participants. At this level of learning, participants both imagine the problem and seek ways to resolve it through collective practice. Engeström (2007) describes this kind of learning as *expansive* (i.e. proceeding horizontally), whereby the context of learning itself is transformed from within, exploiting existing conflicts and tensions as people in the activity system seek resolutions to central conflicts (Engeström, 1991).

This theoretical framework, which focuses on the reciprocal relations of learning and doing, provides an important means of understanding how participants in this study used global flows (Appadurai, 1996) as resources for meaning making and symbolic creativity (Willis, 1990). It offers a powerful heuristic for understanding comprehensive, distributed, and contextualized activity as a system. Since I am particularly interested in the ways that this networked community offered resources for learning and literacy development, a CHAT framework offers a set of theoretical tools for understanding how participants addressed the textual multiplicity inherent in our global connectedness and increased communicative channels and media (New London Group, 1996).

## Review of Relevant Literature

This study draws upon a burgeoning body of scholarship that explores how digital and social media play into adolescent learning and literacy development. Since rapidly emerging technologies continue to shift the representational landscape, researchers are just beginning to explore how educational institutions might incorporate new tools and practices. In this section, I first review current work on social media in the fields of computer-mediated communication and education, which includes emerging ethnographic research around adolescent literacy practices. I then turn to the growing research base around adolescent digital literacies, including findings about literate opportunities afforded by adolescents' engagement in self-sponsored practices in informal learning contexts. This work helps to set the stage for this study by illuminating key opportunities and tensions that might be relevant to adolescents' networked composing practices in educational settings, an area that has not yet been explored in depth. Finally, I turn to research in teachers' digital practices to better understand how the opportunities and tensions around the educational adoption of new technologies offers insights into this cross-cultural networking project.

### Social Media, Learning, and Schooling

In the past several years, scholarship around social media has become more prevalent, and many in the field of computer-mediated communication have turned their attention to exploring the effects of social networking on different groups of users, mapping how people use social networks and for what purposes. A seminal review of research on social networking by boyd and Ellison (2008) offered an early roadmap for scholars, tracing the evolution of popular social networks and offering a definition of social network sites, widely adopted in subsequent scholarly literature, as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (p. 211). Much of the research into these social network sites has been situated in higher education (e.g., Crook & Cluley, 2009; Jones, Blackey, Fitzgibbon, & Chew, 2010), investigating through surveys and questionnaires how undergraduates and young adults use popular social networks like MySpace and Facebook (e.g., Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2011; Hargittai, 2008). Increasingly, scholars are focusing on adolescents' uses of social networks using a range of qualitative measures like interviews, focal groups, and discourse or content analysis in addition to large scale surveys (e.g., boyd, 2008; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009a, 2009b; Mallan, Ashford, & Singh, 2010; Notley, 2009), including a focus on how young people use social networks popular in different national contexts (e.g., Donoso & Ribbens, 2010; Kalmus, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Runnel, & Siibek, 2009; Ryberg & Christiansen, 2008).

These studies of social media explore five primary themes: the role of identity (and self-presentation) in social networking (e.g., Buckingham, 2008; Davies, 2007; Liu, 2008; Livingstone, 2008; Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008); the relationship between online and offline practices (e.g., boyd, 2008; Donath & boyd, 2004; Hargittai, 2008); the role of social networks on users' social capital (e.g., Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Greenhow & Burton, 2011; Zywicki & Danowski, 2008); relations between public and private (e.g., Lange, 2008; Lewis, Kaufman, & Kristakis, 2008; Livingstone, 2008; Tufekci, 2008); and the role of social networks on civic engagement and civic action (e.g., Byrne, 2008; Hjorth & Arnold, 2011). Many of these studies have explored the ways that people use these sites to

maintain and extend their existing social networks and manage others' impressions of them through identity performances for imagined audiences. Indeed, a major finding across many of these studies about the centrality of networked audiences has significant implications for adolescent composing – how does the collapse of multiple audiences (Marwick & boyd, 2010) into diverse invisible audiences (boyd, 2011) impact young people's composing processes? While the role of audience has emerged as an important finding of many studies into social networking, this question has not been the central focus of much empirical work to date (except, see Marwick & boyd, 2010). Furthermore, ethnographic inquiry would allow for "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) about youth's composing practices in relation to expanded, networked audiences, but this methodology has only been employed in one major study about the media practices of US young people more generally (Ito et al., 2010). This study seeks to address the possible roles that networked audiences play in authors' composing processes.

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in the implications of social networking for learning (e.g., Collins & Halverson, 2009), especially around its application in schools (e.g., Burnett & Merchant, 2011; Davies & Merchant, 2009; Kist, 2009; Parker, 2011). One set of studies has focused on how online networks can have social implications for young people: how online networks can act as 'social glue' (Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009); how students perceive connections between learning and social life (Jones, Blackey, Fitzgibbon, & Chew, 2010); how interacting with teachers on networks can affect student motivation and classroom climate (Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007); and how students talk about school or learning on the networks themselves (Selwyn, 2009). However, little empirical work has been done on the use of social media in K-12 classrooms (cf. Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009; Livingstone & Brake, 2010), though scholars do agree on the need for an educational framework for social networking and media use by adolescents more generally (e.g., Davis, 2011; Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2010; Jenkins et al., 2006; Luckin, Clark, Graber, Logan, Mee, & Oliver, 2009). As more educational scholars focus on how social networking is being adopted in educational spaces, researchers have begun to look at the role of networks in fostering innovative, creative, and design-ful practices of young people (e.g., Greenhow & Robelia, 2009a; Hull, Stornaiuolo, & Sahni, 2010; Stornaiuolo, Hull, & Sahni, 2011). One design research project, similar in some ways to the Space2Cre8 project, has begun to explore the affordances of a private social network on youth learning across formal and informal learning contexts (Richards & Gomez, 2011). Young people in the Digital Youth Network created digital artifacts in school and out of school classes, sharing their work on a private social network called Remix World that connected kids in the local Chicago program to one another. Richards and Gomez found that the social network Remix World bridged formal and informal learning spaces, giving participants tools to link knowledge and expertise across multiple contexts and engage in meaning making opportunities in multimodal spaces. Students produced many forms of texts and developed public identities around those texts in a network that functioned as a knowledge-building space. Their study is one of the first to explore the affordances of social networking for learning in school and after-school contexts, offering an interesting window into young people's relationships with 'mentors' who guided young people's engagement on the network. However, the locally bound network did not offer the same kinds of audiences and textual resources available on the Space2Cre8 international network, and Richards and Gomez did not explicitly explore the relationships between teachers and students around networked literacy practices.

The handful of studies that focus on how young people's engagements on social networks function as literate practices have found that the space of the online community has afforded

particular kinds of textual possibilities (Dowdall, 2009; Richards & Gomez, 2011) and an expanded rhetorical repertoire (Beach & Doerr-Stevens, 2011; DePew, 2011; Reid, 2011). For example, DePew (2011) examined undergraduate second language students' writing strategies on social networks and found that they drew on a multilingual rhetorical repertoire in composing for audiences with different linguistic and cultural expectations. Similarly, Reid (2011) found that closed Facebook pages afforded users a separate space for creating new relationships and fostering new forms of interaction. The undergraduates in South Africa saw the Facebook pages as a safe space for using different textual norms, which Reid argues shifted the power dynamics in the program and offered an alternate pedagogical space that enabled expanded critical practices around writing. Beach and Doerr-Stevens (2011), in one of the only studies of social networking in an English classroom with adolescents, explored how one class of 12th graders used a Ning site to learn about argumentative writing. They found that young people adopted hybrid discourses to construct roles and negotiate dialogic tensions, which facilitated their collaborative argumentative writing. While work around the literacy practices of young people in socially networked spaces is only now emerging, this early work highlights the opportunities for composing in these networked spaces. However, this review of the literature illustrates that there is much we still do not know about the role of social networks for educational practice.

### **Adolescent Digital Literacies**

Significant sociocultural research has focused on adolescents' digital literacy practices more generally over the last decade (Mills, 2010), with a number of scholars qualitatively documenting youth's engagements with new technologies across a range of informal learning contexts (e.g., Black, 2009; Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Lewis & Fabos, 2005; Ranker, 2008). Studies of adolescents' uses of digital technologies often detail their self-sponsored practices (e.g., Ito et al., 2010) and "textual identities" (Lam, 2000), arguing that the attendant literacy practices are creative forms of learning oriented toward social communication (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). Yet even as more composition and literacy scholars have called for re-visioning adolescent composing in light of the impact of changing technologies on the production and circulation of writing (e.g., Shipka, 2005; Smagorinsky, 1995; Wsocki, 2008), many point to an increasing gulf between in and out of school literacies (cf. Hull & Shultz, 2001) and call for more empirical research that addresses how to reconcile these in- and out-of-school literacy practices as well as mapping exactly what they entail (Moje, 2009). Early research on the academic implications of these digital learning practices (e.g., Barab et al., 2005) point to increased motivation and academic efficacy as they more effectively encourage youth to draw on a broader range of cultural competencies than traditional literacy curricula (cf. Mills, 2010). However, our understanding of the educational implications of these digital media is still emerging, not least because of the rapidly changing technological landscape, with new tools and practices constantly emerging and shifting in use (Coiro et al., 2009; Leander & Lewis, 2008). Researchers are beginning to explore "what writing is now" (Haas & Takayoshi, 2011, p. 398; cf. Vasudevan, Shultz, & Bateman, 2010), especially in the context of such Web 2.0 composing practices as blogging (Zagal & Bruckman, 2011), microblogging (Mills & Chandra, 2011), fan fiction (Black, 2009), wikis (S. Gibbons, 2010; Reich, Murnane, & Willett, 2012), instant messaging (Haas, Carr, & Takayoshi, 2011; Lee, 2007), and digital video composing (Gilje, 2010). A number of studies also explore adolescents' literacy practices in the context of online communities like Quest Atlantis (Dodge, Barab, & Stuckey, 2008; Barab et al., 2005), Computer Clubhouse (Kafai, Peppler, & Chapman, 2009), and Flickr (Lee & Barton, 2011), using new

tools like Photovoice (Zenkov & Harmon, 2009) and Scratch (Peppler & Kafai, 2007). Much of the research on adolescent digital literacies argues that digital technologies offer new possibilities and opportunities for young people's literacy development, particularly around composing.

Scholars have found that digital technologies offer diverse composing opportunities by virtue of the new resources they offer, including new texts, contexts, modalities, genres, experiences, languages, and semiotic tools that allow young people to compose via multiple paths (Ajayi, 2009). Young people are able to exploit new modalities in their composing, weaving together film, photos, music, and text in complex combinations (Gilje, 2010; Hull & Nelson, 2005; Ranker, 2007, 2008; Ware, 2008). This multimodal meaning making is facilitated by the ubiquity of various composing tools like mobile phones, compact cameras, and online editing websites, and adolescents regularly draw on their knowledge about these meaning making resources within educational contexts (Burnett, Dickinson, Myers & Merchant, 2006). Indeed, researchers have demonstrated that young people can extend their literate repertoire (Rymes, 2011) by drawing on their cultural resources (Lam, 2009) and their everyday experiences in the world (Haas, Carr, & Takayoshi, 2011). Adolescents can build on a number of linguistic resources, including the creative inscription of paralinguistic language features in the written genre of instant messaging (Haas, Takayoshi, & Carr, 2011) or the multiple languages that intermix online (Lee & Barton, 2011).

Similarly, researchers have found that young people build on and construct multiple texts and contexts as literate resources, most especially through their mobile and hybrid textual practices. Scholars agree that reading and writing processes now require audiences and authors to be more adept at reading and writing intertextually – across texts, modes, and genres – and particularly across a hybridized collection of text forms using a variety of ever-changing tools (Coiro et al., 2009; Leander & Lewis, 2008; Witte, 1992). For example, Black (2009) examined the textual practices of young women who wrote fan fiction and mixed media genres and languages in complex and novel ways online. Such experimentation with new genres allows young people to draw on “rich intertextual landscapes” (Ranker, 2008, p. 229) that provide resources for remixing diverse texts across multiple networks and contexts (Bearne, 2009; Erstad, Gilje, & de Long, 2007; Lam, 2006; Forte & Bruckman, 2010). This intertextual reappropriation of symbolic material and cultural practices across a range of school-sanctioned and ‘unofficial’ spaces offers opportunities for young people to construct and demonstrate knowledge in multiple ways (Brass, 2008). Indeed, many scholars exploring adolescents’ digital literacies question how constantly circulating resources and evolving social systems foster different kinds of opportunities to learn (Leander, Phillips, & Taylor, 2010). This ‘spatial turn’ in new literacy studies (Leander & Sheehy, 2004; Pahl & Rowsell, 2006) asks not just how new mobilities highlight revised understandings of learning, space, and time across formal and informal learning contexts but also how youth’s textual practices indeed construct and constitute contexts (Bulfin & North, 2007). For example, Haas, Carr, and Takayoshi (2011), in examining instant messaging, found that young people had to establish social and cultural contexts and build common ground online through their deictic textual practices, a finding that echoes the work of boyd (2011), who has argued that the collapse of contexts – and the need for audiences and authors to collaboratively negotiate and build contexts – is one of the defining characteristics of online communication. In tracing the global flows within the social networking project of S2C8, I was attentive to how different texts and contexts served as literate resources that young people constructed across the networked community.



A number of studies of adolescent digital literacies have proposed that circulating texts and contexts offer new opportunities to co-construct knowledge collaboratively than ever before, which has led to shifting notions of expertise and authority between teachers and students (Chavez & Soep, 2005; Ito et al., 2008) and new relationships between authors and audiences (Warshauer & Grimes, 2007). For example, Yi (2008) examined the ways that “relay writing” functioned in an online community of transnational Korean students, with traditional divisions between authors and audiences collapsing as participants collaboratively composed brief narratives, commentary on the narratives, and responses to the narratives in a dialogic, group-focused writing activity. This kind of group composing, made easier through wiki and microblogging tools, invites adolescents to share and co-construct knowledge and expertise (Rojas-Drummond, Albarran, & Littleton, 2008; Zagal, 2011). This provides opportunities to learn by sharing or building expertise about composing tools and practices with peers (Vasudevan, Schultz, & Bateman, 2010) and allows authors and audiences to negotiate what counts as a text as they compose (Laquintano, 2010). However, tensions about writing as an individual versus collaborative activity are often instantiated in formal educational contexts, where students must negotiate issues around individual assessment (Bearne, 2009; Tharp, 2010; Ware, 2008). For example, students have reported feeling uncomfortable with editing other students’ work in a wiki (Forte & Bruckman, 2010; Grant, 2009; Wheeler & Wheeler, 2009) and discourses around ‘credit’ and ‘ownership’ permeate collaborative projects (Tharp, 2010). These tensions around authority and expertise are often present in relationships between teachers and students as they negotiate what counts as authoritative knowledge, who controls expertise, and what counts as writing (Black, 2009; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2005; Ito et al., 2010; Junquiera, 2008). Multimodal and networked composing shifts our understandings of authorship (Vasudevan et al., 2010), complicating traditional schooled notions of writing as monolingual, adherent to conventions, and print- and author-centric (Black, 2009; Lam, 2006). In the next section I explore in more depth how teachers often reported struggling with these tensions as they incorporate new media practices into their pedagogies and grapple with different norms and expectations around composing.

### **Teachers, Schools, and New Media**

While there are some studies about using social media in teacher training and professional development courses, there is considerably less empirical work about its use in classrooms. However, there is quite a bit of scholarship around teachers’ uses of digital technologies, much of it focused on reasons why classrooms lag behind everyday uses of new technologies. While a vast majority of schools and classrooms now have access to digital technologies as well as the Internet, most educational researchers report that there remains a wide disparity between the rich digital practices that people engage in during the course of their everyday lives and the more limited and narrow technology practices adopted in schools (Speak Up, 2010b). Over the last decades, research has continued to show that schools integrate technology in superficial ways, with little innovation despite the widespread access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001; Honan, 2009; Tearle, 2003). Despite the innovative uses of digital media that individual teachers may adopt (Miller, 2007; Wheeler & Wheeler, 2009), the institutional practices of schooling seem much more resistant to change (Davidson & Goldberg, 2009). Most uses of technology in schools are instrumental at best, focused more on the technical aspects of ICTs than on the social and pedagogical contexts of their use (Zhao, Pugh, Sheldon, & Byers, 2002). It appears that few

schools or classrooms have integrated technology into the curriculum in the sense that Hutchison and Reinking (2011) describe as transformational (cf. Angers & Machtmes, 2005; Hernández-Ramos, 2005). Indeed, the use of ICTs in classrooms more often than not supports existing practices rather than inspires learner-centered, collaborative, and social pedagogies (Halverson & Smith, 2009; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Palak & Walls, 2009; Windschitl & Sahl, 2002). While a number of researchers have explored different explanations of this apparent disparity, the historically rooted reasons are complex and cannot be explained by simply holding teachers responsible (Cuban et al., 2001; Hernández-Ramos, 2005; Honan, 2010; Zhao & Frank, 2003).

There is overwhelming evidence that a number of contextual factors play a significant role in how technology is adopted in classrooms. For example, teachers continue to struggle with access to technologies, including unreliable, broken, old, or difficult to access equipment (Cuban et al., 2001; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; Sime, 2005; Starkey, 2010; Stolle, 2008). While this technical infrastructure is a barrier to ICT integration, so too is the ‘human infrastructure’ (Zhao et al., 2002), including the lack of support staff or institutionalized policies and practices (e.g., updated materials, generous computer use policies, professional development). Ertmer (1999) has called these external factors “first order” barriers, with “second order,” intrinsic barriers even more difficult to pinpoint. Researchers often point to barriers related to teacher beliefs that impede sustained curricular integration of new technologies, including teacher-centered pedagogies, views about the relevance of technology, the extent of their technological pedagogical content knowledge, and expectations about the classroom environment (Angers & Machtmes, 2005; Ertmer, 2005; Hughes, Kerr, & Ooms, 2005; Karchmer, 2001; Koehler, Mishra, Yahya, 2007; Sime & Priestley, 2005; Starkey, 2010; Zhao, Pugh, Sheldon, & Byers, 2002). Other factors related to teachers’ practices that recur in the research also include teachers’ past experiences with technology (e.g., Starkey, 2010), their training and professional development (e.g., Hutchison & Reinking, 2011), and the time demands for planning and fitting ICT into class time (e.g. Holloway & Valentine, 2003). But other researchers caution that it would be too simple to look for deficits in teacher practices (e.g., Honan, 2010) and that more ecological explanations (Zhao & Frank, 2003) would offer a historically situated consideration of how policies and infrastructure impact the integration of new technologies in schools (Cuban, 2001; Kist, 2007).

Emerging research illustrates how that teachers are using Web 2.0 technologies in literacy classrooms. For example, Miller (2010) studied how teachers implemented multimodal pedagogies from their training in their classroom instruction, arguing that integrating multimodal composing transformed both teaching and student learning. However, she cautioned that that a central factor impacting such transformations was teachers and students co-constructing a meaningful purpose for using these practices. When both teachers and students saw multimodal composing as central to their activities – not as a hook into ‘real’ literacy or as a reward – then important shifts in participants’ epistemologies and social practices resulted. Davies and Merchant (2009) make a similar case for the transformative potential of Web 2.0 tools, particularly blogging and social networking, in literacy classrooms. However, a recent large-scale survey of literacy teachers by Hutchison and Reinking (2011) offers the clearest window yet into how literacy teachers perceive technology in the classroom. While the vast majority of teachers thought integrating technology was important, they were not likely to consider newer forms of reading and writing central to their classroom instruction or important to students’ literacy development. Literacy teachers rated such Web 2.0 activities as blogging, sending email, chatting, collaborating online with other students, and publishing information were rated as low

in importance and not widely used in practice by literacy teachers. Furthermore, while they thought 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies were important for young people to learn, literacy teachers reported using more traditional technologies in conventional ways (e.g., using a projector or having students learn powerpoint) and imagined these uses of ICTs as supplemental to their instruction.

While the picture of how new technologies in general and Web 2.0 practices in particular are being integrated in schools is emerging, we can identify three interrelated ideological tensions around their use in schools that are salient for understanding how social networking was taken up by teachers in the Space2Cre8 project. First, a tension around the adoption versus the integration of technology runs throughout the literature. Students may be using technology in schools, but these uses are often part of a long ingrained habitus that orients us toward print ideology (Snyder, 2009; Erstad et al., 2009). While students are presenting using PowerPoint or answering comprehension questions about a website, these practices are fundamentally unchanged by virtue of using technology (Honan, 2010; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011). A related tension is one around the educational value of new technologies. While teachers may think these new technologies are important for students to learn and may use them in their everyday lives, it is not clear that they understand them to have a learning purpose in the classroom (Honan, 2009; Karchmer, 2001). They can be seen as entertainment, or something separate from the classroom (Burnett, 2009, 2011), without a purpose in the context of learning (Miller, 2010). Finally, there is a deep-seated tension around the relationship between new and traditional literacy practices in education. Some stakeholders in schools can feel that these new literacies are supplanting or displacing more traditional reading and writing in ways that threaten the hegemony of print texts (Stolle, 2008; Tearle, 2003). These historically rooted understandings of “how it has always been” (Kist, 2007) are present in the taken-for-granted, routine structures of schooling for the past century, in short time bursts separated by disciplinary boundaries that foreground the role of the teacher as expert. All of these understandings are threatened by the introduction of new technologies that invite different literate practices to be valued. While we certainly are only beginning to understand the relationship between literacy practices and social media in educational contexts, the research literature points to a number of these ideological tensions that were salient for the participants in the S2C8 project and were central to the contradictions that teachers and students struggled with over the course of this study.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

*“Extending and adapting ethnography [for online spaces] provides both a site for reflection on what counts as ethnographic experience and a site for reflection on the implications of mediated communication.”*

-Hine, 2000, p. 156

*“[W]e are concerned with describing practices that could be followed in understanding how participants create, bound, and articulate social spaces. Our shift, therefore, is from identifying sites (as things) to identifying ‘siting,’ as a productive process, ... [studying] productive tensions among flow and place-making practices, space-time paths and stories of travel, and the ways in which writing, speaking, and reading are constructions of social space.”*

-Leander & McKim, 2003, p. 213

Employing a multi-sited ethnographic approach (Marcus, 1995) in this dissertation study, I followed five teachers and their adolescent students in Norway, South Africa, India, and the United States as they participated in the Space2Cre8 networked community over two years. I traced how the study participants talked about the intersecting online and offline spaces of the project, collecting interview, observational, artifactual, and informatic data about how teachers, their focal students, and other key stakeholders (program directors, principals, and co-teachers) understood the purpose of the program. This ethnographic study was designed to help educators identify how we might productively incorporate social media into classrooms and foster students’ development of the compositional facility needed to communicate with varied audiences across multiple composing contexts with complex and varied texts.

My research was guided by the following questions:

1. How do teachers’ practices with and beliefs about educational social networking change in relation to others in the networked community and within institutional settings? What challenges do teachers face in incorporating social media into their classes and in developing curriculum and how do they respond to those challenges?
2. In what ways do teachers view the social network as a space for learning and literacy development? Consequently, how do teachers understand youth’s new media composing practices in a networked community?
3. What role, if any, does the social network play in youth’s composing processes?

### Study Methodology

This dissertation study employed a multi-sited ethnographic approach (Marcus, 1995) in order to investigate teacher and youth practices around social networking across time and contexts. This approach shifts away from place-based fieldwork (and complicates the notion of the ‘field’) in order to “focus on how meanings get taken up, shift, and circulate across different situations, ... [that is,] how meanings travel” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 76). In tracing teacher and youth practices across five S2C8 program sites and the online space of the social network,

this study is already quite literally multi-sited in nature. However, this study is aligned with multi-sited ethnography epistemologically as well in its focus on how teachers and youth constitute the social network in conjunction with others in the community: how do participants imagine the network over time; what metaphors and discourses about the network are invoked and when; how do those discourses and metaphors travel and change; how do participants' practices and beliefs form a network of connections between participants? These kinds of questions about connections, associations, and relationships are at the heart of multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, p. 97), a research paradigm that explores "circulations of discourse, the production of social imaginaries, and the forging of transnational networks across levels of scale and connecting people across time and space" (Hall, 2004, p. 109).

The methodological focus of multi-sited ethnography is particularly appropriate for this study about participants' understandings and uses of educationally turned social media because such a methodological approach presupposes that digital literacies are firmly interconnected with other literacy practices across online and offline spaces (Hine, 2005; Leander, 2009; Leander & McKim, 2003). So in seeking to understand how teachers incorporate social networking into their pedagogy and negotiate those practices with their students, this study assumes that participants will routinely build connections across online and offline spaces, constituting the online community through their semiotic practices. Rather than invoking *a priori* analytic categories like 'offline' and 'online' and other dichotomous constructions, I trace how participants themselves define and construct connections and discontinuities across social spaces, especially the metaphors and narratives participants tell about the social network over time. As a methodological approach, multi-sited ethnography invites exploration of participants' awareness of cultural phenomena across spaces, or what Marcus calls a "multi-sited sensibility" (p. 112), and thus seems particularly well suited to a study that explores how teachers and students across different geographic sites understand and constitute the social network – in particular, the awareness of how it connects them to others – in their teaching and composing practices.

While multi-sited ethnographic research offers a methodology for capturing practices that move and travel, I found that the methodology of 'global ethnography' offers a complementary perspective fruitful for this dissertation study. Global ethnography takes the global, and indeed the very nature of multi-sitedness, as an object of study (Burawoy, 2000; Gille & Rianin, 2002). It offers a way of understanding the global and local as constantly repatterning and co-constituting one another across places and scales. The job of the ethnographer is thus to interrogate people's sense-making activities as a set of place-making projects, whereby social relations are constructed across spatial scales, all globally inflected and locally manifested. This understanding of multi-sited ethnography as the investigation of people's place-making practices is particularly helpful in illuminating how global flows produce and indeed constitute the local in particular spatial configurations. As young people and their teachers worked together to imagine how to create this global S2C8 community, I have been attentive to their place-making practices across multiple scales, from the local and global, as intertwined with their literate practices. Thus, global ethnography adds a dimension of historicity and scale to multi-sited ethnography that proved useful in the data collection and analysis.

Within its ethnographic framework, this study also draws on case study methodology to illuminate micro-practices of particular teachers and their students around social networking and new media composing. Dyson and Genishi (2005) describe how a case is a research-driven theoretical decision about the relationship between the context and the phenomenon under investigation:

Any detailed ‘case’ (e.g., a studied teacher’s pedagogy, a child’s learning history) is just that – a case. It is not the phenomenon itself (e.g., effective teaching, writing development). That phenomenon may look and sound different in different social and cultural circumstances that is, in different cases. This relationship between a grand phenomenon and mundane particulars suggests key theoretical assumptions of qualitative case studies, particularly those involving the production of *meaning* and its dependence on *context*. (p. 4)

In this study, the phenomenon under investigation was educational social networking, and I wanted to focus on one teacher’s interaction with his or her students in relation to social networking in detail. In choosing one site from the five, I had to make decisions about “how to angle [my] vision on these places, depending on the interplay of [my] own interests and the grounded particularities of the site[s]” (Dyson & Genishi, p. 12). I focused on the New York school site for case study analysis for two primary reasons. First, the infrastructure of the school site in New York allowed me to capture interactions between Jake and his students and address the study’s central questions in detail. Second, Jake and his students occupied an important role in the S2C8 community as the project unfolded, affording a unique lens on how participants’ engagement in the project shifted over time.

I chose the New York site for case study analysis in part because Jake’s program was the most consistent. Meeting twice a week for almost the entire two years, Jake and his students had a fairly stable set of participants and a classroom culture that emerged over time. I was welcomed into this community very openly, and Jake and his students regularly included me in their private conversations and collaborations. Furthermore, he did not have to shift his curriculum in response to outside pressures, so I could observe how Jake and his students determined the curriculum ‘from the ground up,’ so to speak. All of these affordances allowed me to trace in detail the challenges that the New York participants faced, especially Jake’s beliefs about educational social networking. The second reason I chose the New York site for detailed analysis was the important role it played in all of the community-wide interactions in the latter half of 2011. The New York site became the driving force behind much of the increased collaboration between the different teachers and students, and Jake and his students produced an impressive amount and quality of work that inspired others across the online community. The New York site was involved in all of the cross-cultural exchanges that occurred in 2011, which were the first significant interactions between participants from different countries. Therefore, I was able to trace the differences in the ways that Jake and his students participated in the project over time, looking in particular at the participants’ shifting beliefs about the network before and after the exchanges began in earnest. This closer look at the evolution of one program site (i.e., one activity system) and its participants’ shifting understandings of themselves, the community, and their composing practices allowed me to analyze in detail the global flows of texts and ideas across multiple scales and over time. This further allowed me to address my three research questions at multiple scales, both in terms of one school site and in relation to the larger community in which the school site functioned.

### **Setting and Participants**

This study followed a set of participants in Glynda Hull’s design research study, a social networking project called Kidnet (Hull, Stornaiuolo, & Sahni, 2010).<sup>4</sup> Within that larger project,

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<sup>4</sup> See [www.space2cre8.com](http://www.space2cre8.com) for more details about this project.

this dissertation study focused on five of the original teachers as they collaborated to shape the community for the primary two years of the project. This multi-sited ethnography took place across six total ‘sites’: the online Space2Cre8 social network as well as the five main school sites in the Kidnet program from 2009 to 2011 – New York City, NY, U.S.; Oakland, CA, U.S.; McGregor, Western Cape, South Africa; Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India; Oslo, Norway (see Table 3.1). At each school, a teacher led a group of adolescent students in a digital and social media class that met once to twice per week. During each of these classes, teachers guided students in the creation of digital artifacts that highlighted something the participants wanted to share with the others. Also, each week participants would engage with one another through the social network, often by creating messages online. Since no classes were online at the same time, the majority of communication was asynchronous. I turn now to a discussion of the Kidnet project in general and the multiple sites and participants in detail.

**Table 3.1: Overview of Sites<sup>5</sup>**

Site	Teacher	Program Details
Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India	Amit Patel	-Site established in August 2008 -In a Hindi-medium ‘afternoon school’ for girls who are poor -Class of 15 girls, ages 15-18 -School day class (outside of formal curriculum) -Amit, a technology teacher, has been assisted by three different literacy teachers since 2008
Kaap, Western Cape, South Africa	Kgotso Motau	-Site established in August 2008 -In an Afrikaans-medium public middle school -Two classes of 8 <sup>th</sup> graders, ages 13-14 -School day class (enrichment during technology period, outside of formal curriculum) -Kgotso was sole teacher from 2008 until site closed in June 2011
Oslo, Norway	Maja Johansen	-Site established in September 2009 -Public lower secondary school (grades 8-10) -In Norwegian class period in 8 <sup>th</sup> grade, ages 13-14 -School day class (enrichment within the current curriculum) -Maja took over the class from English teacher in late 2009, then quit the project and closed the site in June 2010
New York, NY (U.S.)	Jake Casey	-Site established in June 2010 -Alternative public high school in Upper West Side of Manhattan for students who had not earned enough credits -Group of 13 focal students, ages 15-18 -Primarily out of school class 2 days per week -Jake began teaching S2C8 in a middle school in Spring 2010 but shifted to the ongoing high school program in July 2010
Oakland, CA (U.S.)	Jerry Jackson	-Site established in September 2010 -Public high school in East Oakland -9 <sup>th</sup> graders in a multicultural elective class (ages 14-15) -In school class 1 day per week (enrichment within the current curriculum)

<sup>5</sup> All of the names of people in this study are pseudonyms. Additionally, the names of the town in South Africa and all of the schools have been changed to protect participants’ identities.

## Context of the Kidnet project.

Kidnet was a design research project that originally brought together three schools – one in India, one in South Africa, and one in Oakland, California – to participate in a social networking exchange. From its beginning in August 2008 through its official end August 2011, the Kidnet project underwent four distinct design phases, each driven by a significant change in the network or participation structures in the community (while I have been involved with the project across all four design phases, this dissertation study took place during the final two phases). While the first two design phases involved the creation of a youth-driven a social network, the project suffered many difficulties in these early days. During the first phase of the design project (August-December 2008), the original school site in Oakland was slated to close due to lack of funds, the Indian and South African schools had major bandwidth problems, and the programmers who were building the network quit before the original network came online. I came into the project during this time as a research coordinator, but before I could coordinate any research, we had to establish an infrastructure that could be sustained. Therefore, my role became more of a project manager during this stage, particularly around the coordination of the different sites and the development of activities and curriculum in collaboration with the teachers.

During the second design phase (January 2009-August 2009), we stabilized the sites, including moving to a new middle school in Oakland, and had hired new programmers who worked with the research team and the kids to design a very plain social network in the open source software, Joomla!. While the creation of this network was a great accomplishment, and young people made amazing artifacts during this time, there was still very little interaction on a network that was ultimately quite clunky. Furthermore, the teachers were operating each site independently of one another, so there was little cross-fertilization. It was during this period that I realized that teacher collaboration would form a central role in the project's success.

In the third design phase (September 2009-June 2010), we moved to a new Space2Cre8 platform, using the much-enhanced social networking software from open-source company Joomla! called JomSocial (see Figure 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3).



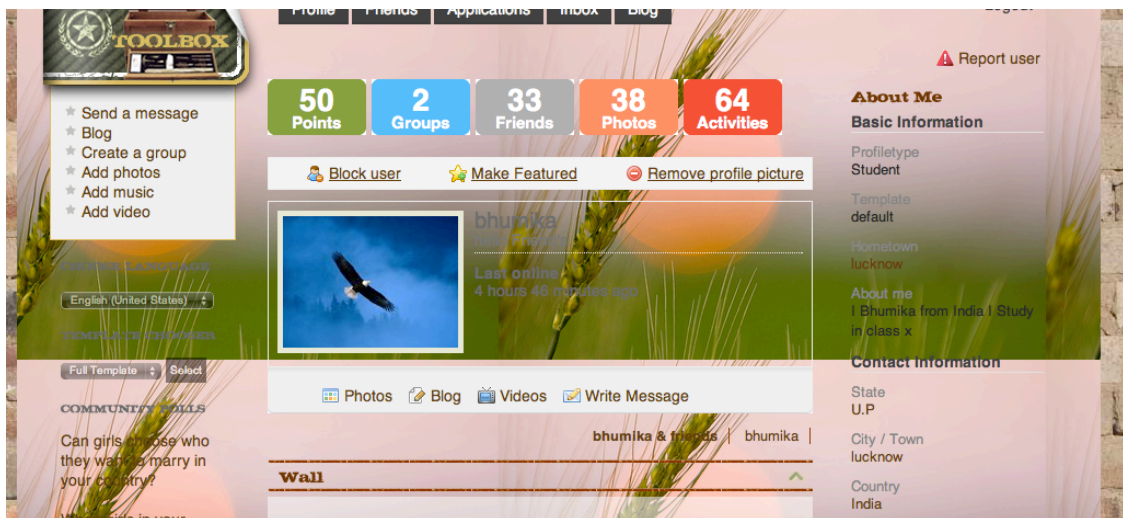
**Figure 3.1.** Sign in page of the Space2Cre8 social network. This was the page students and teachers used to log in to the network.



Over the course of the school year, students offered design advice that shaped the network, including comments about lightening the bricks from the dark original color of the background (see Figure 3.2), incorporating chat, and adding customization features for their profile pages like the option of adding background images as wallpaper (see Figure 3.3).



**Figure 3.2.** Home page of the Space2Cre8 social network. This page was the navigational center of the network with rotating photos of the groups (students in Norway are displayed here).



**Figure 3.3.** Example of an individual user’s profile page. Each user had an individual page that could be designed with images or colors and include text about him/herself.

During this time, a class from Norway joined the community, and the bandwidth issues in India and South Africa were resolved so that the teens could communicate online regularly. Also, we began having teacher calls every six-eight weeks or so, which improved teacher communication, though there were a number of teacher changes that made consistent collaboration challenging at first. Teachers Jake Casey and Jerry Jackson officially joined the project – both had been volunteers in 2009 – by working with middle school sites in New York and Oakland respectively in early 2010.

In the fourth and final design phase (July 2010-July 2011), we continued to add new features to the social network as Jackson and Jake shifted their programs to local high schools in Oakland and New York, which resulted in an increase in youth participation. We added two sites for the summer of 2010, a short summer program for high school students in New York City and a middle school site in the Northern Territories of Australia, but since these latter two programs were short-term in nature and/or the teachers did not participate in a significant number of teacher discussions beyond the course of their programs, I did not include their data in this study. This dissertation study took place during the last two design phases of the Kidnet project, from September 2009 through July 2011, and examines in depth the five main sites throughout the third and fourth design phases. I turn now to a description of each of these sites and the five main teachers at each who formed the core of this study (for overview, see Table 3.1).

### **Lucknow, India.**

The first site to be established was the one in Lucknow, India at the Prayas school, a gated modern-looking two story structure with a wide open courtyard and green gardens all around. The school was located in a progressive locality of Lucknow, which is the capital of the state of Uttar Pradesh, the most populous and second largest state in India. The director of the Prayas school, Karishma was a woman who ran her highly respected private school during the main part of the day and then opened Prayas during the afternoons for girls who lived in the neighboring community and had to work to support their families in the mornings. She was a firm advocate for women's rights, implementing a Freirean pedagogy in the school that encouraged the young women to question cultural givens and develop a critical consciousness around their role in Indian society. That critical consciousness permeated every activity, and when the director began the Space2Cre8 program in August of 2008, which took place during the school day but with a small group of volunteers outside of class time, critical dialogues around pressing social issues were a central part of the class.

Nirali, a literacy teacher in the school, originally led the program with Amit, a slender and youthful-looking computer scientist with an interest in digital and social media. While Nirali led many of the critical dialogues, Amit translated those issue-driven discussions into media projects that could be shared on the network. He led the 15 participants in each developing a digital story and helped them post those stories on the network. He also participated in all of the teacher collaborations, suggesting many activities that he designed to help familiarize his students with social media. While Amit had a computer degree from the University of Lucknow, he had never been a teacher before, and even at the end of the project he saw himself less as the teacher and more as a facilitator. However, over the course of the three years Amit was involved in the project, he took on an increasingly central role, especially when Nirali left the school in early 2009. From 2009-2011 he worked with two other local literacy teachers who were largely unfamiliar with the goals of the project. While those teachers often led the critical dialogues,

Amit ran most other aspects of the class, with the guidance of the Prayas school director Karishma, who had a strong say in the activities of the group.

The 15 girls in the program all lived in the adjacent neighborhood, the majority of lower caste and in poverty, with almost half of them living in huts with no electricity or running water. Ranging in age from 15 to 18, the girls in the program had used computers a bit before beginning the program but had never been online. Their first project was an individual digital story, but in the years following, they became adept at many programs like Photoshop and MovieMaker, making documentaries and other films that they entered in international competitions. All learned English in school, though they were more comfortable with Hindi, and they used mostly English on the social network or subtitled their work in Hindi with English. At the end of 2010, the girls formed an advocacy group around domestic violence, and many of their subsequent projects revolved around their community advocacy work.

### **Kaap, South Africa.**

In the small farming community of Kaap, the Space2Cre8 program took place in the public middle school, a sprawling campus with many outdoor spaces and smartly whitewashed buildings trimmed in a cheerful blue. The children who attended the Afrikaans-medium school were primarily those from the surrounding neighborhoods and the outlying farms, children who would have been called ‘coloured’ under the Apartheid classification system (a designation still regularly used in the town). In some ways a town apart, Kaap is a picturesque village nestled between mountains in the wine-growing region of the Western Cape, at the end of a long road that abruptly stops just outside of town. Full of artists, vintners, and farm workers, the town has a quiet main street, with mostly white South Africans of Afrikaner descent living in the upper part of town on one side of the street and ‘coloured’ South Africans on the other side in the lower part of town (which is where the school is located). While the residents told me of drug and crime problems plaguing nearby towns, everyone spoke of feeling safe in the generally peaceful town full of homes with traditional thatched roofs, adobe walls, and lush gardens. Located in the eighth grade classroom, the Space2Cre8 program was led by Kgotso, who was a Cape Town resident attending a Master’s program in linguistics at the University of the Western Cape.

A speaker of seven languages that represented his wide-ranging linguistic and cultural family background, Kgotso joined S2C8 as a teacher who was fluent with technology but unfamiliar with the town until he visited with his advisor, our local consultant at the nearby university. A gregarious man with close-cropped hair and a round face dominated by a wide smile, Kgotso quickly made friends with the assistant principal, who assisted him in teaching a class of 8<sup>th</sup> graders digital storytelling in August of 2008. Since the school did not have Internet in these early days (and indeed, there was no network to connect on yet), Kgotso spent much of the time teaching students how to work a computer, including how to turn on the machines and use a mouse (all were essentially unfamiliar with computers). For the 2009 and 2010 school years, Kgotso drove 2 hours from Cape Town to teach the 8<sup>th</sup> graders (one cohort each year – 35 students in 2008 and 55 in 2009) in the technology period of school day. After spending the night at a local bed and breakfast, he would teach the 8<sup>th</sup> graders for an hour again the next day and then convene an after school class in 2010 for the current ninth graders before heading back to Cape Town. During these weekly overnight visits, Kgotso became quite a fixture in the town and school, emerging as a beloved figure and functioning as one of the few outsiders the 14- and 15-year-olds interacted with on a regular basis. In fact, Kgotso was one of the first tribal Africans (of Xhosa and Zulu descent) that the young people had come to know well, and many struggled

to pronounce the clicks in his Xhosa name, which Kgotso good naturedly laughed about and ultimately ignored (many called him K as a compromise). During this time, Kgotso had enrolled in a teacher-training program at his university to become a certified teacher.

In 2011, Kgotso began an after-school club with many of the students from the 2009-2010 cohorts, and for the six months of the program 10-20 participants would regularly show up to communicate on Space2Cre8 and work on movies. This club, as an afterschool space, was much more relaxed than the school day class had been, and students regularly gathered for the snack, a highlight for many who had limited food at home. For all of the students in the 2009 and 2010 cohorts, the S2C8 class represented the only place they could access computers and the Internet. The local high school had a computer lab but students were not able to access it, and only a scant handful had a computer in the home (by 2011, many had mobile phones, though rarely ones that connected to the Internet). Students who attended the after-school sessions often came despite great odds – copious homework, family responsibilities (especially watching younger siblings while parents worked), transportation issues (many walked miles from farms outside of town), and paid work (many worked on farms or at odd jobs in town). While youth, now 15 and 16 years old, enjoyed the digital and social media component of the afterschool class, they often sought help with homework and access to the computers for schoolwork during these sessions. Many of them spoke of the class as feeling like a safe space after feeling out of sorts in the high school, which drew from many surrounding communities and was unfamiliar territory for the students who were accustomed to the small town atmosphere where most families were related or historically interconnected over generations. All of the students had taken years of English when the program began, but they were quite shy about using the language on the social network at first. The majority composed in Afrikaans, occasionally subtitling their work. The class ended in June 2011 after the funding expired.

### **Oslo, Norway.**

Our Norwegian site began in September 2009 in Margaret's 8<sup>th</sup> grade English classroom in a lower secondary school outside of Oslo, an attractive brown-shingled building nestled against a picturesque mountain covered in snow many months of the school year. Located in a working-class suburb, the town had a large number of immigrants who attended the local school. The class was part of a media strand at the school (students could choose different emphases such as media or science), and the English teacher was initially quite enthusiastic. She joined the project when the administration asked if she would be willing after being approached by our local project partner from the University of Oslo. After the first six weeks of the project in 2009, Margaret decided the project was too much work and that she could not get through her curriculum and participate in the S2C8 project at the same time. The administration then assigned the popular and outgoing Norwegian teacher Maja to the project, who was quite resistant at first.

A petite young woman with sparkly brown eyes and chin length glossy hair, Maja had been teaching for several years when she joined the project in March 2010, and her youthful, energetic, and edgy qualities seemed to be enjoyed by her students in the classroom. While she appeared intellectually interested in the project, she also struggled to see its connections to Norwegian literacy, her subject area. She worked with the local research team from the University of Oslo to figure out ways to incorporate the program into her class, but ultimately she decided to let the researchers do the majority of the teaching one to two days a week. She never joined the online teacher meetings and only sporadically joined in the online teacher

discussions. By the end of the fall 2010 term, she told the teacher group that she would not be returning to the project due to health concerns. The 28 students in Maja's class were from many parts of the world, and the majority spoke another language at home, Norwegian at school, and English as a third or fourth language. Though some were more confident than others about using English on the social network, the majority composed in English or subtitled their Norwegian texts. All of the students had been online and were familiar with computers, though considering this, surprisingly few were proficient with new media composing tools and programs (e.g., Moviemaker, Photoshop, etc.).

