

THE WORLD OF TEENAGE TWITTER: NEW LITERACIES, IDENTITY WORK,
AND HUMANIZING PEDAGOGY

By

Benjamin William Gleason

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation presents an empirical study into the figured world of teenage Twitter. Designed as a case study, this study examined the Twitter practices of three teenagers over the course of three years. The larger study contained three distinct investigations. The first study investigated three new literacies practices of multimodal composition in teenage Twitter (i.e., lifeblogging, mirroring, and lifetweeting), finding that these literacies were co-constructed, non-linear, multiple, social, and action-oriented. The second study investigated the relationship between new literacies practices and the identity work that occurs in teenage Twitter, examining how teenagers become feminists through new literacies and their commitments to feminism. This study found that young people's individual experiences and commitments to feminism led to differences in how young people became (or did not) feminist. The third study examined how teaching and learning with Twitter may lead to new relationships between teacher-students, and may even transform traditional power dynamics between teacher and students. It found that the use of teenage Twitter may support engaging, participatory learning that is aligned with humanizing pedagogy.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent surveys of teenagers' social media use reported that a majority use Twitter (Zickuhr & Rainie, 2014). In light of this widespread use, educational researchers are attempting to investigate *what exactly*, if anything, adolescents are learning from social media. Research has suggested that social media facilitate student learning in a number of ways: first, these spaces support the development of literacy skills like reading and writing; second, they increase student engagement as users pursue their interests; third, social media encourage the construction of identity as users express themselves online (Greenhow, Gleason & Li, 2014; Greenhow & Gleason, 2012; Greenhow et al, 2009; Gao et al, 2012). Yet, educational researchers still know very little about the processes and dimensions of adolescent learning on Twitter, in particular, a space that is emerging as a vital hub of activity for teenagers. Informed by theories that envision participation in a community of practice as suggestive of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978), this dissertation examines the relationship between teenagers' literacy practices on Twitter (e.g., reading and writing), the construction of identity, and how this relationship mediates learning on Twitter.

My purpose is to examine the literacy practices of teenage Twitter users, the construction of identity (or identities), and how the relationship between these literacy and identity mediates learning in a popular social media space, Twitter.com. Next I will lead the reader through an example or two to illustrate this complex process.

Participation on Twitter represents a unique form of social media practice. Participants in my dissertation pilot study noted that they consider Twitter to be very

engaging, calling it “addictive” and judging it “weird” if teenagers *did not* use Twitter; they also reported seeing teenagers writing their Twitter handle (e.g., mine is @BWGleason) in classrooms at school, often preceded by the phrase “Follow me on Twitter” (Gleason, 2014). On Twitter, people participate in different ways: they interact with others by writing 140-character posts, called *tweets*; they read other users’ tweets; they find, organize, and share information with *hashtags*; they invite others to join the conversation through a *mention*. Twitter affords multimodality, or communication with printed text in combination with image, video, audio, and other graphics. As people participate on Twitter for specific purposes, such as information-sharing to support civic engagement and social protest (Gleason, 2013), they may develop particular identities, theorized as the process of becoming a particular *kind of person* (Gee, 1996).

Participation on Twitter enables social acts previously impossible. Consider the following example from my dissertation pilot study (cf: Gleason, 2015). Three years ago, a bright, high school senior named Lucy retweeted¹: “In response to pro-#rape lyrics, Reebok has dropped Rick Ross—will @power1051 and @ciroc be next? <http://nyti.ms/10UET2e>.” In fewer than 140 characters, this retweet informed readers about a current event by linking to a trustworthy source, the *New York Times*. Additionally, through a practice known as *mentioning*², it invited Ross’s powerful sponsors, Ciroc and Power 105, to join a public conversation about sexual violence in the U.S.

This example raises complex questions about the kind of learning that emerges as teenagers pursue their interests in online social media spaces. As Lucy shared

¹ On Twitter, a *retweet* “forwards” a copy of the original message/tweet.

² A *mention* draws previously uninvolved speakers into an existing conversation.

information organized through the use of a *hashtag*³, she built knowledge of a complex issue, sexual violence, which involves issues of power, gender and sexuality, public health, pop culture, media, and other contemporary concerns. Through her literate practices on Twitter, Lucy aligned herself with *feminists*, who then reified this identity as other feminists recognized her work by retweeting, favoriting, and mentioning Lucy. Because almost all Twitter users make their activity visible, it is possible to observe, document, and analyze teenagers' participation (e.g., defined as literate practices and the development of particular identities) as suggestive of learning (or not). Consequently, my research addresses the following two questions:

- 1) What kind of literate practices do adolescent Twitter users participate in?
- 2) To what extent (if at all) do these literate practices contribute to learning and the development of identity or identities?

Significance

Research that investigates how social media spaces may support the development of new literacy practices is beginning to emerge (Greenhow & Gleason, 2012). Conceptually, this line of work aligns with research that explores youth-initiated literacy practices, much of it occurring in online spaces. This research (Alvermann, 2008; Black, 2009; Steinkuehler, 2008; Lewis & Fabos, 2005) contends that blogs, virtual worlds, fan-fiction sites, and instant messaging support the development of traditional literacy skills like reading and writing, as well as emerging literacy practices, such as the ability to

³ Designated by the # symbol, a *hashtag* is used on Twitter to organize thematic information (e.g., #OWS is used to organize information about Occupy Wall Street).

narrate a story with images. This line of research asserts the importance of “remixing” texts through creative use and re-use (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007) and calls attention to the fact that new literacy practices blur the conceptual boundaries between reading and writing; author and audience; production and consumption (Greenhow & Gleason, 2012).

In addition to the broader explorations of youth-initiated social media use, a handful of researchers have narrowed their focus on Twitter. With its designed features and cultural conventions that encourage following, sharing, and remixing, Twitter is a unique social space that is, by nature, public. All discourse is public, and can be accessed and shared by anyone. Some have developed conceptual arguments, theorizing that literate practice on Twitter be recognized as a new literacy (Greenhow & Gleason, 2012), and others have conducted empirical investigations into the use of Twitter to support teaching and learning (Junco et al, 2013; Junco et al, 2011). And while this research suggests educational benefits as a result of Twitter use, these studies have focused on college-aged students learning in classroom settings (Gao et al, 2012).

Therefore, this dissertation takes the study of Twitter in two promising directions: first, it will focus on youth-initiated Twitter use with adolescents, rather than formal uses of Twitter with college students; second, it will examine the relationship between literacy practices and the construction of identities on Twitter. To the best of my knowledge, my dissertation is the first study to investigate these important strands of inquiry.

By investigating the relationship between digital literacy practices and process of identity construction of teenage Twitter, we begin to understand how young people make meaning in a dynamic, interactive environment (Stornaiulo, Higgs, & Hull, 2014). The process of participating in literacy practices, and the resulting identity construction on

Twitter, represents a complex accomplishment that requires detailed investigation. As a multimodal space where activity is both individually and collaboratively constructed, Twitter requires new forms of participation that blur traditional boundaries between reading and writing, author and audience, consumer and producer, product and process (Greenhow & Gleason, 2012).

The current study seeks to investigate how young people (e.g, adolescents aged 14-18) figure out themselves, and figure out the world (Barton, 2010) through their social media activities.

Theoretical Framework

Traditionally, literacy is promoted as a neutral skill, and national educational policies like the Common Core State Standards reinforce a model of decontextualized, print-based literacy. Sociocultural literacy researchers, on the other hand, envision literacy as corresponding to particular uses, purposes, and practices; rather than a single, value-free model of literacy, they assert that there are multiple literacies (Street, 1984). Recently, literacy researchers have recognized the importance of online literacies, in addition to print-based literacies, in a globalized, information-rich world (Coiro et al, 2008). Informed by sociocultural theory that conceives of *learning as participation* in specific social, cultural, and historical practices of learning that influence a particular activity or practice (Vygotsky, 1978; Lave & Wenger, 1991), this study explores teenagers' participatory practices on Twitter to investigate what, if anything, they are learning. To investigate the meanings that are created in the unique social space of teenagers' Twitter practices, this study relies on the concept of "figured worlds," the

social worlds that emerge as cultural practices take on particular meanings to people (Holland et al, 2001). The concept of “figured worlds” suggests that the process of identification occurs through activity; on Twitter, identities are constructed as teenagers *tweet*, *retweet* and *favorite*, and are recognized for being particular *kinds of people*, such as feminists.

In my dissertation, sociocultural learning theory is strengthened with the concept of *networked publics*. Developed in information sciences, (digital) sociology, and mass communication, the concept of *networked publics* suggests that there are certain features unique to life online, such as the ability to search, archive, and share information (Ito et al, 2008; boyd, 2008). This concept encourages researchers to envision how people use tools to do things previously impossible. When viewed as an example of a networked public, Twitter can be seen as a space that allows marginalized groups like teenagers use a variety of sociotechnical practices to leverage their voices in one of the few public spaces still available to them (Gleason, 2014).

In summary, four learning theories inform the framework used in this dissertation: one, a sociocultural perspective on learning that views learning as participation in specific social, cultural, and historical practices; two, a theory of literacy called New Literacies that acknowledges that literate practice on Twitter, as a multimodal meaning-making space, represents a particular kind of participation; three, theory that examines the “figured worlds” that emerge as cultural practices like Twitter take on particular meanings to people; four, a concept called networked publics that explores the practices, processes of identification, and how that might signal learning in a connected, online space.

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CHAPTER 1

THINKING IN HASHTAGS: TEENAGERS' NEW LITERACIES PRACTICES OF MULTIMODAL COMPOSITION ON TWITTER

Introduction

“I’m starting to think in hashtags” Lucy

Now twenty years old and a senior in college, Lucy started using Twitter in 2009 as an eighth grader; her first tweet simply announced “doing homework.” Her early tweets chronicled her life. One tweet read, “no power. awesome” and another wondered, “really? why does the world hate me so?” For the next three years, Lucy gradually began to become more engaged with Twitter, beginning to tweet more frequently. In 2009, she tweeted roughly once per day; four years later, as a high school senior, Lucy was tweeting roughly ten times per day. At the same time, her Twitter practices were changing as well. Her introspective, journal-like tweets began to include more participatory practices, such as hashtags, retweets, and favorites. In May 2013, following a period of frequent posting, Lucy, then a junior in high school, tweeted, “I’m starting to think in hashtags.”

On the other hand, Ryan, now a junior in college, recalled his early decision to not use Twitter at a time when all of his friends participated on Twitter: “I don’t really like Twitter, the hashtag seems stupid.” Though Ryan eventually figured out how to use Twitter, becoming a prolific and creative participant user, his non-engagement with a key feature of the social media space encourages literacy researchers, teachers, parents, young

people, and others to think critically about what it means to *think in hashtags*. Thinking in hashtags, then, becomes shorthand for how young people develop, adopt, and adapt new literacies practices on Twitter.

Through a case study of three focal participants' participation on Twitter over a span of two years, this study explores the relationship between young people's literate practices, such as the use (or non-use) of hashtags and other Twitter literacies, and young people's ways of thinking, being, and feeling. The study investigates the following research question: It was found that young people use a variety of new literacies practices, among them *mirroring*, *lifeblogging*, and *lifetweeting*, to create, remix, and share multimodal compositions with their followers.

This study explores the purposes and reasons that young people use Twitter in their daily lives. This study contributes to a line of research that explores whether Twitter might be considered a new literacy practice (Greenhow & Gleason, 2012; Gleason, 2015), and considers how teenagers' participation on Twitter blurs traditional boundaries (i.e., authorship/readership; traditional/emergent literacies; thinking/feeling/being; private/public). Ultimately, this study brings to light a range of practices on Twitter (i.e., life-tweeting, mirroring, and life-blogging) undertaken by young people that may suggest new directions in research, theory, and pedagogical practice.

Context matters: What is “literacy” on Twitter?

Twitter is a popular social media space for young people. According to recent survey data, thirty-three percent of young people aged 13-17 use Twitter (Lenhart, 2015), though among 16-17 year olds, roughly fifty percent of this group use Twitter (Zickhur &

Rainie, 2014). Twitter is a microblog/social network site in which users create their own content, tag and share it. Through 140-character messages called tweets, users can publish a variety of content, from print-centric texts to multimedia images (e.g., jpegs or gifs) and videos (i.e., short Vine videos). Users interact by replying to a tweet, liking (or favoriting) it, or adding another user into the conversation with a mention. Additionally, people use a wide range of multimodal texts to communicate on Twitter (i.e., images, graphic systems like emoji and emoticons, and videos). Twitter users share content related to a particular interest, often through the use of a hashtag (Gleason, 2013). Twitter is a hybrid cultural space, in which designed functions of Twitter (e.g., the tweet) co-exist with user-designed social practices. For example, the hashtag was initially popularized by Twitter user Chris Messina and is currently one of the most prominent elements of the space (Greenhow & Gleason, 2012; Gleason, 2015). Twitter makes visible users' textual practices, allowing literacy researchers, teachers, students, parents, and others to trace literate practices over time.

The research question above investigates how teenage (e.g., 16-19 years old) Twitter users practice literacy, specifically focusing on their new literate practices of composition. Following Barton and Hamilton (2000), I conceptualize literacy practices as *what people do with language and literacy*. On Twitter, *what people do* depends, in part, on cultural conventions, the design of the space and the tools available to Twitter users (i.e., the ability to share images and videos). What people do, of course, is shaped by people's attitudes and beliefs; they involve individual decisions about language uses but are also influenced by social (and societal) notions of what counts as language, who has access to it, and how it can and should be used. Practices can be thought of as "existing in

the relations between people, within groups and communities, rather than as a set of properties residing in individuals” (2000, p. 8). In order to describe what people do with language, and the values and beliefs they place on these activities, it is necessary to observe and explore the interactions between people. Taking Lucy’s statement as a starting point, I ask, “How do teenagers practice new literacies on Twitter through composing, and what does it mean to ‘think in hashtags’?”

Researchers interested in how young people make meaning through language and literacy practices are profoundly influenced by the New London Group’s theory of *multiliteracies* that recognizes multiple ways of meaning-making, including visual, spatial, audio, gestural, and others (New London Group, 1996). The New London Group proposed a renewed focus on the construction, rather than consumption, of texts through using available tools, resources, and practices, especially in a digital, globally connected world. This theory of multiliteracies is part of the sociocultural conception of literacy, in which literacy is influenced by the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts in which language is used (Scribner & Cole, 1981; Barton & Hamilton, 1998).

Studies exploring how youth use digital media have focused on literate practices in primarily out of school settings (Hull & Schultz, 2001; Hull, 2003; Alvermann, 2008; Paris, 2010; Kirkland, 2009; Steinkuehler, 2010). Collectively, these researchers have suggested that digital media such as blogs, video games, social media, and text messages can support innovative practices “that are significantly more complex and varied than traditional literacy curricula and externally imposed standardized assessments currently permit” (Mills, 2010, p. 262). For example, Hull and colleagues (2003; 2005) discussed how youth leveraged the affordances of visual media, but also oral, gestural, and aural

modes to create powerful, personal digital stories, which she described as “playful, aesthetically alert, and fun” (p. 231). Paris (2010) discussed the relationship between digital media use, in this case text messaging, and adolescents’ social identities. In addition to positioning themselves as speakers of African American Language (AAL), young people used text messaging as a youth space free from adult prescriptivist notions of literate practice.

Within the field of new literacies, some scholars have begun to take an interest in the way that emergent literacy activities are shaped by interaction between embodied encounters with texts, other people, shifting environments, and histories and cultural practices of particular activities (Leander & Boldt, 2013; Ehret & Hollett, 2014; Wargo, 2015). This analytic focus allows a closer look at the ways that emotion and feeling are implicated in meaning-making as we experience manga (Leander & Boldt, 2013), learn to use an iPad (Ehret & Hollett, 2014), or learn the norms around classroom discourse (Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2015). This focus on emerging *unfoldings* and the sense of possibilities that exist in “unbounded” literacy relations remains critically important in my work. This study contributes to an under-explored research field as it investigates youth-initiated literate practice, specifically focusing on three unique practices of *multimodal composition* on Twitter: mirroring; lifeblogging; and livetweeting.