### **Oakland, California.**

In our Oakland site, Jerry Jackson began as a volunteer in fall 2009 in the S2C8 after-school site at a small Catholic middle school in West Oakland. When the teacher left abruptly mid-year, Jackson (as everyone calls him), a very tall African-American man with glasses and close-cropped curly hair, stepped in and took over the lead teacher role in February 2010. As a technologist who had worked in the advertising, film, and design industries, Jackson had never taught school before, though he reported that he left his technology job because he felt drawn to teaching. Since he had never managed students before, I co-taught with him for several months and helped him with classroom management with 15 energetic young people ages 11-14, all of whom appreciated his impish and slightly irreverent nature. In September 2010, Jackson moved the program to an East Oakland high school, a one story sprawling campus that had once been a large school but was now one small school of three on the property. Separated from the street by a high fence, the school seemed daunting from the outside, a concrete structure surrounded by dilapidated apartments and corner liquor stores. Inside, however, the walls were painted bright colors, the classrooms were bright and well appointed, and the teachers and students boisterous and enthusiastic as they came and went through the halls.

The program began as a hybrid 7<sup>th</sup> period-afterschool class, beginning during the elective freshman World Cultures class and continuing into the after-school hours. However, after six weeks, no students were coming to the after-school class for a variety of reasons – work, absenteeism, sports, or family commitments. Jackson moved to the history teacher's morning class, which had nine energetic students, and met students one period a week, which the teacher turned over to him. However, the technology at the school proved troublesome, and there were regular issues around access to the Internet and computers. Despite setbacks, the nine 14- and 15-year-old students produced a number of projects and collaborated with others online. While several were second language learners whose first language was Spanish, all communicated in English online and in their projects.

### **New York, New York.**

Set in an alternative school on the Upper East Side of New York City (NYC), the S2C8 program was directed by artist Jake Casey, a secondary school teacher who had taught English language arts, special education, and art in NYC for several years prior to joining the Space2Cre8 project. Jake joined S2C8 after having created and run a very successful after-school program for incarcerated youth, and several of his colleagues from that program worked as teachers and administrators at the Upper East Side alternative school called Grad Central where the S2C8 program took place (Jake named it the Innovation program). Prior to beginning Innovation, Jake experimented with an 8-week after-school program at a local middle school in March 2010, but when the after-school program lost funding, Jake decided to start Innovation

with his colleagues at Grad Central in July 2010 (he had already served as a volunteer artist for Space2Cre8 in Oakland and South Africa in fall 2009). The school building where Innovation was located was an imposing structure that housed three separate high schools, each on a separate floor and each with its own entrance and security system (complete with armed security staff overseeing a system of metal detectors and full body scanning devices similar to airports, with the same long lines of people waiting to be scanned and checked). The school that housed the Innovation program was an alternative school for youth all over the city, most of whom took the train an hour each way from Washington Heights and the Bronx every day to attend this school for under-credited and over-age students who struggled in mainstream schools.

Beginning as a summer program in July 2010, Innovation then transitioned into a hybrid model during the 2010-2011 school year, starting in the seventh period English class and continuing into the after-school time for interested students. Twice a week, Jake ‘took over’ his friend and colleague Zack’s English class, which drew more and more interested students who managed to ‘stop by’ every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon to participate in the performing and digital art activities Jake organized, including students who attended the other two schools in the building. Since Jake and Zack had worked in the jail program with their colleague Mark, who was the guidance counselor and supervisory administrator for the alternative school, the three men were able to circumvent many of the administrative hurdles common in starting an after-school program. Zack had curricular control over his English class and thus let Jake shape the two days a week of the program, and Mark cleared the way with other administrators and procured access to many resources like laptops, cameras, green screens, and classroom space for filming.

Over the course of the summer and school year, a core group of 13 students emerged, ones who stayed after school regularly and formed the nucleus of the program. While a total of 28 students participated in the class and afterschool activities over the data collection period, some in influential or memorable ways, many of these students persisted for a short time. Some participated only in the summer or in one of the semesters of the class, and others were caught up in turbulent lives outside of school. Like many students who grow up and attend school in urban environments (including the high school students in Oakland), these students faced serious challenges around poverty, violence, and substance abuse. Over the course of the two summers and the academic year, a group of 13 students, seven girls and five boys ages 15-18, formed a very close relationship. The Innovation program served as my case study site for the dissertation as the tight knit group, who called themselves the Famous Nameless Art Collective, created a number of media projects that resonated with the other sites and integrated the digital and social media aspects of the program in uniquely successful ways.

### **Space2Cre8: the Social Network.**

The Space2Cre8 social network functioned in many ways like other commercial social networks (e.g., Facebook, MySpace). Participants could write one another private messages, chat online, comment on media, and see each other’s activity via the public “wall” on the home page of the network (public for the members, that is). Users could also design their personal profile pages, changing their backgrounds to a color or image, adding text about themselves, and choosing an avatar picture to display. The S2C8 network was different from other social networks in that it connected young people who had never met before, and it was a closed, advertising-free space open only to members of the Space2Cre8 educational program. While it was thus a youth-oriented, multilingual, international site (available for viewing in English,

Afrikaans, Hindi, and Norwegian), teachers and other adults participated there as well (in fact, many of the students requested to be my S2C8 ‘friend’ after I met them and indicated that they were aware adults like me were attentive to their interactions online).

However, despite being connected via S2C8, the teachers did not use the network for most of their teacher-to-teacher communication, in part because they did not have a separate, teacher-only space to interact (all of the material on the network, except chats and private messages, were public to other members of the networked community). Instead the teachers used three other primary communicative media to keep in touch – Skype, the Kidnet Hub, and Dropbox. All of the live teacher calls were conducted via Skype, the only option for free international phone calls at the time (the multiple video capacity had not yet been launched). For asynchronous email communication, Amit started a Google Group in September 2009 (naming it the Kidnet Hub) to facilitate more regular interactions between teachers. And in February 2011, we opened a joint Dropbox account, again at Amit’s urging, to exchange the videos more easily between teachers (most of the files were too big to exchange via the Kidnet Hub). In addition to communicating online, Amit, Jake, and Kgotso all visited at least one other program site during the project (Amit and Kgotso both visited the Oakland class and Jake visited the South Africa one). Furthermore, each site had a researcher that worked with the teachers, and these researchers often participated in the teacher calls and in the classrooms in highly involved ways. While the researchers are not the focus of this study, I note that they often played a central role in the S2C8 community at large as well as in the particular school sites (and they are referenced in this study when their interactions were relevant to the analysis).

## **Researcher Role**

As an active member of the social network and the research coordinator for the Kidnet project, I was positioned in this study as a full participant. My role was a reflexive, involved, and fluctuating one, which suits a multi-sited ethnography in which the researcher’s role is itself being mapped; indeed, the researcher is part of “the landscape, and as the landscape changes across sites, the identity of the ethnographer requires renegotiation” (Marcus, 1995, p. 112). In particular, my role as advisor and coordinator in the broader Kidnet project, working with teachers and youth in designing the social network for increased intercultural communication (and in one instance working as a co-teacher in Oakland for a short time), was more participatory than the participant-observer role adopted in most traditional ethnographic research (e.g., Heath & Street, 2008). Since my involvement in the project extended beyond the traditional ethnographic researcher role and certainly impacted teacher practice, my position in the study warrants an extended discussion.

One characteristic of multi-sited ethnography is that the researcher is “within the landscape” and renegotiates that role over time and across sites. This kind of participatory stance is also consonant in some ways with design research (e.g. Brown, 1992; Collins, Joseph & Bielaczyc, 2004). While both ethnographic and design-based methodologies are similarly rooted in rich learning environments, in design research the researcher plays a more central role, acting as a change agent in the project. Guided by interactions with and input from participants, the design researcher systematically and iteratively designs social and contextual variables in order to “refine educational designs based on theoretical principles derived from prior research” (Collins et al., 2004, p. 18). This dissertation study was not exactly a design project, in that I did not devise interventions to test and develop theories in an iterative and planned manner within a complex learning environment (Barab & Squire, 2004, p. 3). Rather, the goal of this study was to

map teachers’ adaptive responses to their various curricular contexts and to their students’ needs, a goal more closely aligned with ethnography. However, my role in the larger Kidnet project was often one of a design researcher concerned with youth engagement on the network, which most likely affected teacher and student practices within this dissertation study and which necessarily extended beyond the traditional participant-observer role adopted in most educational ethnographies.

The larger Kidnet project adopted design research as a central methodology and had the concomitant goal of effecting educational change. But while the larger project had the goal of theory building around youth learning, particularly in developing an aesthetic grounding for literacy studies (Hull & Nelson, 2009), this dissertation study did not seek to systematically change the designed curricular environment of teachers and their students. Without such a transformative goal and with my intent to map teacher practices rather than change them, this study is more closely aligned with multi-sited ethnography than design research. While my dual role as researcher in both projects likely led to changes in participants’ practices or beliefs, that change is not part of the larger goal of the dissertation study and instead can be seen as a necessary repercussion in a multi-sited ethnography in which the researcher plays an active role in the community.

In the multi-sited ethnographic paradigm, the researcher adopts the part of what Marcus (1995) calls “ethnographer-activist,” who renegotiates his or her multiple and shifting identities across sites as the researcher learns about and becomes part of the larger system (p. 113). This “mobile, recalibrating practice of positioning” might lead to “cross-cutting and contradictory personal commitments,” but these conflicts can be addressed through the constant renegotiation of one’s shifting positions in relation to participants across sites (p. 113). This description of the multi-sited ethnographer’s role, as an activist who is part of the landscape and dynamically interconnected with participants’ meaning making practices, describes my experiences across the many sites of this dissertation study. Each site was uniquely positioned in relation to larger institutions of schooling and firmly situated within local cultural practices, and thus my role was different with each teacher – sometimes I was a resource for new curricular ideas, other times a co-teacher for a stint, and sometimes an outside observer or sounding board. But my ultimate goal was to map teacher and student practices around social networking in order to understand how teachers and their students constructed it as an educational practice relevant (or not) to new media composing.

### **Data Collection**

Over the course of two years, I collected data across three collection phases, with increasing intensity in each phase as the core set of participants coalesced (see Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2: Data Collection Phases**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Description</b>
Phase 1	September to December 2009	<i>Preliminary Research &amp; General Background Data Collection</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program documents</li> <li>• Early teacher memos (Amit, Kgotso)</li> <li>• Early teacher collaborative meetings</li> <li>• Early teacher interviews (Amit, Kgotso)</li> <li>• Field notes</li> <li>• Classroom video data</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online analytics</li> </ul>
Phase 2	January to August 2010	<i>Intensified Data Collection (all teachers)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program documents</li> <li>• Teacher correspondence</li> <li>• Teacher memos</li> <li>• Teacher planning meetings</li> <li>• Teacher interviews</li> <li>• Field notes</li> <li>• Classroom video data</li> <li>• Online analytics</li> <li>• Student creative artifacts</li> <li>• Student interviews</li> </ul>
Phase 3	September 2010-July 2011	<i>Primary Data Collection (all teachers)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program documents</li> <li>• Teacher correspondence</li> <li>• Teacher memos</li> <li>• Teacher planning meetings</li> <li>• Teacher interviews (all teachers)</li> <li>• Field notes</li> <li>• Classroom video data</li> <li>• Online analytics</li> <li>• Student creative artifacts</li> <li>• Student interviews</li> </ul>

The first phase, from September-December 2009, involved the collection of background documents, social network data, observational data, early teacher planning meetings, and early interviews with stakeholders and teachers Kgotso and Amit. The second phase, from January-August 2010, is the period when Maja, Jake, and Jackson joined the teaching team, and this period involved a series of early interviews with all five teachers, regular teacher planning calls, site observations (video and field note data), teacher correspondence, and network analytic data. The third and primary data collection phase, from September 2010-July 2011, represents the most intensive period of data collection, with teacher interviews, teacher planning meetings, teacher correspondence, youth interviews, youth artifacts, observational data, and network analytic data gathered regularly over the course of the (U.S.) school year. Since all of the teachers had been working together for eight months by September 2010, the 2010-2011 school year represented an important shift in the project. The youth participants had begun to know one another, the teachers were comfortable in their sites and with one another, and the teachers and students all expressed enthusiasm and hopefulness about collaborating more intensely during the subsequent term.

### **Data Sources**

The following sections detail all of the data collected across the approximately two years of the project via five primary data sources (summarized in Table 3.3). In the descriptions that follow, these primary data sources as well as a number of supplementary secondary sources consulted during data analysis will be detailed.

**Table 3.3: Data Sources**

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Interviews</b> N=68	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 32 interviews with teachers generally lasted from 30-90 minutes each (total audio: approximately 29 hours)</li> <li>• 7 interviews with staff or supplemental teachers, generally 30-60 minutes each (total audio: approximately 6 hours)</li> <li>• 29 interviews with students, generally 30 minutes each (total audio: approximately 15 hours)</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher Meetings</b> N=10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 meetings with all teachers/staff on Skype, lasting approximately 60-90 minutes each (total audio: approximately 11 hours)</li> </ul>
<b>Observations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 302 field notes from 5 program sites</li> <li>• 39 hours of video data from class sessions at 5 program sites</li> <li>• 8 hours of audio data from class sessions at 5 program sites</li> </ul>
<b>Artifacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 62 email threads</li> <li>• 16 teacher memos</li> <li>• Teaching plans, guides, notes</li> <li>• Institutional documents (e.g., brochures about the school) and teacher generated documents (e.g., flyer about the program for recruiting students, describing program to international partners, etc.)</li> <li>• 19 youth movies</li> </ul>
<b>Analytics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online postings by New York youth: 65 blogs, 124 chats (total lines of chat: 1952), 69 comments, 251 wall posts, 130 status updates, 65 private messages</li> <li>• Analytic reports about New York youth participation (frequency and type of posting online)</li> <li>• Analytic reports of viewed media artifacts (frequency of viewing)</li> <li>• Analytic reports of teacher online activity (frequency and content)</li> </ul>

### **Interviews.**

From September 2009 through July 2011, I collected 32 formal and semi-formal interviews with the teachers in the project. About half of the interviews were audio-recorded in person, and the other half were conducted online (via Skype) and recorded. The majority of interviews lasted about an hour but several ranged from 30-90 minutes. While I had a set of semi-structured interview protocols with which I began each interview (see Appendix A), I let the teachers dictate the direction of the interview and asked follow-up questions that led us down some unexpected conversational paths. Also, affiliated people occasionally joined in our interviews, sometimes intentionally and sometimes by happenstance, which also led to interesting conversational trajectories. For example, in New York I interviewed Jake twice in the first summer of his program (July 2010) with his friend and colleague, Mark, who was the supervisor of the summer program and highly involved with how it was conceived. In India, I

was about an hour into my interview with Amit when Karishma, the director of the school and my host, entered the room and joined in. In both cases, the interviews were enriched by the inclusion of other stakeholders who had a major impact on the project and on the teachers' understandings of the project in relation to the school context.

In order to capture some of the complexities of integrating social media within the school sites, I also formally interviewed other staff, including the on-site researchers, support staff, and other stakeholders, as occasions arose (in addition of course to the numerous informal conversations I had in hallways and before and after meetings). I conducted seven of these individual interviews with supplemental staff over the course of two years, each lasting about 30-60 minutes. For example, I interviewed researchers at the New York, Norway, and South Africa sites and these interviews proved particularly illuminating. In each case, the researchers had taken on teacher roles and had insights about the challenges that the main teachers faced; in New York, for example the researcher really functioned more as a full participant and mentor to the youth and offered helpful insights about the students' composing processes because she regularly sat and worked with individual students on a variety of projects, both Space2Cre8- and school-related. In Norway, I interviewed the original teacher Margaret who quit the project as well as the supervisor who had assigned the teachers to the S2C8 project, and these insights proved invaluable at understanding the difficulties Maja reported facing.

Finally, I included in the analysis 29 formal interviews conducted with youth participants from Oakland, New York, and India, which included all of the students who were involved in the exchanges in 2011. These interviews were conducted between July 2010 and July 2011, each lasting about 30 minutes in length. I asked students about their participation in the class, their interactions on Space2Cre8, and their media compositions (most often their videos) (Appendix B). I interviewed 11 students in India, 6 in Oakland, and 7 in New York (in New York one student was interviewed three times and three students were interviewed twice, for a total of 12 interviews). All of the interviews were audio recorded (and in some cases video recorded) in adjacent classrooms, and students were asked about their design decisions, both in designing their profile pages on the network as well as in authoring their media texts shared there. These formal interviews were supplemented by frequent informal interactions and 'mini-interviews,' informal question and answer sessions that were captured during the course of my observations and audio or video recorded.

### **Teacher Meetings.**

A practice that grew up during the course of the project was a regular international conference call that brought together teachers from all of the sites to discuss what was happening in each place and to plan for the future. I initiated these calls in the summer of 2009 when I realized that teams from each country were not coordinating with one another, and our first recorded call occurred in November 2009. A mix of teachers and researchers joined the calls, which each lasted about 60-90 minutes about twice per term. While I was the organizer for these meetings, proposing times and dates and launching the call on Skype (and recording it), the teachers were often the drivers of the meetings, both in the agenda and in reminding me to schedule a call. In fact, the majority of the calls were suggested by the teachers who would send an email to me personally or to the whole group asking to meet. In total, we met 10 times as a group from November 2009 to May 2011, with all four of the teachers participating in the majority of meetings. However, Maja never joined any of these meetings and asked one of the

researchers to represent her on the calls. Nine of these meetings were transcribed (11 hours of audio; the audio for one meeting was lost and I included the notes in the analysis instead).

### **Observations.**

As a deeply involved member of the community, I spent a lot of time interacting with people in the virtual spaces of the project – the S2C8 website, the email listserv, the dropbox – as well as the physical classrooms. While I was a regular visitor in the local Oakland classroom, observing about once a month, I visited New York four times for about one to two weeks each time, South Africa three times, and Norway and India once. Each time I visited a program, we often had frequent sessions, sometimes five in a week, and I filmed those sessions as well as audio-recorded my interactions with teachers and students. I also often observed the teachers in regular classes when possible or observed non-focal classrooms with other teachers in the school to get a sense of the school context. In addition to conducting impromptu informal interviews with students and video recording the S2C8 sessions and other events like recess, I wrote field notes of these visits (and while I worked as a co-teacher with Jackson in spring 2010, I wrote 21 teacher reflection notes that I include as field notes). Additionally, we had a local ethnographer from the community who worked in each classroom writing field notes for each session, and I worked closely with these field researchers. I analyzed a total of 302 field notes for all five sites, written by me and the field researchers, and I included 39 hours of video data and eight hours of audio data in the analysis for the dissertation – all of the video and audio data I collected from each site visit as well as video data from the New York, India, and Oakland sites when young people were composing and filming their exchanged videos. Also, during the course of my observations I conducted a number of informal interviews with the students, sometimes individually and sometimes jointly, and those were audio- or video-recorded as well and included in the total number of hours of recorded data.

### **Artifacts.**

There were five primary kinds of artifacts that I analyzed: teacher correspondence, teacher memos, teacher planning documents, institutional documents, and youth movies. The first artifactual data source was the teacher correspondence in the project, which primarily consisted of emails sent to the group via a listserv that Amit created in Google Groups in September 2009 (the Kidnet Hub). I analyzed 52 email threads from this listserv, which included an original message and a number of replies by others in the community. Also, the teachers occasionally sent me emails with updates and problems, and I included 10 of those exchanges in the data set as well. A second kind of artifact I analyzed was 16 teacher memos/reflections. Jake wrote four teacher memos, Kgotso three, and Jackson one. I also included eight teacher reflections that Kgotso wrote in 2008 when he began teaching in S2C8. While I suggested to the teachers that they may want to keep a written reflection of their teaching, none made a regular habit of it. Amit, however, wrote a daily update and overview, which I counted as part of the third artifactual data source – the teacher planning documents. The director of the school had asked Amit to keep records of the teaching sessions, so he updated a website about what happened in each class and shared that online document with me. Similarly, Kgotso's advisor at the university asked him to share his teaching plans with the research team in 2008, so I have his early notes about planning his class sessions. Every teacher shared some kind of planning documents, though not so formal as Kgotso or Amit, and I included copies of their notes and plans in the analysis. Fourth, I included documentation from each school and teacher about the

program or the school. For example, I asked teachers to provide new people in the project a summary of their sites, so the teachers wrote a descriptive page about their program to include in the teacher's guide or to send around to new members of the adult community. Also, some schools provided background or promotional materials that helped me get a better understanding of the local context (e.g., brochures at the school in Norway and a fact sheet from Prayas in India). Finally, I analyzed 19 youth generated videos that were highly influential with the teacher or youth participants. Sixteen of those videos were movies made by groups of teens, often around a central narrative, and three of the videos were alternative video formats – two a video of questions or responses to a film and another a filmed poetry recitation. I also collected supplementary materials related to the video composing, including storyboards and drafts (as well as the video and audio recordings of the planning and filming sessions for these artifacts).

### **Analytics.**

The final data source included materials from the S2C8 website itself. With a detailed data-reporting component available, I was able to retrieve a large amount of data from student and teacher participants, including the frequency and duration of logins and all content posted and viewed. Since part of my job has been to facilitate engagement on S2C8, I have been highly familiar with student participation online and have encountered these materials many times in engaging with teachers and students online. However, with the large amount of data available over a long period of time, I had to make principled decisions about what data to analyze for the purposes of this study. I included in my analysis all participation from September 2009-July 2011 for all teachers in the project and all 13 of the New York youth participants. From that main data set, I was able to view many interactions from other young people. For example, as one participant posted a movie to S2C8, wrote a blog about it, and posted about it in his status message, I was able to find out who viewed those postings, read the comments attached to them, and catalogue responses to those comments. For the New York participants, I analyzed their 65 blogs, 124 chats (total lines of chat: 1952), 69 comments, 251 wall posts, 130 status updates, and 65 private messages. From this vantage point, looking through the lens of one group of youth participants, I was able to understand the many ways that young people interacted on S2C8 and could trace how their interactions intersected with participants across all the sites.

### **Data Analysis**

The proposed study triangulated multiple data sources in order to trace how teachers and their students used the social network for educational purposes. Data analysis was ongoing during data collection, allowing for iterative refinement of the data being collected (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998). This concurrent data collection and analysis was facilitated by the writing of frequent analytic memos, archived in the qualitative data analysis program Atlas Ti. This qualitative software program enabled the systematic organization and multi-level analysis of the large data corpus. Organized by type of data (field notes, interview transcripts, classroom observation transcripts, documents, etc.), this digital archive allowed iterative, flexible, and open-ended preliminary thematic coding through several initial readings and viewings (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). From this initial analysis, I developed an analytic plan that attempted to address a number of complexities and difficulties in 1) understanding people's actions as part of a complex field of relations and as place-making practices and 2) finding an appropriate unit of analysis across different scalar levels of activity and activity systems. One complexity of multi-sited ethnography, particularly as that research extends across virtual spaces (Hine, 2005), is in

the development of an analytic framework consistent with understanding how ideas, texts, and people engage in place-making literate practices across physical, virtual, and imagined spaces and over time. Furthermore, a number of scholars working in the CHAT theoretical tradition have struggled with ways to operationalize activity in meaningful units of analysis (Barab, Evans, & Baek, 2004; Witte, 2005) and suggest useful heuristics to capture meaning making practices diachronically and synchronically by adapting certain theoretically articulated elements. Thus, in order to trace teacher and student beliefs and practices around social networking and new media composing in this educational social networking community, I developed three scalar levels of analysis, with different units of analysis at each level. Data analysis occurred across all three levels – macro, meso, and micro – as an iterative and recursive process, moving across levels to facilitate understanding about complex fields of relations. In Table 3.4, I summarize the data analysis plan, mapping the sources of data to the research questions and analytic methods.

**Table 3.4: Overview of Data Analysis Plan**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Analytic Methods</b>
1. How do teachers' practices with and beliefs about educational social networking change over time and in relation to others in the networked community?	Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher Interview Protocols</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coding</li> <li>-Discourse analysis</li> </ul>
	Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video Recordings</li> <li>Field Notes</li> <li>Online Analytics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Video analysis/transcripts</li> <li>-Coding</li> <li>-Discourse analysis</li> </ul>
	Collaborative Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audio Recording</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coding</li> <li>-Discourse analysis</li> </ul>
	Artifacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher Memos</li> <li>Curriculum Materials</li> <li>Email correspondence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coding</li> <li>-Rubric for analysis</li> </ul>
2. In what ways do teachers view the social network as a space for learning and literacy development vis-à-vis youth's composing practices?	Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher Interview Protocols</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coding</li> <li>-Discourse analysis</li> </ul>
	Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video Recordings</li> <li>Field Notes</li> <li>Online Analytics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Video analysis/transcripts</li> <li>-Coding</li> <li>-Discourse analysis</li> </ul>
	Collaborative Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audio Recordings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coding</li> <li>-Discourse analysis</li> </ul>
	Artifacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher Reflective Memos</li> <li>Curriculum Materials</li> <li>Email correspondence</li> <li>Youth's digital artifacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coding</li> <li>-Rubric for analysis</li> </ul>

3. How do youth take the social network into account in their composing practices?	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Interview Guides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coding</li> <li>-Discourse analysis</li> </ul>
	Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field Notes</li> <li>• Video Recordings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coding</li> <li>-Video analysis/transcripts</li> </ul>
	Analytics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Custom reporting of youth’s online composing practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coding</li> <li>-Discourse analysis</li> </ul>
	Artifacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composing materials, digital artifacts</li> <li>• Screen shots of profiles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Rubric for analysis</li> <li>-Coding</li> </ul>

### Macro-Level Analysis: Activity Systems

At the broadest, macro-level of analysis, I turned to cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) to illuminate how individuals jointly worked together to create and define activity. At this most general level, the collective activity system was the relevant unit of analysis, a meaningful segment that foregrounds the importance of understanding relations between constituent parts of the phenomenon of interest, without isolating mediational means, actions, or individuals from one another. For the purposes of this study, I used the six activity systems that participants themselves articulated as ‘sites’ as my primary units of analysis – the S2C8 networked community and the five geographically situated in-school or out-of-school programs in New York, Oakland, Lucknow, Kaap, and Oslo. As a heuristic and a way to understand how these six activity systems developed over time and in relation to one another, I used the six constituent components as identified by Engeström – subject, object, tools, rules, community, and division of labor – as theoretically derived codes (Barab, Evans, & Baek, 2004) for a first pass of purposeful coding (Saldaña, 2009). Following Barab, Schatz, and Scheckler’s (2004) suggestion, I looked at these elements not just in interaction with one another but as transactive elements, whereby one element could function in different moments in time as different parts of the mediational triangle. For example, as I examined the activity system of the South Africa site, I identified how Kgotso and his students developed particular rules for the community, such as the “Help Your Neighbor” policy that Kgotso instituted in which students would help their classmates with questions or problems (rather than immediately asking him). I coded instances of this policy as a ‘rule’ that developed in the classroom, but in some instances this rule became the ‘object’ of activity (kids helping one another only because they were directed to). Other times the rule influenced the ‘division of labor,’ whereby the different members of the community took up new roles and responsibilities in relation to one another (like when the most quiet girl in the classroom suddenly became an expert whose advice others sought in changing the appearance of a profile picture). Coding for these transactive elements of the activity system helped me to illuminate the ways that teachers and students shifted their beliefs about and practices on the social network (and thus addressing my second and third research questions).

In addition to coding for the six constituent elements in the Space2Cre8 activity systems, I also analyzed the contradictions and struggles in people’s various motives and goals within activity (Engeström, 1999a). Since contradictions serve as signs of richness, innovation, and mobility in an activity system, I attended to how contradictions manifested as problems, challenges, doubts, or uncertainties among participants, particularly in the negotiation of

conflicting goals and motives within activity. For example, when a problem cropped up in the August 2010 teacher call around kids' uses of explicitly sexual language online, it revealed a contradiction between how the teachers constructed the rules of the S2C8 activity system (what is appropriate online and the teacher's role in addressing 'appropriateness' with youth) and how they understood the object of the activity differently from one another. Jake, for example, argued that he let some of the potentially objectionable talk about sex pass in order to allow youth to experiment with self-representation without overt censorship; Kgotso felt that many kinds of expressions – not just the sexual ones – needed the teacher's intervention to circumvent cultural insensitivity that stymied interaction. As the teachers negotiated rules for their online community, they grappled with contradictions about the object of activity (self-representation vs. interaction) and the division of labor (how teachers took up particular disciplinary roles in the classroom and as mediators between kids' talk). Using these broad heuristic categories for the macro-level analysis allowed me to identify “productive tensions among flow and place-making practices” (Leander & McKim, 2003, p. 213) and to trace meaning making trajectories (Kell, 2009) across activity systems. Like *knotworking* (Engeström, Engeström, & Vähäaho, 1999), meaning making trajectories are characterized by the unpredictable movement of mediational means and people across contexts/activities and over time (Kell, 2009), what Silverstone (2007) might refer to as shifting polarities of interpretation. By examining meaning making trajectories at this broad level of analysis, I traced circulating actors and cultural tools across activity systems in order to understand how participants framed and understood the sites in relation with one another, especially the challenges that they faced individually and collectively (addressing my first research question).

### **Meso-Level Analysis: Mediational Means**

In the intermediate, meso-level analysis, I honed in on what Witte (2005) argues is the most productive unit of analysis for literacy research using a CHAT-framework: mediational means. He argues that since all human activity depends on tools, technologies, and artifacts to mediate between participant(s) and their goals – and that mediational means are always connected to past histories as well as current and future uses – this unit of activity is a fruitful way of uncovering a constellation of practices. I took into account how teachers and students utilized a variety of mediational means to construct and constitute together the social network and the community of individuals connected by that network. I then catalogued the various tools participants used and the motives for those uses, coding for various participation frameworks (Goffman, 1981) that participants invoked, embedded, and embodied as they interacted together to build and organize social action. I also coded for discourse genres, which Hanks (1996) describes as flexible and emergent regularities in semiotic activity that index particular spaces of engagement within communicative practice. Exploring the discourse genres that participants employed in their talk, text, and embodied actions within these school and online spaces enabled me to analyze students and teacher beliefs about these spaces of engagement as they created, appropriated, and transformed discourse genres, including their everyday narratives about the Internet, the social network, and the classroom space.

In tracing the movement of mediational means over time and across activity, I paid particularly close attention to the recontextualization of semiotic activity over time, something that Prior and Hengst (2010) call “semiotic remediation.” They describe this embedding and re-embedding process as the re-presentation or re-use of semiotic materials across modes, media, and activity systems (p. 1). As Kell (2009) found in her study of meaning making trajectories in



one South African township community, mediational artifacts (particularly texts) became more durable over progressive remediations and thus served as ‘joins’ between contexts/activity systems. In this study, I similarly traced the paths of mediational means and how participants embedded, dis-embedded, and re-embedded these mediational means across contexts and times. For instance, I traced the path of a poem written by an Indian participant as it underwent multiple transformations in the work of a New York student, signaling how the young people in question understood social media texts to function as generative material for adaptation and appropriation across mode and media (as opposed, for example, to school texts that were often cast as ‘official’ or authoritative and not easily available for adaptation). In this meso-level analysis, I explored participants’ semiotic practices across imagined and embodied spaces as place-making practices that inscribed beliefs about authorship and textuality within mediational means.

### **Micro-Level Analysis: Literacy Events**

Since I am particularly interested in the implications of social networking for youth’s literacy development (and especially how teachers understand the relationship between social networking and literacy development), at the more detailed micro-level of analysis I examined literacy events in detail, a unit of analysis that Heath (1982) defined as “any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants’ interactions and their interpretative processes” (p. 93). In this study, I broaden literacy events to include occasions that involved all kinds of texts (not just written) in the sense that Kress (2003) defines texts, as “any instance of communication in any mode or any combination of modes” (p. 48). Thus, in my study videos, poems, blogs, and storyboards all functioned as texts in that each was part of ongoing semiotic action that participants extracted from the “infinitely rich, exquisitely detailed contexts, and [drew] a boundary around... [giving] it a form and meaning that are imaginable apart from the spatiotemporal and other frames in which they can be said to occur” (Silverstein & Urban, 1996, p. 1). In one example of a literacy event that I transcribed and analyzed in detail, participants in the Oakland site planned their response to a video by the New York students. They used the blackboard, chalk, paper, pens, a computer, the projector and screen, the original video, popular cultural texts, and each other as some of the central resources in planning their response, and I characterized this set of interactions as a literacy event I called a ‘planning session.’

In using the literacy event as the unit of analysis for the detailed exploration of how participants understood composing in relation to social networking, I hoped to emphasize two things. First, focusing on the “observable episodes” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8) of literacy events stressed the situated nature of literacy and allowed me to understand how participants situated themselves in relation to a range of textual practices (local and global, proximal and distant) rather than using *a priori* notions of texts and contexts. Second, I focused on how literacy events, as “everyday, observable, placed moments” (Kell, 2009, p. 77), could illuminate the ideological valences of broader literacy practices, which Street (2003) argues “refer to the broader cultural conception of particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts” (p. 79). Looking at literacy events enabled me to ‘get at’ participants’ cultural beliefs and values around literacy and served as warrants for claims about literacy practices.

Rooted in cultural historical activity theory, mediated discourse analysis (Jones & Norris, 2005; Scollon, 2001; Wohlwend, 2009) offered me a complementary methodological framework for analyzing literacy events at a detailed scale. The methodological approach focuses on the relationship between discourse and action, particularly how discourse functions in relationship with other available tools with which people take action in the world. This approach thus

preserves the complexity of the social situation by focusing on social practices, including (but not limited to) discourse. While complementary to critical discourse analysis and drawing on some of the same methodological tools (Gee, 1999), mediated discourse analysis shifts the focus to the intersection of social practices. Mediated action (Wertsch, 1991) is the central unit of analysis, which Jones and Norris (2005) describe as “the real time moment when mediational means, social actors and sociocultural environment intersect” (p. 5). All activity is made up of multiple mediated actions, and the flexibility of this unit of analysis helped me to hone in on the ways that participants combined multiple resources to take action during these literacy events. For example, in the “planning session” I described above, I examined how the teacher used written language, the white board, and gesture to guide the initial brainstorming session, while several students collaborated with a camera, the written plan on the board, their notes, and the original video as they talked about how they would film the response.

### **Multi-Level Analysis**

I analyzed the data recursively across these different analytic scales, which allowed me to trace interesting patterns across the data set. In carrying out this multi-level analysis I conducted frequent member checks with the teachers to help me gauge my interpretations and analysis. This strategy of engaging multiple perspectives on the data analysis, combined with multiple methods and careful and close description of the multiple sites over a long period of time, helps address concerns about validity in ethnographic research (Merriam, 1998). While the quality of empirical social research has traditionally been assessed using the constructs of validity and reliability, those concepts must be considered within a qualitative methodological framework and adjusted accordingly (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study addresses issues of internal validity qualitatively (Merriam) by triangulating multiple data sources over a long time scale (with detailed participant observation) and by conducting ongoing analytic checks (including with participant members). In regard to generalizability, qualitative researchers (e.g., Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Yin, 2003) argue that the logic of looking at “concrete instantiations of a theorized phenomenon” (Dyson & Genishi, p. 116) derives from “analytical generalization” (Yin, p. 37), or the generalization of results to broader theories. In this study, the presence of multiple cross-cultural sites helps to increase external validity by addressing a range of situations in which social networking has been negotiated in educational settings (Merriam, p. 212). I argue that this multi-sited ethnographic study design will facilitate generalizations about the ways new media (particularly social networking) impacts teachers and students in educational settings.

## CHAPTER 4: CONTRADICTIONS IN THE SPACE2CRE8 COMMUNITY

*There was this one girl who said, 'I don't want to attend this session anymore. I don't want to work on the website.' And, after some time, next day I think, she came up to me and she said, 'I want to be part of the group.'*

-Amit, 11/2/09 Teacher Call

In Amit's brief narrative above, what we might call a "small story" (Georgakopoulou, 2006), we see him sharing with his fellow teachers the difficulties of operating a program with a slow Internet connection, a problem that made opening the Space2Cre8 website or playing its videos exceedingly difficult for his students at the Prayas school in India. While this compressed story served to illustrate the very real effects of the technical difficulties that plagued the project (every site had problems with broken, slow, or stolen computers; slow, blocked, or inconsistent Internet connections; or out-of-date software and equipment), I open this chapter with Amit's story of how one girl left and rejoined the project to index the kinds of complex and interwoven tensions that emerged over time in the Space2Cre8 community. The girl in the story initially left the program because she did not want to "work" on the website – this reference to the activities on Space2Cre8 as work was not uncommon and represented a recurring tension around its role as an educational network facilitated by teachers. Furthermore, the girl initially understood the website as separate from the community, quitting the program because she did not want to participate on the website but rejoining in order to be "a part of the group." From Amit's story it is not immediately clear whether she meant the local group of girls who made up the Prayas S2C8 program or the larger group of people who interacted on the website (the networked community). While it is likely the former, given Amit's trouble in motivating the girls to participate on the slow website, I argue that this blurring of 'groups' represents another tension around how to understand the local community in relation to the international one and to the social network itself (and the importance of a sense of community or 'group' in mediating students' participation in the project). Finally, I found this small story by Amit to be particularly revealing about how he understood his role in the project more generally, in that the stories he told about his interactions with students indexed the problems he understood himself to be negotiating regularly and mediated his fellow teachers' understandings of the Prayas program (this is, after all, his revoicing of the student's words for the larger group of teachers and researchers). His revoicing inflected her concerns with his own around issues of work and group membership, and he presented himself as the person mediating her participation in the group (she came to him to gain access). Amit's recounting captures in miniature many of the tensions that he and his colleagues grappled with, including how he understood and negotiated his role as teacher.

In this chapter I examine the central contradictions in the S2C8 activity system (Engeström, 1999b) and how these were linked to teachers' competing motives and goals. In analyzing data including the teacher meeting transcripts, interview transcripts, teacher artifacts, and observational data (field notes and audio/video), I argue that the central contradictions for teachers in the project, or what Engeström & Sannino (2010) call "historically evolving tensions," were tied to their view that social networking as a 'social' practice should be held apart from other activities (p. 4). In the opening section of the chapter, I discuss three central contradictions of the project: 1) how participants understood the international networked

community in relation to the local program sites; 2) how teachers understood their roles relative to a schooling paradigm; and 3) how teachers negotiated what they all agreed was a lack of student to student interaction. In analyzing how these three contradictions played out across sites for the different teachers, I begin each section with a short vignette that features one teacher and illustrates his or her practices in more detail.

In the second section, I describe how these contradictions were tied to teachers' competing and shifting goals and motivations (i.e., objects) in activity. I trace how the teachers talked about the network and the community in different ways over the two years as they individually and jointly defined what the community was about. In the beginning of the study, the teachers framed the purpose of the project primarily around self-expression and self-representation, with the network operating as a kind of "display gallery" for sharing identity artifacts. This purpose of the project sat in uneasy alignment with teachers' competing goals for cross-cultural interaction, which required teachers and students to communicate with others in collaborative and responsive ways that moved beyond sharing. As teachers negotiated these competing motives in activity, they began to frame the goals of the project around fostering dialogue, a communicative stance that foregrounded cross-cultural understanding and responsiveness. Engeström (2001) has described how this kind of collective reconceptualizing of "the object and motive of the activity" can lead to "a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity" (p. 137). The third section focuses on two emergent discourse genres – blogs and video – that indexed these competing discourses and ideological beliefs. While blogs were linked to teachers' contradictory feelings about writing and schooling in relation to social networking, youth-created videos, as both self-representative and dialogic, functioned to bridge these competing discourses and came to define for the teachers 'what this community is about.' These videos served as 'joins' between activity systems (Kell, 2009) and functioned to connect the participants in new ways, undergoing multiple semiotic remediations that entextualized them as a kind of foundational text for the teacher community.

### **"Bridging the Gap": Contradictions in the Space2Cre8 Community**

*Even when so many times you try to bridge the gap, it becomes so difficult, so when you try and encourage conversations between the kids themselves and them and you, it's a bit of a challenge.*

-Kgotso, 11/2/09 Teacher Call

The first time I met Kgotso in person in March 2009 in South Africa, he was bent over a PC in a darkened computer room, large windows shaded against the hot late morning sun. I caught a glimpse of him behind the barred metal gate to the computer lab as I walked down wide outdoor corridors at the primary school, needing sunglasses against the glare of the fresh white building in the sun, its bright blue trim matching the broad deep blue sky framed by tall mountains etched in the distance. Dressed in crisp khakis and a checkered button down shirt, his brow furrowed in concentration as he concentrated on the computer screen, Kgotso conversed with another older man with graying temples working on a computer nearby, the assistant principal Mr. Jackson (kids in Oakland and South Africa made much of the fact that they both had their own Mr. Jacksons). When he caught sight of us at the gate, Kgotso smiled broadly, white teeth gleaming in what I came to associate as his characteristic expression. I came to think of him as always cheerful, rarely ruffled as his teen students tried to exasperate him. Without breaking stride, he would hold out the garbage can to collect smuggled chewing gum as a

chagrined eighth grade penitent spit it out dutifully, ruefully smiling as Kgotso chided the young man with a stern tone and a smile. Before the kids filed in that day, one at a time in an utterly silent uniformed row, Kgotso warned me that the kids were unfamiliar with being addressed individually and would not likely answer my individual questions. He cautioned me not to expect too much too soon, since they would be shy and unaccustomed to our American schooling style. He explained that children were rarely expected to speak out in class beyond answering a brief question with a correct answer, and that he was working to move beyond those pedagogical expectations. However, school had just started, Kgotso reminded me, and he had only been working with this group for two weeks (3/17/09 Field Note). In the quote above, spoken eight months later, Kgotso revealed what a struggle it had been for him to initiate dialogue between the kids and between himself and the students, something he had been working on but that proved quite difficult.

Certainly all five of the teachers in the Space2Cre8 project faced different kinds of difficulties like these in attempting to integrate new technologies into their classroom practices, similar to those identified in the research literature (e.g., Cuban et al., 2001; Luckin et al., 2009) – practical issues like access to working computers or administrative support and ideological ones like the shifting nature of collaboration in teacher-student relationships. In the quote above, Kgotso’s metaphor of trying to “bridge the gap” is a useful one for understanding how teachers framed these challenges. As a spatial metaphor, the notion of a gap has two senses; a gap can be a gulf to be bridged or an opening to be navigated. Both senses of the metaphor are apt for considering the central tensions in this project, for while the teachers understood these three challenges as gaps that needed to be bridged, they also turned out to be openings through which new collective understandings about literacy practices in relation to educational social networking emerged. In explaining three of the central contradictions in the project, I use Kgotso’s metaphor of the “gap” to help explain how teachers negotiated these gulfs and openings.

### **The Gap between Contexts: Creating Boundaries**

One of the most salient problems for all of the teachers was balancing the needs of their individual programs with the needs of the broader community. Over time, teachers discursively constructed these communities as distinct entities, each school program representing a unique constellation of needs and opportunities that teachers framed as separate from the international community. While participants were of course all part of the networked community, they felt conflicted about how to reconcile the needs of the local and global groups. Teachers reported feeling pulled in different directions, desiring the collaboration with international colleagues but aware of the local demands of the curriculum and the needs of their students. One way teachers coped with this pressure was to intensify their boundary marking, drawing distinctions between their activities online and those in the classroom and creating divisions between their programs and those of the other teachers.

#### **Geographic boundaries.**

I met Amit during his first visit to the Oakland site in July 2009, where he proved to be a popular (and tangibly ‘real’) figure among the middle schoolers. They were fascinated by his Indian accented English and had many questions about his relationship to the girls they had been interacting with on S2C8 – has he really flown over from India and how long did it take? Did he know the girls personally? What did they like to do for fun? Kids tried to figure out how to

reconcile the slender and smiling young man in front of them, black short hair neatly parted on the side and crisp white button down shirt, with their imagined Indian context, pieced together through class discussions, personal experiences, media representations, and their conversations on S2C8. Just like with his own students in India, Amit spent most of the time in Oakland with his head bent in concentration close to one student's as they puzzled over film editing, script writing, or photoshopping of images for an art project with T-shirts. With his amiable and inquisitive manner, Amit managed to draw even the shiest student out of her shell by working closely with her and asking pointed questions that were at the same time gentle and incisive as she designed her shirt (7/20/09 Field Note). In his own class in India, he devoted most of his time to working individually with students on media activities, only occasionally addressing the whole group like when we all gathered around the projector to watch a group movie from New York in July 2010. After watching the movie together, Amit then immediately turned to work on photo collages with several girls, shifting seamlessly from one pair who had mastered the lasso tool in Photoshop to a girl who needed help translating her poem from the Hindi in her notebook to English on S2C8 (7/12/10 Field Note). In both Oakland and India classrooms, Amit embodied a particular teaching style, serving as coach more than lecturer. But when he tried to bring some art activities (like the T-shirt project) from the Oakland classroom to the Prayas site, the director Karishma reminded Amit that their school site had such different needs that he could not extrapolate activities between contexts.

Teachers inscribed these divisions between sites, which Karishma might have described as *different contexts with different needs*, by calling each site by its geographic moniker. Teachers named the sites "Oakland," "India," and "Norway" as shorthand with themselves and their students, program sites which were also separate from the virtual space of S2C8, the networked community that linked them all:

I think we and the other sites are also looking for a way to maybe easily sort by the site? So if I'm on Space2Cre8, actually online, and I can select Norway, I can see everything that comes from Norway. And the same from Oakland and India or something like that? Just an easy way to capture everything from one particular site. (Jackson, 5/12/10 Teacher Call)

As Jackson here described, teachers and students regularly wanted to search by program site online, looking for all of Norway's media in the community space of the social network. While one might expect that this virtual space would afford the blurring participants' national origins or physical locations, their geographic and national affiliations seemed to follow via these site distinctions. However, unlike the teachers who regularly identified sites in this way, young people were reluctant to identify themselves in these terms. The majority of youth participants wrote detailed identity statements in their 'about me' profile online, referencing their cultural and linguistic backgrounds in more complex ways than simple geographic location or national affiliation (such as the young woman in Norway who said she was from Turkey and spoke three languages). While youth readily acknowledged their layered identities beyond the geographic or national, teachers regularly wrestled with tensions around how to understand the relationship between their program sites and the international Space2Cre8 community, often thinking about them in dichotomous terms framed around nationality or geography.

This discourse around "sites" as locally situated, with separate needs and issues relevant to their national and cultural contexts, permeated the teachers' conversations. They spoke to one another at length about the difficulties they faced in navigating the exigencies of their individual school sites, which were often shaped by national and geographic discourses. For example, Amit

tried to figure out how to fulfill the needs of the local Prayas context, sensitive to students' poverty and the school's focus on critical engagement with cultural issues like early marriage. He saw his role as "bridging that gap" between the needs of the girls at his local site and the needs of the project more broadly:

I always felt myself responsible for whatever was happening, to find a way to shine a light towards the social network, or towards making a media. Like getting it back to the core of the project. And I always worked with the [other] teacher, you know, to bridge that gap. So whatever it is that they're doing, to make a small blog entry out of it. Or just get the Space2Cre8 or whatever the media that we can make with it going. So that is, that is essentially what I have in mind every time that we do anything in class, that how does it actually relate to the core of the project. (5/25/11 Interview)

For Amit, the "core of the project" was to draw connections between the local activities and the global community, through blogs or media production. However he could, Amit looked for ways to "shine a light" toward the activity's implications for the larger S2C8 group, pushing his students to see connections between the different communities they were part of. Amit tried to bridge the two communities – the local and the global – since it was this bridging that he understood the project to be all about. Despite his efforts to forge connections, however, ultimately he saw them at some kind of odds, with one often accommodating the other, and Amit had to work diligently to "bridge" what he saw as a divide between the two.

All of the teachers understood their sites to be like Amit's – uniquely positioned by virtue of local cultural and national dimensions and operating in some kind of tension with the global community. Like Amit, the other teachers described their own unique circumstances in terms of national and local factors at play. For example, Maja talked about the role of immigration in Norway as relevant to her school situation, and Jake and Jackson frequently brought up the needs of their U.S. urban students in relation to street violence and failing schools. Kgotso framed South Africa as a country that had unique cultural barriers he needed to overcome as a teacher:

We are very disadvantaged when it comes to, I think, conversations with the kids because we have such a patriarchal background which resulted in so many ways a bigger gap between teacher and student.... As I say, we are very disadvantaged when it comes to conversation in that sense because of the cultural differences and all that. (11/2/09 Teacher Call)

As a result of "cultural differences" between himself and his students, Kgotso argued that he had a more difficult time initiating critical conversations with them. National contexts emerged in teachers' discourse as a 'natural' way to frame the divisions between sites and to understand the different programs' needs in relation to the international community.

One way this discursive boundary between programs via nationality became reinforced was through the divide experienced between Norwegian, South African, and Indian speakers of English. Maja, Kgotso, and Amit regularly reminded the rest of the group that conversing in English always made salient the differences between the young people at the different "sites," influencing the kinds of interactions and compositions participants engaged with. Maja described that the predominance of English placed an undue burden on her: "Because we have a tight schedule as it is in this Norwegian course, and adding this where I have to translate everything into English, because that's basically what I need to do, I can do a lot of things in Norwegian, but at the end of the day, to use it on Space2Cre8 I have to translate it into English" (3/2/10 Interview). The hegemonic role of English could be felt throughout the site, which – though

multilingual in its interface – necessarily defaulted to English as the language of student to student communication (the only language in common between them), contributing to what Kgotso said was one of the ways he felt he was “Anglosizing them” (11/23/09 Interview). Kgotso described the ways that language placed the undue burden not on him but on his South African students:

[My students] struggle linguistically when they have to communicate with other kids from the other sites. The thing is when they talk among themselves in Afrikaans, they use Afrikaans, obviously, so they don't have a problem with that. But it becomes a problem for them to cross over. So when they have to chat to other kids in the other different sites, the problem is they will then have to convert to English. They don't have that level of communication in English that other kids have. (10/2/10 Interview)

Kgotso described his students as less fluent in English than other students on the network, a status that positioned them asymmetrically in the community. While students at every site struggled with the English language, especially the students in India, Kgotso felt that the language barrier particularly disadvantaged his students. He framed his students as separate from others in the community, different because they had to negotiate not just English but also the text language based on Afrikaans that they were familiar with, which made it difficult “when they spoke to the other learners *from the outside*” (6/21/11 Interview, emphasis added). The dominance of the English language was one way that unequal power relations manifested in the project, something that was reinforced through this discursive boundary work (i.e., positioning some participants as “from the outside”).

Kgotso explicitly surfaced this largely tacit power relationship between the U.S. and the other countries on several occasions, though most of the time it remained unspoken. He argued that the S2C8 project was not particularly responsive to the South African context. In an early teacher memo, he found that the pace of the project, especially in expecting him to teach computer literacy and digital storytelling as well as facilitate youth’s online participation, “makes the project seem insensitive towards the classroom experiences of rural education system” (8/7/08 Memo). He thought that because “we come from a sort of a disadvantaged background in that the school and the village folks are sort of part of the farming district,” there needed to be special consideration of the computer literacy needs of the rural learner (5/10/11 Teacher Call). Interestingly, even though he did not live in this rural part of South Africa or grow up in a rural context himself, he grouped himself as part of the “we” who were disadvantaged by the expectations that he could accomplish all of the goals that teachers routinely set for themselves as a group. He understood the needs of South Africa and India to be subsumed to those of the U.S. in Space2Cre8, which he made overt when he listed the particular difficulties that he did not feel were adequately addressed in the beginning of the project:

I suggest a revisit to the curriculum and perhaps most specifically to the two sites, India and South Africa. I am not sure how far India is now with their work and what sort of problems they might have encountered but as I understand that we are the two sites that are linguistically disadvantaged at the moment, especially in relation to the utilization of technology. Not only language is a problem for us but also the lack of previous basic computer literacy knowledge and not spending enough time in the lab for better practice and utilization of computers to gain adequate technological knowledge. I wonder if there could be a way that curriculum is developed with these problems in mind, thus making it easier for us



to work at our own pace as of course our school calendars are indeed different from those in the United states. (8/7/08 Memo)

While there was no official curriculum and no particular pacing expectations for the S2C8 program, Kgotso seemed to be reacting more to the implicit pressures he felt to produce artifacts that could be judged and displayed. This framing of the national context (in relation to the U.S. in particular) was a tension that contributed to the boundaries teachers created between the international and local sites.

### **Curricular boundaries.**

When I first met Maja, she was striding into the bright classroom with big windows framing a picturesque snow-capped peak in the suburban school outside of Oslo, arms crossed and a defiant tilt to her head. A youthful brunette with hair that swung in a bob cut above her shoulders, she told me that she was an unwilling participant in S2C8, only there because she had been directed to participate by her head teacher. In short staccato sentences, she revealed that she created her curriculum for her Norwegian class with a colleague who taught the other eighth graders not in her section. This partnership meant half the work, she reminded me, which would all be on her shoulders if she had to customize curriculum to fit with this project, which she did not see as relevant to her classroom in the first place. When I asked why she was chosen to participate, she shrugged and implied that she had the least seniority of the other eighth grade teachers in the media strand. When I had spoken to her head teacher earlier in the day, he told me that the teachers had full control over their curriculum as long as it was aligned to the overarching learning goals, but Maja argued that while she could control the lessons to some degree, she had a particular curriculum to cover in a short amount of time. She could not fathom how to do the kinds of media projects needed, especially because she was not a super proficient user of digital tools beyond her computer and Facebook (3/2/10 Field Note). While Maja was the most extreme example of someone who saw a clear and insurmountable divide between the everyday curriculum and S2C8, indeed all of the teachers created boundaries between classroom and network activities.

The teachers all reported difficulties in apportioning their time and deciding what to focus on during their limited hours with the teen participants. For example, in South Africa Kgotso had developed a media literacy and digital storytelling curriculum; in New York, Jake incorporated many kinds of artistic practices in his daily activity structure; in Oakland, young people focused on filmmaking. Teachers reported these classroom activities to be separate “entities,” “sections,” or “compartments” from the activities on the social network, creating a discursive boundary between the composing activities in the programs (writing scripts, creating digital stories, filming videos) and the communication activities of the social network. In an email to the Kidnet Hub, the online teacher listserv, Amit explicitly articulated this separation: “Our activities [at Prayas] can be divided into two major sections [our social justice group] related activity and Space2cre8 activity” (9/16/10 Email to Kidnet Hub). Similarly, Kgotso described how he had to divide his instructional time between the network and the digital storytelling: “And then eventually we had to combine that [getting on S2C8] with doing the particular stories, so our time had to follow this split into compartments” (10/2/10 Interview). This compartmentalization resulted in the social media component being framed as the “extra” piece that was included whenever possible rather than woven throughout each program’s curriculum.

One very practical reason for this separation between network and composing activities was simply time. Teachers regularly bemoaned the lack of time to do meaningful activities, and often the goals of trying to finish projects or ‘cover’ curricular material took precedence. In Norway, for example, Maja had the most trouble seeing a relationship between her subject area (Norwegian) and the social networking project, framing those as quite separate entities. Maja reported that Space2Cre8 was something that she merely “observed” as an imposed segment of the school day that happened to take place during her class period (2/6/11 Interview). She devoted what time she could to the project but reported that she could not “afford” the time it took from her curricular responsibilities:

You see, the problem is that I only really see my class approximately two hours a week, not nearly enough to get through the curriculum, let alone a huge S2C8 project. This is why I have said that I would like to continue the project, only not as often as last year (which was once a week), not by far. I simply can't "afford" it. (Maja, 10/24/10 email to Amy)

Maja did not see the educational purpose of S2C8 in relation to her Norwegian subject matter, and therefore she understood it to take away from her teaching time, which she needed in full in order “to get through” her curriculum.

While Kgotso did not have a formal curriculum to ‘get through’ in his role as extra-curricular teacher, he too framed S2C8 as an ‘extra’ that was fun but less important than his other curricular priorities. When the program began in 2008, one of the S2C8 project directors had shared a digital storytelling curriculum with Kgotso and encouraged him to use that as a project for kids to ultimately post on the network. Every year thereafter Kgotso taught his eighth grade class this digital storytelling curriculum, which took the better part of a year to complete because none of the children had used computers before. This work of digital storytelling and media literacy was his primary concern, and S2C8, while fun, represented temptation away from what he perceived to be the central work of his program:

I am torn between showing the learners the new developments on the site and carrying on with DS [Digital Storytelling] and I always have to nudge myself when I stray sometimes, to discipline myself and let them finish with their DS creative process before venturing back into the world of discoveries (S2C8). (Kgotso, 9/12/10 Email to Kidnet Hub)

In this email, Kgotso revealed how he struggled to “discipline” himself not to be swayed by the exciting “world of discoveries” that was Space2Cre8. In some ways, this email to the other teachers functioned as a kind of apology for not collaborating more with them, explaining why he would like to join in the discovery space but could not, like Maja, “afford” to take time away from the real (creative/storytelling) work of his program. For Kgotso, storytelling remained the curricular priority and the interaction on the website represented fun to be enjoyed after the ‘real’ learning and work was completed. These tensions described by Kgotso were bound up in complex ways with tensions over schooling and difficulties teachers had in negotiating their roles in relation to powerful discourses around school.

### **The Gap between School and Social Networking: The Teacher’s Role**

*[Jake] has an idea today for the students to make a video that shows our school and neighborhood to the students of S2C8, similar to the one that the students in India did introducing their school to everyone on the network. ... The students notice that there is a lot of freedom*

*and open space in the India school that they are kind of envious of compared to the intense security and kind of austere nature of their own surroundings. ... [Then] we move everyone downstairs to the auditorium – with this shot we are hoping to point out that there is this awesome and great auditorium that is locked to the students, and that they rarely are able to use, which kind of just underscores the restrictions and a lack of use of space at the school. (2/10/11 Field Note)*

For the students at Jake's school, located in a posh neighborhood in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, ironies abounded. While the school was fairly well resourced and located in a neighborhood lined with fancy shops and trendy restaurants, many of the school's spaces were locked away from students, who had to wait up to one hour in line to get through the metal detectors in the morning. One day when I was there visiting and we were headed outside to film, three of the students asked us to wait while they ran to the corner to retrieve their phones – apparently a homeless man charged kids a dollar a day to hold their phones because they were not allowed to bring them on the school grounds. There was a reality comprised of strict rules and regulations that sanctioned adolescent behavior, language, dress, and movement at all times. When students watched the India school tour video, which showed elaborate outdoor spaces open to all of the Indian students, many began to reconsider a site that heretofore they had considered impoverished in relation to their own. This reimagining of the Indian context led to the questioning of their own relationships to schooling.

As the New York students' experience might indicate, one of the major contradictions in the project revolved around the discourse of schooling. Even in the programs that took place in afterschool contexts, school discourses pervaded participants' understandings of the project, unsurprising in some ways since the project took the self-sponsored practice of social networking and turned it toward educational purposes. In every site, teachers negotiated the rules and roles of the community they were creating in relation to school: Should they dictate how often students engaged online? Should they have a say in what students posted or talked about? What responsibilities did they bear to other teachers in collaborating on educationally oriented projects? These were difficult questions that teachers worked together to address, and many of the teacher calls were devoted to talking about such issues. Teachers were conflicted about the relationship of social networking and schooling and expressed ambivalence about their role in directing an activity that they ultimately thought should be student-driven.

One source of ambivalence for teachers was around the educational role of social networking – could it function as a learning space? Many of the teachers felt obligated to use the limited time they had with students expeditiously, so they felt a need to justify all of the activities kids participated in as learning-focused. In India, for example, Amit struggled to comply with the director's imperative that the time be used for purposes that would help the young participants in their lives beyond the class. The director told me, "Unfortunately they [the students] don't have the time to just chit chat, because, you know, they're taking time away from their four classes to do this" (Karishma, 7/14/10 Interview). She worried that phatic or friendship-driven communication (Ito et al., 2010) that was characteristic of social networking was not educational enough to warrant the time away from their classes. This view of social networking as primarily "chit chat" was one constantly at issue, not just with administrators or students but also within teachers' own belief systems. Teachers themselves were sometimes unsure how well social networking could be adapted to educational purposes. Maja, for example, openly admitted that

she had trouble seeing its educational application: “I also have to admit that I had some difficulties finding the purpose behind the project” (2/6/11 Interview). Teachers grappled with the question of whether this kind of online communication ‘counted’ as learning. Without a tangible way to measure what young people were learning, teachers seemed a bit adrift in articulating how the use of S2C8 was fulfilling learning goals. The idea of young people communicating with others from around the world seemed beneficial to everyone at first blush, but how to articulate those benefits (and measure them) created a central contradiction for teachers.

One way that teachers addressed this contradiction was to frame youth’s learning in terms of production. In school, youth regularly produced artifacts that tangibly represented their work. Often, writing functioned as a form of ‘proof’ of young people’s comprehension or learning (e.g., an essay or book report), but other kinds of artifacts could fulfill that role as well (e.g., a poster, a PowerPoint presentation, a video). As long as young people could generate a product, teachers could point to evidence of their learning (and of course assess it). This discourse of production as work permeated the project, and teachers regularly emphasized ‘production’ activities over ‘communication’ ones. For Kgotso, the real work/production his students were engaged in was the digital storytelling. When updating his colleagues about his students’ progress on their digital stories, he said, “so far we have only a few [students] that have completed their work” (5/10/11 Teacher Call). This focus on production caused him anxiety, in part because he seemed to think it placed an undue burden of them (and him): “Although still concerned with the time frame these kids have and what we expect them to produce out of it, which is unfair, we continue” (8/7/08 Memo). Kgotso was conflicted about pushing kids toward production, something he saw as very school-related, yet he understood it to be his job as the teacher:

The biggest challenge probably for teachers is the fact that there's always some form of curriculum, even if it's in development. But there's always some form of curriculum that the teacher's trying to follow. So they can get you know, some work done. Because leaving the kids to themselves also means that you would have to invest a lot of time for them to eventually get things done. Because leaving them to their own devices means you might take actually a long way around before you get to the final product. (6/23/11 Interview)

Kgotso articulated a clear tension between letting students take a lot of time to generate these eventual products or directing them in order to move more quickly, something he certainly struggled with. Even his self-designed curriculum required that the teacher push students forward to work toward a “final product.” All of the other teachers related similar concerns about getting students’ “products” online for others to see and comment on, and much of the teachers’ time was devoted to working with students to produce artifacts to be shared online.

Teachers grappled with how to negotiate their roles in facilitating this production, most preferring to take a backseat to students’ own creative processes but aware that they played a role in pushing students to finish work. The teachers seemed to concur that the role of the teacher was to facilitate young people’s engagements in the project as much as possible rather than tell them directly what to do. For example, Amit saw his role as facilitator who would help students realize their vision: “I guess if I’m there, then I should only be there in capacity of a person who can help them out with maybe technical stuff. Like they want to make a poster, then I should tell them ways to make that poster. Make it happen” (7/14/10 Interview). Jake adopted that facilitator role in relation to kids’ online communication because he was interested to see what

students were motivated to talk about on the network. He worried that if he interfered too much then it would be ‘forced’ (and by implication, ‘inauthentic’): “Then there's nothing to look at in terms of exchanges if it's all just forced and thrown up there” (5/19/10 Interview). Likewise, Kgotso tried very hard not to be the person at the front of the room telling students what to do. He talked about the biggest problem for him being the conflict between letting students have creative freedom while also reconciling his role as teacher in directing their engagement online. Kgotso did not believe that teachers should direct how students used the network:

You know it, the biggest problem with it [S2C8] being aligned to you know class time was the fact that it was instruction mode. So they would only use it when we say that something that they need to use it for. And it shouldn't be like that. They should have access I mean to it whenever they want to use it for its intended purpose. You know, and they should feel free to use because it's their network (K 6/21/11 Interview)

Like other teachers, Kgotso saw S2C8 as “their network” that should be used as students saw fit and not to fulfill educational purposes that he set as part of “instruction mode.” Even with the digital storytelling work he facilitated, Kgotso was careful to take a coordination role as much as possible so as to preserve the integrity of the creative work and offer students as much rein as possible. While teachers wanted to take a hands-off stance toward youth engagement in the project, they also felt obligated to make sure youth were producing something to share with others. It seems that one way that teachers reconciled that tension was to create a boundary between S2C8 and the ‘real’ work of the curriculum.

Most of the teachers in the project found that social networking, since it was not entrenched in the school paradigm, could (and indeed should) function as a space apart. This “world of discovery” view of S2C8, while potentially problematic (e.g., as a space apart it could be framed more easily as separate from educational goals and thus as mere chit chat), also afforded teachers space to incorporate different pedagogical styles than they might otherwise. This was particularly true for Amit and Kgotso, both of whom reported working within a traditional educational paradigm that required students to follow dictates without questioning them. Amit discussed how he worked with students to establish a different kind of pedagogical space, where students could explore ideas more freely, without constraint:

I always try to tell them, you know that if you don't really feel like it, then you don't have to do it, there is no- and you can do whatever you want to do. You can write about whatever you want to write. But, it's, it's not how I- if I really have to pass a judgment on this, why judge like that, then I'd say it's because of the, the system that we have with education here. That is how it works. (7/14/10 Interview)

For Amit, the social networking project afforded a different kind of space for students to explore their opinions and voices in ways proscribed in traditional school settings, most especially in their writing. All of the teachers described how their students were reluctant to take creative risks, often following the teacher’s directions as if they were rules or mandates. For example, Jake described how this schooled stance sometimes led to students’ uncritical composing, like one girl choosing for her digital story the first picture of someone smiling she found without questioning that choice: “Sometimes kids are trained to follow directions very literally in school, and I think that comes out, you know? If she was doing that in school, that would be the correct thing. She found someone smiling, she put it in there. It's like a very direct order, and she probably took it very literally, you know?” (7/21/09 Interview). Since the majority of kids had

been positioned to provide the right answers and follow directions in their schooled lives, teachers described how they worked to shift those schooled participation frameworks in their programs.

Shifting those schooled discourses proved difficult for the teachers. Kgotso talked about how students expected teachers to take up particular roles as authority figures who mandated correctness: “The teacher in front of the classroom and kids, that kind of limits a lot of conversations because what we do we expect to dish out information and then help the kids feed it back to us on paper when we give them exams. So, there really isn't anything in between that” (11/2/09 Teacher Call). He was having a hard time creating a role that was “between that,” shifting the participant framework from authority figure who dished out information *to* students to facilitator who fostered conversations *with* kids. Kgotso said that if he commented on a student’s idea, she would assume that his opinion was the one she should follow and be reluctant to then change course or try something other than what he sanctioned. However, Space2Cre8, for Kgotso, represented freedom from those strictures, especially around how students could use language online. In school, he said, “they are expected to be formal most of the time. You know, their writing has to be corrected, has to be fixed so they kind of get tired of not being right.” As a result, “they don't really enjoy writing and that effect, that has a lot to do with mostly academical because that's what this school is dependent on, everything is academical.” However, in Space2Cre8, “they have the freedom and I think we spoke about this but the language they use is totally different from what they would be expected. They're not feeling bound by the formal expectations of the language, I guess” (1/4/11 Interview). For Kgotso, the social network functioned as a place where writing was not corrected and kids could experiment with different self-representational styles, especially in language use. It was, ultimately, an informal space in which mandates of correctness held no sway.

For Jake, the social network provided such a “free space” that kids needed, and the teacher’s role was to provide access to such places: “I think you know having a free space is really important... So it's just, you gotta figure out what it is that your kids need, like what is the space and what is the space offering for those kids, it has to be offering something that they need, and that they're not getting otherwise” (6/23/11 Interview). The network offered young people the opportunity to be a part of a community beyond the school, an informal space that allowed new relationships to be built outside of those sanctioned by school:

So it [S2C8] becomes like this space that opens up a door that's been closed by the school, you know? And, it's definitely like, it definitely solidifies the group, it gives them like a collective presence because they're all involved in this one activity together, and they're the only people in the school that are involved with this online activity, and so I think that's a benefit. (Interview, 2/4/11).

For Jake, the networked community “opens a door” for students to understand themselves as part of a collective, a group that cohered around a shared activity. This opening, for Jake, was directly opposed to the closed door of the formal school space, which allowed no opportunity for new ways to connect with others. Maja too felt that S2C8 could be a place for freedom of expression when students had the opportunity to choose affiliation with the community. However, she argued that this potential was not realized in her program because kids did not have a choice about whether to participate in the school-based program: “I think S2C8 can give so much to young people, but I strongly recommend the program to be voluntary. Otherwise they will only think of it as work and school” (2/6/11 Interview). This tension between how S2C8 would be perceived – as work or as freedom – continued to be one of the major sources of concern for

teachers over the two years of this study, and teachers thought that as a social network it should function as a place apart from teacher dictates. However, teachers were not sure what to do when students did not engage on the network like they anticipated. They felt obligated to their fellow teachers to push their students to engage online, yet taking that kind of active, directive stance sat in conflict with their desire to make S2C8 less of a ‘schooled’ space. This tension was centered around their indecision about what to do with a problem everyone concurred needed teacher intervention: a lack of interaction on S2C8.

### **The Gap between Students: Lack of Interaction**

Teachers agreed that the central challenge in the whole project involved students’ interactions online, or, as they all concluded, the lack thereof. Over the course of two years of conversations on the teacher calls and the Kidnet Hub, teachers talked at length over what they characterized as a lack of interaction. While sometimes they discussed the content of the material online, concerned that it was primarily superficial (or as Karishma might say, “chit chat”) or inappropriate (concern over sexual references), the majority of time teachers talked about how little students responded to one another – students would post plenty of material online, and analytics showed they were viewing others’ materials to some extent, but very few students commented on each other’s work or engaged in extended conversation, which teachers seemed to agree would be the optimal outcome for an educational network. As Jackson wrote to the Hub, “Please ask your students to watch, review and comment on them [the videos we posted], we are desperately seeking feedback in Oakland” (2/1/11 Email to Kidnet Hub). Jackson continued to address this lack of feedback in the subsequent teacher call, saying: “I was really into promoting like a class cross-pollination kind of a thing over the website, over Space2Cre8, so that we can get more feedback. We’re getting a big lack of feedback I think at the [Oakland] site.... And we’re not sure why. But we want a way we can get direct feedback from other students on our videos. Ideally” (2/8/11 Teacher Call). In general, all the teachers agreed that students were “desperately seeking feedback” on their postings, and like Jackson, they weren’t exactly sure why students were reluctant to post online.

Jackson’s use of the pronoun “we” in his message highlights how he saw himself as part of the teaching team who could together resolve the interaction issue. Indeed, the teachers, who were in general in favor of taking a more hands-off approach to student engagement on S2C8, struggled with whether they should take up a more involved role in fostering the online communication together. For example, Amit characterized the difficulty of the networked communication as something that all teachers wanted to address: “Yeah, I really- we want students to interact with students. And to create that kind of communication. But that was not happening, for whatever reason. This individual site communication was not happening” (5/25/11 Interview). Originally, he began to say that he wanted to promote student-to-student interaction, but he amended that statement to say that “we,” all the teachers, wanted to “create” that kind of communication. Over time, the teachers came to see it as their joint responsibility to craft opportunities for online communication, and they began to feel responsible toward one another for promoting kids’ interactions on the network. When Maja had not been holding regular sessions, she wrote to the group to apologize: “Hey everyone! I’m very sorry that me and my students haven’t been active on S2C8 lately” (11/30/10 Email to Kidnet Hub). Over time, teachers found that they felt obligated to account for their absences to the rest of the group and to make an effort to solve why online interaction felt sparse.

Teachers tried to figure out why some students were not as motivated to get on S2C8 as they would have hoped. Maja reported that she thought her students were not motivated because as a school-based program it was mandatory:

Since this project wasn't voluntary for my class, but something they were expected to do, many of them failed to see the purpose. I know many of my pupils found Space2Cre8 a bit boring, and since there was no grading or evaluation of some sort, they just didn't bother with the project. I should of course have made the projects into something to evaluate, and I sure would have if I had continued. (2/6/11 Interview)

Maja felt that since this was a school-based program she should have framed it with a school-like motivator, grades, to solve the participation problem. She reflected that she should have taken up a more traditional, evaluative role in the program in order to make the online component work, something that other teachers contemplated as well. For example, Jackson reported that he took up what could be considered a more "forced" position as well, asking students not just to share but to comment and respond to others:

But the idea would be that we're actually building our lesson plans for when they approach Space2Cre8. It's a two part- it's a two part kind of attack in which they're, not only are they sharing something about themselves, but every time they've gotta respond or do something, someone else's video comment or interact with someone. It seems like forced interaction I know, but we're hoping it's gonna kind of make something happen. (2/8/11 Teacher Call)

Even though Jackson agreed that it seemed like "forced interaction" since he was requiring students to comment, he hoped that it would generate new interactions that could take off on their own. Jake, who initially was reluctant to collaborate in a pen pal type pairing of students conceded that it might work to address what they all agreed with mounting concern was a stumbling block: "You know I've been somewhat opposed to the idea, I guess previously, just because it feels like such an old school like antiquated, forced kind of like way to get some kids to talk. But at the same time, you know now like it may not be that bad an idea" (2/8/11 Teacher Call). Teachers seemed to think that once they 'jump-started' the cross-cultural communication it would proceed on its own, similar to the ways interaction proceeded in self-sponsored networks like Facebook.

Indeed, teachers were reluctant to be involved in students' networked communication, only intervening to try to address this perceived lack of interaction before they could back away again. This belief about not becoming too involved in this space may account for why teachers did not use the network much themselves (see Table 4.1). While teachers eventually began talking to one another more via the Kidnet Hub, they did not use the social network to connect with other teachers. When they did participate online, they did so mainly with their own students, and Jackson in particular tried to use the network to motivate kids to participate more. Jackson was the biggest user of S2C8, logging in 580 times and visiting an average of seven pages each time. He also engaged in the public functions of the network that established him as a presence in the networked community: initiating the most friendships (48, including all of the other teachers as well as many students), posting the most updates to his status (22), commenting on other people's media most frequently (15), and designing his page most often (8).



**Table 4.1: Teacher Use of S2C8<sup>6</sup>**

Teacher	Log ins	Pages Browsed	Friends	Friends Initiated	Status Msg	Page Design	Groups	Comments	Private Msgs	Chats
Amit	10	172	26	2	0	1	3	5	26	143
Jake	179	3736	87	30	5	3	11	7	57	1121
Jackson	580	4057	66	48	22	8	10	15	20	269
Maja	1	25	21	5	2	3	2	8	1	52
Kgotso	10	237	34	20	4	3	0	0	17	304

Jake also participated online quite a bit, logging in 179 times and visiting an average of 21 pages per visit, but he spent a lot of his time interacting with students in the private spaces of the network, chatting and sending private messages more often than the other teachers. While Kgotso generally believed in letting the student etts interact on S2C8 in their own way, he did participate to some extent, initiating friendships with 20 students and teachers and browsing almost 24 pages on each of his 10 visits. Amit and Maja participated still less, with Maja only logging in one time. While teachers thought about and discussed how to get students to participate more online, only Jackson modeled what that participation might look like; the other teachers never established much of a public online presence on S2C8.

The teachers pondered why students were not particularly motivated to respond to one another online. Amit argued that it was a reciprocal issue, whereby a lack of response would engender similar apathy: “But right now they send the message, then they don't get a reply, then they get let down, and they just lose the point of it all” (7/14/10 Interview). Jake too lamented that his students received little feedback and became discouraged: “You know I can have them send messages and things like that, but it just- I think it's hard to sustain that like, ‘Oh, send somebody a message’, you know? The kids are like ‘What's the purpose at this point? I've already sent them like five messages’” (Interview, 2/4/11). Jake argued that he could direct them to send more messages, but at some point, without reciprocation, even he could not ask any more. Without more sustained interaction between sites, students would not be motivated to continue making an effort to communicate. He argued asynchronous communication, inherent in international exchanges, added to the interaction problems:

Jake: I mean I think that just so much time tends to elapse between comments....

By the time like, you know we are able to watch it, if it's a month later and then my student replies to a student of yours, that you know happens to miss a week or school's on vacation, then they don't get a reply back for three weeks. You know it just, like time becomes such an issue with this asynchronous conversation, you know it just, you know a month or a month and a half can run by so quick, and then you know by the time they get a comment back, a month and a half later, they've already moved onto something else and they don't care anymore.

Jackson: Yeah, I've seen that happen quite a bit, yeah. (2/8/11 Teacher Call)

As teachers speculated on the reasons for a lack of interaction, they also tried to enlist students' help in figuring out how to address the interaction problem. Amit had a discussion with his students, who agreed that the lack of interaction was problematic but did not have solutions:

<sup>6</sup> Each of these categories captures the total number of times teachers engaged in these activities from September 2009 through August 2011: Number of times teachers logged into the site; number of pages browsed (total); number of friends; number of friendships the teacher initiated; number of status messages posted; number of times the teacher designed his/her page by adding an avatar or changing the background image or font; number of groups teacher belonged to; number of comments made; number of private messages exchanged; total lines of chat teacher engaged in. These latter two activities are the only private ones available on the network; all others are public.

But what came out was that even they were disappointed that no one replies. And I asked them these questions, that do they think that the students from other sites have the same complaints as them? And they said, probably they also have the same complaint, that we don't reply. But we try to reply and they try to reply, but they don't understand where the problem is in all of this. (2/8/11 Teacher Call)

Both teachers and students made an effort to reply, yet everyone agreed that the interaction they were hoping to see was not materializing. While they debated why and tried to find solutions, the teachers all took up more directive roles in fostering student interaction. In this process, they began to think about their program sites as interconnected in new ways, seeing themselves as responsible to one another as a teaching community.

### **“They’re Like Two Different Worlds”: Competing Motivations in Activity**

These three major contradictions in the S2C8 project were all centered around teachers’ conflicting understandings of the purposes of the project and their uncertain role in it. On the one hand, teachers believed that the project was geared toward providing young people the opportunity to express themselves creatively using new semiotic tools. On the other hand, teachers believed that the project involved the development of cross-cultural learning and understanding afforded via online interactions with peers around the world. While these two goals for their programs appeared to be aligned, in that young people could create self-expressive artifacts offline and then share them with others online, in actuality the teachers experienced them as contradictory. First, the safe, creative space for self-expression that teachers tried to form in their classrooms was permeated by schooling discourses that they had to regularly negotiate with students. Second, when teachers tried to carve out an online community that could function as this kind of creative space outside of teacher or schooled intervention, students did not interact with one another’s self-representative or expressive artifacts (or each other) in ways teachers intended or assumed. Third, the online community required teachers and students to take up different roles with different responsibilities and obligations to one another, a stance none of them foresaw and which sat in uneasy relationship with their understandings of social networking and composing (as primarily individual and self-sponsored). These conflicts between competing motives in activity led to innovative solutions (which I discuss in detail in Chapter Five), but also led to a number of false starts, conflicts, and negotiations around “what the project is all about.” I begin this section of the chapter by turning to one event that surfaced many of the tensions around the purposes of the project and the different motivations in activity, a teacher call in August 2010 that addressed an issue that had first emerged of the month prior: sexual talk.

In July 2010, a flurry of activity on the network translated to many newly posted artifacts and increased interactions between students. In the public spaces of the network, a number of students in New York addressed the issues of homosexuality, bisexuality, and gay marriage in a series of blogs, movies, and wall postings. In the private spaces of the network, many students chatted with one another in a flirtatious manner (e.g., asking if they were dating anyone), sometimes offending participants by sexualized banter (e.g., greetings like “hey sexy” or “I tryna get at u”). As a result, the director of the India site was concerned about her students being exposed to or involved in inappropriate conversations that could have major implications in their everyday lives (in a best case scenario shunning in the community and in a worst case scenario violence against the girl). The threat was very real for everyone, and until teachers could decide what to do we created an automatic filter for the India site so Amit could moderate flagged

material first. During the group call in August 2010 before the students resumed classes in September, teachers debated what role they should take up in these interactions, a conflict between wanting to address Karishma's concerns and their beliefs that they should not interfere in the online space.

Jake and Jackson were both sensitive to the need for oversight but were reluctant to adopt what they considered a schooled stance, in which they would overtly monitor and sanction particular uses of the site. However, they agreed that they should intervene to some degree, and both struggled to determine how to take up an authoritative role in a space they were trying to frame as creative and expressive. Jackson argued that individual teachers probably should address specific problems as they emerged, on a case-by-case basis, but he talked about being careful not to restrict students' freedom in general:

But here [in Oakland] I think we try not to- I think that they see Space2Cre8 as somewhat more restrictive than Facebook, so we kind of try to avoid those [teacher-ly conversations about S2C8 use]. Not avoid them completely, but to kind of make it seem more open. And not so restrictive. So that maybe they'll get on it at different times. I don't know if you guys understand what I'm saying exactly, but, it's an open thing. You know, to restrict it I think might scare them away from it a little bit. (8/25/10 Teacher Call).

Jackson did not want to "scare" students away by making the networked space seem teacher controlled, so he told the other teachers that he tried to minimize any conversation about students' interaction online. For Jackson, this kind of teacher restraint was the key to getting students to interact more, and these competing goals – to both encourage student-driven interaction and guide their online behavior – could only be reconciled if he could react to situations that had already occurred. Jake too was reluctant to direct students' activities online, but he thought that if students had a purpose for their posting that teachers should error on the side of non-interference:

I mean, I just continue to try to push the idea that they're representing themselves and their communities on this site, and so just kind of be conscious that it's a global environment, and you have to kind of watch how you say things, and the way you say things. And to show like a little restraint. And I know- my group was probably pushing the envelope a little bit with some of that stuff. But they all seem to have a genuine purpose for you know, whatever they were posting. And that's why I kind of let that, some of it slide. (8/25/10 Teacher Call).

Like Jackson, Jake was loath to intervene directly, arguing that his students, who may have been "pushing the envelope a little bit," were purposeful in their actions. Therefore, Jake saw his responsibility as a teacher to be to encourage reflectivity about how their representational choices might be interpreted in a global environment, not to censor or otherwise intervene in those choices. While Jackson's motivation for abstaining from taking a direct role in kids' online interactions was to foster more student communication, Jake's motivation was to encourage more thoughtful self-representation. Both men believed that the teacher's intervention in the networked space would disrupt those goals.

While Kgotso shared Jake and Jackson's reluctance to intervene in students' interactions online, his rationale for abstaining, linked to issues of power and control, was ultimately the most persuasive to the other teachers. Kgotso linked teachers' intervention in this issue about sexuality to a hegemonic stance, one that teachers imposed on students and one that some sites imposed on others. He implied that mandating appropriateness around sexuality was tantamount to

disrespecting both students' creative expressions of identity and the participants' different cultures. He argued that to intervene would be to disrespect other cultures whose practices around sexuality and other potentially hot button topics were locally situated practices that could not be addressed by banning them. In a follow up email, Kgotso reiterated his position (in part because his microphone failed during the call and other teachers had to read his texted comments into the online discussion). He wrote in an email to others:

I don't know how far our collaborative work is or when we should start but i have been following the discussion on sexual content on the the site etc. I would like to talk in depth about this as I think it is a major and serious topic that needs the various sites' attention considering that this is ultimately what the project is about, cross cultural interactions and respect of the 'other' and their beliefs. (9/21/10 Email to Kidnet Hub)

Like his point during the call, Kgotso here emphasized how important he thought the sexual content was, not in and of itself but because it indexed “what the project is about.” For Kgotso, who was sensitive to the hegemonic Western forces at play in the project, this issue of sexual content revealed an opportunity for cross-cultural learning and the development of respect for others' ideological beliefs (rather than the imposition of one ‘universal’ standard applied to everyone). This exchange of viewpoints could not occur if the teacher were to interfere, he implied in his email, and this stance encouraged others to think about the purposes of the project in new ways.

This position by Kgotso sparked a new kind of collaborative reimagining of the project among teachers. Instead of only framing teacher interventions in the online space as an infringement on kids' creative space, they began to imagine the networked community as a kind of “contact zone,” which Pratt (1991) defined as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (p. 34). Their role as teachers was not to mediate the interactions there but to help prepare students for their cross-cultural interactions in this ‘learning space,’ where students could learn about one another and thus themselves. Amit, who was initially in favor of the teachers explicitly addressing the sexual content, took up Kgotso's framing of the project and explicated how teachers could play this reimagined role:

The one thing [Kgotso] was saying about being- there being these cultural gaps between students. And they don't really understand their audience, who they're addressing. And how a certain word which they're so comfortable with might get offending, like, like calling someone sexy, can also be a compliment and can also be very offending. I don't know, the way our kids might see it. So maybe a sensitive discussion in every site about how across the world audiences are different, and how you respond to them. You have to be a little sensitive about it and keep in mind that not to get yourself offended or not offend someone else when you're choosing words. And for the first conversation to be you know a little on the- I don't want to use the word formal, but maybe, I guess more introductory in nature instead of getting to know the other culture, instead of not trying to connect with whatever culture you have, or whatever conditioning you have. Does that make any sense? (8/25/10 Teacher Call)

Amit took up Kgotso's earlier concern about “cultural gaps” and the need for students to be sensitive to one another's culture and suggested a role for the teachers to possibly adopt, as facilitators of this exchange who could help students imagine their audiences. This suggestion

would prove very fruitful in fostering new kinds of teacher collaboration and a shift in teachers' roles in the project (addressed more fully in Chapter Five).

This conversation by teachers about the sexual content in the online space illustrated the teachers' different beliefs about the purpose of the network, beliefs that shifted over time. At the beginning of the project, all of the teachers believed that young people's primary activity was engagement in creative, expressive, and representational projects without the need for explicit teacher instruction. The goal in activity was self-discovery, with students learning to use new tools that would allow creative impulses to be nurtured and extended in new ways. Like the other teachers, Kgotso was careful to respect that creative space so as not to "interfere with their way of self expression":

I usually feel like that if I check up on the stories, I'm sort of intruding because it's more like their own, sort of, private creative space. When they decide to write their stories, I just leave them be. They'll type them out or they'll write them by hand and then we'll type them out. I never actually say anything. I mean, this includes me like looking for grammatical errors and things like that. I never get into their creative culture because eventually what I take from it is that they get to record what they wrote and they record it the way they want and kind of the way they normally speak with what they'd hear. So, if I interfere, I sort of change the whole idea, in a sense. So, I never interfere with their work now when they're writing. (1/4/11 Interview)

Kgotso believed that the purpose of the project was to encourage kids to express themselves using multiple semiotic tools and that his interference changed their 'natural' creative efforts and imposed an academic model of teacher-student relationship he worked diligently to circumvent. The teachers took up different roles in the kids' activity, but all of them honored students' voices and tried to take a facilitator role so as to preserve the creative space of the project. Maja struggled the most with reconciling that stance with the assessment model of teacher-student relationship that was part of the 'involuntary' nature of her schooled context.

Not surprisingly, much of the focus was thus on activities that teachers saw as supporting those creative and expressive goals, classroom activities like making films and digital stories. Amit described the creative process as something that took place in the local group but not necessarily in the networked community, which Amit felt was too "adult-driven" already (1/4/11 Interview): "Somehow the network has not been the best way I think for them to express themselves, for the girls to express themselves" (2/8/11 Interview). Understandably, teachers centered their attention around the goals of production and publishing, whereby one first engaged in these acts of creative expression and then shared them. This act of putting one's creative work *out* in the world was a two-stage model – first creation and then sharing. Thus, the network's function, in the early days of the project, was one of repository, housing the projects that kids spent the majority of their time creating in the local program space.

In the context of this 'sharing' paradigm from the early days of the network, it was not surprising that no one responded to one another or participated much online. Sharing implies a one-directional movement in that one shares one's work (often in polished form) with others by publishing it in an appropriate venue (and then perhaps observing the ways the audience reacts to it). There is no obligation to participate in a community or to be involved in a dialogue within this *sharing* framework, only an obligation to make available one's work to others. This is aligned with a broadcast model of participation, whereby authors are agents who create (often individually) and then, when the creation is complete, distribute their work. Audiences are

‘passive’ receivers of that work<sup>7</sup>, whose responses and creative uses thereafter have little impact on the author’s original composition (beyond authors perhaps reading audience reactions, akin to reading a book review in the *Times* after one’s book has been published). Certainly this model of sharing was initially how the network worked. Adolescents made individual digital stories that in some way represented themselves for others on the network, which they then posted online. Through browsing a student’s profile, one could examine his ‘about me’ text, his avatar and other photos, his status messages, and any videos he had authored. The video was one kind of media representation among others that communicated something about the student, an individual identity artifact that was ‘located’ on the front page of his profile. Students browsed these artifacts, certainly, but rarely did they comment on them or sustain any interaction around them. And while these artifacts proved influential in young people’s thinking and composing, only rarely did the author realize the impact that his or her artifact made on others’ composing practices.

This sharing discourse was tied to the teachers’ motivations around self-expression and production, with one-directional movement of the artifacts *from* (individual) authors *to* audiences. Kgotso described his production-sharing vision for the project when he framed the network as a vehicle for the storytelling: “It’s a different world, you know, the Space2Cre8 and being a storyteller. They’re like two different worlds. The other is sort of the vehicle for the other” (10/2/10 interview). The network was a “vehicle,” a place of one-directional movement – kids put materials *on* the network. As “two different entities,” the storytelling and the network operated in this directional relationship with one another: “So, they’ve used the site more as a, I suppose as I said, a display gallery and a way of communicating, getting across their messages somewhere far” (1/4/11 interview). As a display gallery, it is unsurprising that no one much commented on others’ work or interacted in ways the teachers expected to see on S2C8. As a display gallery, which is essentially a repository for created artifacts, there is no clear expectation that one would respond to the artifacts, only the expectation of viewing them (like a museum). Indeed, when Jackson first began teaching in the project, he suggested that other venues like WordPress or YouTube might be more appropriate venues for sharing than S2C8: “I’m not actually sure you need it, the social networking. I mean, there would be other places you could share on the Internet” (4/13/10 Interview). The social network, in Jackson’s estimation, did not offer the optimal framework for broadcasting one’s work to wider audiences, his perceived goal for the project. Indeed, in the early days students used the social network as a kind of broadcast model, putting work on the network and never interacting around it again. As Amit said, “You know it’s all about getting access to the outside world, you know they get into the virtual network and they’re connected to everyone else in the world” (1/4/11 Interview). Getting “their messages somewhere far” as Kgotso said, might extend the reach of students’ work to “outside” places and new, distant, and largely unknown audiences, but they were not interacting with those audiences. In these early days, the broadcast model of sharing one’s work with far off audiences did not take advantage of the ways that social networking allowed them to be “connected to everyone else in the world” in different configurations of author-audience relations.