Methods

I used a case study method to investigate the new literacies practices of a select group of highly active users, who used Twitter daily. Three participants were enrolled in the study in March 2013. All participants in the current study were from a suburban town on the East Coast, and were acquainted with each other prior to the start of the study. As

a result of the pilot study (Gleason, 2015), I was familiar with participants and wanted to continue to investigate their literate practices on Twitter over an extended period of time. In addition to my familiarity with the participants, I am also a seasoned Twitter user (e.g., I began using the service in 2009) who participates multiple times per day on Twitter and considers Twitter to be a significant social space. Throughout the study, I communicated with participants in this study through Twitter, occasionally tweeting @ them, retweeting them, or using the direct-messaging feature. This level of familiarity with participants, and my positioning as someone who “gets” Twitter, allowed me a certain level of expertise and experience that deepened my understanding of literate practices of teenage Twitter.

Data from three focal participants included two data sources: one, their archived Twitter feed (e.g., “archive”); and two, participant interviews. All three participants produced thousands of tweets during the data collection timeframe, with one creating over 20,000 tweets during this period. For this study, focused on exploring young people’s new literacies practices on Twitter, I collected Twitter data representing *all* their Twitter activity, up to the time of data collection. Data collection, in my case, meant that each participant requested their Twitter archive from Twitter.com, which was then sent to me. Data was obtained for participants, representing years of Twitter activity, as can be seen below.

Because I was interested in, broadly, *what it means to “think in hash tags”* I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants to explore their the relationship between new literacies practices of teenage Twitter and thinking in hashtags. Topics discussed during the interview included: learning how to use Twitter; the development of

new literacies practices; outcomes of particular practices; and public recognition on Twitter. The interviews, which lasted between 45 minutes and 75 minutes, took place on Zoom, a video conferencing platform. Interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Table 1 Data Collection Plan

Participant	Data Collection Period	Number of Tweets Collected	Interview Date Collected
Ryan	August 2012-August 2014	22,529	January 30, 2016
Lucy	March 2009-August 2013	7,033	January 19, 2016
Lori	June 2012-August 2014	16,366	January 31, 2016

Looking at the table, it is apparent that the data collection periods are not uniform for participants. Rather, data was collected from when participants began using Twitter and was collected through the period when they began college or university. This methodological decision is consistent with my theoretical focus on exploring new literacies practices of adolescents (e.g., high school students).

Data Analysis

In order to better understand the new literacies practiced by case study participants on Twitter, I began by analyzing participants' Twitter archive. As the archive held the entirety of participants' Twitter production, I wrote analytic memos for each participant to help me think through participant patterns and practices. These analytic memos provided a way for me to "go deep" into particular questions, issues, or topics that emerged during analysis. For example, an analytic memo from April 28, 2015

included examples from Ryan's Twitter activity of an initial code called "creative multimodal participation," as well as analysis of what this participation might mean in Ryan's context. Analytic memos were then compared across participants in order to highlight particular practices that may suggest patterns, themes, or emerging trends within young people's new literacies practices on Twitter. Regular weekly meetings with dissertation director Dr. Angie Calabrese-Barton provided an opportunity to analyze, discuss, and interpret participant Twitter activities.

A constant comparative approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2006) was used in order to develop an emerging repertoire of literacy practices (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). Guided by a symbolic interactionist perspective that views data analysis and theory construction as a constructivist activity, I collected "rich, substantial, and relevant" data from young people's Twitter archive (Charmaz, 2006, p. 32). Following constant comparative approaches (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), I created a series of codes related to "New Literacies practices." This code, for example, was created as an umbrella category to mark how common digital media practices, such as taking selfies, play out in the specific local context of teenage Twitter. Typically, these codes were developed in conjunction with analysis provided through the structure of writing analytic memos. Twitter activity was deemed as belonging to the family group of "New Literacies practices" if it had something to do with *ways of reading, writing, and being on Twitter*. For the participants in this study, there are particular ways of "doing things with words" on Twitter that are different than in other spaces. Tweeting is different than "classroom discourse," and different kinds of meanings, feelings, and relational codes are caught up in these practices.

Findings are reported as a two-step process. In the first step, participant Twitter data was collected and analyzed to respond to the research question: *How do young people engage in the new literate practice of multimodal composition on Twitter, and for what aims or purposes?* In this step, I attempted to catalogue a wide range of young people's new literacies practices on Twitter, recording everything from subtweeting to selfies. (Coding procedures can be found in the Appendix). This open-ended list of practices suggested a wide range of relevant youth literate practices to be explored. Coding was followed by reading through the entirety of participant Twitter archives, focusing on finding and identifying *a range of new literate practices that present possibilities* about what teenage Twitter can be for young people. That is, through empirical study over multiple years of participant Twitter activity, three new literate practices (e.g., mirroring, life-blogging, and life-tweeting) were identified that speak to the promise and possibility of teenage Twitter. These practices were identified as important new literate practices not because they are representative of the three participants, or of a generation of Twitter users-- Lucy, Ryan, and Tori cannot, and will not, represent millions of Twitter-using youth. However, their specific and contextual literate practices on Twitter-- Ryan's mirroring, Lori's life-tweeting, and Lucy's life-blogging-- do highlight particular ways that young people think and act on Twitter and point us to consider the multiple meanings suggested as young people participate on Twitter.

Participants

Lucy

Lucy is a 20-year-old young, White woman who is about to start her senior year of college, where she studies philosophy and women's studies. An extremely thoughtful person, Lucy uses her introspective personality to process and reflect on events in her life, and she frequently tries to connect these events to the world at large. Lucy attempts to understand it by "going deep," by trying to understand her condition in all its manifestations or situate herself as a participant in a larger system of oppression. Lucy is also highly intelligent and motivated to attend graduate school to study philosophy. When I met her in April 2013, Lucy was a high school senior in the middle of deciding what college to attend. Accepted to several prestigious liberal arts colleges, she chose to attend a state school that was more affordable. Early in her first semester, she recognized her interest in graduate study, tweeting, "No of course I'm not looking into grad school a month into freshman year #killme." She is now in her third year of college, and has finished a summer as an Undergraduate Research Fellow at Harvard University, studying philosophy and doing research with a faculty mentor.

Outside the academic sphere, Lucy works hard as well. She has held a number of different part-time positions, from working at the college newspaper, to working at Mandeos, a discount clothing chain, and Lowe's, a home furnishings megastore. Like many who work in retail, Lucy has many stories about her customers, some of whom have been known to comment on her septum piercing, her pierced nose, or another aspect of her physical appearance. Lucy seems to take these interactions with a grain of salt; after a customer called her "sir," (perhaps owing to her short hair and petite frame), she

celebrated, saying, “that’s the aesthetic i’m going for.” Through all the challenges of adolescence and early adulthood, Lucy tries to maintain a sense of humor. For example, when she looked back on her emergent sexual attractions, she tweeted, “#thatawkwardmoment when you figure out you're straight after being bisexual, pansexual, lesbian, and bisexual again...” She seems able to make a joke about her fluid sexual identity, calling it “awkward” rather than unsettling or potentially uncomfortable. By calling it “#awkward” Lucy is able to participate in a relevant youth practice, sharing awkward moments through the use of a hashtag-- thereby, her self-deprecation marks her story as both unique (individual to her) and collective (part of a specific youth practice designated by a particular hashtag).

Ryan

Ryan is a White college student in his third year at a prestigious Ivy League university on the East Coast. Now 19 years old, Ryan was 16 when he first began to participate in a research study that explored how teenagers practice literacy on Twitter (Gleason, 2015). An extremely likeable young man, Ryan has many friends, many of whom share his primary interests, including speaking French and all things Francophilic, emo-rock bands like the 1975 and 21 Pilots, photography, and politics. He has also maintained close relationships with his family, including his younger sister (currently in high school), his parents, and his beloved grandfather, who passed away recently. A prolific social media user, Ryan participates in a number of different social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, Ask.fm, and Snapchat. Ryan is majoring in political science, motivated by his passion for politics and public

participation. Ryan's interest in politics spans local, national, and international boundaries; he wants to learn about the politicians who represent his East Coast state as well as educating and informing others about national events, like the US Presidential Elections and important Supreme Court decisions. In the past year or so, since he has started college, Ryan has begun to learn more about international affairs and has started participating in micro-loan programs in developing countries.