As teachers worked more and more collaboratively to ascertain why students were not interacting in the ways that they had hoped, their understandings of these relationships between authors and audiences began to shift. In particular, they started to think about whether students

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<sup>7</sup> Obviously, audiences are never passive (deCerteau, 1984), as decades of audience research has documented (e.g., Das, 2011; Livingstone, 2004). However, in this sharing paradigm audiences seem to be construed as recipients who do not shape the original work explicitly or directly.

had responsibilities toward others – to comment on others’ work, to be thoughtful audience members, to be generous in interpreting others’ intentions (like in the sexually charged comments). Amit described the learning benefits of taking on these new responsibilities as audiences and authors exchanging information and creative artifacts, with young people exposed to new ideas and perspectives that would in turn help them to gain new insights into their own lives:

You know how, if there is a cross-cultural exchange, this will really help them to overcome the, the, you know the things which they have been taking on face value, the traditions. Some of the things which seems very logical to them right now. But when they see that, how other cultures operate, it will get their minds open about everything. (7/21/09 Interview)

This sense of exchange was tied to a reciprocal relationship (I view your artifacts and you view mine) rather than a unidirectional one (I create and produce artifacts that you view). This cross-cultural exchange paradigm was an extension of the sharing model in that the influence was not unidirectional but bidirectional. Authors could influence others and be influenced through their interactions with other audiences and authors (it could “get their minds open”). A New York student described how he imagined the network could facilitate this kind of exchange with others in the global community:

Maurice: We could like communicate with people and what they're doing, and that might- what they're doing totally different from what we're doing. And we share those ideas and ask kids like, like we could share ideas with them. Like say we do trash sculpture and then another kid asked me what we're doing, then I'd tell 'em like the process of trash sculpture, and then he takes that to his country. And then he does something, that's something new that he learns, something new that he can bring, another form of art he could bring to where he lives. So I think it's good, mostly like communicating with, like other ideas and what other people are trying to do. It should fit, but- it *should* fit like that in this program.

Amy: But did it not quite fit like that?

Maurice: Well, I dunno. I can speak for me. But ever since I've been on the beats, like I've been heavy on the beats, like on the computer, so like the Space2Cre8 website, I like, I've been on it, but not like that. So I haven't really been communicating. I've been communicating with people, but not like we have a conversation to share ideas. (Interview, 7/23/10)

Maurice framed the communication that he and his global peers ideally would engage in as an exchange, “taking [an idea about art] to their country” and offering a new idea back in return. Maurice thought of this conversation between global peers as an exchange of ideas and information that is adopted, wholesale, into one’s own practice. This back and forth trading of ideas, while certainly part of the conversations that teachers talked about fostering, was still an act of importation and exportation (a still unrealized one at that point, as Maurice pointed out) rather than one of transformation.

This kind of exchange, while fruitful in helping authors compose thoughtfully and audiences interpret generously, still did not necessarily result in the kinds of interactions teachers hoped to see, in which kids understood themselves and their worlds differently by virtue of their cross-cultural communications: “We downloaded all the videos from that FTP site and we had a viewing of that.... And we got the comments to the website, but it never ended up in any kind of

communication between children” (Amit, 2/8/11 Teacher Call). Amit, Jackson, and Jake puzzled over how to promote “real conversation” instead of exchanges of greetings or one-time sharing or exchanges of materials (Amit, 2/8/11 Teacher Call). As some of the teachers worked together to direct these “real conversations” about serious topics at issue in kids’ lives, they began to reframe the purpose of the project from one of creative expression and sharing to one of intercultural understanding and dialogue (documented in Chapter Five). These shifts were fraught with tension as teachers’ beliefs about self-expression and the teacher’s role in youth’s creative spaces remained in conflict as they repeatedly negotiated their understandings of the project’s purposes, often via the project’s main mediational artifacts.

### **Discourse Genres as Mediational Means**

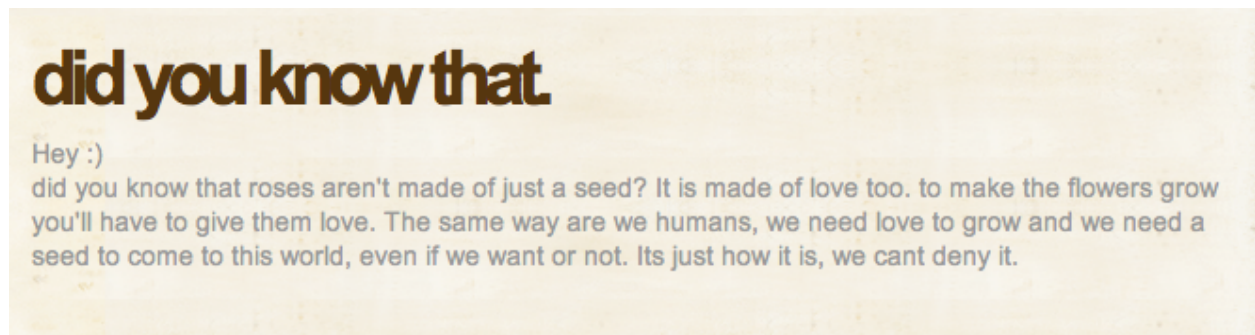
As the teachers worked together over time, increasingly collaborating to try to address the lack of student interaction in the S2C8 community, they focused on two primary discourse genres as potential solutions to this problem. Teachers hoped that blogs or videos would spark interaction between students and foster a kind of cross-cultural exchange that Maurice described in still hypothetical terms. While blogs and videos became the most practiced and discussed genres that emerged in the project, they functioned as mediational means for participants in very different ways. Blogging was primarily a teacher-driven activity seen by teachers as an efficient way to publish content to a wide audience. Youth generated videos, on the other hand, though also facilitated and directed by teachers, were linked with students’ stories and valued as youth’s creative expressions that could mediate students’ understandings of one another through their multimodal affordances. This section describes how these two genres emerged as central to the community over time and how videos came to function as an important mediational resource for both students and teachers, linking sites, teachers, and students in new ways through progressive entextualizations.

### **Blogs as Schooled Discourse Genre**

It is perhaps unsurprising that blogs became important in the S2C8 community; as a discourse genre, blogs shared many similarities with the kinds of writing generally valued in schools. Written by one author, blogs were ‘attached’ to that person as the ‘owner’ of that piece of writing. If I brought up a student’s profile page on the network, it listed her blogs prominently on the page, with the most recent at the top. While blogs afforded multimodal expression in that videos and photos could be embedded and the text customized in size and color, it was a primarily textual genre driven by the written word. And even though people could comment on a blog, they could not edit or otherwise change a blog that had been written. In this sense, it was a one-to-many publication model. At the end of the session, there was tangible evidence that students completed some kind of ‘work’ because there was a textual trace of their engagement online, easily tracked by the teacher. Even though teachers were reticent to direct students on the network, when they did give instructions about online participation, it was usually in relation to the blogging function. Over time, the nature of blogging on the network changed to some extent, which I describe in detail in Chapter Six. However, until spring of 2011 blogging remained a school-sanctioned and often teacher-directed activity that provided occasion for students to share about their lives with others in the international community. Even though these blogs were often prompted by a teacher’s request, students were generally thoughtful in their blogs, and for some students blogs were a popular self-sponsored venue for personal creative expression. For

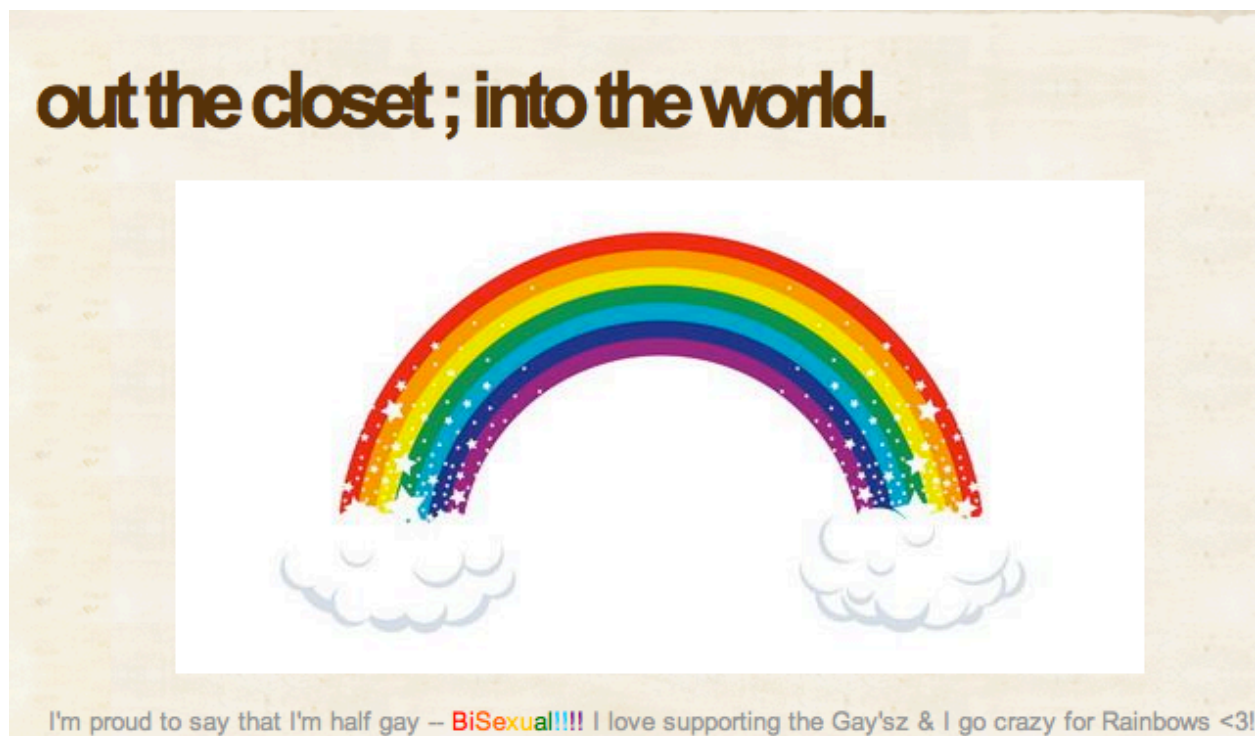


example, one girl in Norway wrote regular blogs that were reflective musings about life or postings of her poetry (see Figure 4.1):



**Figure 4.1. Norwegian Student Blog**

Other students, when prompted, wrote elaborate and meaningful entries about issues that were important to them, like coming out as gay or bisexual (see Figure 4.2):

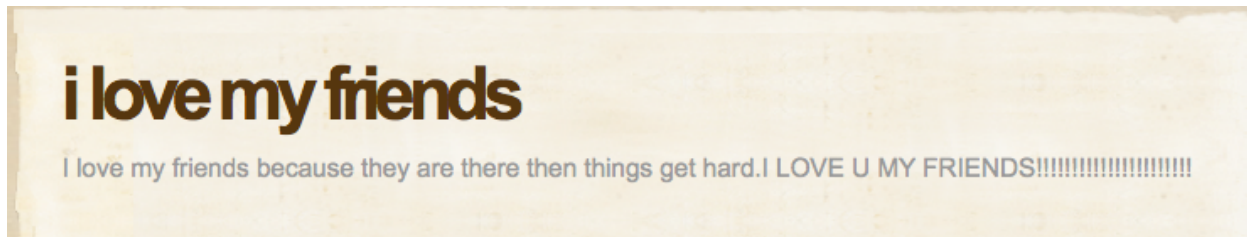


**Figure 4.2. Opening Section of New York Student Blog**

Blogs like these were prevalent on the site and reveal attention to detail, frequently including carefully designed wording, images, and fonts. Often addressed explicitly to others on the network, blogs were composed with an international peer audience in mind, with background information like photos and links that helped contextualize the text.

While students reported getting satisfaction from blogging, most often it was a teacher-driven activity. All of the teachers required blogs at some point in time except Kgotso, who had a firm hands-off policy about students' creative expressions on the network and off. For the South African students, who had just recently discovered the Internet and social networking, blogs were treated like the other functions and were not extensively used, though occasionally students

would use them to give a ‘shout-out’ to others both in their local community and beyond (see Figure 4.3).



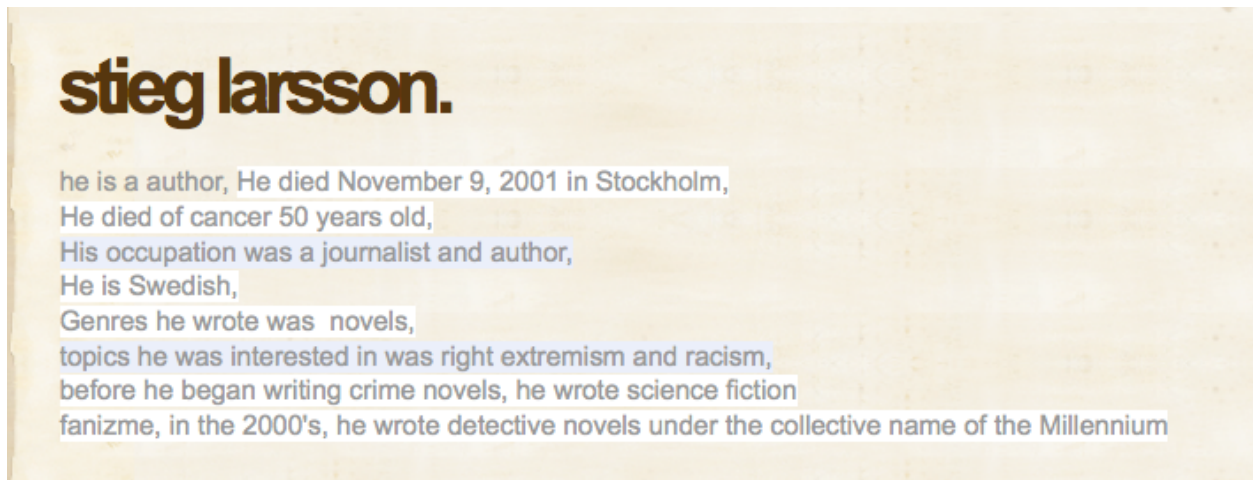
**Figure 4.3. South African Student Blog**

At all of the other sites, however, the teachers talked about blogs as a way to integrate the curriculum with the network, promote interaction, or share about students’ everyday lives with others. Jake, who regularly assigned blogs, linked these to “pretty standard teacher practice” and acknowledged that they functioned less to connect the New York site to others than to fulfill a particularly local assignment:

You know, I mean obviously it would be great to get a response from the international users. But also I- it would probably be difficult to respond to those things [blogs], cause they're within kind of the assignment that's being given, and they're very much within the- and I actually find a lot of that with the India girl stuff too. It's usually within the little realm that they're working, and so for other students to respond to it, it's kind of hard because they're not working on that specific issue at that moment or whatever, you know? (10/28/10, Interview)

While Jake hoped that blogs might generate responses from others, they were so intertwined with the local contexts of a teacher’s assignments that he knew it would be difficult for other students to respond to. Linked to schooled practices, blogging tied into teachers’ goals for learning about one another’s lives, and so teachers promoted the practice in their classrooms, albeit in different ways and for different purposes relative to their local communities.

In Oakland and Norway, both sites situated in the school day, Jackson and Maja required students to write blogs on occasion as a way to link the school curriculum with the networked community. In Norway, for example, Maja was searching for ways to make the network relevant to Norwegian literacy, and she proposed at one time a blog on something like their study of the Vikings. After discussion with the Norwegian researcher, the students wrote two different blogs that connected to the curriculum, one on famous Norwegian authors and another on the Norwegian national day (a third they wrote in this time period was about their room, a response to a suggestion by Amit to show a little bit of their home lives). The researcher described how blogs functioned primarily as a bridge to the curriculum: “And the special thing with the Norwegian site is that we, our challenge is we have to link the activities real close to the curriculum. And we have actually, the last weeks we have been- they have been making three different kinds of blogs, ... and the last two blogs is very close connected to the curriculum” (5/12/10 Teacher Call). The students’ postings about their favorite authors looked very similar to a book report (see Figure 4.4):



**Figure 4.4. Norwegian Student's Favorite Author Blog**

Students from other sites did not respond to these blogs, Amit commenting to me that the language was too complex for his students to understand and Jackson commenting that his students were generally not interested in books and reading. Like in Norway, Jackson was attentive to the need to connect with the curriculum in the multicultural classroom in Oakland and sometimes asked students to write a blog post on topics like stereotyping or cultural practices. This teacher-directed activity would sometimes elicit playfully resistant behavior by students (see Figure 4.5):



**Figure 4.5. Oakland Student Blog**

In New York and Oakland, students sometimes pretended to be busy writing blogs but never posted them and other times posted 'funny' topics like 'Pizza' to circumvent the directive through passive resistance. This kind of push back was routine in Jake's classroom in New York since he required a blog entry at each class session. In Figure 4.6, one of his students jokingly implied that she had posted more blogs than she could even remember:



**Figure 4.6 New York Student Blog**

While Jake's student complied with the direction to reflect on her activities, she did so in a way that she indexed as perfunctory though the title of the blog as "number 48574." This kind of cooperation with the teacher's instructions about blogging was also common, as students fulfilled the requirements of the assignment but sometimes without great attention to detail or design.

For Jake, blogs represented an important part of his program, which was focused around artistic practice. Jake believed that reflection was an integral part of artistic work, a way to become critical of one's own projects, to maintain an artistic discipline, and to build a sense of community as artists engaged in serious practice. He linked the blog writing to S2C8's role as a space for reflection and community building:

Well it [S2C8] definitely will continue to be this kind of reflective space, you know, a place where the students can do their blogs and reflect on their work and kind of you know, has that kind of community building platform, right? Where they're all on this space together and it's kind of this, it kind of like legitimizes their own project, it gives you kind of a sense of like, it gives it its special aura of community. (2/4/11 Interview)

Through reflection, students built community by virtue of participating together. Part of that community building for Jake involved the "legitimizing" role of the international audience as an extended community. By publishing their work on this broader community space, students could engage more dynamically as members of the community.

While Jake generally adopted a loose teaching style, reluctant to overtly direct students' interactions online, he was content with directing the reflective piece of their online engagement because he understood it to be important not just for building local community but for feeling part of the networked community. He believed that there was a larger purpose to the blogging that he trusted that kids understood, one connected to his sense of obligation to the larger group:

Amy: Do they like doing, do they like doing the blog, do you think?

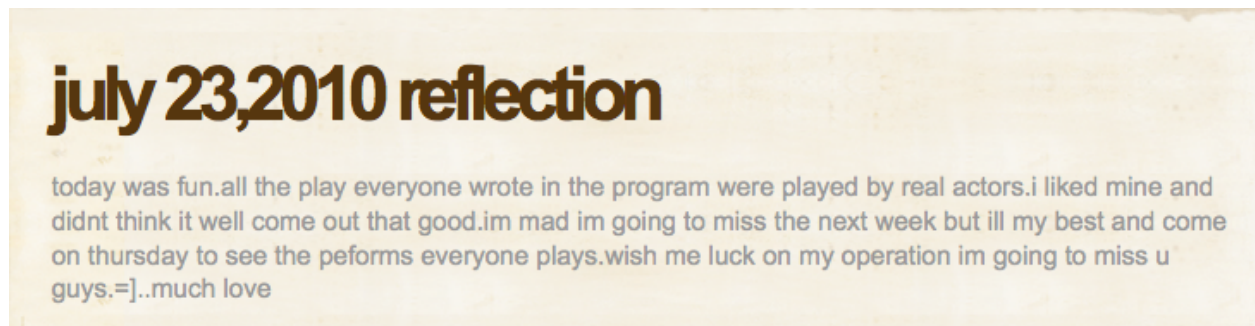
Jake: Mmm. I don't know if they like, but- I think they understood the value of doing that. You know they understood that they were kind of keeping this journal, you know, about their activities, and as well as kind of letting the rest of the community know what they were doing in each session. But you know like, kids never wanna- only a certain number of kids kind of just like to write, you know? To them it's always- writing has such an association with schoolwork that I think that it just kind of gets on their nerves. (2/4/11 Interview)

For many students, writing was connected to schooling so tightly that Jake had to work to overcome that resistance through repeated practice. By asking students to blog every session, Jake tried to frame the reflection as part of the artistic enterprise, one that bound them to others in the community by virtue of their reporting of their participation. Jake emphasized this responsibility to the larger community throughout the program, and writing these blogs was one kind of responsibility that his students bore:

I never force them to take on a particular project or force them to do anything a certain way. But once they started a project, like if he was gonna make a response to Oakland, part of that project would be you have to explain you know through a blog what that was. You'd have to reach out to the people and explain to them you know what your ideas were. So that's where the forcing came, was making sure that they saw it through to the end. Cause that's where kids, you know they're kids, so they'll start something and then you know a day or two will pass

or they'll miss a day, and then they're just gonna, you know they're gonna quit on it. So, you know compelling them to complete projects, you know that really helped build the community. Because then everybody would see like a final product and that would inspire you know the other students to do stuff. So I think all of that stuff was really important in building the community. (6/23/11 Interview)

Jake saw his role as pushing students to finish their projects so that they would have a product to share with others, which was part of the community building work they were engaged in. But beyond that, students had an obligation to others in the community, to using blogs to communicate ideas to others (see Figure 4.7).



**Figure 4.7 Adira's Reflective Blog (New York)**

This reflection by one of Jake's students illustrates the obligation she felt to the local and wider S2C8 communities. In this reflection, Adira explained to all of her readers that she would be gone for a little while because of an operation she was going to have. Clearly this student felt responsibility to explain why she would be out of touch and to send her warm regards to others in her absence. Jake encouraged this use of blogging to keep community members informed, something that fostered a sense of belonging.

Amit felt obligated to connect his students' school activities with the networked community in ways similar to Jake. He framed it as an obligation for students to keep others informed of their activities and to reach out to them. For example, girls regularly blogged about their activities in the local community: "And they're doing social [outreach]...and a blog posting about the same on Space2Cre8. About the group which they have started" (8/25/10 Teacher Call). This kind of broadcasting of their activities, Amit revealed, was rarely the girls' idea:

Like they know that they can go there and write something, but they have never-it's always us who talk about something and we ask them to reflect it on their blogs. They would never go out or think of a topic unless there was something they wanted, really wanted to express. (7/14/10 Interview)

Even when the students "really wanted to express something" it usually grew out of their activities in their class. For example, students wrote poems and illustrated their poems with photos. Amit then directed them to post those poems as a blog entry (see Figure 4.8):

a dream



#### A Dream

Want to fly in sky,  
only this is my will  
Neither there are any chains nor there is any prison  
Only there should be my world of vision  
Want to break all the chains  
that have held me  
The dreams which are mine  
Of which I was unaware till now  
My hopes & expectations are awakened  
And will now fulfill my desires.  
Now I have taken one vow  
Will not let any women down due to guilt  
Will build courage  
Will teach to fight for their rights  
Let the world do all efforts  
Will make every women empowered

**Figure 4.8: India Student Blog**

But these, multimodal blogs, beautiful as they were, also represented an activity that Amit was reluctant to continue. He wanted students to *choose* to express themselves this way, and he felt conflicted in his role as authoritarian:

Like blog entries I see that how directed they are, and I kind of feel very bad that I have to do it. Like I have to tell them, ‘Please don’t look at the pictures, finish this blog entry.’ Which is like an assignment, that you have to sit on that network and you have to write these two lines. It’s mechanical, they’re not actually choosing, this is something that they have to do. (1/4/11 Interview)

Amit did not enjoy directing students in what he thought should be self-sponsored activity, and consequently he kept trying to find ideas that would spark interaction that motivate students to participate in building relationships apart from his direction. Like Jake, he linked these to school

assignments, which were required but not meaningful to students outside of the schooled paradigm.

Amit realized that these directed blogs were not working toward a goal of interaction, in no small part because only a few others read them and commented. He related how one of his students complained that she felt no one was reading them: “The thing I was saying, when we were doing this yesterday about reading someone else's blog entry and commenting on it- I don't remember who it was. And someone said, ‘Why should I reply, they never reply to my blog. They've never said anything on my blog, so I'm not going to talk to anyone about it’” (7/14/10 Interview). Students’ reluctance to reply to others because of their feelings of being unheard was a common refrain, and teachers had to push even harder to convince students to engage. In the Norwegian and Oakland sites, sometimes this revolved around assigning grades. In the other sites, teachers had to cajole or even bribe students with food or fun activities. Amit talked about promising students they could browse freely on the Internet once their ‘work’ of writing the blogs was finished. One reason that the girls in India struggled with blogs was their textual nature:

It's really difficult to follow all the blog entries which are there, and kids have not been going there and reading those blog entries and commenting on them as much as they want to. Because they're helpless with the language at times. And it's impossible for us to you know be with every one of them all the time. So we were just thinking that we'll throw it upon a project and make a video out of it. So their responses will be in the video itself. (8/25/10 Teacher Call)

Amit suggested that an alternative would be to turn the blog reading into a collaborative activity and make a video out of it. Indeed, it was this idea of Amit’s to use video to mitigate difficulties of written text that turned everyone’s attention to video as a medium for interaction in new ways.

### **Videos as Joins between Activity Systems**

From the beginning of the project, video productions were of central interest to the participants, whether in the form of digital stories, stop motion animation, video greetings, or short narrative films. Students were eager to learn how to make their own movies and write their own multimodal stories, and teachers were enthusiastic about the video medium as extending youth’s communicative capacities. While many program sites began with students’ individual digital stories as the main composing activity, over time teachers and students experimented with different structures and new mediums for their digital productions, many times based on a complex set of program needs, availability of resources, and youth interests. In Norway, for example, students created two sets of collaborative projects, the first a set of digital stories about local Norwegian narratives and legends and the second a set of short fictional films about drug and alcohol use. These were collaboratively structured because the number of functioning laptops was insufficient for all of the students to work individually in the amount of time available for the project, and for the second project, the artifacts were structured as collaborative films because that would fulfill a school-wide curricular requirement for group projects around drug and alcohol awareness. Every site faced its own unique mix of constraints and affordances that shaped these kinds of composing activities young people engaged in with video.

As the project progressed, teachers began using video in different ways in order to address difficulties facing the community around students’ online interaction. For example, when teachers concluded that kids’ questions were not being answered on S2C8, each site recorded a set of questions and answers on video to try to foster more interaction. In the first of these

exchanges, Jackson worked with the students in Oakland to create a 'hello' movie for me to take on my visit to Norway in which different kids introduced themselves and asked their Norwegian counterparts questions. Unexpectedly, one young man from Oakland spoke eloquently about his experience with drug and alcohol abuse in this supposedly straightforward movie of greetings, sharing his personal story in response to seeing the Norwegian films about drug and alcohol awareness. In India, Amit recorded students' responses to blogs in order to overcome the difficulty girls faced in reading and responding to written text online: "It took us some time to notice that the text was not working out to be the best way for us (india) to respond. So we made a shift to video and recorded a video in response to some of the blogs posted" (9/16/10 Email to Kidnet Hub). This move to video to solve problems with interaction worked to some extent, and after watching the videos many students were inspired to log onto the network and respond to the authors.

One of the reasons that teachers surmised that video footage of different sites worked to help interaction was because it allowed kids to get an embodied sense of one another as real people acting in the world. Amit suggested this rationale for moving to video interactions, arguing, "I said this before, I'll say it again, that other kids are not real for them" (1/4/11 Interview). Similarly, Jake found that his students struggled to imagine other kids as real people: "They think of these people as invisible, right? They're not really real people, they're- it's kind of confusing in that way to try to imagine these people in this other place, and other time" (10/28/10 Interview). When interacting online, students reported feeling unsure that they were engaging with real teens facing similar problems to them, and Amit proposed that videos could help students make connections with other individuals:

The first thing we have to do is, for you know to make kids real, and to get it rolling, it might really work wonders if they could see the video, and they could see that, OK, this kid- they know the name of the kid, they've seen this kid in the video, and then they picked this kid. And then they go on the network, that kind of is more compelling, I guess. (2/8/11 Teacher Call)

Amit still was hopeful that videos, in anchoring others in reality, would help students connect individually on S2C8, "picking" someone from the video to pursue a relationship with online. He made this movement from video to S2C8 explicit:

So what you need is a video to make people real. And I think once they see that some kid has something interesting to say, they will want to know the name of the student and more about student, and probably they will move to a more synchronous method, which is Space2Cre8. But they just don't feel the reality of it. So probably this video thing will help us identifying the students in the beginning. (2/8/11 Teacher Call)

Videos, teachers hoped, could help interaction on S2C8 by making students real enough to identify with. Youth generated movies, the ones that told young people's stories of their everyday lives (and thus made them 'real' to the other participants), became the most circulated and viewed artifacts on the network, and these videos became fundamentally important in mediating participants' engagement in the networked community.

As teachers talked with each other about their video work with their students, they started to imagine ways to collaborate on the film projects and share them with each other in new ways. For example, when it became too difficult to find the videos on the network (there was no organizational system for finding videos), Jackson suggested a media gallery with an easy to use icon for sorting, and Amit suggested that it include the tag "homemade" to highlight that youth



created the movie themselves (8/25/10 Teacher Call). When the gallery proved difficult to use as well, Amit suggested using Dropbox to mobilize the media, which was tied to the larger goals of the project: “I feel that one of the main objectives of the network is to mobilize all the media which is being produced by all the kids” (1/4/11 Interview). Increasingly, student-created media like Bhakti’s digital story, the India school tour video, and Oakland’s short narratives on stereotypes began to circulate via teachers over Dropbox. Teachers talked at length over email and in the teacher planning sessions about how to circulate and respond to these videos, and they began to see that “part of the role of the teachers is to kind of to find a lot of the media and introduce it to the students and generate some discussion around them, and then allow the students to kind of pick and choose how and what they’ll respond to” (Jake, 5/10/11 Interview). Through the mobilization of these youth-created videos, teachers worked together to construct the project as one community connected via their engagement around youth narratives. In this way, then, the videos that involved kids’ everyday lives and stories became increasingly important in reconciling teachers’ conflicting goals for self-expression and increased interaction. Videos were flexible enough to *both* allow students’ creative freedom to express themselves *while* promoting interaction by virtue of sharing parts of their lives with others. This allowed teachers to address the “gaps” in the project in ways that satisfied their conflicting motivations. These videos functioned as border-crossing objects that bridged the competing discourses in the project, allowing teachers to take up a facilitator role in relation to both the network and the creative work.

Part of the reason that videos functioned this way in the project was because of their detachability from the networked context. While teachers saw blogs as ‘located’ within the networked space, videos could be dis-embedded from that space, shared via Dropbox and email, re-embedded in other kids’ projects, and recontextualized on the network. In this way, videos functioned in the same ways Kell (2009) argued that material artifacts like a written journal operated in her study, connecting activity systems and people as “joins” that became increasingly durable as they were progressively recontextualized in new contexts. As artifacts, these videos traveled the spaces of the network and the program sites, in the process allowing participants to forge new connections between the spaces and define themselves in relation to one another in new ways. While I discuss this process in depth in the next chapter, I offer one example of an early artifact that functioned to connect the activity systems of the network and program spaces in new ways, offering participants new ways to imagine themselves connected to one another.

In South Africa, Kgotso spoke at length about the role one such video artifact played in mediating his and his students’ understandings of the project and their relationship to one another. It was a digital story of a teen in India, Bhakti, who narrated a series of personal photos about her life (for extended analysis of this story, see Hull, Stornaiuolo, & Sahni, 2010). Kgotso explained how this story allowed for the kind of self-expressive work he wanted to foster but had trouble with inspiring in his students’ writing:

So, I’d like to just say that mostly, [Bhakti’s] story, kind of touched all of them because ... we got to kind of get through to the kids to be able to open them up and actually have them express what they were thinking because as far as it goes, I think they have it in their heads that they are the most disadvantaged in the world. So, part of that, I think also has to do with that a setting of the school is kind of a village, slum area. ... For them, it doesn’t get worse than that, I’d like to think... So, when we eventually sat down and had to draft up their stories because they had to start on paper first, most of them had a lot of stories to tell. So, I can

guarantee that a lot of the stories were pages full, writing. So, that was for me, it worked really well and I would like to maybe again partake in similar activities. (11/2/09 Teacher Call)

For Kgotso, Bhakti's video sparked a creative outpouring of writing and idea generation for his students' own stories (a valued practice in Kgotso's classroom). The videos functioned to sanction particular kinds of stories (e.g., stories about themselves) and to connect kids to one another in new ways: "So I think for [Dalton] and many others also, the fact that [Bhakti] was comfortable in telling her story so it opened the doors for them as well to open their own sort of closets, you know" (1/4/11 Interview). Kgotso valued personal stories that revealed something about the narrator, and this video artifact facilitated that kind of "opening up" by his students. While Bhakti portrayed circumstances particular to her Indian upbringing, Kgotso found that kids made connections to their own lives.

Bhakti's story traveled across sites, borne by teachers and researchers independently of the network, and opened new spaces within students and programs. As it traveled it became recontextualized in each program site as it was shown to youth. Just as it was shown by Kgotso to young people in South Africa, it was shown by Amit to young people in Oakland. Like Kgotso, Amit discussed how the video functioned as a border text, linking young people together by virtue of its recontextualization in the local space:

I remember the same thing happened in Oakland. The kids, when they saw [Bhakti's] movie, ... then they were talking about stuff which I was told they don't really talk about... I don't remember the specifics but it gets to open up and talk about stuff which they don't really share with others. (11/2/09 Teacher Call).

Similar to the way the video "opened up" new stories in South Africa, Bhakti's video was interpreted by Oakland's kids as relevant to their lives as well. These youth-created videos served to open new connections between students but also to bind the program sites in new configurations. Oakland, India, and the S2C8 community became intertwined as a result of viewing this video, and participants understood themselves in relation to one another in new ways. In terms of Bhakti's video, participants understood themselves as all struggling to find hope in a life marked by personal difficulties.

As self-expressive objects, the multimodal and re-mediated videos also served as generative artifacts in that they promoted new kinds of interactions between students. In the next chapter, I discuss how some of these new interactions took the form of response videos, a genre that emerged from teachers' collaboration. In Chapter Six, I report on the ways these new interactions also resulted in transformed roles between authors and audiences and between written language, image, and video. But here I close the chapter with Kgotso's words about the important way that the videos 'bridged gaps':

We've had difficulties in [having critical discussions with kids] but, after awhile, as I've said, with the movies that we've shown them, it's also kind of giving them that bridge and letting them know that it's okay you can actually get to express yourself and they start talking and sharing ideas and you get a lot out of that as well. (11/2/09 Teacher Call)

Indeed, over time the videos functioned as a kind of "bridge" for teachers, joining participants in ways that exploited the "gaps," the openings and gulfs teachers experienced. The videos functioned not just to enable new interactions with and between kids or newly generative space for creative expression but they worked to join teachers together in new collaborative models that led to what I call in the next chapter an expansive learning cycle.

## CHAPTER 5: THE RISE OF THE RESPONSE VIDEO

*Between ... Oakland and New York we've been having really good luck with this whole thing of exchanging like a hot potato kind of a, a video project where we make a short video and then New York does a response, and then we do another response, and things like that. ... And that's a really cool way of creating interactions between the schools, that we've kind of had problems with in the past.*

-Jackson, 5/10/11 Teacher Call

Jake Casey moved swiftly around the spacious classroom as he set up the computer and projector, talking with students at his New York program site about their various projects as he skirted around the four low tables, teacher's desk, laptop cart, and storage units situated around the room. He stopped to look over Pete's shoulder as Pete edited a movie the group had filmed the previous week, mentioning that he had a copy of the song Pete could use in the editing. Tall with pale brown curly-hair and a large physique, Pete sat hunched over a low classroom table in a small plastic chair at the back of the room with his two classmates, Lola and Santiago, as all three worked on their individual laptops. At the adjacent table nearest the back wall of pale blue lockers, four students worked in pairs, Luisa and Emilio sharing one computer as they held hands and giggled loudly and Nina and Jonny sitting across from the couple with their heads bent close together in concentration as they edited Jonny's script with pencils in hand. There was a low buzz in the room as people working individually and collaboratively kept up a meandering and jovial group conversation about their everyday lives with one another, Jake, and the other adults in the room, including me, English teacher Zack, and local researcher Elena. They were all waiting to see Oakland's video response to Santiago's movie, none more eagerly than Santiago, who told Jake, "Alright Casey, play that video already." Jake replied, "Alright, alright" as he strode to turn off the lights. He called out, "Lola, you might want to watch this since you might want to do a response video too. Alright Santiago, I'm playing this for you. Alright, you ready?" Despite Santiago's protest that he wanted to see the newest movie first, Jake insisted on playing all three movies in the order that they were made – the first a short film by Roxy from Oakland called "Angry Girl" followed by Santiago's movie called "Bloody Lenny" and finally this newest Oakland installment called "Hey."

As soon as the instrumental music from the film "Angry Girl" filled the classroom, all seven adolescents twisted in their seats and trained their eyes on the screen at the front of the classroom, sitting attentively through the 36-second video that showed a young girl interacting with a cashier in a cafeteria (I will describe each of the videos in this sequence in more detail later in this chapter). When it finished playing, Jake introduced the next video in the series by saying, "This is the response to 'Angry Girl.'" Nina, a tall, statuesque, and articulate 17-year-old girl, turned to Santiago in anticipation and said, "I like this one!" Santiago, in preparation for watching himself on film, pulled up the hood of his sweatshirt so that it obscured most of his face. A physically large 18-year-old with a boyish round face, wispy moustache, and soft voice, Santiago slouched down in his small chair as the loud heavy metal music of his video pulsed through the speakers. Emilio kept looking over and trying to catch Santiago's eye as he nodded his head in time to the beat and lifted his arm in a fist pump, large smile across his face. Jake laughed at Emilio's fist pumping and leaned over Santiago's back, hands on his shoulders as he

sang along with the heavy metal music in Santiago's ear: "We will never sleep cuz sleep is for the weak." As the movie wound to a close, Jake stood at the back of the room against the lockers and announced to the students, "Next is the response from them."

Almost seamlessly, the response from Oakland began with the same music that Santiago's had used, and Jake signaled the transition by saying, "OK this is Oakland's response to Lenny." Santiago sat up straighter in his chair and all of the people in the room watched intently as the main protagonist in the video acted as female counterpart to Santiago's angry Lenny character, striding down a similar school hallway to the same pounding heavy metal music. Partway through the film, Lola turned to Jake, exclaiming, "I want to do a response back!" Jake said, "Watch, watch, keep watching." As the music changed from the heavy metal to the happy theme song from the cartoon "Arthur," everyone in the room erupted into laughter. Jake started dancing in place, and Emilio began waving his hands in the air in time to the music as Nina exhaled a long "wow." Immediately when the movie ended, Lola bounded out of her chair and announced, "I know *exactly* what I want to do!" Jake, at the same time, pointed to the screen and said, "So we need to open up our response," as everyone in the room began talking at once.

I open the chapter with this description of a pivotal moment for the S2C8 community – the creation of a new communicative genre participants came to call the "response video," which represented an innovative solution to a number of the problems and challenges that had been plaguing S2C8 participants. Prior to this day in March 2011, Jake and his students, like the other S2C8 participants, had been working mainly on media projects that were driven by the adolescents' interests or curricular demands, largely in isolation from others in the S2C8 community. For example, in Oakland students had finished their films for the multicultural class about stereotypes and were working on individual digital stories about their lives. In New York some of the students like Vince and Jonny were working on fictional stories about young men of color growing up in an urban neighborhood and others were working on digitizing poetry or making dance videos. When Jake encouraged his kids to "open up their response" on that day in March, he invited them to think about videos differently, as part of a collaborative narrative trajectory with other members of their global community. The videos that the S2C8 participants created from this point forward were significantly different than the projects they had previously made. These response videos eschewed traditional written or spoken language as the primary modality and used music and image to respond to ideas the young people found provocative in other created artifacts from within the community. This new genre made space for difficult conversations to take place and for collaborative work to take root, and as Jackson said above, they became "really cool ways of creating interactions between the schools." As participants remixed, revised, and revoiced texts in newly interactive and collaborative ways, the response videos illustrated especially vividly the heteroglossia inherent in all composing practices and the "inherently multi-voiced process of debate, negotiation and orchestration" characteristic of expansive learning (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 5).

In this chapter, I tell the story of how the response video genre emerged from contradictions that three of the teachers, Amit, Jackson, and Jake, struggled to overcome through their collaborative efforts, leading to what Engeström (1999b) calls a cycle of expansive learning. This genre emerged through teacher and student co-collaboration when teachers took up new roles and shifted their understandings of the purpose of the S2C8 project. I trace the shift from individual composing (expressive work that was more explicitly self-focused) to jointly composed pieces that were collaborative, participatory, and deliberately intertextual. In the

opening section of the chapter, I describe three central turning points that established the context for the new genre to emerge: 1) a focus on promoting dialogue through recontextualizing videos in different ways; 2) a move to new collaborative frameworks for teachers and students to engage in conversation; and 3) new experimentation with video genres that enhanced dialogue by foregrounding other modalities besides language. As teachers tried out these three solutions to the problem of sparse student-to-student interaction, they sparked an innovative process of internalization and externalization that Engeström calls central to an expansive learning cycle, “in which the learners are involved in constructing and implementing a radically new, wider and more complex object and concept for their activity” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 2). In the second section, I follow the design process for each of the four videos in the first response video sequence (which came to be called the “Worlds Collide” series) and analyze the video narratives that emerged: “Angry Girl,” “Bloody Lenny,” “Hey,” and “Bloody Lenny Goes to Heaven.” I illustrate how the interpretive and composing processes for these collaborative videos became highly intertwined as teachers and students constructed their responses in conversation with others in the networked community, in the process intertextually weaving through elements from the other stories to build a layered multimodal narrative. In the final section, I discuss the role of this new genre in the community, describing the next series of response videos (a sequence called “Moving Money”) and showing how the response videos operated as bridge texts, expanding cross-cultural conversations while allowing for student creativity and what Jake would call the “organic” development of ideas between teachers and students.

### **Three Turning Points**

In this section, I describe the three turning points that were critical to the development of the response video genre and the resulting move toward collaborative composing. The first shift was one that grew out of the teachers’ dissatisfaction with students’ interactions online. As they jointly worked to understand ‘what this community is about,’ teachers developed a sense of responsibility toward one another as they imagined together what kinds of student engagement they wanted to foster online. In the course of this process, they came to characterize the online social network as a kind of *contact zone*, a place where people from many cultural and ideological backgrounds interacted in sometimes unfamiliar or uncomfortable relations in order to learn about one another. Within this learning environment, the teachers understood their role to be guides, preparing students to engage in dialogue there but not becoming overly involved in the online space themselves. Tightly intertwined with these efforts toward developing dialogue between students, the second shift in the networked community involved the development of new collaborative frameworks. These cooperative structures involved the reconfiguration of teacher-teacher, teacher-student, and student-student participation frameworks as participants tried to overcome problems around student interaction. For example, as teachers began showing videos to groups of students rather than individuals (gathering around one laptop or projector screen), students and teachers began working together in new ways that altered some of the traditional relationships between teacher and student and led to more joint interpretive work between all of the participants. The third shift occurred as the teachers experimented with video to ameliorate some of the difficulties in communicating via text, difficulties experienced not just by students who spoke multiple languages but also those who struggled to make meaning from written text or who had a troubled history with school-like writing. These three shifts set the stage for the emergence of the response genre and led to new kinds of collective communication between teachers and between program sites.

## “Real Learning”: The Dialogic Turn

Even as their students began interacting more on S2C8, often at teachers’ prompting, the teachers remained dissatisfied with kids’ interactions with one another. Certainly, many of the artifacts kids created were powerful, affecting young people in important ways (see for example Stornaiuolo, Hull, & Sahni, 2011); however, the teachers agreed that students’ engagement around those artifacts did not lead to the kind of substantial one-on-one conversations about the issues portrayed in the digital projects (such as poverty, violence, drug use, sexual identification, etc.) that they had hoped to see. More often than not, students exchanged greetings, background information, and compliments in short bursts, and Amit talked about this largely phatic or social communication as something less substantial than a conversation: “At the same time they also realize that most of the time they’re just saying hi. They’re also saying ‘hi,’ the girls from India saying ‘Hi,’ ‘Hello.’ And the other person is also saying ‘Hi’ and ‘Hello.’ They kind of know that it’s not a conversation” (2/8/11 Teacher Call). Like Amit, Jackson talked about the lack of “real connections” between students (4/13/10 Interview), and Jake argued that there had not been any “real engagement” online to date (2/4/11 Interview). As teachers tried to figure out what they hoped to see in terms of student interaction, they began to define ‘real’ interactions as those that led to students learning about and forming relationships with one another. Jake described how this kind of meaningful interaction moved beyond response and toward dialogue:

And you know they’ll get a response, you know but like, the girls from India for instance, I think sometimes they don’t really understand what the message says that was sent to them, and they’ll respond back with a very nice, you know, message. But it doesn’t really facilitate any real, I think like, learning about each other. You know? I don’t know. It- I mean I guess you [Amy] see the interaction as well. I mean are you seeing anything happening just naturally, and out of the moment where there’s like sustained dialogue happening? Or sustained kind of exchanges of, you know, what they do? (Interview, 2/4/11)

Here, Jake expressed his frustration about the kinds of messages kids were exchanging, “very nice” ones that did not lead to “real...learning.” For Jake, real learning was connected with “sustained dialogue” around “what they do” in their everyday lives. Jake made a clear distinction between *responses* that did not lead to understanding and *dialogue* that would lead to learning. Responsivity online, while important, was no longer seen by the three teachers as enough – the exchange of “nice” messages did not lead to “real” communication or learning. The online interaction teachers wanted to foster needed to be meaningful, sustained, and dialogic.