Building on his accomplishments in high school, Ryan continues to excel academically and socially. Recent pictures from college show Ryan to be an integral part of a social group. For Christmas, for example, Ryan and his friends exchanged "secret Santa" presents and dressed in matching sweaters. In another picture, the same group of friends locks arms and poses for the camera, celebrating the end of an academic year. Ryan is often surrounded by smiling friends, and he never seems to suffer from not having exciting and interesting places to go-- from Paris to San Francisco to Boston and the Caribbean, Ryan is fortunate to be able to travel so extensively. Often, these trips are taken to attend rock shows, like the numerous 21 Pilots shows Ryan and his friends have seen. Ryan's obsession with the band spills over across three social media spaces; concert pictures are common, as are lyrics, fan art, and upcoming tour information. Ryan's profile picture on Twitter shows him holding a ski mask in front of his face, a coded reference to 21 Pilots that only fans understand. Music allows Ryan to bond with others over a shared interest. Indeed, it seems that there is something in 21 Pilots that allows Ryan to express his sensitivity and empathy with others, while the live shows enable a certain kind of cathartic outpouring of emotion.

Lori

Lori is a 19-year-old young White woman about to begin her junior year of college at a school in a large city on the East Coast. When she began participating in the study in 2013, Lori was a 17 year old high school junior who told me that she checks Twitter up to 30 times per day. At the time, Lori used Twitter to follow her favorite bands (Taylor Swift, We the Kings), express her affinity for her favorite television sit-coms, such as Friends, and to talk with friends and acquaintances. Like Lucy and Ryan, Lori participated in Twitter on a daily basis and considered it an important part of her social life. Much of Lori's Twitter activity is directed at her close social network-- friends, family members, and even favorite teachers. However, Lori's Twitter use is not without complication. Her first tweet expressed the tensions between the "publicness" of social media and user control. Lori wrote, "hate having a new privated twitter but i can't stand people so..." (6/22/12). Later that same night, Lori expressed her frustration that, when her tweets are "privated," her followers were unable to retweet her. Pointing to herself, she wrote, "#imhilarious."

This episode seems to capture much of the spirit of Lori's Twitter practices, from her unabashed humor, and her corresponding desire to share that humorous spirit with friends and acquaintances, to her frequent use of Twitter to communicate her experiences and build connection with others. A prolific Twitter participant, Lori tweets about a wide-ranging variety of experiences, especially relating to daily lives of teenagers: from daily social drama, to her interest in making the high school tennis team, to the stresses of Advanced Placement classes.

Now 19, Lori is in her third year after transferring from a university in a large southern state to an art school on the east coast. While in high school, Lori thought that she might major in criminal justice, expressing her desire to be a police officer. At her new university, however, Lori has developed her interest in radio production, deciding to major in sound engineering. On Twitter, Lori occasionally tweets about topics such as feminism, politics, and gender and sexual identities.

Research Findings

In the data sets analyzed for this study, all three participants used a variety of new literacies practices to read, write, interpret and interact with others on Twitter. Across thousands of tweets over a period of years, participants interacted with friends, acquaintances, and audiences (both known and unknown), composed and shared multimodal tweets (i.e., tweets composed of both text-based and image-based features), and took to Twitter to document, express, and circulate a wide range of feelings and emotions. These young people took to Twitter in moments of everyday activity and in moments of conflict, tension, or during compelling activities (e.g., to document milestones such as high school graduation, beginning college, celebrating holidays and other special events). In an earlier study (Gleason, 2015), I reported on how youth use the four functions of Twitter (e.g., tweet, retweet, favorite/like, and reply) to create multimodal compositions that suggest particular identities. This study was focused on Twitter as a tool, and its constraints whereas the current study investigated, rather the meanings of compositional practices themselves. While data analysis and interpretation revealed a number of new literacies practices, including subtweeting, taking selfies, and

everyday tweets, I identified three related to the act of multimodal composition: mirroring, lifeblogging, and lifetweeting. These three practices were selected because they suggest an interconnected relationship between literate practices and becoming, that is, Further, I identified one focal participant for each practice, so that we can begin to explore the connection between literate practice and becoming through mirroring, for example.

Table 2 Findings

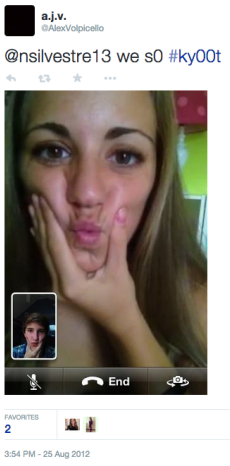
New Literacy Practice	Conceptualization	Significance of Practice
Mirroring	Users suggest similarity or alignment through texts (print, visual, and graphic-based).	Influenced, in part, by imitation of common practices, mirroring requires detailed observation of popular practices, key figures, and a willingness to participate.
Lifetweeting	Users tweet an event, activity, or performance, as it is happening that directly pertains to their life.	Allows for emergent, spontaneous events to be narrativized through Twitter-based tool (e.g., hashtag).
Lifeblogging	Users document a particular aspect of their life through consistent posting.	Encourages users to perform particular identities (i.e., someone in recovery) through committed writing.

Twitter Literacy Practice 1: Mirroring as Multimodal Composition

A widely used affordance of Twitter is the ability of users to share multimodal texts, often in the form of images and micro videos (i.e., Vines, animated GIFS, and

others). Sharing multimodal texts is a complex literacy practice that requires sociotechnical knowledge (i.e., technical knowledge of how to publish an image, including how to compose and take a photograph, in addition to social knowledge about potential audience(s) reactions, which comes from knowing the social context and conventions of Twitter). *Mirroring*, then, is the practice by which people, deliberately or not, capture, curate, and circulate texts (e.g., print and image-based) of their networks. The images below provide examples of the practice of *mirroring* in youth Twitter.

Table 3 Mirroring

Term	Definition of Practice	Conceptualization
Mirroring	The practice by which users create, curate, and circulate texts that suggest similarity or alignment between users through printed text, visual imagery, or graphic systems (e.g., emoji).	As a multimodal conversation with friends and peers, mirroring facilitates youth participation in relevant cultural happenings (e.g., the prom) while deepening relational bonds and suggesting creative expression.
Visual Mirroring	The practice by which users suggest similarity through alignment of visual images (e.g., imitating the form, pose, gesture, or style of another).	 <p>The image is a screenshot of a video call interface. At the top, it shows the user's profile 'a.j.v. @AlexVolpicello' and the contact's name '@nsilvestre13' with a timestamp 'we s0' and a hashtag '#ky00t'. The main video area shows a young woman with long blonde hair, wearing a pink top, with her hand near her face in a specific pose. In the bottom left corner of the video, there is a smaller inset video showing the user, who is also in a similar pose. Below the video, there are icons for 'End' and other call controls. At the bottom, it shows '2' favorites and the date '3:54 PM - 25 Aug 2012'.</p>
Discursive Mirroring	The practice by which users suggest similarity through alignment of discursive practices (e.g., style, tone, or conventions of discourse).	<p>Ryan's friend: "OMG RY HAI"</p> <p>Ryan: "I DON'T KNOW HOW TO WORK THIS"</p>

What is the practice of visual mirroring?

Through of process of visual symmetry called *mirroring*, people suggest similarity through a range of visual-alignment strategies. In the two examples below, we can see Ryan mirroring the gestures and bodily positioning of two of his conversants, his girlfriend (example 1) and a classmate (example 2).

In example 1 we see Ryan and his girlfriend, @nsilvestre13, making similar faces in an example of what I have conceptualized as *visual mirroring*. Writing in *textese* to his girlfriend, @nsilvestre13, Ryan suggests that they are “s0 #ky00t” (i.e., so cute). Still early in the process of learning how to use Twitter, Ryan demonstrates a willingness to experiment and play-- with friends (@nsilvestre13), language, (“s0 #ky00t”), literacy practices (attaching a multimodal image), and ultimately his body and sense of self



Figure 1 we s0 #kyoot

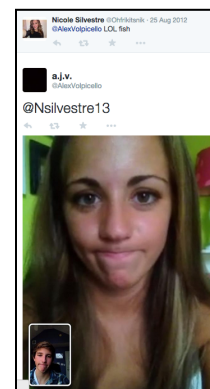


Figure 2 LOL fish

In Figure 3, we see a picture of Ryan taken by his friend Jane, on what appears to be a school bus. Similar to the previous example, it is possible to see the elements of similarity in the visual images-- both young people are sitting with their backs against the window, with phones in hand, primed to shoot. Similar text, in this case “hi,” is also used in both images, suggesting alignment as well.

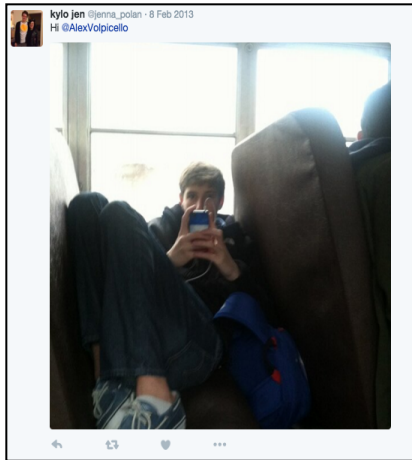


Figure 3 Hi @Ryan



Figure 4 @Jane hi

Visual mirroring is a significant new literacy practice that captures the user's "just in time" recognition of the spontaneous activity of teenage Twitter. By documenting emergent activity, young people are communicating their own literate practices as well. By holding a mirror up to what they see around them, Ryan and friends also show us *where they stand (or sit)* in the vital social space of teenage Twitter. Their performance allows us to see their daily conversations as embodied participation; that is, literacy is not just enacted through printed text, but through (and with) the body as it interacts and makes meaning with other bodies, other languages and literacies, and other kinds of texts.

What is the practice of discursive mirroring?

Discursive mirroring is the practice of using discourse (i.e., similar words, phrases, styles, or genres) to suggest alignment with audience(s). Here, we see Ryan's friend demonstrating her excitement at Ryan joining Twitter by writing in all caps, the online equivalent of yelling. Ryan's friend tweeted, "OMG RY HAI" using youth vernacular (e.g., OMG for "oh my god," "HAI" for hi in "internet speak," and "RY" for Ryan). In response, Ryan wrote, "I DON'T KNOW HOW TO WORK THIS," copying

the stylistic features of his friend's tweet by using the relatively rare ALL CAPS. In addition to copying linguistic styles, Ryan also learns how to employ particular graphical systems, such as emoticons and emoji. For example, when a friend uses the emoticon to represent "happy face" :) Ryan responds in kind with the emoticon for "very happy face" :D.

In another example, Ryan discussed his excitement ("literally cannot wait") around getting a new camera. In response to Ryan's excited tweet, a friend named Peter questions Ryan's interest in photography and asks him, "are you gay?" Copying Peter's discursive form, Ryan responds "Are you poor?" which seems to end the confrontation. In a later encounter with Peter, Ryan again uses a discursive mirroring strategy. When Peter accuses Ryan of being "that gay French kid who plays tennis" Ryan replies in kind, wondering if he is the "gay stoner bassist that wants to play tennis." Though this is mirroring, this actually seems to be escalation, in this case emphasizing that while Alex "plays tennis," Peter merely "wants to play tennis."

How has mirroring changed over time?

Over the course of two years, Ryan's practices of mirroring became more complex and sophisticated. Whereas his early mirroring emphasized common cultural practices (e.g., "LOL fish" face), over time he began to use his intense interests (e.g., 21 Pilots) as a cultural mediator allowing him to create sophisticated artwork that reflected the cultural practices of youth Twitter. Discussing his early attempts at Twitter, Ryan said, "It was two-fold; either me copying my friends and seeing the ways they used Twitter, and also noticing the general trends of Twitter, what are people hashtagging,

how are they using it, what's funny..." At the same time, eager for a way to contribute to popular youth culture and to express his creativity, Ryan began to participate in trending topics.

By the time Ryan is a senior in high school, he has become more vocal about his intense interest in the popular band, 21 Pilots, which he tweets about multiple times per day. Ryan used mirroring (i.e., primarily visual mirroring, but also discursive mirroring) to suggest alignment with 21 Pilot fans, which from Ryan's perspective, seem to be most of his high school. The most interesting finding is how Ryan's interest in the band (as mediated through Twitter) seems to facilitate two related outcomes: his creativity (i.e., creating digital fan art about 21 Pilots), and his relationships with friends (e.g., their love of 21 Pilots brings them closer). Below, Figure 5 is the cover of a 21 pilots album cover; Figure 6 is Ryan's multimodal composition that remixes it.



Figure 5 Cover of 21 Pilots

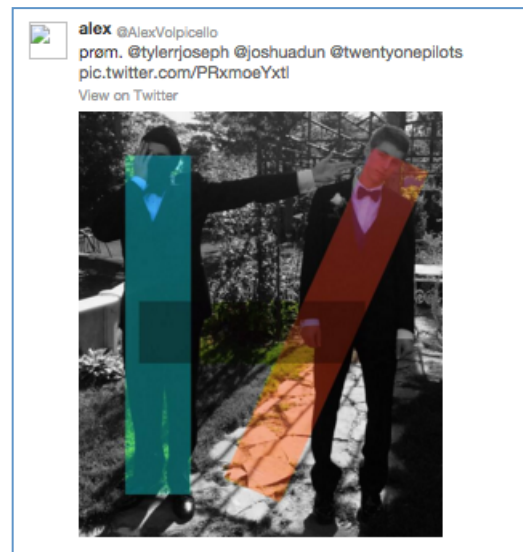


Figure 6 prom

Conceptualizing this digital art as multimodal conversation that mirrors the culture around it (i.e., youth culture on Twitter) encourages us to see Ryan's creativity as both singular expression and as participation in a youthful conversation. That is, through Twitter, Ryan is able to participate in significant cultural happenings in youth culture (i.e., the prom) in a way that highlights his creativity and artistic talent as well as a peer. Thus, by promoting his multimodal compositions that highlight his love for 21 Pilots, Ryan is strengthening bonds with his close friends, who share in his fandom, as well as suggesting his own relevance as a member of youth culture, as a digital artist, and as someone who knows how to tell a story on Twitter. All of this happens through these multimodal compositions.

What is the sense of possibility through mirroring?

The new literacy practice of mirroring on Twitter encourages people to observe and participate in relevant cultural practices on Twitter (i.e., LOL fish). We've seen how Ryan used visual and discursive mirroring to artfully compose interactions with others, suggesting similarity in a number of ways, from copying his girlfriend's facial expressions (i.e., "LOL fish") to copying the bodily pose and language of a friend's tweet. In addition, Ryan demonstrated that he can also recognize and use the linguistic and social conventions of his peer group, as he mimics particular heteronormative, cisgendered insults (e.g., "are you gay?"). When I interviewed Ryan, he proposed interpreting his tweets ironically, saying, "I was making fun of people at my school who actually tweeted like that...I just enjoyed mimicking them, as if my Twitter were completely indistinguishable from someone that goddamned ignorant."

For Ryan, then, mirroring allows him to reflect the social norms and conventions of teenagers in his network, such as using “gay” pejoratively, while facilitating an opportunity for him to comment or evaluate these norms. Ryan intimated that using language ironically to reflect the deeply offensive social conventions of his community presents an opportunity for self-expression, commentary, and implicit critique. He is confident that his followers would “definitely know” he was being sarcastic, and that more explicit critique is unnecessary.

Mirroring, then, can be conceptualized as participation that documents, reflects, and possibly challenges relevant cultural practices of the moment (i.e., knowing how to do the “LOL fish” face). At the same time, mirroring as Ryan practiced it, suggests the possibility of using these moments for creative composition (i.e., the multimodal 21 Pilots album cover). What remains constant in either conception of mirroring is the centrality of friendship and relationship in this practice.

Twitter Literacy Practice 2: Lifetweeting

Table 4 Lifetweeting

Term	Definition of Practice	Example
Lifetweeting	Encourages the production of a multimodal narrative (i.e., linear or nonlinear) told by multiple authors that captures the playfulness and sociality valued on Twitter.	Lori creates the hashtag #LorTakesFlorida in order to lifetweet her flight to Florida, and gets her friends to participate in the activity with her.

What is the practice of lifetweeting?