As the teachers worked together to define what counted as meaningful participation online, Amit, Jackson, and Jake shifted their focus from the sharing or exchanging of student work to a focus on the development of student learning. As Jake articulated above, student learning was intimately tied up with the development of understanding through dialogue. No longer did the three teachers find it sufficient that students posted and viewed one another’s creative work on the network – they wanted students to learn about and indeed understand one another’s worlds, and teachers came to agree that this kind of “real” learning could only happen through conversation. Encouraging dialogue thus became the object of the social networking activity for teachers in spring of 2011, a focus that *expanded* how teachers viewed students’ roles and responsibilities in the networked space. Dialogue, unlike sharing or exchanging, required interlocutors to engage in ongoing, reciprocal, and mutually constituting meaning making

activity. Working together with a conversational partner to build common ground for mutual understanding would require students to take an active role in constructing meaning across difference.

The teachers' joint goal of promoting dialogue (and through dialogue, learning and understanding) emerged clearly in their talk after the August 2010 teacher call in which they discussed how to address the issue of sexuality on the network, a topic that forced them to grapple with what it meant to make meaning across difference. In this teacher meeting (detailed in Chapter Four), teachers responded to Kgotso's argument that teachers should allow young people to struggle with ideas and norms online that they may not fully understand in order to learn to deal respectfully with other people's cultures and belief systems. This framing of the networked space as a kind of contact zone, in which kids could engage in conversation with people from different life worlds and different backgrounds, resonated with teachers, who saw their role in such a project as a kind of guide or coach, one who would not navigate the contact zone of the network themselves but would help prepare students for their engagement there. Jake thought that the role of teachers was to help students in negotiating such a zone because they needed "a little bit of structure, you know, in terms of reaching out to other students" (2/4/11 Interview). Jackson sought the help of his fellow teachers in how to talk to his students about communication on S2C8:

I think it would be neat if maybe using the, our Google shared account, that we could continue the conversation on how the discussions are going with the other classes, about how to communicate because if we could share back and forth between what other people are saying or doing or what's coming up in the other countries, like we actually- I might not know exactly what certain things were being said from Africa or India and totally understand what the kids were actually communicating. So maybe we could just keep the conversation going about how to talk to the children. Cause I imagine we're gonna have to talk to them all school year about communication and how the best way to interact with other people from other countries are. (8/25/10 Teacher Call)

Jackson, like Jake and Amit, understood his role as helping students figure out "the best way to interact with people from other countries," but he asked for his fellow teachers' help in doing that. He proposed that teachers use the "Google shared account" (the Kidnet Hub) to "keep the conversation going about how to talk to the children." Indeed, this suggestion to increase teacher collaboration around the jointly construed goal of fostering intercultural communication and learning led to a new era of teacher collaboration in the project, as teachers began to "share back and forth" ideas about their programs in the way Jackson imagined.

From this point forward in the project, teachers began to see themselves as a kind of team in dialogue with one another, which in turn would help them scaffold students' conversations with one another. They communicated on the Kidnet Hub more frequently, and they began to understand themselves as obligated to one another in making the project work. In a flurry of emails on the Hub shortly after this call, for example, they greeted each other with warm regards and inclusive language as they exchanged information on site developments. At the end of one of his updates Jake wrote, "Both our new and old members here in New York look forward to working with you all, and working towards greater cultural exchange and understanding. Warmest regards to you all" (9/21/10 Email to Kidnet Hub). Here Jake framed his students and himself as part of the larger global community, articulating the purpose of the community as "working together toward greater cultural exchange and understanding," an echo of the jointly

constructed goals established in the previous teacher call. While Jake certainly still thought of S2C8 as a platform for his students' work, he also understood students' sharing of their work to be part of a larger effort toward mutual understanding, an expanded object of activity that emerged through his collaboration with other teachers. Jackson too worked diligently to frame his students and himself in relation to the larger community in service of intercultural exchange and understanding, writing in greeting to the group, "Hey Global Teaching Community" (10/7/10 Email to Kidnet Hub) and suggesting an international film contest that "would be a wonderful way to bring the world a little closer to our students" (10/7/10 Email to Kidnet Hub). This kind of collaboration, detailed in the next section, helped teachers reframe the project around the goals of dialogue, understanding, and learning. While teachers still generally understood the network to be a student-occupied space for creative and communicative work in which teachers did not play a central role, they expanded the object of the activity and their motives for participating in the project via their collaborative work. This resulted in a cycle of expansive learning, which did not just involve changes in individuals but in the purposes and goals of activity:

Traditionally we expect that learning is manifested as changes in the subject, i.e., in the behavior and cognition of the learners. Expansive learning is manifested primarily as changes in the object of the collective activity. In successful expansive learning, this eventually leads to a qualitative transformation of all components of the activity system, (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 8)

The teachers' joint construction of a mutual goal of promoting dialogue offered a new lens on the project, leading to qualitative transformations of the whole S2C8 activity system.

### **"Hello Global Teaching Community": Collaborative Efforts**

One of the most significant shifts in the project came as first teachers and then students developed a new ethos of collaboration and partnership. As teachers reframed the project as one around dialogue and understanding, they began to work together more deliberately. One central mechanism for increased communication was the Kidnet Hub, which they used to keep each other up to date and to plan new ventures, and in so doing reinforced their mutual understanding of the project to be about intercultural interaction and understanding. One email exchange that illustrated this new culture of teacher collaboration and partnership was one inviting Maja back to the teacher group. Since the end of the previous term (Spring 2010), when it appeared she would quit the project after her involuntary service period concluded, Maja had written to me to indicate she would like to continue. I wrote to the teacher group and mentioned that Maja would be involved in the Fall 2010 term, and all of the teachers immediately rallied to make her feel welcome. Jake wrote to Maja via the group, "Here at the New York City site, we are enjoying a great start to our semester, and look forward to continuing providing opportunities for international exchange and collaboration. Looking forward to our continued correspondence" (10/27/10 Email to Kidnet Hub). Again, he reiterated the newly articulated goals of the community as not just exchange and collaboration by kids but "continued correspondence" and new connections between teachers. Jackson quickly joined the welcoming chorus for Maja, who had been on the outskirts of the teacher community to date, to make her feel part of the group: "Welcome Back [Maja], & Norway! I think we have some good collaborative projects in the works, cannot wait to work with your students" (10/27/10 Email to Kidnet Hub). Again, Jackson emphasized his efforts toward greater teacher collaboration, as did Kgotso:



Welcome [Maja], looking forward to working with you here in South Africa. We would love to work with you and your kids that side, even though we are almost at the end of our school year. This one month that we have, we would like to do something with with Norway, provided your are available of course. Any ideas from your side on what we could work on? (10/28/10 Email to Kidnet Hub).

This welcoming of Maja by Kgotso, and his willingness to begin a collaborative project in the little time he had left in the school year, was evidence of a new spirit of collaboration that permeated the project in this period. Maja indeed seemed pleased and touched at the outpouring of support:

Hi everyone and thank you so much for all your warm welcomes :-) We are quite eager to get started as well, and we look forward to our joined projects. I am going to have a few of my students post a few pictures and a movie they have made on S2C8, hopefully as soon as today. I just thought it would be fun for you and your students to see what we look like, 6 months or so later ;-) I can also tell you that my school have 5 theme periods during a school year, which lasts for approximately 6-7 weeks each. The next theme starts on monday and is called "Colour". This includes quite a lot of subjects, just to mention some: different cultures, religion, youth culture, racism, languages, minorities, slavery, ethics, diversity, sexuality, respect, music and such. These are just some thoughts of what we will be working on here in Oslo, but maybe we also can find a common project for S2C8? Could be interesting... :-) (10/27/10 Email to Kidnet Hub)

Unlike in the past, when Maja was reluctant to move outside of the given curriculum to imagine new projects, she felt the “warm welcomes” and was inspired to collaborate on “joined projects.” In the email she provided detailed background information on her class and offered to seek a “common project” with others.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, this message by Maja was an example of just the kind of communication teachers had hoped to inspire in their students. For the first time, all of the teachers were working in newly collaborative ways, and they seem to have shifted their collective understanding of the purpose of the project toward intercultural understanding through sustained dialogue.

This teacher collaboration took root and led to new relationships between Jake, Jackson, and Amit. While all of them had been open to working with others before, now the three all made concerted efforts to reach out with invitations and specific project suggestions for joint engagements between sites. Jake, for example, regularly posted updates to the Hub and invited others to join him for collaborative work: “Hope you are all well, and please reach out to me anytime other moments for collaboration arise. We have a fun and committed group right now, and we will be meeting regularly” (2/1/11 Email to Kidnet Hub). An important shift in collaboration between Jake and Jackson occurred when the two met for the first time in person when Jake visited Jackson’s Oakland program and discovered they both shared an irreverent sense of humor and an enjoyment of video editing. Jackson shared with Jake a humorous movie he had made for fun (and showed his students) in which he starred in repurposed footage from a 1960’s scifi TV series, which Jake later showed his students, one of whom used some of the same found footage in a later video. Jackson wrote about this meeting to the other teachers: “We had a great and busy week last week. [Jake Casey] from the NY schools came for a visit and we attended a technology in education conference in southern California. The video communication between [OHS]/Oakland and India worked out great!” (3/14/11 Email to Kidnet Hub). In

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<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, not long after this message Maja had a medical emergency and had to take a leave from the project.

keeping the rest of the teacher community up to date on their collaboration, Jackson also reinforced the idea that the teachers should continue their efforts in working together and using video to increase interaction between all members of the community. Jake too talked about how meeting Jackson helped inspire new collaborative efforts: “Meeting [Jackson] definitely helped. It just- it really helped in terms of just opening up the communication with each other. It really helped kind of seeing like, you know seeing who he was and seeing that he's a very playful guy, that he's willing to kind of take risks and do- that he's really creative and has a really good grasp of the technology” (Interview, 3/24/11). Jake talked about how meeting Jackson helped inspire him toward new ideas for promoting student interaction and exchanges, revitalizing him to work with other teachers toward these larger joint goals.

One of the ways that the teachers all shifted their practices was through collaborative student viewing of the videos, made easier by virtue of the new mobilization of the videos via Dropbox. Each teacher gathered students around a projector and showed a group a youth-created video from another program site. Jackson linked this collaborative viewing structure with S2C8 engagement: “We get a lot more buy in on Space2Cre8 and things like that if we walk into the class and do something on the projector” (1/3/11 Interview). This collective viewing of the movies led to more interaction between students in each program, as they worked together to interpret the videos and came to collaborative understandings of other kids’ life worlds. This new process, Jake argued

seems to have really elevated the students in terms of thinking creatively about how to respond and kind of portray or, or reveal aspects of their own culture and identity and community. ... [It is] that organic process that I think really helped, helps facilitate a smoother process when that's not forced, and becomes quite contrived, I think that we've seen sometimes in the past. (5/10/11 Teacher Call).

For Jake, this collaborative viewing structure was a more “organic” and less “contrived” way for the teachers to guide students in thinking about their own culture in relation to others. The process also invited creative responses that oriented kids not necessarily to self-expression but to responsivity. This new participation structure enabled teachers to take up a more naturally supportive role without overtly directing students’ interactions with other kids, leading a discussion about the video artifacts that promoted creativity while also facilitating exchange and understanding. These dual goals could be accomplished through the recontextualizing of a video in the collective viewing space of the individual classroom.

This shift toward collective viewing practices, which until the February 2011 teacher call had been an idiosyncratic practice when technology demands warranted a collective viewing, later became the new norm for Jake, Jackson, and Amit. On the February call there was a discussion around the role of student interaction and learning, and Amit argued that video would help students learn about one another by representing their everyday lives in ways that would help ground others in space and time (i.e., make them “real”). As teachers discussed how learning about one another via communication could take different forms, Jake pondered whether we could think beyond the individual communication structures in the project:

And I think an important way for the teachers to kind of think about this is you know we very often think of communication as kind of person-to-person. And I think what we're looking at here is more collective communication. Sites are communicating with each other as these collectives that then kind of reflect on the activity happening within Space2Cre8. You know offline, collectively. As a way, as kind of thinking about kind of how these cultures and worlds and people

are interacting together and then what is the position of us within this kind of enterprise. It's an important kind of way to think about it, and it kind of throws you off at first because you're always thinking communication, you know within kind of this personal framework, or within the person to person connection. And now I think we, we're starting to think about a collective communication. (2/8/11 Teacher Call)

In proposing that teachers more deliberately move away from promoting individual communication, Jake offered the other teachers a way of thinking about what he called collective communication. After this call, the three teachers who still met regularly with their classes tried to engage more regularly in instances of collective communication<sup>9</sup>, which helped them foster creativity while also promoting interaction. In the next teacher call, Jake reflected on why this shift ultimately worked to promote student dialogue, engagement, and learning:

And another thing to think about too and...something that kind of plagued us in the beginning of these projects is that we were always trying to create exchanges through individuals and you know, it's a fairly awkward thing for a high school student to just blindly reach out and ask questions to somebody in another country. I mean it's just not that natural of a thing. So, when they work as collectives and respond to each other as collective or as larger groups, I think we find that there's a lot more confidence in that. And then individual relationships kind of grow out of that collective initial engagement. (5/10/11 Teacher Call)

Jake talked about how the individual exchange structure (which teachers had pushed for during the majority of the project) was not “natural” and thus never took off without direct teacher intervention. The students were proceeding “blindly,” without guidance, or in “contrived” situations in which teachers directed the communication; Jake suggested here that collective communication meant kids could engage confidently, spurring communication in the ways teachers had always aspired to.

An important factor in facilitating this move to collective communication was the newly mobile videos that circulated through the teacher community. Teachers recontextualized the videos in the classroom setting, often describing the context for the viewing and guiding the responses and thus serving as important mediators for students, who experienced these videos differently than they did by viewing them individually on the network. For example, one video that had been on the network for several months but had not been viewed much included a school tour video by the Indian participants. In the February 2011 teacher call, Amit alerted Jake to the video, which he noted had become ‘lost’ on the crowded S2C8 site itself. This tour of their school was the first collective video that the Indian students had attempted, in an effort to move away from the individual digital stories and toward the video medium that Amit was convinced could more fully illustrate the everyday lives of the S2C8 participants:

On a slightly different note, [Jake], we have the video that we made for- it was like a small tour. It's a very rough video. It's a small tour of school. So that might be a good video to show to your students, and if they want anything else, if they want to know anything else about the school, they can like, you can shoot the

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<sup>9</sup> Kgotso began a new after-school club with his students when school resumed in March 2011, which he continued through May 2011. However, between the shifting student attendance, Kgotso's personal difficulties in attending every week, and everyone's unfamiliarity with the out-of-school program structures, which none of the participants had experienced before, the program did not flourish during this period. He did, however, engage in one such collective viewing and exchange project with Oakland during this time.

whole building, I think it's under a minute, the whole video is under a minute. They can watch that video and they can have more questions. Then our girls can probably shoot something and give a reply. That might trigger some kind of- that might interest them. (2/8/11 Teacher Call)

Amit thought that perhaps this collectively imagined video, short and rough though it might be, could be productively used in a joint viewing session with Jake's students to "trigger" more interaction (and of course spark students' interest because of the video medium). He saw it as the first in a potential series of exchanges, whereby Jake and his students could do a quick video in response that could offer a glimpse of the New York school.

Jake was indeed inspired to try this new collaborative viewing structure and to imagine a collective video in response. The next week, Jake began by asking if students would gather around, with Lola in charge of projecting the movie on the interactive white board as students stood and sat around it watching. The one minute and seven second video was comprised of 13 separate clips that showed one or more girls from the Prayas school standing in front of some part of their school and gesturing as they described the area in English, for example: "This is our school garden. It has beautiful flowers. My school garden is very good. We love flowers." The girls took the viewers on a tour, beginning with the outdoor school yard, moving through largely empty and spacious outdoor and indoor spaces, and ending in the computer room where they "got on Space2Cre8" (see Figure 5.1 for an example of the students' classroom, which was accompanied by the spoken text, "This is our classroom. We study here").



**Figure 5.1. India School Tour Video**

Immediately, the conversation about the movie centered around the free and open nature of the Indian school space, which contrasted with the urban reality of the New York school. Jake suggested that the group could create a satirical response by matching the shots to highlight the differences between the presumably more affluent school in Manhattan and the more rural school in Lucknow. The students were highly engaged in sketching out the kinds of shots they would take to highlight the disparities between schools (and in viewers' expectations), like a scene of their "garden," an ice-covered, gated courtyard that was always locked and inaccessible to students. After assigning roles, students walked through the school, continuing the conversation about the urban nature of their school and its contrasts with the Prayas school (e.g., the corner store serving as their source of food, and the street as their playground) (2/10/11 Field Note). This kind of recontextualization of videos in new school spaces led to interesting and creative

responses by students, as they made sense of the videos in the collective context of the classroom rather than individually on S2C8. This move toward collective and collaborative practices, by teachers and students, was facilitated by newly mobile videos and afforded new interpretive and composing practices.

### “A Remix”: New Genre Experimentation

As Amit, Jake, and Jackson began collaborating more intensively in spring of 2011, they started experimenting with new genres that they hoped would help facilitate interaction and understanding. One way they began experimenting was by remixing kids’ work, using the different video artifacts in new compositions. Of course, many students had been using other students’ videos as inspiration, creating mirror stories that echoed themes and topics (like students who showed their homes in their videos after viewing Bhakti’s digital story). But in pushing toward the remixed videos, the teachers hoped to move beyond sharing as a simple exchange of ideas toward an interpenetration of styles and texts. Jake talked about remixing as a way of thinking conceptually about the relationship between cultures, programs, and identities through juxtaposition:

It would be so cool if they could start doing like remixes of various documentary footage from the sites, and kind of mixing it together to create these kind of conceptual video pieces. You know that would be something to think about, cause it would be interesting to see how each kind of site is interpreting this other footage, and then kind of juxtaposing it against their own footage. (3/24/11 Interview)

This experimentation with mixing the different footage took several forms as teachers tried different ways to make it work.

Amit suggested that teachers post raw classroom footage on the Dropbox to give a sense of what a typical day might look like (which could then be remixed), while Jackson proposed that the teachers organize a joint project that “could be like a remix ...[which] would help focus their imagination” (3/10/11 Planning Session). The goal, as Jackson articulated, was to use the remixed footage to help ignite kids’ imaginations in thinking about the relationships between the programs in the S2C8 community in new ways. Jake began experimenting with the idea of the remix by working with already filmed videos that were now in increased circulation. He began with the school tour video by the students in India and the questions his New York students had filmed originally as a way to send non-textual feedback to the Indian students. Jake instead suggested they insert these questions into the movie itself, trying to steer the students toward an engagement with these student-created artifacts that transcended exchange and moved into remix and transformation. Kids embraced this idea, and Vince worked with Jake on a scene with the Prayas students in their classroom (see Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2. Vince in the India School Tour Video

In this clip, the Prayas movie paused as Vince responded to the scene: “Wow, students actually pay attention in class here? Pshh, our students back at home go crazy jumping on desks.” While this remixing project with the school tour was never finished, Jake and his students worked on a different set of projects that involved remixing when the students returned to class after a month of testing.

A different kind of experimentation by the three teachers involved uses of video composing that relied on modalities other than language. When Amit told the other teachers about the difficulties of filming using a camera with bad sound quality, Jake suggested, “Another thing too you can do [Amit] is do like silent films with just music in the background. Just concentrate really on building image” (8/25/10 Teacher Call). Jackson experimented with a genre he called “the silent film” (1/3/11 Interview) in which he encouraged students to design a film that expressed its story through dramatic action and music. He and Jake watched a movie by another student Gabriel who had used loud music to set the tone of his video, and Jake was inspired by the ambiguity of the nonverbal communication: “Well I can tell you from my perspective, first seeing [Gabriel’s] movie was very inspirational to me in terms of giving me an idea about where to go with kind of doing like these short, one minute videos that are really musically driven, and they’re visual” (Interview, 3/24/11). He was so enthusiastic about these ambiguous short films that relied mostly on music and live action that he began to advocate for this kind of film in the teacher online community:

I really like the idea of these kind of abstract, ambiguous one to two minute movies. I think they are great to respond back and forth to, and can be made in a single session with little necessary text/speaking. It might be cool to focus on these everyday moments and objects to frame these types of videos. (3/15/11 Email to Jackson)

Jake thought that these short videos, with their quick turnaround time, their ambiguity, and their “little necessary text/speaking” could facilitate the responsivity that teachers were seeking. This experimentation with new genres for responding back and forth between groups of students, especially non-verbal narrative shorts and different kinds of remix, set the stage for what became the most influential genre in the S2C8 community in subsequent months, the response video.

### **“When Worlds Collide”: A Genre is Born**

In the month of March 2011, after Jake had visited Jackson and as teachers became interested in promoting student dialogue in the networked community via new genres and collaborative structures, the first response video sequence emerged between Oakland and New York (called “Worlds Collide”<sup>10</sup>). These videos were the first to experiment heavily with the use of visual and sonic elements over textual ones, using music and symbolic visual elements to communicate the narrative rather than spoken dialogue. While the series is comprised of four videos, the first two were not originally conceived as part of a larger narrative trajectory. Indeed, these initial videos seemed to function at first more like a pair of “mirror stories,” in which the second “Bloody Lenny” video operated as a kind of mirror response to the original “Angry Girl” film, echoing the theme, genre, and setting of the original in a kind of conversational volley. However, it was in the third and fourth installments of the series that the outline of the larger narrative trajectory became clear, as teachers and students worked to interpret the ambiguous narratives of the first pair of videos as part of a larger story that they could extend and shape.

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<sup>10</sup> This video response sequence can be seen at [www.space2cre8.com](http://www.space2cre8.com).

These last two installments in the sequence were collaboratively realized, both in the interpretation of the previous videos as well as the composition of the response across the brainstorming, planning, filming, and editing stages. They were also deliberately intertextual, as participants included remixed elements from the other videos in the series to tie the narrative together while extending it in new directions.

In this section I trace how the genre emerged out of the teacher collaboration between Jake and Jackson and the teacher-student collaborations between the two teachers and their respective students. In analyzing the design process and the resulting four videos I intend to illuminate how the video response genre involved the intertwining of collective interpretation and composing processes that gave rise to an ethic of co-composition. Furthermore, I illustrate how the teachers took up new roles in this cooperative genre, participating in the interpretation/composing processes with students, from conceiving to editing the videos. Finally, I demonstrate the agentive positions that participants adopted in the process of designing these compositions, which helps “conceptualize and characterize empirically the new forms of agency involved in expansive processes” in regard to networked composing (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 20).

### **“Angry Girl”**

The first video in the sequence came to be called "Angry Girl," a short film made by Roxy, a ninth grade student in Jackson's class. Always attentive and unfailingly polite, Roxy rarely spoke above a whisper in class and often kept her eyes cast down when spoken to. The class was working on a unit on stereotypes as part of the multicultural course curriculum, and students had already engaged in two brainstorming sessions about the different ways people stereotype others by virtue of what they look like, what they believe, what race or ethnicity they appear to belong to, or where they live (thinking especially about Oakland's reputation in the popular media as a violent city). Students were tasked with going home and writing a storyboard for one stereotype that they could combat in a 30 second short film. Roxy was the only student to have completed her storyboard by Monday morning's class, so everyone decided the class would help film her short movie. Roxy certainly took charge of designing each of the scenes and checking the footage to make sure they were captured in the way she intended, but what began as an individual project turned into a collaborative one as a number of students helped shape the final product by their suggestions and as Jackson did all of the editing. Indeed, over time, it came to be understood by S2C8 participants as one part of a larger, collaboratively realized narrative.

Roxy wanted to create a film about stereotypes of teenagers, and when I asked Jackson which stereotype she ultimately settled on he said she wanted to convey “that all teenagers are angry” (Jackson, 11/22/10 Interview). The 36-second short certainly did seem to focus on an angry teen, opening with a young woman (Roxy herself) striding with angry purpose down the school's outdoor hallway for the first half of the video. The second half of the video depicted the teen's interaction with a cashier, who initially appeared angry (yelling “Hey you!” as Roxy leaves a store) but turned out to be returning the young woman's change (he then called out “you forgot your change!”). The field researcher understood the stereotype Roxy was challenging in the film differently than the teacher based on how Roxy characterized the movie in class discussions:

Her story takes on the stereotype of teen stealing. Her drawing depicts a girl walking angrily, fists clenched, into a store. She designed the shots to look like she is possibly stealing something. The next shot has the employee at the store

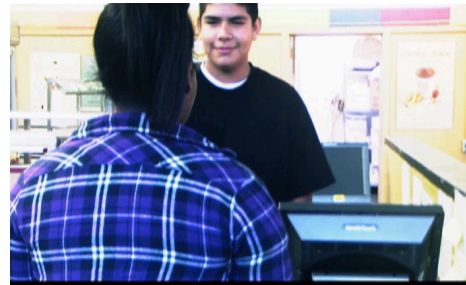
shouting at the girl to stop. The viewer is supposed to believe that the girl has been caught stealing, but instead the employee simply tells the girl that she forgot her change, which is offered and taken. (11/15/10 Field Note)

In Roxy's big smile in the last frame, she could be challenging the stereotype of the angry teen (as Jackson thought) or challenging the stereotype that teens are assumed to be thieves (the researcher's take). Set to music with only two lines of dialogue, the film was intentionally ambiguous, thus inviting the dual interpretations of the teacher and researcher about the teen stereotypes Roxy was challenging. As we will see shortly, the kids in New York had a different interpretation still. Roxy originally wanted to call the movie "Change," a name as fittingly ambiguous as the movie itself. The title had two possible meanings – referring to both the main action in the video (a cashier offering a teen her change) as well as the larger goal of the assignment (to change stereotypes). However, Jackson kept referring to the movie as "Angry Girl," the name he titled it on the teacher Dropbox account, and it was the name that ultimately stuck (and undoubtedly colored the New Yorkers' interpretations of the film).

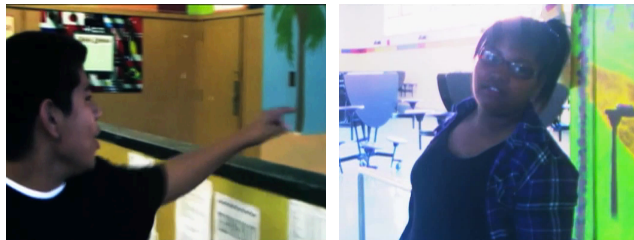
In analyzing this video, I distinguished four main phases (Halverson, 2006): an opening sequence of action, two middle scenes, and a closing scene, each of which involved a different constellation of actors, objects, and setting (see Figure 5.3).



Phase 1: Roxy strides down corridor



Phase 2: Roxy buys something from cashier



Phase 3: Cashier addresses Roxy



Phase 4: Cashier returns change

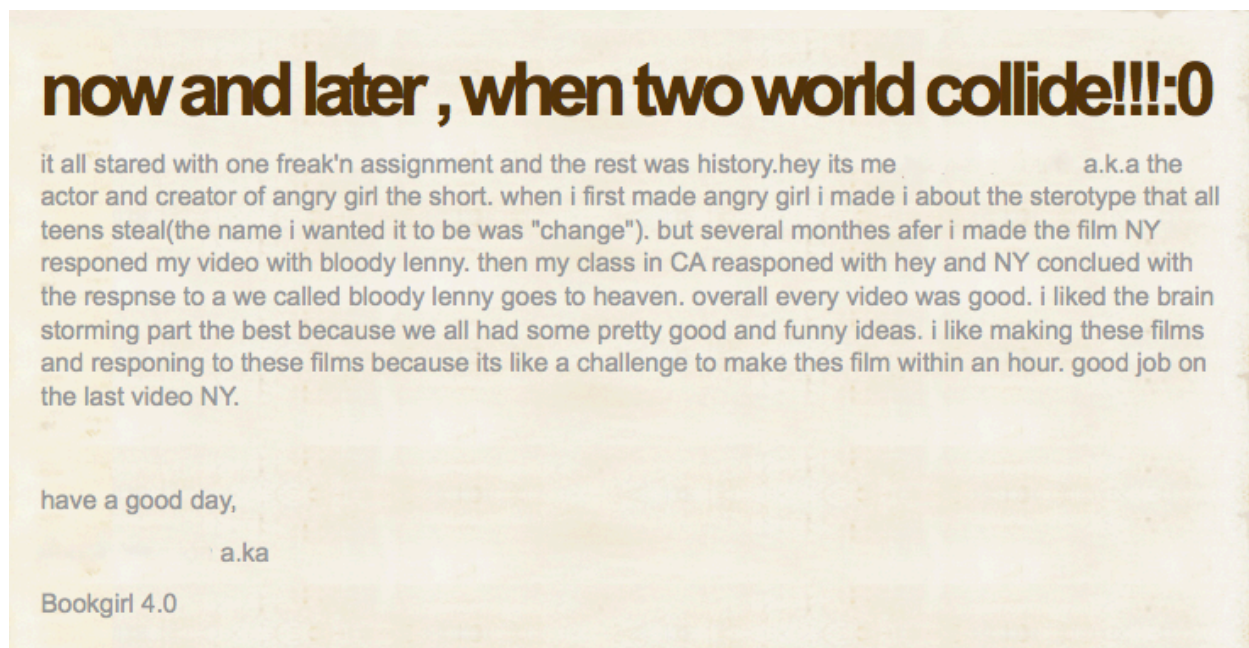
### Figure 5.3. The Phases of the “Angry Girl” Video

In the 18-second opening phase of the film *Roxy*, eyes downcast, shoulders hunched, and hands balled in fists by her sides, marched forcefully through the outdoor school corridors while instrumental music that built suspense played. In this opening phase, Roxy was the lone figure in the scene, keeping her eyes down as she walked with purpose, the camera depicting her from several angles as the music echoed the repetition in her footsteps. In the second phase (:19-:23), Roxy entered what appeared to be a cafeteria or store and silently interacted with a cashier, appearing to purchase something, with the same music playing as the only sound. In the third phase (:24-:27), the music stopped abruptly as the cashier called out, “Hey you!” and Roxy turned around with a suspicious look. In the last phase (:27-:36), the cashier called out, “You forgot your change!” He then smiled widely, and as the camera panned to include Roxy, her face



broke out in a broad grin as the movie slowed to slow motion and the music resumed. Then the music shifted into a slow sound effect (which sounded like a squeak and then a loud sigh) as the cashier handed Roxy her change and they continued smiling at one another, Roxy's face tilted toward the camera.

When the students in Jackson's class made these stereotype videos they knew they would be posted on Space2Cre8, but the assignment was not linked to projects happening in other programs and there was never any discussion around how this movie might be interpreted by others in the community. However, Roxy chose to concentrate on the ways that adults often assumed the worst about adolescents, a topic that could be applicable for other teens in the networked community. At the end of the response sequence between New York and Oakland, Jackson asked the students to write a blog entry on S2C8 about the experience of making these response videos, and Roxy wrote that "it all started with one freak'n assignment and the rest was history" (see Figure 5.4). This was the first blog Roxy had written on S2C8 because she said she preferred to browse other people's pages rather than writing, explaining "I'm kind of a slow typer" (5/25/11 Interview). In the blog she identified herself as the "actor and creator" of the short, and she asserted her authorial intention about what she wanted the 'meaning' of the video to be. However, she did not seem particularly attached to the meaning she originally intended, taking up its reframing as about an "angry girl" and only parenthetically mentioning that it had another name originally. She understood that the "angry girl" video was a recontextualization of her original movie, now part of a larger narrative trajectory and understood in relation to those other interwoven texts.



**Figure 5.4. Roxy's Blog Entry**

In her blog entry, Roxy juxtaposed the process of creating "Angry Girl" and the subsequent response videos she made with her class, asserting that the collaborative part of the video-making process was her favorite. She cast the original video as an assignment (and thus implied it was obligatory), but the subsequent group movies involved the challenge of working in a quick time frame and the pleasure of sharing "pretty good and funny ideas" with classmates.

She elaborated on this distinction between individual, assigned writing (linked to evaluation) and collaborative, creative writing (linked to responsivity and joint enterprise) in an interview:

Cause like the other ones [videos] were like scripted, we had more time to like think of what we wanted to do, and [when] we did the New York videos, we just like put a whole bunch of stuff together. It wasn't really planned out, it was just like, rushed, and I think that was like, I think that was like better because it was more creative, more entertaining. (5/25/11 Interview)

Roxy preferred the unscripted videos that invited a creative brainstorming process with classmates. Indeed, the interpretation of the New York videos was intertwined with the composing of a response video (as we will see shortly), a process she enjoyed. In her blog and interview, Roxy saw her original video as part of a collective venture between the two program sites, one that involved an iterative and generative process of interpretation and composition.

### **“Bloody Lenny”**

While Jake was in Oakland, he and Jackson talked about moving toward increased collaboration (between them as well as between students) by experimenting with new genres of video, especially musically-driven ones that used little dialogue, that could be remixed and exchanged. Jackson showed Jake several of the short music-centric videos his class had made about stereotypes as the two talked about how they could be useful prompts to get students interested in replying. Jake described how he returned to his New York class and showed the “Angry Girl” video to them:

I started just flipping through their videos and the ‘Angry Girl’ one was a perfect video to showcase it, to try to do a response off of, just because it’s that type of genre. So for me that’s what got me really you know motivated and with the idea, how to pursue it with the class here. (3/24/11, Interview)

Jake was trying to spark his students’ interest by showing the video in a group setting, and indeed it was the interaction between Santiago and Asilah’s differing interpretations in that collective viewing that prompted them to respond via video:

It is the first time that [Jake] has come back since visiting the Oakland site, and he wants to show the students a video that the students from Oakland made. The students are pretty into the video and when we are done watching it [Jake] asks the students what they think about it – they say that it shows the video of an angry girl, who is in a really bad mood but then she is happy when the person hands her the correct change – [Santiago] thinks that it is the change that makes her happy, but [Asilah] has different ideas – she sees it as more ironic, and that maybe it isn’t really the change that makes her happy but something deeper than that. She makes an interesting point about the video, and kind of picks up on the abstract and unique nature of the video. [Santiago] immediately wants to film a response to the video, I can tell that it touches something in him and he specifically picks up on the angry music, and the point of view of the angry student. While [Santiago] picks up on the anger and [Asilah] picks up on the abstract nature of the video, it is [Jake] who suggests a more abstract approach to the response – [Santiago] had been playing with a water bottle and the three of them ([Santiago], [Asilah] and [Jake]) collaborate a response that involves [Santiago] kicking the water bottle throughout the hall, and it is unclear to the viewer why he is so angry, and then at one point [Asilah] picks it up and opens it for him, as though that is

the reason that he is upset, but then ultimately it is still kind of unresolved at the end of the film. (3/15/11 Field Note)

Santiago and Asilah had different interpretations of the “Angry Girl” video, Santiago picking up on the anger of the teen and Asilah interpreting the smile as an ironic one. Jake suggested they create an abstract response, one that would be similarly open-ended in its ambiguity, and all three set about making a video using similar themes to “Angry Girl” and integrating elements from the original story throughout.

While classmates identified the resulting movie as Santiago’s, in a similar way to how Roxy’s movie was attributed to her, the movie making process in New York was also collaborative, as the interpretations of Roxy’s film spurred the participants to think creatively about how to compose a response. Santiago described how the movie came about through this interpretive process, especially prompted by Roxy’s smile in the final phase of “Angry Girl”:

I got the idea from [Roxy’s] video and [Casey] who said we should be replying to their video in an interesting way. So one of my friends said her smile looked kind of, like a sarcastic smile, so why don’t we do something around that? But in the end we just showed how the character really feels, and then I was thinking that my character shouldn’t just be mad but be mad AT something. So that is where I got the idea he should be mad at an object, so the first thing I see is a bottle. Maybe if I kick the bottle around that will show them that the character is angry at something. (3/24/11, Interview)

While Santiago talked about where he got the ideas for the movie in first person, he framed it as collaboratively realized (“we showed”). He not only used the inclusive pronoun in his description of the movie making process but credited inspiration to the Oakland teen, teacher Jake Casey, and classmate Asilah (whom he cast as a friend). From Santiago’s description, we see how he thought carefully about which elements to include and how he highlighted particular aspects of his character – especially the anger – by offering a target the audience could visualize. From its inception, Santiago understood this movie (a) to be in conversation with the other film and the kids in Oakland; (b) to be a collaborative venture with his whole class; and (c) to make a statement about teens, anger, and judgment.

The process of making the movie, filmed by classmate Isabella, acted by Santiago and Asilah, directed by Santiago, and edited by Jake and Santiago, was highly collaborative (other students also watched the filming process). Jake’s role was as guide and coach but also as fellow participant, in that he offered his ideas and the students debated them in similar ways to how they debated the ideas from other classmates. This kind of collaborative process, in which the teacher takes up a participant role while also acting as coach for certain parts of the process (like editing), was what Jake liked to call ‘organic’ in that the teacher did not overly direct the action but rather follow the students’ lead. This collaborative process between teacher and student can be seen in the editing process, as Santiago directed Jake:

As they dig into putting the clips together it is clear that [Santiago] has a very clear idea about how he wants the film to look. He has clear ideas about the music (he thinks that it should be really angry, loud music), and the timing/pace of all of the clips, and he suggests a dark and intense song that he wants to accompany the video. [Jake] suggests at one point that they do a kind of fast forward sequence with some of the footage, and [Santiago] says that he likes the idea of flashes better, with clips flashing one to the next, because I guess he has seen that kind of pacing in a thirty seconds to mars video that he really likes. He

says at one point as they are editing that “ he hopes that people on the S2C8 site are Emo, because this video is definitely turning out emo” – it is clear that [Santiago] really wants other students to like it and to be receptive to what he has put together. (3/15/11 Field Note)

This joint construction of the movie during editing, in which Jake and Santiago collaborated on ideas for realizing Santiago’s vision, took place even after class ended, as Jake described in a teacher memo:

When I got home, I did some touch up editing on [Santiago’s] piece, and then texted him (partly because he was bothering me about never texting him) about what he wanted to title the piece. The following text conversation occurred:

[S]: Wat was the name of the bottle?

[J]: Lennys [a local sandwich store]

[S]: Name it lenny haha

[J]: How bout ‘empty lenny’?

[S]: Bloody Lenny?

[J]: Nice. Do u want a skull in the beginning and or end

[S]: End I geuss lol

[J]: ok. any pic in the beginning. Or just title on black.

[S]: Title in black no pics and can u email it too me when ur done with it ?

(3/15/10 Teacher Memo)

While Santiago had clear ideas about the ethos of the film and directed Jake about how to design the title slide (which he implied he would check when Jake emailed it to him), the title process, just like the interpretation of the source movie and design of the response, was constructed through joint effort. For example, when Jake asked about the title and Santiago suggested the name of the water bottle (which he thought of as the focal object), Jake came back with the suggestion of adding “empty” as a descriptor, which Santiago rejected in favor of a more descriptive adjective that would convey the “emo” concept he thought the video portrayed.

The resulting one-and-a-half minute (1:31) film unfolded across three phases (see Figure 5.5) with two primary transitions (the opening and closing screens that Jake added during the editing process) (see Figure 5.6).



Phase 1: Lenny kicks bottle down a hallway



Phase 2: Girl removes cap & hands Lenny bottle



Phase 3: Lenny tosses bottle aside

**Figure 5.5. The Phases of the “Bloody Lenny” Video**



Transition 1: Title screen



Transition 2: Final screen

**Figure 5.6. The Transitions of the “Bloody Lenny” Video**

Featuring Santiago in the role of the main character, the movie opened with a title screen, “BLOODY LENNY” written in red against a gray and black background as static noise gave way to a few simple notes and the words “A [SANTIAGO FLORES] PRODUCTION” faded in. Next, in the opening phase (:02-:40), the video cut between close and medium shots of the water bottle and shots of Santiago striding down a school corridor, eyes downcast, hands by his sides, scowling expression on his face (similar in stance to Roxy). While the haunting instrumental notes became more urgent in this opening sequence, the music erupted to a heavy metal beat at 14 seconds, with the lyrics “We will never sleep cuz sleep is for the weak” screamed at high volume. As the lyrics continued and the strong bass line pulsed in the background, the second phase (from :41-1:08) is characterized by the introduction of a young woman (Asilah) who picked up Santiago’s water bottle, smiling broadly in a way that echoed the cashier’s and Roxy’s smiles in the earlier film. Similar to “Angry Girl,” the video moved into slow motion as Asilah handed Santiago the bottle, and the picture faded to black and white, which emphasized her broad smile. As she handed Lenny the bottle as she opened it for him, and he offered a small smile and mouthed the words, “thank you” to her in return. The camera focused on Santiago putting the cap back on the bottle as he walked away. In the third and final phase (1:08-1:27), Lenny walked down the hall away from the camera. We see him from the back, shoulders hunched forward and his dark hoodie pulled up over his head, as he threw the water bottle to the side and continued down the hall, the music pulsing throughout the phase, with the chorus repeated more quickly in a loud, urgent tone, “We will never sleep cuz sleep is for the weak; we will never rest until we fucking die.” The screen flashed red for effect before cutting to the final image of a bleeding skull, with the words “Bloody Lenny” in red block lettering underneath.

Santiago was very excited about this video, recommending that all of his classmates watch it and even blogging about it, an activity he resisted whenever possible (as someone who was dyslexic and struggled with reading and writing, Santiago was reluctant to reveal those struggles and created diversions to avoid writing). In the blog posted the week after he made “Bloody Lenny,” Santiago seemed to understand the interpretive and design processes as collaborative but the video itself as his own (see Figure 5.7). He talked in first person plural about “our interpretation” of the “Angry Girl” video and what “we thought” about the girl’s smile at the end of it. But while the interpretive process might have been collaborative, he claimed the “Bloody Lenny” video, calling it “my crazy video” and talking in first person about his desire to make it feel like a music video.

## bloody lenny: my crazy video

This video was a response to a video called angry girl. In our interpretation of the video Oakland, we thought that the girls smile was a sarcastic act and that in the end, she was still indulged in anger. So, in this response I thought I should make a very angry video that looked like a dark emo-ish music video. The name of this video is called Bloody Lenny because the water bottle is from the sandwich place on the corner called Lennys. However, I'm not really a mad person. The video does not show the real me. It is only acting people. Leave comments on it. Thanks.

**Figure 5.7. Santiago's 3/22/11 Blog about "Bloody Lenny"**

While Santiago certainly framed the video as a response that grew out of a collaborative process, his blog made it clear that the design decisions were driven by the interpretive process and were not reflections of his own angry nature. While he claimed ownership of the movie at this point, and he wanted people to know his intent and recognize his authorship, he also acknowledged the joint nature of the video's provenance, a stance that became more prominent as the response video genre evolved (which is evident in the 3/24/11 Interview above and which I discuss further later in this chapter).

This movie excited Jake greatly, who wrote immediately to Jackson so that they could continue the exchange (though interestingly, he did not suggest the continuation of this narrative trajectory per se, merely advocating for this kind of abstract video exchange):

I am putting a video on the Dropbox called 'Bloody Lenny' that is a response to the Angry Girl video from [Oakland]. I showed the Angry Girl video for a few folks in the class, and they came up with this idea. Interestingly, at first we were interpreting the video as a bad day turned good because of the honesty of the cashier. However, one student said that the smile of the girl was sarcastic, and the rest agreed, so this small interpretative move framed the ending to our video, starring space2cre8 user Mr. [Flores]. I really like the idea of these kind of abstract, ambiguous one to two minute movies. I think they are great to respond back and forth to, and can be made in a single session with little necessary text/speaking. It might be cool to focus on these everyday moments and objects to frame these types of videos. (3/15/11 Email to Jackson)

In this email, Jake revealed how he and his students interpreted the film differently from one another, an interpretation that evolved through their collaborative discussion. He argued for continuing this new genre work that they had been experimenting with, encouraging Jackson to make a quick, ambiguous response focused on the "everyday." In the email exchange, Jake learned that the smile "Angry Girl" video was intended in earnest, and Jake responded that the ambiguity, and indeed the room that the ambiguity created for response, was the interesting part of the enterprise for him:

Really funny/interesting how we completely and somewhat insanely misinterpreted the film. In terms of ambiguity, I think that what was super cool about these two videos is that the authors/designers are definitely being intentional in the story they are conveying, but that they are also ambiguous/symbolic enough (in large part because they lack speaking roles) that they become fodder for mis-interpretations/appropriations of the work in

intriguing ways. Theoretically, I think we are kind of working through the binary of Barthes' death of the author and authorial intentionality, and instead see this kind of ongoing performative dialogue where author/reader(viewer) are mutually constitutive. Very dope. (3/15/11 Email to Jackson)

In this response, Jake began to think about the role of the interpretation in shaping the composing process, arguing that the authors and audiences were mutually constitutive and in a new relationship in which they negotiated meaning through dialogue. This exchange pushed Jake and Jackson's thinking forward about the exchange process as Jake considered it to be both performance and dialogue. It was after this email conversation between Jake and Jackson, and this realization that the students were moving beyond sharing into performative dialogue, that sparked what truly became a collaborative endeavor and came to be known as a response video.