Lifetweeting is the practice by which people tweet an event, activity, or performance, as it is happening, that pertains directly to *their life*. Lifetweeting is similar to livetweeting, in which people participate in major events such as the Oscars, political debates, sporting events, television shows, and concerts through “just in time” tweeting. Recently, a public scholar lifetweeted her son’s high school sexual education class, drawing attention to the misinformation promoted by the school district’s abstinence-only based curriculum (@AliceDreger). *Lifetweeting* is a complex new literacy practice that takes advantage of the social, playful, and embodied natures of tweeting. Conceptually, lifetweeting is related to the umbrella term of livestreaming, in that users chronicle their lives online and share them with networked audiences, “facilitating connections to others, deepening relationships, and creating a source of real-time information,” (Marwick, 2010, p. 371).

In this event, high school junior Lori lifetweeted a flight from the East Coast to Florida, creating the hashtag #LorTakesFlorida to organize the activity. This hashtag suggests action (“taking” Florida), references pop culture (“taking Florida” implies “taking Manhattan”) and a personal connection (i.e., the use of Lori’s nickname Lor). Almost as soon as Lori tweeted that she “finally” finished packing, a delay occurred, putting Lori’s flight “on hold.” Meanwhile, on #LorTakesFlorida, action was heating up. Another delay occurred, causing Lori to blurt out, “omfg...kill me pls” (“pls” for “please”). Throughout this event, Lori, Brianna, and Hannah tweeted about Lori’s flight and its untimely delay with the kind of topical humor valued on Twitter. After Lori

expressed her frustration (“kill me, please”), Hannah clarified, “Lori will have to take Florida a little later than expected” and shared a picture of a smiling Lori (seen below):

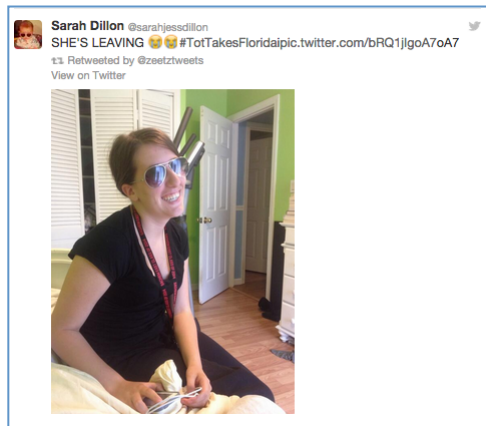


Figure 7 SHE’S LEAVING

Lifetweeting can be characterized by a number of significant features, including the emergence of an activity to be tweeted (i.e., delayed flight or sex education class), the use (or non-use) of a designated hashtag, and the possible use of multiple representational systems (e.g., printed text, visual images, graphical systems like emojis and emoticons) to document an on-going activity. While a hashtag may organize contributions from multiple authors, Lori and her friends created a participatory ethos to the activity, encouraging others to “jump on in” and “don’t be shy live tweet [Lori’s] adventure.” This participatory ethos of lifetweeting makes visible the embodied, emotional nature of literate practices. The range of emotions activated through #LorTakesFlorida suggests the connection between multimodal composition practices, emotion, and the relationships deepened through this activity. These emergent interactions, which develop a multimodal, co-constructed narrative, have a whimsical quality that seems to reflect the best cultural conventions of Twitter-- spontaneity, playfulness, sociality, and relationality.

How has lifetweeting changed over time?

Lifetweeting was a regular practice for Lori throughout the course of this study. She regularly lifetweeted important milestones in her life, such as her high school graduation, going to the prom, and even taking exams. One particularly significant milestone was her school trip to Washington, D.C. in her senior year of high school. Some significant differences emerged from Lori's lifetweeting of her senior trip, designated by #setrip14, and #LorTakesFlorida, which occurred earlier in her high school years? Whereas Lori and her close friends used the #LorTakesFlorida hashtag to organize their narrative about a flight delay, on #setrip14 these practices became more complicated, less unified, and more nonlinear. Lori and friends occasionally included the #setrip14 hashtag, but just as often did not use it (e.g., "Me with Ashley & Lori at senior trip"). Other times, Lori retweeted posts that seemed to indirectly reference the senior trip, but without using those words: "so excited to ride all the roller coasters today." On the senior trip, Lori retweeted six different people before the bus even left the parking lot, suggesting that this story would be imagined not as a coherent activity (i.e., #LorTakesFlorida) but as a journey in which many authors made small contributions.

The changes in Lori's lifetweeting practices reflect not just her own deepening competency in multimodal composition, but also a deepening richness and complexity of how we tell stories on Twitter. Whereas #LorTakesFlorida was organized around consistent use of the hashtag, and a linear narrative about a flight delay, on #setrip14 the story was more complicated (literally). The multiplicity of authors and inconsistent hashtag use in #setrip14 challenges notions of individual, unitary authorship. One of Lori's chief roles is to collate the multiple accounts of #setrip14, which she does through

constant observation of the emergent, unfolding action of Twitter. The key here is the notion of collation rather than integration; Lori does not retweet multiple accounts of the senior trip in order to synthesize or integrate the story into a consistent, unified story. Rather, she is merely one of the authors on this trip who constructs an idiosyncratic story that draws from #setrip14, as well as from accounts that do not use this tag.

What is the sense of possibility through lifetweeting?

As a new literate practice, lifetweeting allows Twitter users to facilitate the construction of a multimodal, non-linear narrative told by multiple authors. Similar to how mirroring encourages people to reflect customs and conventions of a particular culture, lifetweeting facilitates the deepening of social relationships between people. On the senior trip, Lori both produced and circulated visual images that reinforced relational connections with her good friends. Sharing pictures of Lori and her friends is almost a story within a story. In the image below, it is possible to observe Lori using multimodality to emphasize and reinforce her relationship and close connection with two friends (shown here giving the sign for their clique). Holding their fingers to make “WB,” (for “White Bitches”), Lori and friends “take the Washington monument” though the caption acknowledges that they are missing their friend Alexa, another WB.



Figure 8 Wb take Washington monument

The theme of recognizing an absent member is repeated below, with the image from the bus.



Figure 9 @alie we love you

The image works to remind people of the relationship between friends, mediated through images, as well as to focus attention and energy on the activity of lifetweeting. When Lori published a picture of her clique, with the caption “we love you so much,” their relationship is made explicit. At the same time, the image references the on-going, unfolding activity of the senior trip. Thus, the visual images that are shared reinforce the amicable bonds between close friends as well as drawing attention to the emergent

activity of the senior trip. Lori and the WBs use multimodal images to tell the story of the WBs on their senior trip; absent friend Alie, not yet a senior, is recognized as a vital member of the WBs whose communication with her friends feeds back into the participatory, emerging quality of lifetweeting.

As a new literate practice, lifetweeting allows Lori to perform an identity as a writer who can tell multimodal stories that are co-constructed, and also dynamic (i.e., playful and silly). Lifetweeting affords telling an emerging story by multiple authors, telling a story from multiple perspectives using diverse modes and media. Through lifetweeting, a sense of possibility emerges, about the nature of authorship, what kinds of stories can be told, and what other dynamics are reinforced or supported through lifetweeting. #Setrip14 covered the usual elements of a DC trip: visit to the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, and, of course, the cherry trees. Yet, some of the most engaging parts of #setrip14 were from the more mundane elements of the journey-- the time spent on the bus, traveling to and from sites, and just hanging out. This is a powerful literate practice that speaks to the power of the “everyday” story that captures (or creates) the embodied, emotional activity of young people’s lives.

Twitter Literacy Practice 3: Lifeblogging

Table 5 Lifeblogging

Term	Definition of Practice	Example
Lifeblogging	Emergent practice of committed advocacy to a particular topic that, by weaving personal and societal stories, can help serve as a learning opportunity for self and others.	Lucy lifeblogs about her process of #recovery from self-harm and traumatic relationships she endured and includes journal-life entries, images, meme participation and curated content.

What is the practice of lifeblogging?

Lifeblogging is the practice of blogging about a central aspect of one's life on Twitter, often through the use of multimodal, new literate practices. For Lucy, her Twitter lifeblog centered on #recovery from emotional trauma and sexual abuse, for which she was hospitalized during her sophomore and junior years of high school. Envisioned as multimodal conversation comprised of multiple elements-- including a journal; visual representations; curated content; and meme participation-- lifeblogging is an emergent practice that can help people "write themselves into being" through committed (i.e., daily) practice.