### **“Hey”**

Jackson immediately showed the “Bloody Lenny” video to his Oakland students at the next class session, calling it “the New York response to Angry Girl” (3/21/11 Video Transcript). By casting it as both collaborative (from the whole “New York” site) and responsive, Jackson implied that he saw the interchange as taking place between program sites, something reinforced by Jackson showing it to the whole class at once. The researcher for the Oakland site led the beginning part of the group conversation, asking students to remember and articulate the original assignment (given four months earlier) before asking them to attend to “similarities and differences” between the videos. The group first watched “Angry Girl” and when the researcher asked the students how they thought New York students might have interpreted it, no one answered. When Jackson asked what people knew about New Yorkers, still getting no response from the generally very quiet group, he asked if they were “bright, shiny people.” Roxy answered that she thought that people from New York were “rude and don't really care about other people. I mean, I'm not trying to be mean or anything, like they worry about themselves, not other people” (3/21/11 Video Transcript). The students then watched the “Bloody Lenny” video and Jada declared, “I just don't get it at all. She opens the water and he, like, thanks her or::: I just don't get it.” When Jackson explained that students should use the fact that it was meant as a response to their video to help figure out what was going on, Jada dubiously asked, “That was a response to our film?” No one could quite figure out the ways that the two films were connected, and the researcher told them that the students in New York thought the original movie was about a bad day that was turned around, though the New Yorkers were not sure whether Roxy's smile was genuine or sarcastic. In light of this information, the Oakland students then asked to watch the videos together one more time.

Before viewing the videos a second time, Jackson pointed out that the short films without dialogue could be opened up to interpretation so there could be many possible meanings for students. In the second viewing, the students attended to the music and to the main character's mood, and as was characteristic of the group viewing and interpretation sessions, the students commented to one another as the “Bloody Lenny” video played:

As the opening shot began, [DJ] said that the character looked angry and I agreed. One of the students suggested he's going to go “beat up on somebody” and [Jada] said that he's a big guy who should “be able to open the bottle himself.” When it was over, [DJ] asked “why's it called Bloody Lenny?” [Jada] said “maybe it's that song. It's horrible!” (3/21/11 Field Note).

For the students, the film’s music set the tone and inspired their interpretive endeavors, with DJ and Jada spending the most time pondering how the music helped convey an angry mood. Jada in particular seemed stuck on why a big guy like Lenny would need help opening a bottle, and the class debated whether the girl’s smile who opened the bottle seemed genuine or fake. They all agreed that it seemed genuine to them, which generated the question of why the girl would hand Lenny the water bottle (a line of questioning they eventually abandoned, though Jada did ask the researcher later to please find out). During the course of this conversation, the multicultural teacher asked if it was possible to do a response and the researcher said the kids could do a response or a completely new movie, offering suggestions like basing the new film on a song or a new character. The class felt strongly about the Lenny video, though, and DJ and Jada in particular veritably insisted on doing a response, Jada asking if they could film in the hallway. The class pondered music that might be antithetical to the New York music, and they briefly considered the Barney theme song (though Jackson pushed for Tupak’s “California Love” and the multicultural teacher suggested a song by Lady Gaga, neither of which students took up).

As the class brainstormed possible responses individually on paper, Jada suggested to the group that they should film in the hallway like the Lenny video. The Oakland researcher suggested that if they were going to have a happier theme they could get people to give one another hugs in the hallway. Jackson suggested, “I think the best thing to do to continue the story at least would be to maybe include the bottle. And if we use the bottle as a focus we’ll know- they’ll know for sure we’re discussing the same film” (3/21/11 Video Transcript). The multicultural teacher suggested using a recycling theme and gathering the recycling containers to use in the movie. But Jada returned to the earlier idea she had proposed while incorporating some of the adults’ ideas, suggesting that the protagonist could be “pushing people, pushing them out the way. Then the other person comes up, hands them a water bottle, and then he gives him a hug, and it ends happy. Then [the multicultural teacher’s] song plays and they go skipping down the hallway” (3/21/11 Video Transcript). In response to this idea, DJ asked, “You guys ever heard the Arthur song?” He pulled the song up on his phone and played it for the class, and everyone agreed that it would be the perfect song. Clearly, the teens and adults worked together to create the idea for the response movie, though it was the students themselves that pushed for a collaborative movie that responded to “Bloody Lenny.” The idea that they could be creative in their interpretation and subsequent response invited many voices into the process, something that had not happened to date with the normally reticent class who often composed individually.

This 41-second video, shot in the single class session and edited by Jackson that night, became the third video in the sequence, unfolding in three-phases (see Figure 5.8).



**Figure 5.8. The Phases of the “Bloody Lenny” Video**



Phase one (:00-:20), featured the “Bloody Lenny” song and a girl wearing a fierce expression and fiercer leather jacket who strode with purpose down the people-filled hallway toward the camera. Partway through her walk, she began pushing people into lockers, and they veritably bounced as she continued on, unwavering. In the second phase (:20-:23), the angry, leather jacketed teen was stopped by another girl, who put a hand on her shoulder and gave her a metal (recyclable) water bottle. As the angry girl’s expression softened, both girls smiled at one another and the music changed from the heavy metal to the happy music of the “Arthur” cartoon theme song. In the final phase (:23-:41), the two girls linked arms, skipping down the hallway to the happy music, and just as “Bloody Lenny” slowed down at the end, the end scene became a slow motion skipping as the girls moved toward the camera until the movie ended with a frozen image of the two girls’ smiling faces. The song continued on for nine seconds, echoing the refrain that had been playing in the background in full, “Every day when you’re walking down the street, everyone you meet has an original point of view. And I say hey, what a wonderful kind of day, if you can learn to work and play, and get along with each other.” The title of the video was drawn from the repeated voices of children singing “Hey” loudly in each refrain, the most noticeable word that echoed throughout the three phases of the film.

In many ways, “Hey” functioned as a counternarrative to Lenny’s dark take on life, his video suggesting that it is not so easy to solve people’s problems by an act of friendliness or kindness (which may indeed be fake or sarcastic). The Oakland movie “Hey,” by contrast, suggested that getting along with people and learning from their different viewpoints can lead to happiness in everyday life. The happy and hopeful tone in “Hey,” conveyed powerfully through the shift in music to accompany the change from anger to happy skipping, was playfully echoed in the transformation of the empty water bottle to the “greener” metal version popular in California. In some ways, students were playing up the differences between the New York and California sites by exaggerating particular elements like the water bottle and the skipping, to indicate that the California lifestyle was more laid-back and less intense than that of New York’s fast-paced energy (conveyed via Santiago’s choice of pulsing song and what they knew from hearing about New York). The video provided an occasion for the young people in Oakland to think about themselves in relation to others in the world in new ways through the elaboration of a narrative, and the semiotic flexibility (and indeed ambiguity) allowed them the interpretive space to play with representations of place and self in a supportive (and as Roxy said, “fun”) collaborative environment.

When Jake received the response, he was excited by what he perceived to be a new genre, one that he thought might generate a series of videos that could be remixed in interesting ways. In fact, it was Jackson’s effort to use the prop of the water bottle and the use of Lenny’s music to signal the shift in message that inspired Jake to think in new ways about using remixing to tell multiple kinds of stories. Jake said, “I haven’t seen other people really do that, this type of thing before. Like I mean the three videos. Really when you watch the three videos side by side it’s really cool. ... You really see something starting to happen there, where it can you know- it continues back and forth” (3/24/11 Interview). While Jackson’s use of remixing elements from the previous video inspired Jake, it was the response that Jake and his students designed that led to the full-fledged emergence of the new genre (and its new name, the response video).

### **“Bloody Lenny Goes to Heaven”**

When the students in New York viewed the “Hey” video (described in the opening section of this chapter), they were eager to conceive a response. When Jake asked the students to

“open up” their response, the New York participants began talking over one another enthusiastically in efforts to imagine what form that response would take. In the opening to this chapter, we saw that Jake had imagined the response videos to be somewhat individually conceived (like Santiago’s was), which we can observe in his comment to Lola that she should pay particular attention since she might want to do her own video in response to “Hey” (and which she confirmed when she jumped up and said she knew “exactly” what she wanted to do). However, as the group conversation evolved, the participants brainstormed their response to “Hey” as a group and Jake and his students collaboratively constructed this response video genre. After the cacophony of reactions to the “Hey” video when Jake suggested “opening up our response,” Nina took the floor and began expanding on the “Hey” video, an idea that was then elaborated by Emilio as the group looked on attentively, nodding and laughing along:

- Nina: No, you should do like, you know just like take their song just like they took your song, and then you like do something like [circular hand motion].
- Emilio: [I think, I think-
- Jake: [Yeah, that’s what we should do. So, let’s think about a response, I think um-
- Emilio: [I think, I think-
- Nina: [That is hilarious.
- Emilio: We should walk, right, right, alright? Alright, this is my idea. So you see how they was walking, it’s a wonderful kind of uh [hums Arthur song, waving hands in air] and then Lenny, mean Lenny, comes [jumps to standing]. And so he show up down the hallway [dances and hums Arthur song] and then you just see Lenny [hums Bloody Lenny song] and then they just meet up, and bump into each other, right. And they’re about to have this whole rumble and then we all come and we have the song come up, um, [singing] one love, one life [stands up and dances with arms in the air, to laughter from everyone]
- Jake: That would be a good one.
- Santiago: Can we write this down before we forget it? [directed at Jake]
- Jake: That would be a good one, I like this idea. [Walks to get paper] So we could, we could definitely film that right now.
- Emilio: I think it’s the chips [as he ate the potato chips Elena brought].
- Nina: The chips give you good ideas.
- Emilio: It’s like their video and Lenny’s video meeting up together, makes a new video.
- (3/24/11 Video Transcript)

In this short stretch of conversation, there seemed to be a shift in understanding that occurred, led in part by Emilio, from the view that the response videos were individual to the understanding that Emilio put forward, that the two videos “meeting up together, makes a new video.” Emilio saw the relationship between the “Bloody Lenny” and “Hey” videos as a new kind of hybrid artifact, achieved through the intertextually-layered and multimodally-rendered narrative. But

Nina began by offering ideas to the group that others could take up in a more traditional, individually oriented way. She had not participated in any video production to date and as a recent member to the class was an enthusiastic but largely observant member of the group. She clearly thought of herself as on the outside of this narrative trajectory when she suggested what “you should” do, a suggestion to Jake and the others involved in the original Lenny film. She suggested “taking” their song “just like they took your song,” a proprietary, ownership model of storytelling. Instead of seeing the use of the Lenny song as a remix and response, originally Nina thought of it as a usurping move in which sites appropriated ideas and material. This was akin to how Jake suggested Gina might want to do a response and Gina’s exclamation that “I know *exactly* what I want to do!” All of these responses were individually oriented, operating in an ownership model of composing whereby one author’s vision and intent is realized and then attributed to him or her by the audience.

Another relatively new member, Emilio shifted the framework of this conversation by using the inclusive pronoun as he suggested what “we” should do. He wanted the two different movies to interpenetrate one another, to operate in a literal contact zone of the school hallway, suggesting that “we all come up” and sing a unifying song to show how these conflicting beliefs could be resolved. Through this brainstorming activity, Emilio tried to turn the discourse from “I” (Gina) and “you” (Nina, Jake) to “we,” placing the whole group in the hallway and including everyone in designing the response. While everyone ratified this idea through laughter, Santiago wanted to entextualize it by committing the idea to paper, prompting Jake to ratify it as the teacher/inscriber. By collaboratively imagining their response as a group, the New York participants, Jake and students both, shifted how they saw communication proceeding on the site from individual sharing to group dialogue.

Jake moved swiftly around the room to gather a big piece of paper and pens as students kept refining Emilio’s ideas. He adhered the large white paper to the blue lockers at the back of the room and began sketching the scene in a kind of large storyboard, pausing regularly to suggest ideas or build on others’ suggestions. Lola declared she wanted to be a happy skipper, and everyone else declared that Lenny must of course remain Lenny. Jake began writing down students’ suggestions and assigning roles to students who volunteered (Lola and Nina would be the skippers; Jonny would be director; Santiago would be Lenny; Emilio and Luisa wanted to be students in the hallway). At a pause in the brainstorming, Jake tried to direct students back to planning:

Jake: So then we got what? Lenny’s coming this way [drawing on paper]

Santiago: Me! [raises his hand high above his head]

Jake: Are we gonna-every shot that we go to Lenny are we gonna go to the evil music [gesturing back and forth with two hands]? So you wanna go back and forth with the music?

Santiago: Hold up, hold up, I’m Lenny?

Emilio: [I think, I think-

Nina: [Yeah, back and forth

Lola: That would be a good one.

Nina: Something mellow and then nunununu [hums Lenny –sounding song], then mellow:::, then-

Lola: Yeah!

Emilio: The faster the video clips, it goes nununun [hums Lenny-sounding song and gestures with two hands]

Jake: OK, OK I like that [draws]

Emilio: Until they meet

Nina: Yeah, nununu [humming], boom [gesturing like an explosion]. Like collide.

Lola: And then we can have the two songs play at the same time

Santiago: That's going to sound terrible. [Leaning toward Lola and lowering his voice] Hey [Lola], can you put the, [points at whiteboard] thing back on?

Jake: So Lenny's coming back this way and we're doing speed cuts as we get closer [draws cutting marks on paper], doing speed cuts as we get closer::: um. [Bloody Lenny song comes on as Lola restarts the "Hey" video]. Let's watch the end together one more time [said while song is playing]  
[20 seconds goes by as the movie plays and people sing and talk amongst themselves]

Jake: All right, so we've got Lenny coming and then what happens when they meet? What's, uh-

Emilio: They coLLide. You feel me? [Gesturing in the air like an explosion] Cuz it's like the hallway, they can't see each other. So it's like happy and mad meet each other, you feel me?

Jake: So they run into each other and like fall on the ground, or?

Emilio: I don't know if they fall but I know it's a collision.

Santiago: [How about an explosion?]

Emilio: [That's how I see it in my head. And then it's supposed to be like a riot.

Jake: Oh::::!! A big explosion, so they hit each other and we'll take video footage of like a big like atom bomb explosion, phsshhh [gesturing widely]

Students: Yeah!

Emilio: There we go, there we go

Jake: And then when it's over we'll have shots of like everyone dancing, one love [sings and dances] like that

Emilio: Oh yeah

Jake: Ok, all right, I like that [heads back to paper as students cheer]

While Jake took a lead role in this brainstorming session, a number of students worked together with him and each other to imagine the direction of the response film. Emilio, Santiago, Nina, and Lola took on primary roles, but the other students in the room were attentively watching, laughing, and nodding throughout the whole planning session, participating by virtue of their nonverbal feedback. In this stretch of dialogue, different ideas got taken up by Jake and ratified by virtue of including them on his large piece of butcher paper (which was never referenced again once the planning was finished). For example, Emilio knew that he wanted some kind of collision, which was originally suggested by Nina, and Santiago suggested an explosion, which was picked up by Jake and expanded. Later in the discussion, Luisa suggested filming outside on the street, and Lola and Jake thought that Central Park would be a good location for the singing

and dancing. Throughout this process, students repeatedly returned to the Oakland video for inspiration and a new round of interpretive work in guiding their composing (like when Santiago directed Lola to replay the video during the brainstorming session). They worked together to realize a narrative vision, intertwining the interpretation and composing throughout.

The resulting two minute and fifty second movie was much longer than the others in the sequence, in large part because Jake went home the day of the filming and put it together that evening, adding in rather lengthy transition elements that kids directed him to include as well as the majority of the footage from the day’s filming. In the three phases and three transitions, the film unfolded around the central transition, an explosion between the happy skippers and angry Lenny (see Figures 5.9 and 5.10).



**Figure 5.9. The Phases of the “Bloody Lenny Goes to Heaven” Video**



**Figure 5.10. The Transitions of the “Bloody Lenny Goes to Heaven” Video**

In the opening transition, which lasted a brief second, the Arthur music began, “And I say hey” as the screen briefly flashed on a large size Hershey’s kiss, the brand of candy that the students used as a prop in the film, with a red tinge, followed by a view of clouds in a blue sky (see Figure 5.8). In phase one (:01-1:02), with the Arthur theme song continuing, two girls linked arms and began skipping down the hallway toward the camera as they gave Hershey’s kisses to kids lining the hallway (similar to the students lining the school hallway in the original movie). As the girls skipped down the hallway, stopping at various students and teachers along the way to hand out candy, the camera panned occasionally to Lenny, walking down a similar hallway to the death metal music from the original Lenny film. The image of Lenny walking was overlaid with a red effect, which made the snippets of him stand apart from the happy skipping scenes more dramatically, enhanced even more so by the jarring shift in music. In the second phase

(1:03-1:22) these two scenes of Lenny walking one direction down a hallway to the metal music and the skipping girls proceeding the opposite way down a hall to the theme music began shifting back and forth more and more quickly, creating a cacophony of sound and flashing images that became increasingly jarring and hectic until they met up in a split screen effect with a screeching noise (like a bomb being dropped) and a black and white overlay blotting out all color. In the second transition (lasting from 1:22-1:52), this cacophony of music and image gave way to a video clip of a nuclear bomb exploding with bomb-like sound effects, followed by the same opening image of clouds in a blue sky, this time accompanied by chirping birds.

In the third phase (1:53-2:40), the Bob Marley reggae song “One Love, One Life” began as Lenny stood in the middle of a circle of students in a park. The students were holding hands to form the circle, holding their clasped hands skyward as they danced to the music while Lenny looked on. The lyrics chanted the refrain twice, “Let's get together and feel all right. Hear the children cryin' (One Love!); Hear the children cryin' (One Heart!), Sayin', give thanks and praise to the Lord and I will feel all right; Sayin', let's get together and feel all right. Wo wo-wo wo-wo!” Toward the end of the refrain, Lenny appeared to smile for the first time in either film. In the third and final transition (2:40-2:50), the screen froze on a black and white image of Lenny surrounded by dancing students, with the words “One love: From Oakland to New York” written in yellow across the screen. The first chorus of the song could be heard in the background for ten seconds (similar to the way the music extended nine seconds past the action in the “Hey” film): “Let them all pass all their dirty remarks (One Love!); There is one question I'd really love to ask (One Heart!); Is there a place for the hopeless sinner, Who has hurt all mankind just to save his own beliefs?”

This final installment echoed elements throughout the narrative series, bringing many of the themes from the previous videos together. The two major musical elements, the Arthur song and the death metal tune, met up in a cacophony that gave way to the reggae classic that told the story of “one love.” This message of love and care, sent by one program site to another, implied that the two competing narratives – of anger and hope – could be reconciled into one, a metaphor that the students found uplifting. When kids in Oakland watched the film, they pondered the message, puzzling out together that Lenny likely went to heaven:

[Jackson]: What do you guys think happened at the end?

[Jada]: I think heaven...I mean, it showed the clouds and,

[Jackson]: And the tweety birds. I always think of clouds and tweety birds – I always associate that with heaven but I don't know

Me: So you think he died and he's in heaven? Or – Bloody Lenny – would that be his kind of heaven or would that be his hell to be getting loved on like that?

[DJ]: He was smiling

Me: He was smiling, that's true.

[Jackson]: So maybe it was more of a heaven

[Jada]: Maybe they showed him how to be good or something

(3/28/11 Field Note)

While the students generally agreed that the birds and sky suggested that Lenny died in the explosion and went to heaven, Jada implied that the end might have been allegorical, suggesting that the end indicated that the skippers who were bringing happiness to others helped Lenny be a better person.

The students in New York asked the students in Oakland to name the last installment based on their interpretation, and so a discussion ensued about possible names and the Oakland

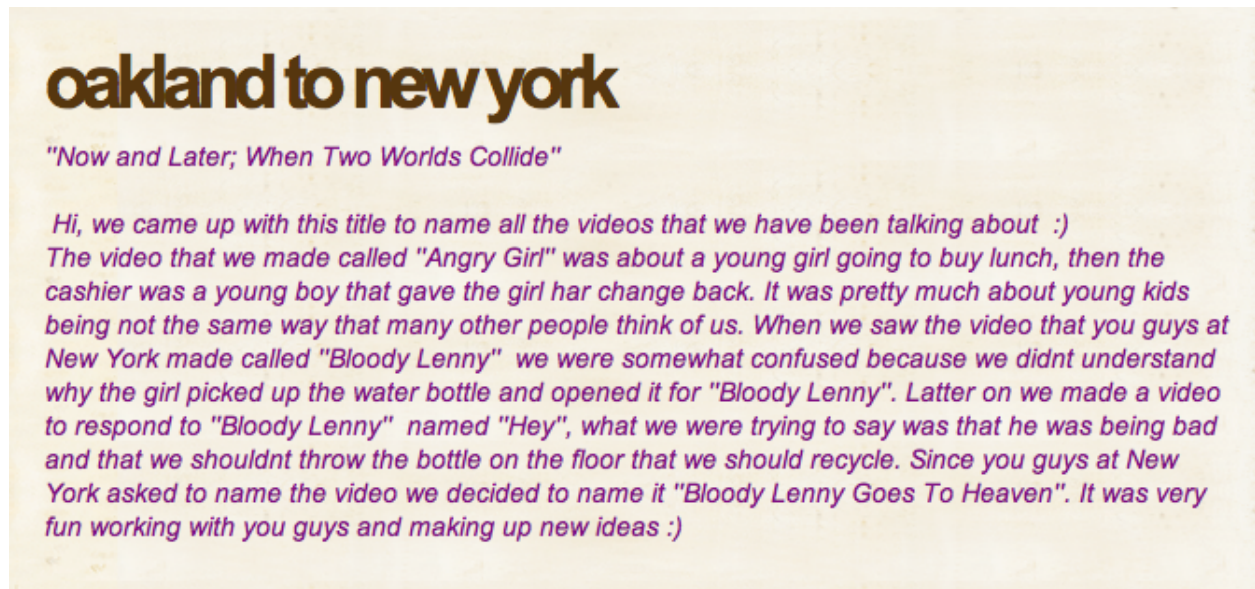
students decided to name the last installment “Bloody Lenny Goes to Heaven.” However, they also debated doing another response before concluding that the New York installment felt like the conclusion. They decided to name the whole series “Now and Later: When Two Worlds Collide,” indicating that students understood the response video sequence as an allegory, telling the story of two different “worlds” (e.g., New York and California). While the students’ two worlds appeared to be competing and in tension with one another in the early part of the exchange (e.g., Nina’s comment about them taking each other’s song or Santiago’s comments about the exchange being like a competition), the last installment was a “true” response video in that it incorporated elements of all of the previous narratives while extending the story in new ways through a highly collaborative (and performative) dialogue. With the final expression of “one love,” expressed through the choice of music as well as the setting of Lenny in a park surrounded by happy people singing and dancing, the New York response video offered a hopeful vision of the possibility of reconciling differing viewpoints. When Jackson asked them to write blogs about the experience, many of the students in Oakland took the opportunity to reflect on this process of joining two sites in new ways, like Jada who blogged that the last film “was the final video because it sort of rounded this whole thing up by bringing the two sides together” (3/28/11 Blog).

### **The Role of Response Videos in S2C8**

For the students in both sites, the genre represented an exciting shift in the project, in that they began collaborating in new ways, became engaged in a highly interactive and intertwined process of interpreting and composing videos, and worked to create new narratives by recontextualizing and extending previous ones. In these ways, students shifted how they saw themselves and others connected in new relationships. The teachers were equally excited because the response video genre addressed a number of their concerns about cross-cultural dialogue and learning by fostering students’ creativity and understanding while allowing the teacher to take up a collaborative role with students. These response videos “bridged the gaps” in the project in multiple ways, as they became recontextualized over and over in different local contexts and helped participants define themselves in relation to others generatively. They addressed the teachers’ dual goals of promoting dialogue and facilitating understanding while also allowing kids the creative freedom to express themselves without overt teacher direction.

The move toward collective communication, something Jake proposed in the February teacher call that was put in practice for the co-composed responses, was both enjoyable for students and helpful in shifting how they thought about composing more generally. That is, students began framing the collective work as “ours,” a collaborative paradigm that signaled new kinds of authorship roles. While teachers and students both still understood writing to be ‘owned’ by authors, they also concurrently *expanded* their thinking about co-composed work as jointly conceived between multiple authors and between authors and audiences. Participants’ beliefs in the ownership model of authorship was thus challenged and extended by what we might call this collaborative model of authorship, in which authorship is shared between people who take up mutually constitutive roles in the process. As writing helps authors to gain distance by externalizing thought, this kind of networked composing afforded by writing for the S2C8 community invited multivocality and new kinds of author-audience relationships. Students gained distance by interacting with highly participatory audiences and multimodally composing artifacts with new collaborative tools and practices that were circulated in new ways.

In one student's blog entry after the first response genre sequence was completed, we see how she understood the composing process to be collaboratively realized, generative, and intertwined with joint interpretation (see Figure 5.11).



**Figure 5.11. Jessica's Blog (Oakland)**

In Jessica's blog, she framed the project as a collaborative one, telling the students in New York about the title for the "videos that *we* have been talking about" (my emphasis), which joins her Oakland classmates and the New York students together. In a similar vein, Jessica understood the original video ("Angry Girl") to be a collaborative effort, using the pronouns "we" and "us" to describe its message and target audience. At the end of the blog, Jessica told the New York students that she had fun "working *with* you guys" (my emphasis) to make up "new ideas." Not only did she find the collaborative process enjoyable (working with others) but she particularly enjoyed the development of new ideas, creating something new out of remixed and reinterpreted materials. Lia too wrote about the fun of making the videos with others because she "really liked the responses" and "had so much fun shooting it" (3/28/11 Blog). Jake also found high student engagement with the response video genre, reporting to the other teachers the success in moving to more collaboratively realized group-to-group dialogues. He talked about the second video response sequence, "Moving Money," as "a very simple idea just to get the kids kind of engaged with the media making process collectively" (5/10/11 Teacher Call). For Jake, the process of *collective* movie making was a central feature of this new response video genre.

Certainly the different beliefs about the nature of composing (as individually owned or collaboratively constructed) were in tension in the project, for both teachers and students, especially since the notion of individual author as creative force and arbiter of meaning is a tradition long held (and rewarded) in schools. However, even though Santiago claimed some kind of creative ownership over Lenny, his notions of authorship were *expanded* by virtue of participating in this kind of networked composing. He understood his video as recontextualized in the larger narrative trajectory, no longer his own creation alone but shared with others (see Figure 5.12).



## about lenny...

We think of the main "angry character" in our movie as Lenny. His name came from a sandwich shop. He is an angry guy. We are not sure where his anger came from, he is just angry at the whole world, LOL, that is why he is kicking the bottle around, the bottle is a symbol of his anger. I am not like Lenny, because I am not emo. If anyone realized, his name is on the bottle in the first movie. In the end when Lenny was resurrected I was heartbroken, because Lenny was an interesting character and his whole thing was about being mad. I really like my character Lenny, in the future I hope to make more videos of him -- this is not the last time you will here of Lenny.

**Figure 5.12. Santiago's 3/29/11 Blog**

Santiago began his blog in the first person plural, talking about what “we” think about “our movie,” as he referred to the “Bloody Lenny Goes to Heaven” video. He elaborated on the original intent behind Lenny’s anger (that it was general rather than targeted anger), but instead of thinking about this decision as his alone, Santiago framed the character’s motivation as a joint construction between him and his classmates: “We are not sure where his anger came from.” He took up the Oakland students’ interpretation of Lenny as in heaven when he talked about how he was heartbroken “when Lenny was resurrected.” Even though he framed the composing of the movie as a collaborative endeavor, he also still saw Lenny as his creation (“my character”) and planned to make another Lenny movie individually (“I hope to make more videos of him”). So while he still thought of Lenny as his own creation, he also understood Lenny to be part of the larger narrative, one in which he was resurrected by the group’s decision despite Santiago’s personal sadness about Lenny’s demise. Both of these views of authorship were supported in the response video genre, as there was expansive room for both individual agency and collective engagement in these multimodal texts.

The engagement came not just from working with others in the same room but also by engaging with audiences (and the ideas of these audiences) in new ways. The resulting response videos were multivoiced in the sense that students’ ideas across the networked community were embedded and woven throughout the narrative trajectory. This act of deliberately weaving through elements from the different films – the water bottle, the theme of anger, the music, the hallway setting – invited students to think about composing as a designful and dialogic process, whereby they carefully chose how to incorporate different modal elements to create new meanings that were in conversation with others. Audiences and authors operated in new relationships with one another, as students served as audience for the response videos to figure out meanings of the ambiguous films while composing a response as co-authors that incorporated those meanings into a new film (in the process of course continuing to engage in ongoing interpretive work). The interpretive process was highly generative, spurring new ideas and becoming intertwined with the composing process in a newly visible way. Students had to grapple with the meaning of a smile, for example, using the joint interpretation of the smile to guide the group’s composing decisions. Roxy talked about the twin processes of interpreting and composing as equally important in an interview about how she understood writing differently after participating in activities with the networked community:

Writing is like, I guess expressing your feelings, expressing yourself in a non-verbal way, I guess. Cause like when you're writing, you don't, even when you're

not exactly writing, like writing a story, not talking about what the story means, you have to like interpret. People have to interpret the story to understand what you mean and stuff, so yeah. (5/25/11 Interview)

For Roxy, writing was a creative act, one that was *both* expressive and responsive, with authors and audiences working together to construct meaning. Students like Roxy began to think of writing as composing, including across modes that were “nonverbal” (like of course her “Angry Girl” video). Roxy explicitly connected the video composing with writing, arguing that “how we make movies and stuff, I guess that could be a form of writing.” For Roxy, writing was interlaced with reading, the composing and interpreting processes linked, and these could take many shapes, including traditional school writing or video making. These twin processes became visible in the moviemaking, which she argued “tells a story, like a book. It tells a story and like when you read a story, you have to interpret the story like, understand what the story says, and like, like the video responses, that's kind of like what we had to do” (5/25/11 Interview). Roxy thought of the videos as stories, similar to books in that one could read those stories to generate new ideas to develop the stories. For Roxy, this composing/interpreting process was tightly bound up with the collective work, and her view of writing as multimodal was expanded by virtue of her participation in these networked composing contexts.

These response videos, in becoming remediated through other videos in the series, took on new meanings in each progressive recontextualization. As they became more mobile through sharing via the Dropbox, the videos could be re-embedded in each program site and thus adapted to the cultural and practical needs of each site. Indeed, Jake encouraged the other teachers to re-embed a short, musically-driven vignette that one of Jake’s students had made during their experimentation with music video genres. While it was not created as a response video, Jake hoped that other teachers would use it as the basis for another round of video exchanges in the genre:

And it's basically like this kid in New York made this little short video about a stack of money that a kid picks up off the ground, another kid beats him up for it, and they both fall on the ground, and a little girl runs off with the money. And the whole idea is that you know we create this narrative around this money that constantly is changing hands and moving between people. (5/10/11 Teacher Call)

He hoped that teachers could work with students to imagine a response through the lens of the different program sites: “And then it can very easily, that narrative can travel across sites cause any site can just pick up the narrative where the previous one ended and something else can happen with the money. And I think it would be really cool if it moves to a place like London or India because then the currency changes as well” (5/10/11 Teacher Call). Jake wanted these traveling narratives to shift and change with each cultural context, and Amit and Jackson both took up his request, making a response in the series that suited their cultural contexts. In India, for example, the video revolved around a girl hiding rupees from her abusive father, a theme that recurred in many of the Indian participants’ stories, while in Oakland the action revolved around a homeless person burning the money to stay warm on the streets.

The response video genre helped to promote cross-cultural interactions, which the teachers had been struggling to foster, and in that way addressed one of their central goals. Jackson articulated how these videos fulfilled the teachers’ desire to promote “real” interaction and dialogue: “The kids really respond to it [making the response videos], and it's as close as you know we've gotten to them actually talking to another country, you know? And interacting with I think, you know, another site” (5/4/11 Interview). For Jackson, the response videos were the first

thing that inspired the kinds of interaction they had been striving for over the course of two years – something that both motivated the students as well as instigated cross-cultural interaction. Amit too felt like the development of these videos represented a “success” in that the students were newly inspired to communicate: “But what I’m saying is that this has actually got them to think and got them to come out of their shell where they were not communicating and this video thing has actually been a success I think for um, for India at least” (5/10/11 Teacher Call). Students were more highly motivated to participate, and as the next chapter details, these dialogues evolved toward social action and engagement that all of the teachers felt helped students learn more about one another and understand themselves in new ways.

While the videos spurred youth engagement and led to dialogues between students, these response videos also fulfilled teachers’ desire for activities that inspired students’ creativity without requiring the teacher to take an authoritarian stance. Jake had called this kind of student-led activity “organic” in that it transpired without too much direct adult intervention:

I think a lot of times you know the kids, like, you say to a kid "Well, let's make a video, what do you want to make a video about?" And they're like, "I don't know what I want to make a video about." You know, like what kind of question is that? But when you start to show them a lot of stuff, like you know...and [Santiago] happened to watch that girl in Oakland's video, that angry teenager girl video, that sparked an idea in him and he ran with that. You know? And so, that type of kind of organic approach to it has been very successful for me, and now that there are- there's so many videos now on the DropBox, that there's lots and fodder. (6/23/11 Interview)

While Jake characterized the response video as arising from Santiago ‘happening’ to watch the “Angry Girl” video, Jake took a major role in facilitating that process, something he downplayed. Indeed, the teachers did not want to direct kids’ activity in order to let ideas “spark” naturally, so it is understandable that Jake framed his role as being less involved than it was. However, even though Jake took up a key role in facilitating the response genre process, it was organic in the sense that it was a collaboratively realized vision, with him as a player but not necessarily director. This role of coach or facilitator was one that he deliberately strove to cultivate, and the teachers all saw the response videos as offering the opportunity to take a more backseat role. Even though Amit, Jackson, and Jake did most of the editing and directed the conversations in particular ways (Jake inscribing the brainstorming on paper, Jackson suggesting using the bottle to continue the narrative, Amit showing the movie and asking girls to imagine a response), the response video genre shifted the practice of individually created artifacts toward co-composed ones, offering the opportunity for teachers to take up a collaborative role.

As S2C8 participants composed in this new genre, they engaged with mediational artifacts that facilitated new understandings about their obligations to one another as authors and audiences. These artifacts are particularly important in mediating an expansive learning cycle, during which people innovate via the iterative process of internalization and externalization (Engeström, 1999a, p. 33). As participants were socialized to become competent members of the S2C8 community, they reflected on what that meant as they jointly defined the rules and norms for participating. As they engaged in creative externalizations, first individually (e.g., “Angry Girl”) and later collaboratively (e.g., “Hey”), they critically questioned what it meant to participate in the space, which gave way to innovative solutions to the contradictions surfaced during the process of critical reflection (prompted in many ways through the joint teacher calls but also during class discussions between teachers and students, illustrated here in the planning

sessions). The resulting videos (creative externalizations) acted as mediating artifacts that led to new kinds of understandings and ways of participating in the community (internalizations), as participants composed in new response genre sequences that intertwined reading and writing in semiotically complex, highly generative, and intertextually rich ways. This expansive learning cycle also led participants to innovate by taking action in their local communities, as the India and New York sites began a collaboration that led to a cycle of social action and prompted participants to compose in the networked space in ways that I argue in the next chapter are powerful examples of transliterate practice.

## CHAPTER 6: THE ART COLLECTIVE: A NEW YORK CASE STUDY

The young people in the English classroom had their heads bent toward their projects, some drawing on big sheets of paper, others constructing sculptures from empty plastic water bottles, cardboard boxes and duct tape, and still others writing in notebooks. The teens in New York were following the instructions of the guest artist that teacher Jake Casey had brought into the class, a performance artist who specialized in the Theatre of the Oppressed<sup>11</sup>, a performative framework (with roots in Paulo Freire's work) that uses interactive techniques to address problems through dialogue between actors and audiences. On this day, students were working in groups to tell a story of one of the group members about a time he or she experienced oppression (which the artist defined as a silencing of one's voice/self), and each member of the group had to tell about the story in one of three ways: via two-dimensional art (drawing), three-dimensional art (creating a sculpture from repurposed materials), or poetry (to be read aloud). Students took their task seriously, spending about 30 minutes creating their story representations in one of the three self-chosen mediums. In one group, Emilio and his classmates constructed an elaborate two-foot tall turnstile from empty paper towel rolls while another member drew a picture and Maurice wrote an accompanying poem. When it was time to look at the group's efforts and interpret the story through the artistic media, everyone gathered around to figure out what this three-dimensional art revealed about the story. Students, standing in a tight cluster around the sculpture, called out their interpretations, including that it looked like a metro station that was policed, which made Vince surmise that "maybe the kid was going to try to hop." After looking at the drawing, a comic strip that showed a young man jumping over a turnstile in the subway station (which is what Vince had suggested), the guest artist asked everyone to close his or her eyes or look at the sculpture as Maurice, who had been working alone in a corner with his face pressed close to a notebook, read his poem aloud in his deep voice:

Somebody please help me, I need a helping hand  
Nobody feels my pain, I need someone who understands  
They say all people are equal but let's be realistic  
In the eyes of racist whites I'm just a statistic  
Sixteen on my way to the train I needed a ride  
I asked the lady at the booth, she wasn't letting me slide  
Right after that she let a white man through for free  
I found that messed up because what she did for him she ain't do for me  
People always told me how messed up the world is but now I see  
I guess I should take (a real look at growing up) in NYC

While he read, other students nodded and said "Umhm" under their breath, encouraging him. As Maurice spoke the last line in a breathless rush, the room erupted into applause, whooping, and conversation as everyone talked about their own experiences of being stigmatized for being a young person of color (many could relate to the experience of being harassed on the trains). Maurice smiled as some classmates clapped him on the back, and others returned to look at the sculpture more closely after hearing Maurice's poem (10/28/10 Video Transcript).

This chapter opens with a characteristic scene from Jake's classroom, a day infused with a diversity of artistic practice and intense participant collaboration, in order to set the stage for a closer look at the New York program, the S2C8 site whose artistic projects catalyzed the

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<sup>11</sup> More about this organization can be found online at <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org>

networked community. The chapter examines how Jake's philosophy about making "really cool art" permeated all of the program's activities and influenced how he worked with his students and the other teachers as "artists in the room" (6/23/11 Interview). Like the other program sites, the New York program developed its own set of participation structures, norms, routines, and conversations in response to a complex set of factors that included the national and local contexts and the students' and teachers' experiences and beliefs. As teachers negotiated the complexities of their program sites, they brought their own historically-rooted beliefs and expertise to bear in shaping the space of their classrooms, like Kgotso who worked so diligently to construct a teacher-free "creative culture" for students to work on their storytelling without sanction from authority figures. The teachers' visions for their sites often evolved out of their negotiation of these multifaceted dimensions, as they designed the program with and for students and in relation to the school context. In the New York program, Jake's vision for an artistic space both *shaped* the ways students composed for the networked community and *was shaped* by his interactions with teachers and students. By closely analyzing the interactions between teacher Jake Casey and the 13 focal students at the New York site, I illustrate how the global flows of texts and ideas around the networked community helped Jake and his students create "imagined worlds" (Appadurai, 1996) that provided opportunities for expansive learning (Engeström, 2001) as they came to think of themselves as artists who took action in the world.

The chapter opens with a section about how Jake's vision of creating an artistic space for young people, in which he functioned as a mentor and fellow artist, was realized in practice. Enjoying the most pedagogical freedom and material resources of any of the teachers in the S2C8 project, Jake regularly adjusted his teaching practice to accommodate the needs of his students and the networked community while still retaining a strong vision for the program. While he imagined the social network as "a platform to share...art," Jake's vision expanded over time to include seeing the network as both a generative space and a dialogic zone that could inspire new artistic practice and new understandings of self and other. In the second section, I trace how this artistic focus informed the design of the New York participants' response video to India, which was an aestheticized, highly symbolic social critique about their own struggles growing up in New York City in 2011. As these young people turned toward social critique in dialogue with the India participants, they worked to name their struggles, focusing on the role of media in oversimplifying complex issues around urban street violence and stereotyping young people of color. This socially aware work led to New York participants forming an activist group called the Famous Nameless and new kinds of creative compositions and exchanges online.

I trace how these exchanges led to new uses of the social network and new kinds of composing in the third section of this chapter, as young people in New York began voluntarily using S2C8 for hermeneutic and expressive purposes. Blogs, no longer used just for mandated reflection, became one means for students in New York to explicate (and promote) their work, and students regularly deployed the network's many communicative features (e.g., private messaging, wall posting) to express their viewpoints about the films and their everyday lives. As students developed new purposes for using the network (e.g., to communicate about their struggles, to help people understand their message), their uses of the network's mediational artifacts shifted as well. Videos, for example, while still the primary means for exchanging and sharing their worlds, became just one part of a much larger communicative whole. In the final section of this chapter, I examine the role of the social network as it functioned for the New York students as a kind of mediated public (boyd, 2011). For many months S2C8 functioned mostly as a kind of *imagined* public, since students did not interact with their audiences as much as

imagine them from their traces on the network. This act of imagining an international audience for their work was powerful for the New York students, helping them to think critically about how they composed. However, these young people did not need to work with or take into account the audience's reaction to their compositions, making the networked community more peripheral in its influence. After the New York students engaged in response video exchanges with Oakland and India though, they began to see themselves in relation with students in new ways. As students became more "real" to one another, the New York students felt more of an obligation to try to facilitate cross-cultural understanding. These efforts toward understanding and the responsibilities this placed on authors and audiences helped students attend to how mediated publics required "*a mutuality of responsibility* between producer and receiver, notwithstanding differences of power in the structure of things, and *a degree of reflexivity* by all participants in the communication, notwithstanding the inevitable imperfections in the process. What is also required is *the recognition of cultural difference*" (Silverstone, 2007, p. 34, emphasis added).

### **Jake's Vision: "We're All Like Artists in the Room"**

*I think like our focus is ... that we're all like artists in the room, you know? So they all imagine themselves in that space I think as artists, and so our agenda was always first and foremost to make really cool art, and to use the network as a platform to share that art.*

Jake, 6/23/11 Interview

As a practicing artist focused on social justice and new media composing, Jake Casey was deeply interested in the ways that artistic practice could help young people make sense of their lives. As a young charismatic New York native, Jake had a manner that appealed to adolescents, a combination of tough street-savvy mixed with sensitive perceptiveness. He and students joked around quite a bit, and they felt comfortable calling him by his last name and talking with him like a peer. Kidding aside, Jake took their lives and their work seriously, and he accorded them a respect that students in turn reciprocated. Over the course of a year, the New York participants reportedly felt like "a family" (Luisa, 7/28/11 Interview), a testament to the close community Jake and the students built over time. Meeting regularly over the course of a school year and two summers, the participants worked collaboratively on a variety of artistic projects, many of which involved video production. The structure of the program was loose – certainly there was lots of artistic practice, like the exercise led by the guest performance artist described above, but there was also lots of collaborative work that emerged from students' interests. For example, one day students were browsing on S2C8 and saw a dance video by the girls in India; several girls then choreographed and shot their own dance video with the help of other students in the same class period. On any given day, there were two or three collaborative projects like this at different stages of production.

One of the reasons Jake was able to structure his class in this free-flowing way was because of the infrastructural support he enjoyed, with plenty of equipment and supportive staff but little oversight. He talked about this support as a direct influence on the kind of program that he imagined, especially in his friend and administrator Mark's role in procuring equipment, space, and staff buy in. Jake taught during the school day every Tuesday and Thursday during the school year (the last period, which led into the afterschool class), and this position within the school day as co-teacher with close friend and colleague, English teacher Zach, gave him a kind

of legitimacy with other teachers, the principal, and students. But no one ever really checked in on what Jake was doing in the afterschool program, and so he had lots of the support that is so clearly necessary for running a successful media arts program but without the interference of others dictating what he should be doing. Certainly he experienced problems similar to other sites, such as the high level of security in the school, the blockage of many websites kids needed, and the mandates of high-stakes testing that disrupted kids' schedules and psychological well-being. But the freedom to shape the program in ways he found most productive allowed him to integrate a wide variety of arts into the activity structures of the program: One day students would move from a workshop focused on writing an autobiographical story, to a series of acting exercises by a visiting artist, to an editing session on the computer for a visual narrative, to a hands-on painting activity.

When he joined the Space2Cre8 project in the spring of 2010, he brought to the S2C8 teaching team a belief that that young people could develop an aesthetic understanding of their everyday lives that would facilitate learning and literacy development. He articulated this belief early on in the project during an interview in which he was discussing his planned approach: "I really want to kinda think artistically about how they're kinda constructing themselves and constructing their environment, and I'm always going try to instill in them an aesthetic sensibility to documenting things" (3/24/10 Interview). This focus on the *art of the everyday* – how young people constructed themselves and their environments on a moment-by-moment basis – permeated all of the activities that Jake and the students did in the networked community and the classroom. While for Jake this focus on everyday life, finding the artistic in the mundane, was a way to understand oneself better, it was also well suited to social networking activities, since he saw S2C8 as a generative source of artistic energy and as a "platform" for students to document their everyday realities and represent themselves online.

Jake argued that a variety of artistic practice – looking at the everyday through various lenses – allowed youth to develop different areas of expertise and expression: "I think that they're learning to engage in, they're learning to engage in artistic activities beyond just like what their natural talents allow, you know?" (2/4/11 Interview). He encouraged students to try new activities and explore artistic forms they may not be familiar with, including different roles in the video production. For example, one young woman, Isabella, was a talented artist who drew an elaborate picture on the white board that she changed incrementally, photographing each change. She then worked with Jake to learn how to create a digital video animation of her artwork in ways that extended its narrative scope and her artistic capacities. This kind of video creation work was centrally important to their artistic endeavors, and as the response video genre emerged, Jake and his students spent a lot of time constructing narratives that relied heavily on the visual and audio channels to communicate their artistic vision. Vince explained how their video compositions were like abstract pieces of art:

You know how you say a work, a piece of art, abstract or whatever it is, you kind of put your own emotion and your feeling into it? They say art is what you want it to be. Well our videos is like an abstract piece of work. We tell our story, but at the end of the day you're gonna interpret it....You're gonna get your own message from it. (7/28/11 Interview)

Vince linked the participants' work with video to abstract art in the sense that their videos were intentional but ambiguous enough to be open to multiple interpretations. Viewers could draw their own conclusions after watching their films, an openness that invited others to respond.



The New York participants characterized these complex videos as artistic renderings, creative by virtue of their original nature. For the students, the art they were creating, no matter what it was, became original via the creative process, as authors remixed elements in new ways to create something innovative. Maurice explained that artistic activity, whether writing or music-making or video-design, was at its heart creative, and creative practice involved making something out of something else:

You know I've just written a play, you gotta think, you have to think-As like, let me see if I can explain this. You have to think like, when I write a play, like be creative like make something that hasn't been done before. Like to make it interesting, you have to be creative. Trash sculptures, you had to be there, we was working with garbage, so you had to be creative, have a creative mind. Wanna have like- you gonna turn that into, like an animal, something like that. What I did before, my beats, they had to be creative on how to like, the switches I did, what loops here at what time.  
(7/23/10 Interview)

Like the trash sculptures he made, play writing and beat making required that Maurice adopt a creative stance and figure out how to make something fresh out of other materials, a kind of remix sensibility that Jake encouraged. This understanding of how something 'new' can be created from materials that are creatively reimagined was an important part of Jake's philosophy. The creative effort, which was always a kind of conversation with other creative efforts and a remixing of other voices, was ultimately a way to know oneself better. Vince, when asked what he was learning in this program, understood this link between creativity and self-development: "We learn life things. How to be a better human. How to be a better you I guess. How to use your imagination, but how to use your brain power to create something that nobody else has created before" (7/28/11 Interview). For Vince, learning to "create something that nobody has created before" was intimately linked with the work of the imagination and the work of the self. Being creative meant imagining possibilities, potentialities that were linked to becoming a better person and learning about life.

For Jake and his students, the most important part of their program was the process of creating art and learning while *doing*. From sculptures made out of trash to chalk graffiti on the classroom floors, kids understood that "everything [we do] like has art in it" (Luisa, 7/23/10 Interview). For Jake, engaging in artistic practice had less to do with 'high' forms of art found in museums than it did turning everyday experiences and objects into art's subject matter and medium. The everyday, for Jake, took on an aesthetic sensibility when constructed by the artist, learned through practice with others:

But students do acquire skills, but they're skills acquired through practice. You know where the skills are just an innate aspect of that practice, right. So we don't teach kids how to paint, but while they're painting it's inevitable that they learn certain skills of painting. You know what I mean? But I never sit down and do a art lesson, like this is how you blend two colors together. It's just happening on the canvas while we're all working together. (2/4/11 Interview)

Jake felt that skills were intertwined with the practice of doing something together with others, and he explained that he believed this to be true of all learning (including learning from others on S2C8). Vince echoed this belief when he said, "learning here is just, you learn as you go along" (7/28/11 Interview). This belief that people learn by doing, rather than by being told by someone

else, was a central organizing framework for Jake's classroom and helped explain why he wanted students to explore S2C8 on their own terms whenever possible. His students valued that philosophy, talking about the approach as one of the most salient differences distinguishing the S2C8 program from school. Emilio, a talkative and outgoing 18-year-old young man with close cropped hair, big brown eyes, and a contagious laugh and smile, talked about the importance of this kind of learning for him:

I think here it's like more hands on. And like, as soon we like all communicate, it's like no one is like left out. So you know how sometimes in school your teacher's like, "Oh later, I'll tell you about it later," I think our program is better because like, when your teachers- you [Jake] explain to us and when we have questions you don't get like, you know not aggravated, but you like to tell us about things. And like as soon as you explain to us how to do something with the camera, we do it the same day. Like if you teach us how to work with the flip cameras, we do know how to do it. And you just tell us right then and there, we just get the hang of it. And I think in regular school they don't do that. Like in a regular school day, they teach you and they'll just be like "Okay, you do this. Read this" and ask you questions. Here like there's more talking about it. And then doing it. (7/28/11 Interview)

The kind of learning in school Emilio described was teacher-controlled, with the teacher managing the discourse and providing little opportunity for hands-on practice or real-world application. In Jake's S2C8 program, however, Emilio learned how "to get the hang of it" immediately – "talking about it. And then doing it." For Emilio, the program offered him the opportunity to learn by *doing*, a process fundamentally tied together with collaboration and communication (talking and doing at the same time, with others). One of the highlights of the program for Emilio was the inclusiveness of the collaboration – no one was left out.

Jake concentrated on how to create this sense of community by positioning young people as co-creators with and respectful audiences for their peers. Since Jake considered the young people's artistic work to be meaningful and important, students took one another's work seriously, giving thoughtful and careful feedback to each other and working collaboratively on projects. For example, for much of the fall 2010 semester the whole group worked on Vince's movie, which he described as a "short film or lengthy music video" about a young man's struggles growing up in a "rough neighborhood" (10/26/10 Interview). Vince, a slim and graceful young man who often wore a baseball cap with his dark hair pulled into in a glossy ponytail to the middle of his back, directed the others in filming scenes that he had written, while different students rotated the roles of actor and cinematographer. Students gave him feedback about the dialogue, the pacing, and the content of his film in between working other projects like painting a mural or filming a dance video. Sixteen-year-old Lola described what they were doing together as 'real art' that involved investing personal energy into their work: "You're really putting yourself into it. Like if you're working so hard to make something amazing, then it has to be real art" (7/28/11 Interview). Jake believed in the collaborative construction of expertise, and he encouraged young people to work with one another in developing confidence and an artistic voice as they made "something amazing."

As fellow "artist in the room," Jake positioned himself as collaborator rather than expert, a shift that many young people admired and enjoyed but also struggled with at first as it conflicted with their understanding of a teacher and adult as always the more expert other. He rarely spoke in front of the whole group of students in the early days of the program, most often

working with individuals or small groups on a specific project (like editing a film, brainstorming an idea, or writing a poem or script). Jake called his approach “organic” and explained that he wanted students to be able to “go off on their own and really make something because they kinda found what drives them and what moves them artistically. You know it's a risk because you're not putting the kids down and saying this is what you're gonna do right now” (7/7/10 Interview). Different from school-based notions of teacher-student relationships, in which the teacher directs the students in what to do and how to do it, Jake asked the kids to direct themselves and the group through what motivated them artistically, which led to students exploring new talents and thinking about all of the different experiences they were engaged with as artistic. Emilio described this difference as less “literal” than school and in that way more free, a place where anything could happen and all ideas were on the table for discussion and collaboration:

In school stuff is more literal. Like it's more, like if you really think about it,  $2 + 2 = 4$  over there, like everything makes sense, everything's supposed to go according to what they teach you. Like if they was to put something on the test that they taught you, it has to be there. In our program, we can always change the flow, you know what I mean? It doesn't always have to go by- we can have an idea for one thing, and then as we're doing it, we'll think about other ideas and incorporate that into the original idea. So then it'll be like a big ass collaboration. (7/28/11 Interview)

Emilio liked how in the program, students drove the knowledge construction, not just reiterating given facts but actually creating and imagining how the world worked, “changing the flow” through collaboration with one another. For Emilio and the other students, the intertwined composing and interpreting they did as a group was one of the most enjoyable aspects of the program, the chance to join in “a big ass collaboration.”

Jake’s role in the project as co-collaborator was vitally important to the development of a sense of community. In addition to brainstorming and working alongside students as they created art, he spent untold hours editing students’ films at home, bringing them pizza, or taking them out for ice cream to talk about problems in their lives. Luisa, an outspoken young woman with unruly curly hair, big brown watchful eyes, and a sweet disposition, talked about how Jake’s participation as a full member of their community afforded mutual respect:

And I think here [S2C8 program] like usually like, we respect you [Jake], and I think that you don't look at us down. You don't look down on us, saying "Oh, well you know I'm this, that." I think that you just see us as, you know, adults. Like young adults, and I think at some schools they don't see you like that. (Luisa, 7/28/11 Interview)

Luisa did not experience school as a place where she was respected as a young adult, but she felt respected by Jake and in turn respected him. This mutual esteem was important to building the community but also, for Vince, was part of the “humanizing” role Jake took on:

Well I think something that's very important is actually your role in this program, Jake. The fact that you are the way you are, it's just you in front of us kids. I don't wanna say you're a role model, cause it's not like any of us wanna grow up and wanna be just like you, but the fact that you take your time and humanize with the students and you're just yourself, and you show that you care for us, that's a really big deal cause a lot of us don't have that person that knows nothing about us, yet wants to help. So I think that's a pretty huge lesson. And any kid's lifetime, to have a stranger help them out just because. You know? (7/28/11 Interview)

For Vince, Jake was just himself in the class – “it’s just you in front of us kids” – in a way that allowed students to see his human side. This revealing of one’s self to students modeled a way of being in the world, a kind of ethic of care and respect that students wanted to emulate. As Vince argued, it was not as though he wanted to grow up to be like Jake; rather, he wanted to be the kind of person Jake was, helping a stranger out “just because.” This ethical stance of being hospitable toward strangers in the world, showing that one cares about others, was one that students began to adopt as the response videos took a socially aware turn and the exchanges with India intensified.

### **A Turn toward Social Action**

For Jake, an important part of the project was helping students engage in an artistic approach to the world, which included critical reflection about their everyday lives and struggles. When students watched the India school tour video (see Chapter Five), they began a conversation about their struggles with school that continued throughout the spring semester of 2011. They began filming a “mockumentary” about their school as a social critique aimed at the school’s surveillance and disciplinary efforts. These efforts at ‘naming their world’ were brought into sharp relief when they had a visit from the director of the India school site, who showed them videos and discussed the meaning of those videos in relation to the New York students’ lives. This recontextualization of one particular video from India, a documentary filmed by the Indian students about their socially active work against domestic violence, led to a powerful set of exchanges between India and New York that lasted for months. This exchange helped the young people in New York articulate the struggles they faced in relation to other kinds of struggle in the world, and they had to work toward mutual understanding with the Indian students as they engaged in joint social critique. This series of exchanges represented a turn toward social action for the New York students, as they formed an activist group and began imagining the videos as an artistic way of helping others *see* them (and thus, helping them see themselves).

When Karishma visited the New York site in April 2011, she spoke at length about issues that her students faced in their everyday lives, especially the emancipatory role of school for young women in the program as they struggled to overcome problems related to poverty at home. Karishma made these difficulties real for the New York students, and in her conversation invited them to compare their situations:

[Karishma] also spoke about how the girls, despite threats from family members to not go to school and heavy work responsibilities as domestic servants, view school as liberatory and free, enabling them to overcome these difficulties. She inquired as to why students in New York did not view school similarly and why these students participated in ‘negative’ activities like gang participation, drug use, and illegal behaviors when they seemingly had so much access to education and other social structures absent from the lives of the girls in India. (Jake, 7/21/11 Memo)

By surfacing the role of school and its role in the students’ lives in both India and New York, Karishma helped students think about themselves in relation to others in the world. Everyone engaged in a lively discussion about the struggles students faced in both places, and students in New York, having to articulate the struggles in relationship to those Karishma described, became more and more animated trying to represent them in ways she might understand. Karishma asked them what they were doing to combat these issues, describing how her students had formed a

social activism group called Jaagriti that aimed to ‘awaken’ others in their community to problems of domestic violence. She played the documentary that showed the girls’ efforts to combat this problem as they went around their neighborhoods, talking to women and collecting their stories.

The presence of Karishma was very powerful for the New York participants, making her students’ struggles tangible for them by recontextualizing the documentary (which had been featured on S2C8 for several months with little fanfare) in the New York context. Her challenge to the New York young people to think about what they were doing to combat such problems led to a lively conversation about the systemic nature of the difficulties that the teens faced, which then turned toward a discussion of making a response video:

[Jake] has arranged chairs in a circle so that the students can discuss their ideas with [Karishma]. The students immediately respond by saying they could create a video that relates to them that showcases things that occur in their own neighborhoods and families. [Emilio and Nina] suggest that they do something related to robbery, drugs, gang, beef over territories, and the domestic violence that often occurs at home. (4/7/11 Field Note)

Nina, Emilio and others proposed making a response video based on the same topic, domestic violence, but their suggestions were situated in terms of their own struggles. In this conversation with Karishma, students began to creatively externalize this process of naming their struggles, doing so in relationship to the Jaagriti video but also in terms of their own lifeworlds (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 2001). They thought about the relationships between street violence, domestic violence, drugs, and gangs as some of the most pressing social issues facing them every day, and many went on to speak eloquently about their own experiences with gangs in their neighborhoods. They used the occasion of the documentary screening to engage in reflective social critique drawing on their past experiences.

All of the students brainstormed the shape of the response, which they decided would portray a “jumping in” of a new gang member to illustrate the complexities around the allure of gang affiliation. As the students planned with Jake, who recorded the ideas on a storyboard, Karishma asked a variety of questions about what they meant by the different terms (e.g., “jumping in”) and why people might become involved with gangs. During this long-ranging discussion, students began to clarify the purpose of their video as portraying their everyday struggles, and the six minute and six second movie “Deep in the Shallows” emerged over the course of the next two weeks, as students worked on reshooting scenes over and over, adding effects, screening different versions and making a list of changes<sup>12</sup>. During this process, the idea that this was a response to the Jaagriti video was a shaping force in the composing process. The film itself was driven by silent action set to music, and students in New York hoped their Indian counterparts could understand the action through the music and the symbols layered throughout. While students saw the response video as a kind of social critique, they also wanted it to express their personal struggles in a way that would be meaningful to the participants in India. They thought about how to include personal touches that would personalize the issues explored in the film:

[Santiago] explains that because we are showing it to the Indian kids, maybe at the end we can show students etc. who have died from gangs, that we can put at the end with the credits, so that we can show it really happens. Everyone really likes that idea, and [Emilio and Nina] say they want it to be personal, so that we

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<sup>12</sup> This movie can be seen in the gallery at [www.space2cre8.com](http://www.space2cre8.com).

can show an RIP of all the people they know who have been hurt because of gang violence. (4/11/11 Field Note)

Students wanted their response not just to be a social critique, absent their voices, but a personal expression of their experiences with gangs. They wanted the students in India to understand that this issue was complex and difficult, and that it affected them personally – or as Emilio said, “We made that video to show them that, like, ... we have problems too” (7/28/11 Interview).

The process of creating the response video involved students thinking about what it meant to struggle. Luisa described this response process as one that revolved around the issue of struggle, and how struggles look different in different places but also strangely similar:

Oh, it's good [making these response videos] because we get to show them that we struggle, and it's not just because we- just because we live in New York doesn't mean like we have everything given to us, and it's not easy to get things. And there's a lot of struggle. Like everybody struggles but different ways, in different places. But that is the same, like people struggle about alcohol, or some people's parents are alcoholics. Just I think I learned more, better with the videos then just going on their page. Because they don't even talk a lot about themselves on their page. And when they make videos you can see. So that's why when we responded to them, they got to understand more. And I think that's good that we made videos so they could understand and see how we live. (7/28/11 Interview)

For Luisa, the video, more than the network, helped her really *see* others' struggles and helped them “see how we live.” And this process of seeing through video was linked to developing greater understanding of one another. Emilio similarly described how this process of creating the response video centered on the idea of struggle, which was prompted by collaborative discussion with Karishma as a kind of representative of the students from India, who made them real:

[Karishma] showed the video of them that they had created about domestic violence that they go through with their fathers and all that. And she asked us what kind of problems do we have here. So, we decided to tell her everything, like all the problems that we face growing up in New York. We told her about poverty, gang relations, we just told her about a bunch of stuff and that we also have domestic problems. We then, that same day we brainstormed and we made this awesome video and it goes by "Deep in the Shallows." Which, I mean somebody happened to be forced into gang life. So we made that video, trying to like show them like that it's not like- we have problems too. So, we was just trying to express ourselves. (7/28/11 Interview)

Emilio described how the conversation with Karishma about problems that the students in New York faced was a generative one, leading to a collaborative video that he framed here as 1) a response to the Indian students' film, 2) a means of sharing parts of their own lives that they felt would be relevant to the Indian students, and 3) a powerful way to express themselves. The response video accomplished all three purposes – it was simultaneously a *dialogic*, *representative*, and *expressive* artifact. In this case, however, the artifact was turned toward social critique, something the students in India were well positioned to think about. Indeed, this artifact sparked a whole series of exchanges that helped the New York students similarly begin a campaign of social awareness.

As students worked on this film and other similarly symbolic social critiques, they began a social activist group similar in some ways to the Jaagriti group, called the Famous Nameless. As the Famous Nameless they began a series of media projects that attempted to extend their

social critique to questions about how the media represents urban youth in stereotypical ways. Jake described how this group took on an increasingly political tone but did so through their artistic focus:

I thought our video group (The Famous Nameless) while not conspiring to create overt political and social change, was, as a community of students participating in an after-school program as opposed to hanging out in the streets, an effort to confront these issues [like gangs, drugs, and violence]. Furthermore, our aesthetic work, such as the Deep in the Shallows video, was also an effort to critique and transform these issues through our artistic practices. (7/21/11 Memo)

Whereas the Jaagriti group took overt action through campaigns and marches, Jake thought of the Famous Nameless as working to confront important issues through their artistic efforts, by naming their struggles and launching an awareness campaign through video production. When Vince was asked to describe the group, he characterized it as socially active in the sense that the members used their artistic practices to help make public their ideas about improving their community:

[We're] definitely a group that dreams. Dreams of a better community. Dreams that we want to be heard or seen. We want- we have something to say. We have something to say and we want the public to hear it. That's what we are. We're just like the kids from whatever hood we're from with something to say. And we find that in this program, we can say it, and we might be able to be heard because of this program.

For Vince, the group was about two things: dreaming about ways to better their community and finding a means to be heard. Both activities were tied to the video-making and artistic practices of the program, as young people worked on videos that could help others hear what they had to say. The students tied their aesthetic work in the Famous Nameless group to its *public* dimension, aware that they were engaging in discourse that had ramifications beyond their local program site. Luisa situated this work as important because it involved both self-expression and publication: "I think that the Famous Nameless is like a group of kids that just want to express themselves in film. And so other people can understand what we see and show everybody like what we're doing" (7/28/11 Interview). She understood the group's work to involve expressing themselves through film and doing it so that others "can understand what we see." Whether being seen or heard, the goal of the Famous Nameless was to engage in public discourse.

The "Deep in the Shallows" video led to a number of communicative efforts – via poem, essay, video, blog, and posting – as students explored what they all agreed was a central problem: Students were not sure the others understood them (details of this exchange follow in the next section). As students sent messages, wrote poems, and filmed videos about what it meant to *see* and *understand* one another, they grappled with the difficulties of communicating across difference. Jake wrote about this difficulty: "After reviewing the material sent by the India girls, the NY students felt that the girls had not fully understood what they were trying to convey, a feeling they also expressed about [Karishma] after her departure" (7/21/11 Memo). But it was the *struggle* to understand one another, and the efforts to inscribe those difficulties, that led to fruitful shifts in how students saw one another as well as in their literate practices for representing that understanding. Amit talked about how these challenges in understanding one another, mediated by the recontextualization of the videos in each classroom space and framed by an individual who could narrate its trajectory, helped in the larger goals of understanding through dialogue:

[The kids in New York] kind of said that they'll never be able to survive in such an environment where there's so much poverty and there are all these problems. And when the girls in our school saw the video from New York and they kind of felt that our life is so much more better than the life in New York, because there is so much violence, and you cannot just keep to yourself, cause there's so many elements around you. And on both these sites they kind of, you know had this perception of this other place, that this is a very- if I go there I won't be secure, and I cannot be myself. And what happened in the end after the discussion was, which is what our movie says in the end, towards the end. The girls said that what we have learned out of this video is that every place has its challenges, and you just have to find a way around them. (5/10/11 Teacher Call)

For Amit, the opportunity to think through these challenges, seeing other people's struggles and trying to make sense of their everyday realities, helped students to see commonalities between themselves and others. Also, as we will now see, students negotiated what the difficulties of communicating across differences were as they turned to the network to mediate some of those challenges.

### **Literacy in Action/Literacy as Action**

As Jake and his students in New York turned their focus toward response videos and social critique, they began to use the network in different ways than before. Whereas previously students blogged because Jake directed them to reflect about their practice (see Chapter Four), now they began to blog about the videos as a kind of commentary that became part of the fabric of the video interchange. Blogs and other functions of the network became a way to extend the video composing practices into the networked community, and these voluntarily written commentaries functioned as interpretive tools that foregrounded the relationship between interpretation and composing. As students in New York engaged in this complementary writing online, they drew connections between the videos and the collaborative interpretive work of understanding those videos, offering others in the networked community a kind of guide for interpretation. Emilio talked about this newly discovered role of the blogs as a kind of exegesis, a means to assist others in their interpretive process:

The blogs are to help people. Say, we blog about the videos, we reach out to try to get the person on the right path to thinking what we want them to think. Because our videos- they're awesome. But they're also like, like you think a lot. Our videos are made for you to think, understand? Our videos is not just on one central idea, it's like multiple ideas that you can have. And it's like, it really, you really use your brain while watching our videos. (7/28/11 Interview).

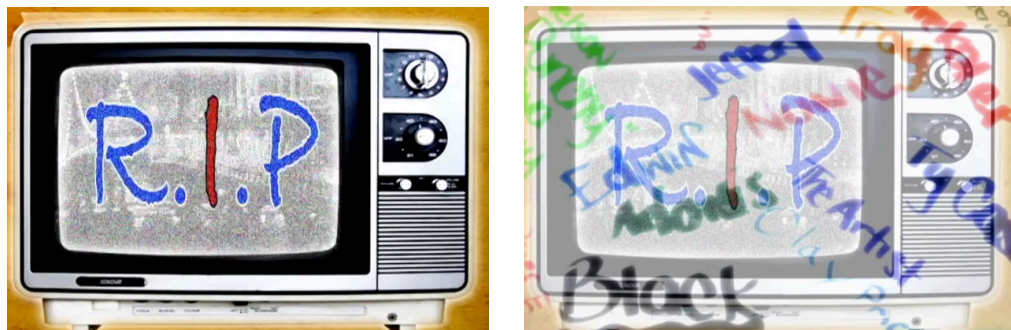
While Emilio talked about getting a person on "the right path," he did not seem to mean this as though the videos had one meaning or that the New York participants' intended meaning was the only correct one. Rather, he talked about the videos as multivoiced and multifaceted, with "multiple ideas you can have" rather than a "central idea." The blogs were thus assistive, to "help people" in this interpretive work of making sense of the multiple ideas and to help people think.

As students engaged in making films that were highly abstract and artistically complex, they knew that the networked community might have difficulty understanding parts of the videos. When they filmed "Deep in the Shallows," Karishma asked Jake about how he planned to help other students understand the complex interweaving of symbols that students were integrating: "How will the people in India understand it?" Jake reassured Karishma that



struggling to understand and come to joint understandings through dialogue and interpretive work, without first being told what the intended meaning was, would be generative. He encouraged her to let the students struggle to figure it out before turning elsewhere: “Well that’s the, that’s a part of the interpretive process, to allow the girls from India to first interpret how they see it. Then they [pointing to the New York students] will write blogs, explaining exactly the meaning that’s happening” (4/7/11 Video Transcript). While he wanted the students in India to puzzle together over how to interpret the film, he also acknowledged that the blogs would help give the students in India direction.

As the filming and editing of “Deep in the Shallows” proceeded over the subsequent weeks, the participants decided a more formal document, which they called a viewing guide, would help document their interpretive decisions in making the film. This viewing guide, while physically written by the researcher Elena, was a joint interpretive effort that took an essayistic form. Almost four pages in length, the document was titled “Viewing Guide for ‘Deep in the Shallows’: A Response to the Jaagruti Video” and shared with the networked community via email, dropbox, and network (the full text is available in Appendix C). It began with a general overview of the topic of the movie: “‘Deep in the Shallows’ is a story about how a life can change in a matter of seconds. It is a story about gang life in New York and the struggles that young people face every day.” In these opening lines, the New York participants particularized and contextualized the narrative for viewers – this was a “story about gang life in New York” – while also offering links to ongoing conversations and larger narratives any young people could relate to – this was also a story about “struggles that young people face every day” and “how life can change in a matter of seconds.” As simultaneously a locally situated story and a globally relevant one, the narrative told through four acts was explicated in detail in the viewing guide, especially the film’s many symbols and personal meanings. For example, the end of the film included an R.I.P. scene, which Santiago, Nina, and Emilio had suggested would be a way of personalizing the story by including names of their family and friends lost (see Figure 6.1).



**Figure 6.1. Screenshots of the R.I.P. Scene in the “Deep in the Shallows” Video**

In the first screen, blue and red letters spelling out R.I.P. appeared in the screen of the old fashioned television set (a symbol of the distorted role of media representation explained in the viewing guide); in the second screen, handwritten names appeared in many colors superimposed over the whole previous image. The viewing guide explained how students designed this memorial section of the video: “The RIP (rest in peace) that appears on the screen is a shout-out for all of our friends that have been killed as a result of gang violence. We wrote some of their names down as tribute to them, and these names can’t be contained on the TV screen because their deaths are too real for TV.” This explanation helped viewers understand the personal meanings of the names included as well as the symbolism of the names being superimposed over

the image of the television rather than contained within it (a critique of the media's depersonalization and sensationalizing of the real loss of these young people). The viewing guide thus was intended to help others understand the different textual and symbolic elements (e.g., RIP, the names of loved ones killed, the positioning of the names, the handwritten image of the names) to deepen the viewing experience.

In addition to helping people interpret their work through commentary material like blogs and viewing guides, students in New York spent a lot of effort in promoting their movies, often through their status messages, wall postings, or private messages sent to online friends. A big effort was expended toward the students in India, who were the prime conversational partners, but these efforts extended as well to many others in the community. Luisa and Nina in particular spent much time posting on people's walls and exhorting them to please watch. Luisa sent a personalized version of this message to 21 people in total:

Hi bhumika how are you ??? we watched your video about domestic violence ,and we made a response to it called Deep In The Shallows ...PLEASE WATCH IT !!!!!!!!! and if you have any questions send them to me :) (4/14/11 Wall Posting)

In this message, Luisa connected the "Deep in the Shallows" video to the Jaagriti video as a "response" and though the use capital letters and multiple exclamation marks strongly encouraged Shushma to watch it. She addressed the message to Shushma directly (using her screen name bhumika) and encouraged her to send questions and begin a dialogue about the movies. Nina did the same kind of extensive outreach, personalizing the different promotional messages:

Hey my name is [Nina] we watched you domestic violence video as well as the video about your home life. It was very inspiring and gave my class an jump off idea for our own video called Deep In The Shallows. write me back with any questions :) (4/14/11 Wall Posting)

Similarly to Luisa, Nina personalized the message to Bhakti, talking about her personal video about her home life, and encouraged further dialogue while also foregrounding the relationship between the different films. Nina credited the videos as inspiring their own response and characterized it as a "jump off idea" for their own work – something the teachers had been eager to encourage from the start. This kind of promotion of the film across the private and public spaces of the network helped connect the videos to the networked space and facilitated the overt links between the videos by the externalization of those relationships through the messages. But this promotional work also seemed to indicate that students felt responsible to one another to get the message out into the community and begin a dialogue about the films, as they positioned themselves as helpful interlocutors interested in answering questions.

The students in India spent quite a lot of time trying to puzzle out the different layers of the video, and they engaged in a number of activities to try to push their thinking forward. They wrote in notebooks and composed responses at the same time they watched the video multiple times and interpreted the film with the guidance of Karishma who had been in New York for the inception of it. They then filmed a series of video questions and sent them to the students in New York as well as wrote interpretive poems that they shared via the network on blogs and via Amit on Dropbox. Deepa's poem is characteristic of the poems that the girls shared:

**Those people**

What storm is this?

That they feel they must give away their lives so easily?

Where still, people weep

Because they know they will lose their dear ones.  
Gone are happy days,  
Now, only bloodshed is left to them.  
Oh Lord! Why did you take away their happy days  
And in return give them a life full of darkness?  
Why has the moon hidden behind the clouds  
Mother! Don't you still want to see my face?  
Fear has crept into their minds  
It has planted the seed of terrorism  
We must uproot this weed  
United we stand against it,  
Stand upright!  
Slap it on its face.  
Together we stand and walk hand in hand,  
Because we are persons first  
Equal -  
No less than anyone else.

This poem, which reflected Deepa's struggle to understand ("What storm is this?"), turned toward a message of hope at the end, as she positioned herself as both champion and ally of the students in New York. She exhorted them to take action ("Stand upright!") as well as offered her support to work together ("Together we stand and walk hand in hand"). These poems inspired the New York youth to their own kinds of creative responses, like Santiago who wrote on Deepa's wall:

Hey [Deepa]. I read your poem about our movie and I really liked it. I wanted to share you a poem that I wrote -- I was inspired by my school because my school is very violent and they do not understand what peace is. Thanks for taking the time to read it.

[Santiago]

We Fight.

We fight and fight -

fight for hate

fight for pride.

We fight for no good cause,

we fight to the death,

we fight a war that never ends.

We fight until we all die.

Too bad we didn't know that fighting never brings  
peace.

By [Santiago Flores] (5/10/11 Wall Posting)

This poem, something written entirely by Santiago without the support of Jake and Elena (a first), represents a significant moment for him in the project. He reached out to someone he only knew through their efforts to mutually define their everyday struggles, and he did so by connecting publicly in the networked space through an exchange of poems. He also linked the topic of struggle to violence at school ("my school is very violent"), an ongoing topic for social critique in the New York site, as a way to contextualize his poem for Deepa and explain his inspiration. He also framed his public message as part of an ongoing conversation with Deepa

across genres, platforms, and modes – his poem (on her S2C8 wall) was a response to her poem (from her blog), which was a response to the “Deep in the Shallows” video, which was a response to the Jaagriti video. The topic of the poem, about the inability of fighting to lead to peace, echoed Deepa’s lament about the futility of senseless violence, an acknowledgement that he heard her call for peace but could not see a way to stop the fighting. For someone who was a reluctant writer and a very self-conscious communicator, who initially told me that he was not interested in talking to people in other countries (7/26/10 Interview), this move toward self-sponsored (public!) exchange of poetry with an Indian peer was a significant step, one that indicated how engaged in the conversation about struggle and violence he was.

The video questions that the Indian girls recorded and sent to New York also occasioned a number of rather impassioned and extended responses, in large part because the students in New York felt that the girls in India did not fully understand the complexities of the problems portrayed in the film. They thought the questions were too one-dimensional, asking for example, “Why do you think so many kids consume drugs when they know it’s bad for them?” This question by Usree, as well as the others about why the New York students would get caught up in gangs and engage in behaviors they knew were wrong, prompted many elaborate messages as the students in New York thoughtfully responded. In a lengthy response by Nina via private message to Usree (the full message exchange can be found in Appendix D), Nina attempted to explain some of the motivations and everyday realities of growing up in New York (excerpted here):

Thanks for taking the time to view our movie a deep in the shallows, Its important to understand that some kids (teenagers) do have parents that support them and sometimes these kids feel as though times has changed and their parent do not understand the things that are going on today. The idea of what is good and bad is determined by culture 1st. Parents do teach their kids right from wrong and protect them from the reality of what really is outside in the "streets" The world is never just black & white/ good and bad theres always grey or in between. As you may know its very hard to protect someone from the many dangers the world has in store. ...Here in America because we have free education its not really valued as much. Kids think they could make as much money being in the streets than actually going to college getting a job to make a better honest living. -Most parents aren't aware that their kids take drugs. Most times kids hide it. -Most times when people are in gangs they are some what proud to state their gang because they want others to know what they represent. (5/10/11 Private Message)

Nina wanted Usree to understand that the “world is never just black and white” and that culture had a major influence on the complex reasons for gang affiliation. She also spent time in her response explaining how education was not valued as much as in India, and this thoughtful reply led Usree to respond (in part): “hey thanks for sharing your thoughts with me. you know some problems in India are similar to the problems of America” (5/14/11 Private Message). This sharing of thoughts helped Usree understand the problems of the two countries to be more similar than she imagined when she first saw “Deep in the Shallows.” The length and detail of the New York students’ messages represented a new use of the communication system – to extend conversations from classroom discussions and video viewing into the online space. This exchange of elaborate and substantial messages was the kind of communication that teachers had been hoping to prompt for years.

In addition to writing poems and posting online in response, the students in New York thought about different ways they could help communicate some of the complexities of their everyday lives toward the purpose of facilitating *understanding*. Emilio wrote a poem about this difficulty of understanding across different lifeworlds, and he then turned the poem into a video to illustrate how difficult it is to understand without experiencing a culture firsthand. He explained that what motivated him to write the poem and make the video were the students in India who did not seem to understand the complexities of the problem as portrayed in the “Deep in the Shallows” video:

And that [watching “Deep in the Shallows”] turned into a situation in which they really didn't understand why were things going on, they were talking about, "You could prevent it by this and that", and it was just like, it was like "How are we like gonna show them that this is not, that we can prevent it, it just happens." Like, peer pressure and stuff like that. So I created this video, well a poem with the help of [Jake] about two worlds that they wanna know each other, but they don't know like how to start. They don't know where to begin. They don't know how, what's going on. And basically at the end I said that there's gonna be one thing which nobody cares where anybody's from. The only thing that will matter is you as a person, that you, as where you come from. (7/28/11 Interview)

When he felt the students in India “really didn’t understand,” he contemplated “how are we gonna show them” (“we” revealing how he thought of this as a collaborative effort). He decided to write a poem in response, which he then made into a video. He worked closely with Jake to translate his poem to video form, and this collaboration resulted in a three minute and 44 second movie Emilio called “Space-Time.”<sup>13</sup> In this video, he read his poem, which he said in his interview was about “two worlds” that want to know each other and don’t know “how to start.” His poem ended with a message of hope: that at the end of these struggles will be an appreciation for who someone is “as a person” rather than where someone is from.

Emilio wrote about his poem and video in a blog entry that published the text of the poem and explained a bit more about his intentions in making both the film and video (see Figure 6.2). In his blog, Emilio explained that the end of his movie held out hope that in the future people’s actions (not where they were from or their skin color) would be the most important criteria. He also explained that his poem was a response to the “Indian poems” that were in turn a response to “Deep in the Shallows” (itself a response to the Jaagriti video). These multimodal and cross-platform responses – across video, blogs, poems – required young people to read/view/compose across multiple texts in order to understand and continue the larger narrative trajectory. Each piece of the response sequence added depth and nuance to the conversation, something that Emilio’s poem addressed directly by virtue of its meta-aware treatment of the previous exchanges: “There are two worlds yearning to know one another/Compelled to close, the great distance between them.” Emilio’s poem and video both sought to understand how the two different worlds (i.e., India and New York) could understand one another without “knowing the soil” where the seeds of struggle were planted. That is, how could the India and New York sites hope to understand one another’s struggles without having experienced the locality, the place, the “soil” that made those struggles comprehensible?

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<sup>13</sup> This video can be found in the gallery on [www.space2cre8.com](http://www.space2cre8.com)

# spacetime

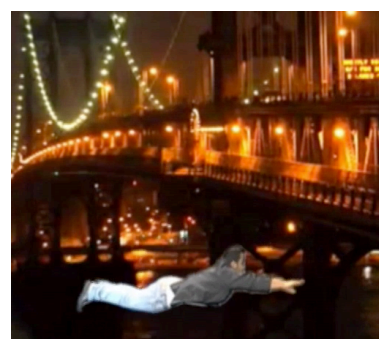
Here are the words to my poem from the video SpaceTime:

Words can travel across oceans, but emotions cannot,  
Emotions are meant to be felt and seen with the human heart and eyes,  
Words are just words, they mean nothing without the companionship of expressive action.  
There are two worlds, yearning to know one another,  
Compelled to close, the great distance between them.  
But how can we visualize, the seeds that rooted our struggle,  
Without knowing the soil where they have been planted.  
Through time our leaves will change and fall,  
As the springtime comes, our leaves will sprout a new dawning era,  
That will fill others with the fruit of compassion and understanding.

This poem was made in response to the Indian poems that replied to our "Deep In Swallows", the poem was meant to express the struggle between different cultures and how an age will come and bring about a new era in which the color of your skin or where your from, a era in which you will be judged by the actions and not you are. The Rainbow man describes how this new era is coming upon us and how we bring our different cultures together to create one united culture

**Figure 6.2. Emilio's 7/14/11 Blog**

Emilio represented this dilemma in his video through a complex set of multimodal design decisions in which he remixed footage from India and New York videos, footage from Jackson's space station video, found images, and live footage from an interview Emilio conducted with a New York street performer (named Rainbow Man, mentioned in his blog). The movie unfolded across four phases, the first beginning in a 1960's space station (Jackson's found footage, repurposed here to establish the setting, playfully, in "space"). Emilio can be seen in the monitor flying through outer space, and we enter into the second phase as Emilio flew toward Earth and through clouds. I focus here on the second phase, in which Emilio superimposed himself (via green screen technology) in a number of symbolically important spaces from S2C8 to illustrate how he sought understanding across the Indian and New York contexts (see Figure 6.3).





**Figure 6.3. Second Phase of Emilio’s “Space-Time” Video**

Working closely with Jake, Emilio depicted himself trying to “see” the different sites by inserting himself into iconic scenes from New York and India as haunting instrumental music played in the background. In the first shot, Emilio flew through a crowded New York street and into a key scene from “Deep in the Shallows,” the jumping in of the gang member, before flying toward the ocean past the iconic Brooklyn Bridge image from that same movie. Next, Emilio flew across the ocean at sunrise, literally traversing the world. He next flew through the India Gate and then in front of the Taj Mahal, both iconic images placing him in India, before flying through the India school tour video. This sequence of scenes, depicting his physical self journeying to “close the great distance” between the two worlds, was part of the larger effort of the film to contextualize the poem for the networked community. By using key texts from the two sites (e.g., the “Deep in the Shallows” and India school tour videos), Emilio situated his video within a larger narrative trajectory, also expanding that narrative trajectory in new ways by experimenting with the semiotic modalities afforded through video remixing.

The “Space-Time” composing by Emilio (across blog, poem, and video) represents one example of how the New York and Indian young people were engaged in a kind of transmedia storytelling, which Jenkins (2006) has defined as a process in which a narrative is told across different media, ideally with each medium contributing in a unique way to the larger story. Jenkins (2007) argues that transmedia storytelling involves radical intertextuality, or the movement of a story across multiple texts in the same medium (the Jaagriti, “Deep in the Shallows,” and “Space-Time” videos, for example, as an extended narrative about struggle), as well as multimodality, which he defines as the way different media involve different representations with different affordances for interaction (“Space-Time” as blog, poem, and video for example). In the “Space-Time” example, the poem, blog, and video each extended a larger narrative about *understanding across difference* by including an embodied character actively exploring each of the S2C8 media artifacts for enlightenment (and later in the video, by interviewing a street performer who talked about all of the world’s cultures coming together). It was multimodal (across video, blog, and poem) and intertextual (expanding the story across multiple texts). Also, Emilio’s effort extended earlier conversations that began with the Jaagriti and “Deep in the Shallows” videos and carried across other blogs, poems, and videos as well as discussions about those texts, which added a historical dimension to the storytelling process. The composing of these response videos, by extending narratives across the network, local program sites, and media, *expanded* how young people understood networked composing:

I think it's really interesting, the response videos. Cause when I see response videos on YouTube it's really just people asking questions about whatever the first video was. But like what we do going back and forth with India is pretty much putting the same type of topic in the video, or having a continuation of

whatever the first video was. So it's pretty much like creating a storyline with another, with the kids in India” (Lola, 7/28/11 Interview).

Lola described how the storytelling across videos went beyond the commenting normally found on YouTube to include a collaborative extension of narrative. By “creating a storyline” with one another, students were engaged in transmedia storytelling across the S2C8 community.

While Emilio and the other students were certainly engaged in storytelling across texts and modes, I argue that these efforts also constituted literacy in action, the global and local intersecting in powerful ways in Emilio and his peers’ meaning making practices. Young people were taking action in the world, reflecting on that action, and trying to understand that action through a set of creative compositions that extended and analyzed the conceptual efforts of the S2C8 community. Brandt and Clinton (2002) define literacy-in-action as a powerful construct that suggests how literacy as a mediator functions both *in* action and *as* action:

We want to retain attention to the role of literacy in human action: how readers and writers mediate their social world through literate practice (i.e., literate action as part of our action). But we also want to consider the additional question of how literacy acts as a social agent, as an independent mediator (i.e., literacy, itself, in action). The construct orients us to ask: What part does literacy play in the action and what does it look like in action? (p. 349).

They argue that literacy is important in mediating our actions but also that literacy itself can act as a social agent, a Latourian insight that assigns agentic status to objects as essential to how meaning is made in relationship with people. Brandt and Clinton argue that literacy can function as a form of action in its role in building and sustaining “long connections across time and space,” a kind of “transcontextualizing work” that connects people and text via inscribed documents that can be re-framed and re-situated in different time and place (p. 347). In the S2C8 project, the videos operated as these kinds of bridge texts, transcontextualizing meanings *across* spaces in complex ways and connecting people and ideas over time. In answer to Brandt and Clinton’s question about what literacy looks like in action/as action, I would argue that it looks like the response exchange between India and New York, whereby these powerful videos (which are of course connected to multiple other texts across platforms) accomplish something in the world, allowing young people’s voices to be heard and their stories to be seen. In other words, the response videos between India and New York were forms of action that connected the local and global in new configurations and connected people in the networked community in new ways.

### **S2C8 as a Global Public**

One of the most important ways that literacy functioned *in* action and *as* action was via the network itself, which operated as a kind of ‘public sphere’ for young people to try out ideas and ways of being in the world with support from peers and teachers. Space2Cre8 fulfilled an important but complex role for the New York students, a kind of public space unlike most were used to. First, the network connected kids who had never met and were not linked via shared affinity spaces or mutual interests, a use of social networking that ran counter to the ways people generally connected via social networks. Second, the network connected kids from very different backgrounds around the world, who spoke many different languages and lived in very different circumstances, and often students did not know how to begin talking to other kids across these differences or how to carry forward a conversation that had sputtered out. Finally, as an educational network, S2C8 had a different purpose, structure, and visibility than other social



networks, so it was more of a ‘private’ public than YouTube in the sense that anything posted would only be seen by S2C8 members. Lola, a savvy social networker who participated in many kinds of youth forums and was an avid fan fiction writer and gamer, talked about this difference between the public nature of S2C8 and YouTube in regard to publishing her video poem: “I felt like the video itself was really good job, and I really wanted to share it. So on Space2Cre8, if you're not a member you can't watch it. So putting it on YouTube means that other people can see it and leave comments and stuff, and I'm actually looking forward to see how many views it gets” (7/28/11 Interview). This view of S2C8 as more limited in audience than the World Wide Web was both a boon and a drawback for students. Certainly for teens like Lola, the limited number of people who could view her video meant that she regularly sought wider audiences outside of S2C8 as well. But others, referring to S2C8 as a kind of “educational Facebook,” imagined it to be “safer” than other places online since it was closed and monitored. For some students, especially those in South Africa and India in the early years, S2C8 represented the first and often only social network they belonged to, and so for these students it became an important public venue for their work as the only outlet to which they had access. For all students, though, it offered a new public kind of space that foregrounded global audiences and connected them to other adolescents around the world who were engaged in similar new media composing projects.