Conceptually, lifeblogging is similar to online journaling. For roughly three years, Lucy used Twitter to document, record, and report her process of recovery. As a way of coping with her emotional trauma, Lucy engaged in self-harming behaviors, such as cutting and disordered eating. Lucy said, "When I was very sick, Twitter was an outlet for me. Much of the suffering of mental illness is very private, and I wanted to make it tangible." On Twitter, Lucy kept a record of her recovery, reporting a wide range of

emotions, experiences, and memories associated with her journey. After returning from a six-month stay in the hospital, she would regularly post “angsty tweets” like this: “feels like she is going fucking insane and is really stressed out” or this one: “frustration overwhelms me, nothing left but this empty feeling, rejection from the very thing that gave me definition.” Around the same time, Lucy began using hashtags to punctuate her tweets and provide an evaluative dimension to her utterances (c.f. Gleason, 2015). For example, from this time period, she tweeted, “new therapist walks by without saying hello. good first impression, man. #asshole.” Another time, she wrote, “I think some of the four pounds I lost was in my face :) #fuckyeah.” Lucy seemed to be quite cognizant that she was using Twitter as a tool in her #recovery process-- one tweet read: “Just kill me now. fuck everything. #angstytweetwhatelseisnew.”

Images are another important compositional element of lifeblogging. While Lucy primarily communicated through printed text, her judicious use of visual imagery (i.e., pictures of Lucy with friends) added richness to the rhetorical experience. On Lucy’s #recovery-focused blog, images served as a reflection of Lucy’s progress as well as motivating factor. The image below is common from this time period:

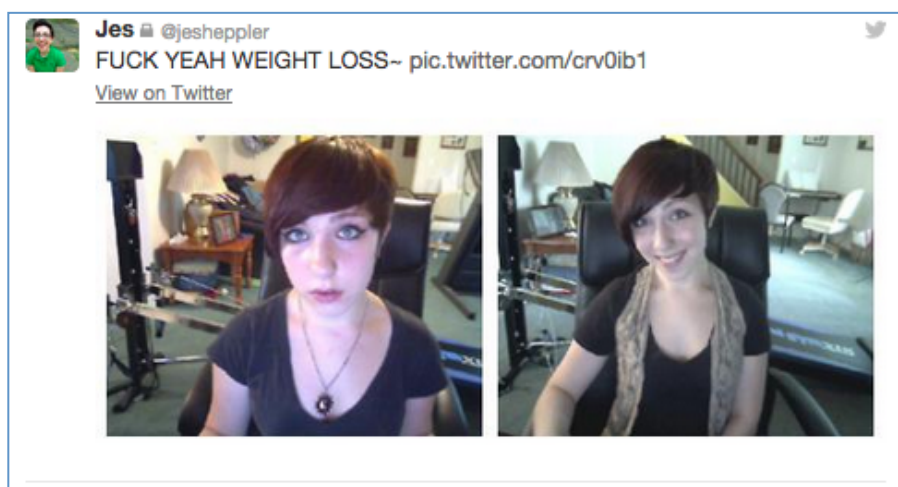


Figure 10 FUCK YEAH WEIGHT LOSS

In Lucy's case, many images were deleted from her Twitter account as well. A tweet from 2012 reported, "How to erase every artifact of what I looked like last year."

Another element of lifeblogging can include meme participation, such as when Lucy engaged with the #MentionSomeoneYoureThankfulFor meme. This seemed to be particularly significant for Lucy, as she contributed five tweets to this meme. In addition to naming her close friends, she thanked two of her favorite musicians, Bright Eyes and Amanda Palmer, and two politicians allied with GLBTQ+ issues. Unlike Ryan, Lucy was not an active participant in memes that circulated on Twitter. Participating in #MentionSomeoneYoureThankfulFor suggests a willingness to acknowledge one's imperfection, fragility, and vulnerability. Similar to circulating images, journaling through tweets, and sharing information, participating in memes is another way of performing #recovery on Twitter. Even though #MentionSomeoneYoureThankfulFor does not explicitly address recovery, it can be surmised that this could be? part of the #recovery process.

Finally, the fourth element of lifeblogging is curated content, or information shared via retweet, discussed more in the next section.

How has lifeblogging changed over time?

Lucy's lifeblogging practices changed significantly in the three years that she was actively using Twitter to assist in her recovery from sexual abuse. Lucy's early practices emphasized her personal struggle while her later practices positioned her as an expert with valuable information and experience to share. Lucy began not only to insert her voice into the conversation, but also began to situate her own struggle in social and

cultural contexts. This complex topic of recovery included connections to other discourses, such as memes focused on emotional health, images documenting Lucy's progress, and, eventually, some circulation of information (e.g., curated content) about #recovery.

At the beginning, when Lucy had just arrived home from the hospital, her lifeblog could be conceived as heavily journalistic. There was a lot of printed text that referred heavily to the emotional process of recovering from abuse. In one tweet, Lucy wondered, "why don't I have any motivation anymore? I just don't care" and in another she reported that it was, "So frustrating. Hate self." Eventually, as Lucy gained support from her parents, friends, mentors, teachers, and mental health professionals, she began to turn the corner. After a period of feeling a sense of "dullness" associated with stabilizing medication, Lucy felt excitement and motivation again. She tweeted, "I can't wait to have obsessions again." As a result of coming off medication, and regaining her mental acuity, Lucy began to reform connections to other literate practices and spaces. Lucy told me that her senior English class encouraged her to develop her analytical and rhetorical skills. Lucy said, "Being good at literature gave me a sense of purpose." Feeling this sense of purpose allowed her to continue to tell her story, using her own narrative as well as sharing others'. This experience helped Lucy to connect her struggle to systemic struggles, as well. She said, "Social justice, activism, and feminism was a way for me to feel validated. It was a way to see that my experience as not totally unique, like thousands of women suffer mental illness as a result of sexual abuse." Lucy noted how sharing information about the connection between mental illness and sexual abuse gave her a

“narrative in which to place myself, situating this thing in something larger than me, and that I could be a part of this community.”

Overall, during this period, Lucy’s lifeblogging practices shifted from the journalistic, characterized as inward-looking emotional report, to outward-looking advocacy and multimodal conversation. Over a period of three years, Lucy’s lifeblog gradually became more of a conversation and less of a confessional-- that is, when she finally started to contribute information about recovery (e.g., via retweeting informative articles), she mentioned how she wanted to add her “voice” to the conversation. Thus, Lucy recognizes that sharing her voice (e.g., her diary-like recollections, as well as informative articles) will contribute to the conversation.

What is the sense of possibility through lifeblogging?

Lucy’s lifeblogging practices enable her to add her voice to a larger, multivocal conversation about the importance of health and well-being (e.g., physical, mental, emotional, and social). Through this activity, Lucy noted that she is contributing her “voice” to the larger conversation. It is intriguing, however, that Lucy made a distinction between her advocacy work and her lifeblogging. It is not her journalistic writings, her daily reporting about the emotional, embodied (and sometimes tortured) experience of living through recovery that she recognizes as an addition to the conversation; rather, she labels her advocacy work as being valuable and useful to others. Lucy’s sense of possibility comes from making connections, building a network of people (e.g., her curated list of people to follow, her gaining followers from retweeting certain things), and weaving her personal and societal stories together. Through lifeblogging, Lucy is able to

contribute her own process of recovery for others to recognize, connect with (or not), and use as a learning experience. As Lucy's lifeblogging changed over time, she began to envision it as a transformative agent. As she "started getting into social justice stuff," she met influential thinkers on Twitter and began to develop a network of her own. She said, "I found much more of a community and a sense of belonging because I was tweeting feminism."