Space2Cre8 functioned as what danah boyd (2011) has called a “networked public,” which she defined as “simultaneously (1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice” (p. 39). S2C8, as both a *space* and an *imagined collective*, allowed students to “gather for social, cultural, and civic purposes” as well as “connect with a world beyond their close friends and family” (boyd, 2011, p. 39). That is, students could use S2C8 as a place for taking action in the world and learning about and meeting new people – it opened up new ways of imagining themselves in relation to others in the world. Jake talked about Space2Cre8 as this kind of space, populated by unknown audiences beyond those that students are accustomed to writing for: “And you know, and I do think that it [S2C8] always, it's always a space to share your work with an audience. And an audience that's not just your teachers and your friends in the room” (2/4/11 Interview). As Jake explained, S2C8 functioned as a venue, a place for sharing with invisible audiences beyond those people we know, like teachers or friends. Amit talked about the space as also a kind of community, a means to bind others together and give them a reason to persist in creating media projects:

[Space2Cre8] binds all the sites together. The network, in a way, binds everything together, and gives them a reason to do their stuff. Like they're making this documentary. They know that they for sure have an audience on this network. If they're not able to show it anywhere else, they can put it on this network. So it gives them a reason to work on these projects. (1/4/11 Interview)

By “binding everything together,” S2C8 functioned as a space and a community both, and as Amit and Jake argued, S2C8 functioned as a central influence on students’ compositions. However, both Jake and Amit were quick to point out that the influence of the networked community was often indirect, though even this indirect influence proved quite powerful.

For many of the young people, even the ones who rarely logged onto S2C8 or never spoke to a student from another program online, the biggest impact of S2C8 seemed to be in its role as an *imagined* space. For Jake’s students in particular, the network functioned as a way to “bind” them – they felt connected to one another and to others in the world via this special program, which linked them in new ways to people they otherwise would not be connected to.

Jake talked about the importance of this indirect influence on students' composing, as they tried to figure out what these imagined audiences would need from them as authors. This imagining of an audience was vital to the process of writing the reflective blogs he required, even if audiences did not read or respond. It was the act of *trying to imagine* them that Jake thought was valuable in building a sense of community:

I'm not sure that any of their blogs have ever received a comment or anything like that. But they're writing it and they're thinking like, there is an audience out there that's- could read it. So do they have that in mind, whether they believe it or not. They are thinking, 'This is a public statement about what I'm doing. I am trying to-' It's not a journal entry in that way, right? Where you're just speaking to yourself. You are demonstrating to a group of people, like, 'this is what I've been doing,' so you have to explain yourself. And it's- you have to think international, I think that they do. (10/28/10 Interview)

The presence of the international community, a "public" audience beyond the local, was very important in building and indeed legitimating students' artistic work in New York. Jake thought that part of the responsibility students owed to themselves and others was to explain themselves (make a "public statement") and document their everyday lives online ("demonstrating" what they were doing). Even the potential that others could read the blogs was enough to help students think about their work in new ways. Indeed, for Jake, the act of making a public statement (regardless of what happened afterward) was the important action students needed to take.

Jake talked about the influence of these international audiences ("you have to think international") on students' composing processes, as they negotiated not just any networked public but a distinctly global one. The global audiences were important for kids to be able to "see these global identities at work" (9/17/10 Interview) as they imagined themselves part of the world and as actors influencing that world through their compositions:

Even though they're not commenting on things, again I think it's just the idea, like I'm part of this international space, like, there's this audience of people out there. I have no idea who they are, like, they sometimes randomly hit me up on a chat and I get a random friend request, and- So, maybe that is the point of the project. Just to be in a place to imagine this big world. (10/28/10 Interview)

Jake pondered whether the point of the project was indeed for young people to imagine themselves as connected to others, thinking about themselves as a kind of global citizen in an expanded social world ("to imagine this big world"). For Jake, S2C8 operated as "a place to imagine" that big world, an imagined kind of community and a space where one shared one's work with others.

As we have seen though, over time the New York participants began to feel more of a sense of responsibility toward the networked community, especially because these audiences were interactive and responsive in ways that disconcerted some students and helped them see what their audiences needed in new ways. For example, Isabella was flustered when a message she sent received a thoughtful reply. She had originally sent the following private message to a new student in Australia:

Hey wassup my name is [Isabella] I live in New York City and my teacher is forcing to ask someone about Australia so I decided to pick you out of idk how many ppl.... So my question to you is Do you live in a city or a town by the beach? What kind of music do you listen to? What is the style over there? Do you have a second language? (10/19/10 Private Message)

While Isabella had some detailed questions that showed she had thought about what she wanted to learn about the new Australian participants, she also framed it as an assignment that she was fulfilling without much enthusiasm (her teacher was forcing her to ask the questions). Isabella, like other students, had sent many messages that were not answered and like Amit argued, the students did not always feel “real” to one another. So when Isabella got an answer, she was both shocked and excited:

[Isabella] squealed in delight and said, ‘[Jake], she answered!’ I went over and looked over [Isabella’s] shoulder – she was reading a response from [a girl] in Australia. [Jake] walked over and looked over her shoulder. He said, “good, now answer her back!” ... [Isabella] read it partly out loud, and said, “That’s so cool! I can’t believe it. I didn’t even think she’d answer.” I asked her why she thought that, and she said, “I don’t know. I just figured.” I teased her about the fact she said her teacher [Jake] made her ask someone questions, and said maybe her teacher made her answer? And she looked embarrassed and said, “Nah, I bet she just wanted to. That’s so cool!” I then saw her spend the remainder of the period composing an answer, absorbed completely in the screen in front of her. (10/26/10 Field Note)

Clearly Isabella was both delighted and surprised that a student from Australia would write back a detailed answer, motivating her to answer in kind and sparking an exchange about music, geography, and school. When Isabella answered about school, she wrote in part, “The thing I don’t like is that we have metal detectors. We get scan and there’s no phones allowed here” (10/26/10 Private Message). Isabella felt obligated to return the Australian girl’s message in kind, offering honest and detailed examples about her life and tastes. This exchange offers a small example of the kind of “obligations to offer hospitality to the stranger in the symbolic space of media representation” that Silverstone (2007) argues is part of our participation in mediated public spaces.

As the students in New York began using the network in new ways to communicate with students in India about their mutual efforts to take action in the world, they engaged in these “hospitable” interpretive practices, taking time to answer messages thoughtfully and seeking out new opportunities for dialogue. Like Isabella and others discovered, they had obligations to audiences who answered and shaped the conversations in new ways. As more students engaged in these kinds of exchanges, especially with the rise of the response video genre, they began to consider other kinds of obligations they owed to one another as audiences and authors engaged in joint meaning making across networked spaces – to be generous interpreters, to answer one another’s messages thoughtfully and honestly, to collaborate on creative endeavors together in respectful ways. When students engaged in joint meaning making practices with others in the networked community, they began to consider their responsibilities to one another and to take action in the world in new ways. Having these imagined and real audiences in this mediated global public of Space2Cre8 was the most important factor in the participants’ efforts to understand across cultural difference:

For without the presence of the other – the presence of the other, once again, on his or her own terms in our media space – there is no possibility of an other. And without an audience, without an acceptance of the other’s voice, there can be no understanding of the other in his or her difference, and as part of our world.” (Silverstone, 2007, p. 143)

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

*It is the continued co-presence of multiple voices that defines, both actually and potentially, the possibility of spaces of mutual hospitality in the mediapolis. For hospitality begins in the recognition of the other and in the sound of his or her voice. It is a hospitality of a cosmopolitan society and of an intensely mediated culture. It involves sharing that space and taking responsibility for it. And it involves all parties accepting the obligation to open their space to the stranger irrespective of their position in the media hierarchy.*

Silverstone, 2007, p. 143

Since social networking is a relatively new phenomenon, with an explosion of social network sites and users since 2004 (boyd & Ellison, 2008), it is not surprising that there has been little research to date on young people's literacy practices on social networks or on the educational applications of social networking. We are at a critical juncture in educational research, as texts, ideas, and people rapidly circulate around the world (Appadurai, 1996) and social networks connect audiences, authors, and texts in new relationships (J. Lemke, in press) with heightened responsibilities and obligations (Silverstone, 2007). This dissertation study represents an effort to map how teachers and students negotiated these new relationships in a globally networked environment, in what is arguably the first empirically documented educational social networking project. The study contributes to our understanding of three emerging phenomena that are important to explore in light of people's rapidly increasing participation in networked learning environments: the prevalence of writing in our everyday lives; the difficulty of incorporating interactive technologies into educational contexts; and the need to account for the global in educational spaces. Even though more and more people are writing in their everyday lives in the company of other writers (Brandt, 2012), often composing across multiple modes (Bezemer & Kress, 2010) and for networked publics (boyd, 2011), we are still in the very earliest stages of articulating these new models of composing (Haas & Takayoshi, 2011; Yancey, 2009b). And while we know that the richly interactive and collaborative practices afforded by networked communication have promise for learning and literacy development (Davies & Merchant, 2009), evidence continues to mount showing that educational institutions have not yet been successful at integrating those practices (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; Snyder & Dillow, 2011), particularly in schools serving low-income students (Reich, Murnane, & Willett, 2012). And in light of the fact that we are living our lives across globalized social and cultural spaces characterized by transnational movements of media and people (Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009; Lam & Warriner, 2012), there is a pressing need to understand how teaching and learning can foster the development of communicative competencies for interacting with others different from oneself (Balistreri, Di Giacomo, Noisette, & Ptak, 2011; Hawisher, Selfe, Kisa, Ahmed, 2009). This need is particularly significant as more people engage with one another across transnational networks, grappling not just with differences in language, culture, or ideology but with the heightened challenges of mediated communication. This study has offered a window into how these three emergent yet little understood phenomena played out in an educational social networking project, as teachers and students collaborated in a networked learning environment to engage in new composing

practices, incorporate digital technologies for educational purposes, and interact with globally diverse peers.

### **Discussion of Main Findings**

It is well documented that a complex interplay of contextual factors affects how information and communication technologies (ICTs) are incorporated into classrooms (e.g., Cuban et al., 2001; Ertmer, 2005; Laat, Lally, Lipponen, & Simons, 2006), and this study certainly reinforced those findings as participants faced difficulties ranging from the technological to the motivational. However, teachers' beliefs about social networking and networked composing emerged as the most significant factor in how teachers used the social network in their classrooms. Whether teachers tried to integrate the network into the regular curriculum, into their extra-curricular classes, or into the after-school space, all of them shared the belief that social networking should just proceed 'naturally,' without intervention. For the five teachers in the Space2Cre8 project, the social network offered a space unmediated by teachers and apart from school, where students could engage in self-expression more freely. They believed that the network provided the space for personal and expressive writing that could flourish in the networked context, apart from school strictures and demands. However, when teachers realized that their students were not engaging on the network as voluntarily or voluminously as they anticipated, they thought something was wrong: with the project (e.g., it was too "adult-driven" [Amit]), with their school site (e.g., there was not enough time [Kgotso]), with their teaching (e.g., they should have motivated students more [Maja]), or with the website (e.g., it was not engaging enough [Jackson]). The lack of interaction became a problem to be solved because all five teachers held largely tacit beliefs about social networking as a primarily self-sponsored activity that should not require teacher intervention or direction. Even when teachers decided that they needed to step in to address the problem, all of them framed their involvement as temporary, a necessary but short-term step until students engaged with one another on their own and they could retreat.

As teachers worked with one another to address issues that arose, such as students' lack of interaction on the network, they confronted a number of ideological contradictions about what role teachers should play in both the local and global communities. For the most part, all of the teachers tried to take up a facilitator role in their classrooms in order to circumvent more traditional and evaluative teacher-student relationships. While teachers built rapport with students and created close relationships via their role as a kind of coach or mentor, this facilitative position offered teachers little opportunity to push students to take up critical perspectives. Teachers were loath to overly direct students, especially in light of the highly personal creative artifacts students often created, but they also thought that students needed guidance. In light of this contradiction teachers struggled with how much they should direct students' engagement in the project—on the one hand, teachers wanted students to be free to compose meaningful self-representative artifacts, while on the other hand, they felt responsible to the other teachers to have students post artifacts regularly and participate in meaningful learning exchanges. In order for students to learn through substantive and issue-driven exchanges rather than friendship-driven communication (Ito et al., 2010), the teachers recognized that they would need to take a more active role than they originally envisioned. This conflict about what role to take and how much to guide students in what they believed should be a primarily student-driven enterprise represented one of the central contradictions for the teachers in the project.

In addition to contradictions about the role that teachers should adopt, participants struggled with what role the network should play in the project. A central contradiction about the network involved the teachers' divergent understandings of the purpose of the network—as a place for sharing work and/or as a communicative learning space. As a sharing space, the teachers framed the network as a kind of artifact repository, somewhere to put student work. They saw it as a place for learning *about* one another, by virtue of reading and viewing one another's artifacts. Competing with this view of the network was one that saw it as a place for learning *from* and *with* one another, through interaction and dialogue—what we might call a dialogic space. While some of the teachers expanded how they saw the relationship between learning and S2C8, as *both* a sharing and dialogic space, these two ways of seeing the network existed in some tension for participants. Engaging in dialogue entailed different kinds of relationships between authors, audiences, and texts than sharing, since dialogue required young people to take on active roles in commenting, responding to, and building on one another's texts over time while sharing only obligated authors to post their texts online without further action. One of the ways that the teachers worked to resolve this contradiction was by embracing *difficulty* as part of the work of the project, framing the network as a kind of contact zone that highlighted difference and difficulty. Teachers thus came to see the network as a place where different voices could interact in sometimes tense or uncomfortable ways, and their position as teachers would be to support students in this enterprise. One of the most important dimensions of this study was the way that participants grappled with and made explicit *difficulty*, a struggle that in turn enabled new insights and innovations. While cultural historical activity theory offers us a framework to understand how contradiction can serve as a generative means of creating innovative responses to challenges, this study points to the importance of participants working together to name those struggles. When teachers began to articulate the central challenge as difficulty in generating dialogue, they made explicit the competing and contradictory ideological discourses around schooling and social media. I argue that as teachers incorporate ICTs in educational spaces, especially technologies that offer networked opportunities for authors and audiences to interact, these competing discourses about what constitutes the 'social' and the 'academic' can operate as a contradiction at a tacit level. For much of the project, these contradictions were seen as untenable challenges, and until participants began working together to name the competing discourses there seemed no easy way past them.

In the S2C8 activity system, artifacts played a significant role in mediating participants' understandings of the activity at hand and helping teachers name the challenges and contradictions of the project. Certainly different mediational means that afforded circulation throughout the networked community became important, like the Dropbox that allowed teachers to import and export movies to show in their classrooms. But the most influential mediational artifacts were the participant-created videos, a discourse genre that helped young people to "see" each other in new ways, offered spaces for teachers to take up facilitative roles, and allowed the exploration of *difficulty*. As objects that could move across the many spaces of the networked community—on an individual's profile or the gallery pages on the network, on teachers' flash drives or computers, on the Dropbox—the videos were easily re-embedded in the different program sites and circulated widely around the S2C8 community. As both material objects (participants could manipulate the videos, replaying and remixing them on computers) and symbolic ones (they represented people and ideas through narrative), videos became important as "tertiary" or imagined artifacts (Cole, 1996; Wartofsky, 1979) that could mediate students' understanding of one another's worlds. Kell (2009) has called these kinds of mediational objects

“joins,” which build up durable meanings as they become recontextualized in new contexts over time. In her study, a journal and a set of building plans became the important material/symbolic objects that crossed space and time and linked spaces together. In the S2C8 activity system, student-created videos operated as the joins, traveling between places and functioning as important objects to be recontextualized and remixed in particular locales, with particular participants, for particular purposes.

One of the primary ways that participants resolved contradictions in the project was through innovating potential solutions using these tertiary artifacts, which resulted in the emergence of the response video genre. Important in shifting participant frameworks and creating new composing opportunities, the response videos became ongoing narrative trajectories that told stories important to young people across program sites using multiple modalities. By foregrounding modalities other than language, this genre opened up new interpretive spaces through narrative ambiguity, inspiring young people to carry forward narratives that told stories across places and time. For example, in the “Worlds Collide” response video sequence between New York and Oakland the students explored issues related to anger by repeating key textual elements—the hallway, the water bottle, the songs—to tell a story about how anger could color all of one’s relationships with others. Students began to expand their ideas of what constituted writing, as they began to see it not as something to be owned or as belonging to any one person; as Roxy said, the video-making was a collaborative writing process that involved the teachers and students across sites and over time. These video artifacts, as collaborative achievements, remained always ‘unfinished,’ both in the sense that someone else could take up and continue the narrative trajectory at any time but also in the sense that the videos were open to many interpretations. This expansive notion of writing as composing across time, spaces, ideas, modalities, or languages opened up new potentials for participants. The videos did not have to have one meaning or even a correct meaning since part of the process was the interpretive work that went into imagining the story. Students used their evolving interpretations of the videos to generate new directions for their narratives, as the cycle of interpretation, brainstorming, inscribing, filming, and revising all comprised necessary and recursive steps in the collaborative composing process. Students began going back to the original text more often as they composed their responses, for example looking back to the “Hey” video to play a song again, to look at a camera angle, or to interpret a smile. Participants’ relationships also shifted as teachers became co-composers involved in different parts of the process and as students took up new roles in relation to one another. They began to see themselves as part of a larger conversation with others across distances, especially as they struggled to understand one another’s points of view. These ‘tertiary artifacts’ thus offered new ways for participants to imagine themselves in relation to others, especially in relation to a kind of *networked public*.

As the response video genre took a turn toward social action, the network assumed a new role in the project. Videos, while still a centrally important mediating artifact, became re-embedded into the networked space in relation to other texts—blogs, private messages, wall postings, status messages, and the like. Videos operated in a web of texts and inspired new genres like poems and viewing guides that could explicate, expand, and otherwise extend them in new ways, ways oriented toward social action. S2C8 functioned as a kind of networked public important not just for imagining new audiences but also for *interacting* with those audiences. As teens like Santiago wrote poems on Deepa’s wall, audiences became authors—people who responded and participated in new dialogues—in flexible and iterative ways. These new participatory relationships between authors and audiences led students to think about their

composing work as a kind of action in the world. For example, as Emilio used his poem and video to illustrate the difficulties of coming to know others across mediated spaces, he and his peers came to see S2C8 as a kind of networked public that opened spaces for literate action: “the space between the familiar and the other, myself and the other, is the space of appearance, the space that guarantees the possibility ... of public life and political action” (Silverstone, 2007, p. 35). These tertiary artifacts did not just open new spaces of possibility to imagine the self in relation to others, they opened possibilities for action in the world and for taking up hospitable positions in relation to others.

### **Theoretical Implications**

A cross-cultural multi-sited ethnography of a networked learning community, this study has adopted a cultural historical activity theoretic framework and thus highlighted the generative role of contradiction and the centrality of mediational artifacts in driving innovation. This study thus represents an empirically grounded example of expansive learning (Engeström, 1987, 2001; Cole & Engeström, 1993) in a virtual community, illustrating how a digitally networked environment can afford collaborative interactions and the integration of multimodal artifacts crucial for expansive learning to occur. The study detailed how participants in the S2C8 community shifted their goals for interaction and semiotically recontextualized videos in collaboration with others, a joint process of internalization and externalization characteristic of an expansive learning cycle. A process of learning in which people critique, discover, and engage with the world, expansive learning is composed of both vertical and horizontal dimensions—that is, learning from/about and learning across/with—and this study illustrated how teachers and students expanded their understandings of the world, themselves, and one another along both dimensions. However, I have attended most carefully in this dissertation to how participants in the S2C8 community made meaning across modes, across texts, across languages, and across contexts; in short, the study has followed participants’ meaning making practices as a kind of horizontal movement and engagement with the world. I would argue that social networks, which operate across the interconnections and interrelationships between people and texts (boyd & Ellison, 2008), facilitate this kind of horizontal (dialogic) meaning making (Engeström & Sannino, 2010). In tracing how people made meaning in the project across blogs, videos, storyboards, and each other, this study provides empirical evidence of how a learning community that spans online and offline contexts can be a particularly fruitful context for expansive learning to occur.

However, beyond offering an example of how networked communities can provide a generative context for expansive learning, I argue that this study can also help extend Engeström's theory of expansive learning for literacy studies. We can understand horizontal or expansive *movement across* to be a fundamentally *literate* endeavor, what we might call transliteracy. One of the implications of this study has been to demonstrate that *learning across* (horizontal or expansive learning) is a transliterate practice, a form of action that plays an important “transcontextualizing” role in the world, building and sustaining connections across time and space (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). While this concept of transliteracy has been proposed to a limited extent in literacy studies in recent years, it has not played a prominent part in theorizing about the “new models of composing” that Yancey (2009) and others (e.g., Brandt, 2012) have called for. Indeed, the definition used by some scholars as “the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media” (Thomas et al., 2007, para. 3) seems to locate the practice as within an individual (i.e., as a skill or “ability”). Glynda Hull and I have



been interested in expanding this definition beyond the individual user to include “the construction, use, and movement of texts across communicative and geographical spaces as well as multiple platforms, tools, and media” (Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2010, p. 87). Our definition thus expands the construct beyond the individual to include the interactions between people and texts across spaces.

Networked contexts, which connect people and texts in new ways across these intertwined online/offline spaces, offer new opportunities and possibilities for making meaning together. For example, composing in networked environments, with participatory audiences who can become co-authors with a few clicks, requires the facility to function as both author and audience member simultaneously and flexibly. Authors and audiences shift roles across many kinds of texts and over time, operating deictically in response to ever changing tools and practices (Leu, 2000) (and I would argue across modes, languages, contexts, and participant frameworks). We make meaning together across a wide range of multimodal texts, including videos, images, and written text that has been remixed multiple times. These interactions on social networks thus invite people to use new kinds of intertextual and multimodal meaning making strategies (cf. Jenkins, 2007) as they learn horizontally (i.e., dialogically) by “cross[ing] boundaries and [tying] knots between activities” (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 38). On social networks these kinds of boundary-crossing and knot-tying activities are literate ones; we make meaning across multimodal texts like blogs, status updates, wall postings, and videos, as a kind of transliterate practice. Without separating out composing from interpretation, production from consumption, writing from reading, the concept of transliteracy highlights meaning making practices as intricately intertwined, flexible, and collaborative. I would argue that this study has begun to articulate that new modes of composing are ones that are fundamentally mobile (Leander, Phillips, & Taylor, 2010), playing a central role in constructing and maintaining social relations across many kinds of borders beyond the national (Lam & Warriner, 2012). Indeed, one of the most pressing questions in literacy studies now is about the relationship between the local and global (Burgess, 2008; Lu & Horner, 2009; Reder & Davila, 2005), and Brandt and Clinton (2002) have argued that literate artifacts play a central role in connecting networks across time and space and “repairing the break between the local and global” (p. 347). This study has highlighted how literate artifacts that circulated within the networked community functioned as a form of social action, connecting participants across local and global spaces and time. As people and texts became connected in complex ways via these transliterate engagements, participants made meaning across spaces (e.g., the virtual and physical spaces of the S2C8 community), texts (e.g., across poems, videos, blogs), and people (e.g., the New York and India S2C8 participants) across many kinds of boundaries.

As participants made meaning across these spaces, texts, and people, I tried to show how they did so artfully, generously, and hospitably. Certainly the cultural historical activity theory’s emphasis on contradiction highlighted the difficulty of that work, but I hoped to emphasize that these efforts were at the same time hopeful, forward-looking, and inspirational. This kind of stance toward the world has been defined as a cosmopolitan one by scholars interested in the educational implications of the ancient philosophy (Hansen, 2010, 2011; Hull, Stornaiuolo, & Sahni, 2010; Papastephanou, 2005; Todd, 2008). In detailing how teachers worked jointly toward greater understanding (between themselves and between students), I have attempted to illustrate how teachers remained both “reflectively loyal to known and reflectively open to the new” (Hansen, 2011). Hansen argues that this straddling of the new and known, maintaining a stance of both openness and loyalty at once, is the central challenge of teaching in the current age.

While the teachers in the study struggled with that challenge, they did indeed learn from one another, prompted to rethink their assumptions about social networking and teaching when Kgotso challenged them to see their work as teachers to model respectfulness toward difference. Hansen (2010) describes how cosmopolitanism involves not just tolerating difference but demonstrating a “willingness to learn from or with other traditions and human inheritances” (p. 6). As teachers and students participated in this project, they came to see themselves as connected to other people in the community, responsible to listen, to respond, and to open their minds toward other ways of living. This study thus represents an empirical example of teachers who exhibited a cosmopolitan disposition toward others, modeling for the students how to be hospitable interlocutors. I opened this chapter with a quotation from Silverstone (2007) about our responsibilities to one another in an “intensely mediated culture.” He argues that the co-presence of many voices is a prerequisite for hospitality, for it is only when we inhabit shared spaces, hearing the sound of one another’s voice, that we might begin thinking about our obligations to others. I argue that over the course of the two years of this study, both teachers and students inhabited the S2C8 community and came to listen to one another’s voices in ways that invited new artful, literate forms of expression and a new sense of responsibility as authors and audiences engaged in dialogue with strangers.

### **Practical Implications**

While there are certainly many lessons we might learn from this study that could help guide educational practice, I would like to highlight several here. First, it proved important that participants’ entertained and made explicit their *multiple* and *conflicting* beliefs about the social networking project. Since participants in any activity system hold multiple and competing beliefs guiding their participation, it is perfectly possible that teachers and students will work at cross-purposes unless these come to light. In the S2C8 project, teachers’ beliefs that social networking and networked composing should be student-driven and self-sponsored was a primarily tacit belief that only became available for explicit review when a problem around sexuality online required teachers to talk about their roles in the project. Even then, it took many months for several of the teachers to find a somewhat comfortable solution that allowed them to talk about and guide students’ work on the network without actually participating there themselves. As teachers and students participate in educational social networking and other digital media activities, it would be beneficial to make overt the deeply rooted and largely invisible beliefs that participants hold about digital media, learning, and school. The goal in making these explicit and available for conscious reflection should not necessarily be on finding consensus or sublimating one member’s ideas to another’s. In fact, it was at moments of disagreement and negotiation that the most fruitful innovations were inspired. For example, when Kgotso argued that censoring students’ work on the network was a form of disrespect toward different beliefs and cultures, all of the teachers shifted their thinking about their roles and about the network, which led to new forms of teacher collaboration and a new sense of community. Embracing the difficulties, differences, and contradictions seems to be an important part to innovation and growth for communities. Similarly, the collaborative structures in the project were very important for generating creative responses that took into account diverse viewpoints, and in the S2C8 project led to new kinds of relationships between the teachers and students.

Secondly, two factors stood out as necessary for success at the program sites: infrastructural support and teacher vision. While the alchemy of any site is too complex to attribute to these two elements alone, these appeared to be needed for teachers and students to

flourish. In terms of infrastructural support, teachers needed a wide range of material and symbolic resources. It goes without saying that participants needed working computers and a fast and reliable Internet connection, but despite best efforts, these were not easily accomplished anywhere. For example, in Oakland Jackson worked for months to rehabilitate older and broken laptops only to find the whole laptop cart stolen one day and all the students' work gone. In India, Amit tried everything he could imagine to figure out why S2C8 would not load quickly on the computers in the lab to no avail, and in South Africa, the Internet would go out for long stretches of time as Kgotso waited for the Education Ministry to send out a technician. In Norway, there were enough computers and an Internet connection, but it took ten minutes at the beginning and another ten minutes at the end of class to distribute the right laptops to each individual, and inevitably some would be uncharged or otherwise unresponsive. While technological support was necessary, so too was the space to engage in the project without interference. Jake enjoyed administrative support, for example providing him extra classroom space when needed, but no one had any say about his curriculum. Alternatively, in Norway Maja felt tremendous pressure to meet curricular goals, and in South Africa Kgotso felt pressure to teach computer literacy to students who had never seen computers before. In Oakland and India, Jackson and Amit had to negotiate with other teachers who had particular ideas about what the kids should be doing. In India, Amit worked with a series of literacy teachers as well as the director, and in Oakland Jackson tried to fit the activities within the multicultural curriculum and ran all of his ideas by the multicultural teacher. Thus a particular kind of support—with plenty of available resources and without pressure to meet externally imposed goals—seems the best infrastructural configuration.

The second important factor involved teacher vision. All of the teachers except Maja had a particular vision for each site, but not all of these visions were flexible enough to shift in relation to others over time or to incorporate social networking as an integrated practice. For example, Kgotso had a strong vision that his program would foster storytelling and students' creative voices, and everything he planned included those goals. However, this vision was not particularly flexible. He never saw the storytelling work as part of the social network, and this division between program activities meant that the storytelling vision was never carried into the networked space. Also, his vision never shifted in response to his collaboration with the other teachers. When he began teaching an after-school program in March 2011, he continued the storytelling paradigm instead of joining the response video exchanges, thus leaving the South Africa site isolated from the rest of the group. Amit had a similarly powerful vision for the India program around women's empowerment, but this was a shared vision that was imported from others in the school community. This vision proved very influential for others in the S2C8 community, as their Jaagriti video and other artifacts inspired a number of dialogues and response videos, but the vision never shifted in response to others' ideas or by virtue of interacting with others in the community. Jackson had a vision of his site as specializing in filmmaking, but the exigencies of his site, such as operating in the multicultural class for a short amount of time with few filmmaking resources, meant that this vision never carried through the project or his site as strongly as others. Jake's artistic focus in New York proved both strong and flexible. Artistic activities permeated the New York site, and students spoke at length about the importance of their artistic work. However, this art became a form of social action in response to the participants' work with the Indian students, and they began to see their video projects as an artistic way to make a difference in their communities. Thus Jake's initial vision was powerful enough to be impactful for all aspects of his program but flexible enough to shift in response to

influence from other members of the S2C8 community and the interaction between him and his students.

Finally, this study offers implications for equity, as young people in the S2C8 community who had not had extensive opportunities to participate previously with these digital technologies engaged in a wide variety of digital literacy practices while supported by teachers. As the digital divide widens around the world, with increasingly disparity between young people who have access not just to new technologies but also access to participate in 21<sup>st</sup> century practices and outcomes afforded by the digital (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010; Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010), educational institutions play an increasingly important role in providing access to all young people. When schools focus more on the technologies themselves rather than on the collaborative and participatory practices afforded by digital and social media, particularly around new media authoring and production, we risk widening this “participation gap” (Jenkins et al., 2006) or “digital divide”:

Today the digital divide resides in differential ability to use new media to critically evaluate information, analyze, and interpret data, attack complex problems, test innovative solutions, manage multifaceted projects, collaborate with others in knowledge production, and communicate effectively to diverse audiences (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010, p. 213).

As Warschauer and Matuchniak argue, this gap or divide has less to do with differential access to tools and more to do with disparate opportunities to participate in a set of productive literacy practices. This study has shown that teachers play a central role in creating opportunities for young people to participate critically in developing these communicative competencies, as youth learned *with teachers* to talk with people from very different backgrounds and belief systems and to persist across difficulty using a variety of semiotic tools to work toward understanding.

However, while teachers have a vital role to play in the on-the-ground realities of classrooms, they operate within a complex institutional system in which mechanisms of inequality persist, especially the ways that schools differentially offer opportunities to engage in the critical 21<sup>st</sup> century practices Warschauer and Matuchniak (2010) describe. For a concrete example of this disparity in the kinds of practices offered by schools serving low-income students in the U.S., scholars who studied the use of nearly 180,000 wikis in schools found that wikis created in schools serving more affluent students offered more opportunities for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, raising alarm that these digital tools will disproportionately benefit students already advantaged (Reich, Murnane, & Willett, 2012). Schradie (2011) has called this kind of disparity a “production gap,” a gulf not just in consumption of or participation in digital technologies but in the production or *authoring* of digital online content (see also Kafai & Peppler, 2011). In analyzing 17 PEW studies from 2000-2008, Schradie found that with people with less education and less access to digital tools and practices were authoring digital content far less than those with private access to the Internet and a college degree. In this dissertation study, S2C8 students authored many kinds of digital artifacts both individually and collaboratively, and teachers played a central role in creating opportunities for digital production and supporting young people in thinking critically about their role as authors and audiences. However, in literacy classrooms across the U.S. this kind of focus on digital authoring, particularly with Web 2.0 tools afforded by social networks (e.g., synchronous chat or messaging), is not valued as a kind of literacy practice (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011). In their national study of literacy teachers, Hutchison and Reinking found that teachers rated these kinds of Web 2.0 authoring tools as less important to their pedagogies, with the development of global

awareness rated as virtually unimportant. Clearly, it is crucial to raise awareness about the importance of these tools and practices for literacy development if we are to address these gaps—in access, in participation, and in literate production. Educational institutions and teachers represent a vital resource in providing opportunities for all young people to engage in new media practices, which is becoming ever more important as the media are now at the heart of our capacity to make sense of the world (Silverstone, 2007).

### **Implications for Future Research**

Looking forward to new research yet to be done, I might argue that our future endeavors seem daunting. Certainly there is much uncertainty in the world, as new technologies emerge at a dizzying rate and as people use these technologies to new ends (consider the role of Twitter or Facebook in the Arab Spring), particularly as our differences threaten to undermine us at every turn (look no further than the anti-immigration laws being enacted in many states to keep out “strangers”). And as this study confirms, there is still so much we do not know about how people communicate across difference in networked contexts. However, this research study ultimately offers a hopeful vision of the future, as young people and their teachers persisted through the difficulty of communicating across difference and worked together to innovate, creatively authoring new texts that took action in the world. While this study has demonstrated that *imagined* audiences play an important role in shaping youth’s composing practices, we need more study about how and why these audiences are important and the role of global audiences in youth’s composing practices. We might ask about the relationships between the networked space and imagined audiences—does the possibility that authors and audiences might interact prove important for composing? Furthermore, what is the role of the public in the networked space? In S2C8, the network served as a kind of public that was more protected than other sites on the Internet, and we need more work that investigates how different kinds of publics shape communication practices online. Importantly, how does the possibility of communicating with global publics impact students’ reading/writing/thinking in networked contexts? While there has been much work of late in interrogating the civic role that social media might play in the lives of young people, little work is being done on how young people’s civic action is fundamentally literate action.

In this study, teachers took on a central role in mediating the use of the educational social network, but we must ask whether this would be true on more familiar networks (e.g., Facebook) and whether this holds for other networked communities. Indeed, much more work on the role of the teacher in networked classroom environments is needed, since this project examined five teachers in a closed social network. As more teachers participated together, would collaboration become as important to learning as it appeared to be here? We know that teachers’ beliefs play an important role in shaping the ways that they integrate digital technologies into classrooms, but we know little about how their beliefs about social communication (like chatting and messaging) and the relationship between social communication and academic goals shape instruction and student learning. I began this chapter by pointing to three emergent but little understood phenomena: the presence of writing in our everyday lives, the difficulty of integrating networked technologies into instruction, and the role of the global in education. While this study has offered tentative beginnings in addressing how to intertwine writing, networked communication, and the global, there is much work still to be done. But as people increasingly engage in mediated communication with unknown others in these kinds of global networks, we can take hope in their

hospitable, artful, and generous commitments and efforts to learn about, from, with one another despite enormous odds.

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## Appendix A

### Teacher Interview Protocol III

1. What are the biggest issues in your class right now that you are focusing on?
2. What were your goals for the kids this term? How did you decide on those? Did they change?
3. How do you think the kids are meeting those goals? What are some things you are noticing about your group of kids in terms of those goals?
4. Do you think that your setting had particular challenges you had to contend with?
5. What role has the network played in your Kidnet class?
6. How do you find the kids like using it?
7. What have been the biggest challenges in using social networking in your classroom? Rewards?
8. What advice would you give other teachers who are considering using social networking in classrooms?
9. What role have digital stories played in your class?
10. What kinds of challenges and rewards have you discovered in the digital storytelling?
11. What are other activities and components you have built into your program? Why?
12. Has it been difficult or relatively easy to incorporate the goals of the larger project into the day-to-day design of the lesson plans? Why?
13. What role do the other teachers from the other sites play in your planning for your class?
14. Can you tell me a little bit about how you have found the collaboration between you and the other teachers or researchers to be?
15. What is the working relationship like between you and XXX?
16. Have you adapted any activities from other sites?
17. What is the nature of the communication between kids in different countries? What might we do to facilitate it?
18. What role do you think XXXX language has played to date? English?
19. Have you discovered anything about yourself or your teaching through your work on this project?
20. What might you do differently if you were to start over or redesign the project from the ground up?
21. What advice would you give to someone just coming into this project now?
22. How does the website functions for your students?
23. How has writing played a part on the network in your class? What have you noticed about the kids' composing practices recently?

## **Appendix B**

### **Student Interview Protocol**

1. How have your projects been coming along—can you tell me about what you've done on them since the last time we talked?
2. Can you show me some footage that you are working on and tell me about that?
3. What has changed for you in the writing/planning part of the script/story? Why?
4. How has the editing process been going for you? Challenges?
5. How are you coordinating music, video, text, sound, image? Why?
6. What audiences do you imagine when you are creating your project, if any? Why them?
7. Will you put it on S2C8? How has the network affected your composing process at all, if it has?
8. Have you been getting on S2C8? What are your impressions of it so far?
9. How do you think we could make S2C8 better? How well does it fit into other things you are doing with your teacher?
10. If you could design a program around S2C8, how would you?
11. Can you show me your page and take me on a little tour of how you use the site, if at all?
12. Do you think that it's possible to make friends across the site?
13. How is the program going for you in general? What other activities do you enjoy doing?
14. Do you think you are learning anything by participating in it?
15. How is school in general going for you right now? Has that changed at all?
16. How do you see yourself in terms of writing?
17. How does your project relate to writing?
18. In what ways do you think you've changed as a writer over time in this project?

## Appendix C

### Viewing Guide for “Deep in the Shallows”: A Response to the [Jaagriti] Video

“Deep in the Shallows” is a story about how a life can change in a matter of seconds. It is a story about gang life in New York and the struggles that young people face every day.

The TV represents that these kinds of stories are talked about in the media all the time, and that the media often fails to display the deeper issues at hand. The bridge symbolizes life, and how it changes and shifts constantly. The time-lapse from night to day is a symbol of the cycles of life as well as the positive and negative aspects of real life situations. We selected this song “New York Minute” by French Montana because it discusses how things can change in a New York minute; things happen here very quickly without us even realizing it. Life moves quickly and distinctly in New York unlike any other place in the world.

The first act shows the gang operating in school. The guns in this scene are an outline of a Desert Eagle gun collaged with celebrity images. They represent how Hollywood gives us a very bland sense of reality and about how we should act and how we should be. The world of celebrity shoots bullets into our minds, which limit us and the way we think (just like the media on the TV mentioned earlier). In this scene, the main character is being recruited into the gang, at one point being forced to walk with the celebrity gun to his head. Even though he is being forced here, his life is really on the edge, and he feels that if he joins the gang he will have people to love and care about him, in the way that a family does. Part of the initiation process into the gang involves shaking the hands of every person in the gang and then it is time for him to get "jumped" in. This means that he gets beat up by all the members of the gang for a certain amount of time. The blue liquid effect when he fall to the ground symbolizes a change, and his personal transition into gang life -- it also reflects the theme of water that is carried throughout the film in later scenes. After he is jumped in, he gets back up and shakes everyone’s hands again which means that he is officially a member of the gang. His first task is receiving a "book of knowledge" which is a collection of codes and rituals that he has to memorize as a member of the gang (each gang has their own set of codes and principles).



The second act opens with the image of the flower which we see as representing how life changes and blooms. But the flower dies once we see images of the gangs. Then the gangs overlay the first plane hitting the Twin Towers which symbolizes that New York City itself changed forever n this day.

Next, our main character is in his room, studying the gang codes. On the right side of the frame, we have a window with the statue of liberty in it, which represents freedom and American dreams. On the left side of the frame we have the rapper Lil' Wayne, holding a finger-gun to his head and smoking a joint. This is a symbol of the world of the streets. The effect of the dripping water here represents that he is now submerged underwater trapped in gang life. The song playing is called "Feel it in the Air" by Beanie Segal, and it represents that our character can feel the change and shift occurring in his life and around him. Next we see the main character's father drinking alcohol, and then abusing him. This is important because it shows how difficult our character's life is at home, and that because he doesn't have a supportive family at home, he retreats and finds solace in the gang for a family. The wave behind the father is a symbol of the violence crashing around them, and the sharks that appear represent the violence and the danger that lurks all around him. Then, the windows switch places and the statue of liberty is upside down representing how liberty and the American Dream. Lil Wayne is in the window now, which shows that our main character is filled with anger that is clouding his mind. He no longer sees freedom, just violence and the streets. As he looks at his gun, the whirlpool around him swirls, which represents that he is getting sucked in deeper and deeper -- the shallow keeps getting deeper. The bird crashing through the book and into the water shows our main character's fall and submersion underwater. The feeding frenzy of ocean life represents a kind of animalistic, primal violence in nature.

Act three opens up again with the gang and this time they are outside of the school. The song is "Drop the World" by Little Wayne, and we selected it because it shows how anger can take over someone, and that now anger and pain has totally consumed our main character. At the beginning we see the boss (the man in the suit who is the head of the gang), and he is explaining to the main character that he must perform a murder/robbery to demonstrate his loyalty to the

gang. We also see our victim for the first time. She is reading a book -- the fact that both she and our main character have a book highlights that knowledge is power, and that power can be used for good or evil; there is a dual nature in knowledge and understanding. The fact our victim turns around and has a little smile on her face underscores that she is naive and unaware of her fate.

We see our main character steal the victim's bag and then he has a flashback scene -- he is remembering the day that he was initiated into the gang with the gun to his head, and that was the day that everything changed. But he is also still thinking about how he has a new family who loves and supports him ( in the gang) even if it is a family made through terror, violence and anger. The sharks that swim by here are again a symbol of this terror around him. The main character brings the bag to the boss as gift to the gang. He then shakes his hand -- the boss now sees that he is reliable, and that he is willing to do things for the gang even if it means getting arrested or killed. The boss is happy now that the main character doesn't have a world outside of the gang any longer. He has put his work in and is now a part of this new family. At the end, we see the victim's soul leaving earth while our main character sits down near the other members of the gang in his new world.

The last sequence is a news story about real gang violence outside of the school -- once again it reflects how gang violence is discussed in the media and is often made into something other than the reality of the situation. Then the video plays backwards across the TV screen showing how the character is reflecting on the changes that have just happened in his life -- part of it represents whether he regrets (or not) the decision that he has made. Another part of this represents how the TV world often tries to put these kinds of 'happy endings' in such stories, but in reality, there are very few happy endings. Again, we see the wave crashing, this time over New York City and the surfer represents that you are always on the edge. In NYC, the moment you get comfortable riding the wave is the moment the wave swallows you—Everything can change in a New York minute. The RIP (rest in peace) that appears on the screen is a shout-out for all of our friends that have been killed as a result of gang violence. We wrote some of their names down as tribute to them, and these names can't be contained on the TV screen because their deaths are too real for TV.



## Appendix D

### Private Message Exchange Nina & Usree

Nina:

***Subject Line: Response to your thoughts :)***

Thanks for taking the time to view our movie a deep in the shallows, Its important to understand that some kids (teenagers) do have parents that support them and sometimes these kids feel as though times has changed and their parent do not understand the things that are going on today. The idea of what is good and bad is determined by culture 1st. Parents do teach their kids right from wrong and protect them from the reality of what really is outside in the "streets" The world is never just black & white/ good and bad theres always grey or in between. As you may know its very hard to protect someone from the many dangers the world has in store. Its all apart of life. Not all parents are busy with work. Some kids are lucky to have stay at home moms or dads. Some kids always have family around to be there for them. But as you know its really important to kids during our school and outside life how we are in social ranking...sometimes when we're younger we tend to do things to please those who are in a higher position than us. Another important thing to know is gangs to not take such measures to recruit members they do not bribe people with money nor do they threaten peoples family members just so they can have that person in the gang. Poverty is a world wide thing. Poverty in America is just as bad as the poverty that occurs in other counties. There are some very poor towns in our country but we as a whole don't really know how to go about solving the problem If we was just to give money to these town it would be a waste we need to make sure that the money we give is invested into the right hands and really goes towards the people. Many rich people in America would like to help out but they think it would be a waste to throw away money to a town that's only going to metaphorically burn their money. -In America everyone goes to school but as students its our choice to go and get a education. Before when education in America was only available to the rich, people in poverty took more advantage of a chance to learn and they appreciated what was given to them. Here in America because we have free education its not really valued as much. Kids think they could make as much money being in the streets than actually going to college getting a job to make a better honest living. -Most parents aren't aware that their kids take drugs.

Most times kids hide it. -Most times when people are in gangs they are some what proud to state their gang because they want others to know what they represent.

**Usree:**

hey thanks for sharing your thoughts with me. you know some problems in India are similar to the problems of America . some parents in India dont support their children. in India many children have indulged in smoking and drinking.their parents are also not aware that their children are consuming alcohol and cigarettes. our exams have finished. today we got our report card. our school will close on 15th of may and it will reopen on 1st july .i will wait for your reply.bye.thanku.

**Nina:**

:) No problem. How was your report card? I believe most counties do have this problem. many kids here i can say in new york drink, smoke, and party for fun many don't really think about consequences and many of them get locked up in jail for just trying to have fun. Personally i believe that our police system is a little harsh on the youth because they make everything seem bad and don't allow kids to make mistake and learn from them. a lot of kids i know pop pills eat shrooms and end up doing other drugs. what are some rebellious things teens do in your part of india? :)