Discussion

There are at least two related major topical "threads" to this study: first, exploration into how teenagers practice literacy on Twitter, and second, into the consequences of being Twitter literate, or having "Twitteracy" (Gleason & Greenhow, 2012). To explore the first, I posed the research question guiding this study: *How do young people engage in the new literate practice of multimodal composition on Twitter, and for what aims or purposes?* On Twitter, teenagers used a number of different approaches to "mediatize" (Deuze, 2015) their lived experience on social media. As they participate in emergent, spontaneous, "moment-by-moment unfoldings" (Leander & Boldt, 2013) with their friends and followers, they create and co-construct multimodal compositions through three new literacies practices: mirroring, lifeblogging, and lifeteeting. To investigate the second thread, I am moved by Lucy's statement at the beginning of this paper ("I'm starting to think in hash tags") to ask my own follow-up: *What does it mean for young Twitter users to "think in hashtags" and what can they do with it?* This relationship between the practices of multimodal composition on Twitter (i.e, how young people develop new literate practices over time), and the meanings of

active participation in the space (e.g., what does “thinking in hashtags” suggest about how young people experience friendship/relationality, share affinities, and become recognized as relevant to peers and other audience(s)?) suggest a complicated tangle of activity that requires additional thinking. To guide our discussion, I will explore the process of how young people practice literacy on Twitter, and what the consequences or outcomes are, in more detail in this discussion.

In order to explore the relationship between how teenagers develop new literate practices on Twitter, and how this new literacy might be used, and for what end, I introduce three concepts: 1) orientating practices; 2) mobilizing practices; and 3) reflective emergence. I suggest that as young people develop their competence on Twitter, their literate practices take two forms: orientating practices and mobilizing practices. *Orientating practices* are those that orient people to the conventions, cultures, and customs of particular sociotechnical spaces, such as Twitter. Through observation and documentation of normative practices in a given space, orientating practices facilitate participation in a given discourse by offering users an opportunity to literally figure out “where they stand.”

Once users have figured out where they are, in a given space, they gain competency through repeated participation. Over time, even young people who were initially disinterested in Twitter became proficient users, often posting hundreds, if not thousands, of times per month (e.g., Ryan averaged almost 70 tweets a day at his high point). Through repeated participation, habitual use, and recognition from others, users develop standing within their network, allowing them to marshal their Twitter connections as participants and as resources in their engaged activity-- these are known

as *mobilizing practices*. Mobilizing practices facilitate interaction, construction, and circulation of literacy on Twitter through serious engagement with *vital life stuff* (i.e., that which produces the “affective intensities” that motivate, inspire, and cajole one to action, such as 21 Pilots, SpongeBob Square Pants, *Hunger Games* and Jennifer Lawrence, Teegan and Sara, and anything and everything else).

Through orientating and mobilizing practices that enact multimodal composition on Twitter, young people’s ways of thinking and being are transformed through a process of *reflective emergence*. A state of emergent literate activity facilitates a process of reflection by which Twitter users gain an understanding of common cultural practices, as well as a deeper understanding about the consequences and possibilities suggested by Twitter participation.

Thus, “thinking in hashtags” becomes more than the ability to produce individual compositions via one’s Twitter account; it becomes a co-constructed, multimodal, participatory experience that suggests new possibilities (i.e., non-linear, uncertain) that are momentous and both ordinary and exciting.

Orientating Practices

The new literacies practices of mirroring, lifeblogging, and lifetweeting can be seen as *orientating practices*, or compositional practices that orient users to the cultural norms of particular spaces (i.e., teenage Twitter). Orientating practices encourage the study of both the normative practices in a given space as well as the process by which people figure out their own place in this space. While three orientating practices are characterized as discreet for analytical purposes here, taken together, these practices

suggest that teenage literate practices on Twitter are social, interactive, and multimodal. These three practices can also represent different conceptual approaches to storytelling using the sociocultural conventions and affordances of Twitter (e.g., ability to embed visual imagery). Simply put, these orientations answer the question, *How do you want to tell your story (stories) on Twitter, and with what rhetorical tool? A mirror? A journal? A live broadcast?* A *mirroring orientation* signals an interest in documenting the unique context that's unfolding around them, capturing the user's interaction with vital, energizing practices. A *lifeblogging orientation* suggests a commitment to story-telling one particular aspect of a life, such as one's recovery process. A *lifetweeting orientation* points to an interest in detailing emerging events in one's life.

As a whole, then, orientating practices are those that enable young people to observe, and document cultural practices "at large" of a given space; through this observatory process, young people are able to recognize "where they stand" with regards to their role or position in a particular practice. For Ryan, a mirroring orientation allowed him to suggest his creativity and sense of humor while becoming acculturated to teenage Twitter. By making light of his unwieldy hashtag use (e.g., #amidoingthisrightyet?), Ryan pointed out the potential to develop competence through participation. A lifeblogging orientation, such as the one Lucy had, demonstrates a commitment to chronicle one's life through a closer look at an important element, such as the process of recovery from emotional trauma. Lori's lifetweeting orientation encouraged her to author emergent narratives out of life's ordinary routines, such as a delayed airline flight.

All three orientations suggest an commitment to engaging with important practices, even as the consequences or outcomes of this practice are unknown. An

important feature of orientating practices is that they merely establish a “ground” or “temporary center” from which users will operate. As such, we can imagine orientating practices to be aligned with future possibilities and opportunities. Orientating practices provide a momentary platform in the often shifting ground of social media, enabling people to keep momentum or interest going as they develop social network, strengthen connections, develop interests, and begin to figure out how to interact with others in this space.

All three orientations suggest user competence in recognizing the cultural conventions of a particular new literacy practice, as well as a commitment to developing one’s own competence in this particular practice. Orientating practices encourage users to engage with Twitter through awareness of how the space functions and how their own literate practices “fit” (or not) with common practices. And yet, by themselves, orientating practices are not sufficient enough to facilitate the complex, generative, co-constructed literacies evidenced in #setrip14. Why not? Isn’t it possible these orienting practices could pull others into a co-constructed narrative. To analyze the significance of these practices, a new concept was developed: mobilizing practices.

Mobilizing Practices

Teenage Twitter is a space of emergent activity, where young people create, curate, and circulate *the vital life stuff* that makes the space so engaging, fun, and relevant: anything and everything from pop culture symbols (e.g., images of SpongeBob SquarePants, Jennifer Lawrence, *Friends* stars, and 21 Pilots) to images of food, friends, and daily life. In this space, participants demonstrated a desire for expression,

relationality, friendship, affinity, and others. Whereas orientating practices are concerned with figuring out *how* individuals participate in this space, and in what form, mobilizing practices are those that encourage others to engage in a shared activity. Inherently social, mobilizing practices are attuned to participation-- unlike orientating practices that suggest a notion of literacy based in part on individual (or unified) activity, mobilizing practices presume collective activity.

Mobilizing practices involve related concepts of relationality and possibility through intense engagement with a range of personal interests (i.e., 21 Pilots, health and well-being, networked sociality). That is, young people are able to encourage their friends and followers to participate in their literate practice (recall Lori and her friends encouraging others to “join us” in lifetweeting #LorTakesFlorida). Mobilized by interests that are engaging, personal, and relevant to others, people participate in memes, creative composition, information sharing and emergent activity.

The *mobilizing practices*, when taken together, suggest a way of engaging with the world that facilitates creative, emergent, interactive, co-construction of multimodal narratives. These stories are often deeply personal, reflecting intense emotional moments and strong interpersonal relationships. As in any conversation, there are many ways to participate, from sharing personal stories with trusted friends (e.g., Lucy’s story of recovery, told over three years, and through stories, pictures, and of course, through hashtags), to participating in popular activities (e.g., memes, such as #EmbarrassYourBestFriend), and to document activity as it unfolds (i.e., Lori’s lifetweeting).

Reflective Emergence

As a result of young people's Twitter activity, they develop a new literacy practice known as *reflective emergence*, conceptualized as knowledge of how to participate in the dynamic, emergent world of Twitter as well as being reflective about how one is changed or transformed by this participation on Twitter. In order to be a competent youth Twitter user and to be seen as "relevant" to other teens (Gleason, 2015), young people have to know how to participate in an emergent activity space, where life unfolds "moment-by-moment" (Leander & Boldt, 2013, p. 33). In this dynamic space, where topics trend and fluctuate, where local social dynamics bubble in the background of youth Twitter, where composing a tweet for an audience means grabbing attention for a moment (Senft, 2015), participants in this study demonstrated their ability to participate on Twitter.

Teenagers in this study were engaged and mobilized by wanting to document their unfolding, "moment by moment" interactions with themselves, with each other, with trending memes, with things that pop up in their Twitter feed, or with friends they follow on Twitter. That is, teenagers were not preoccupied by forward-looking or strategic uses of Twitter; they were not using Twitter to fulfill stated end-goals. Rather, teenagers in this study were engaged by the endless possibilities of using Twitter to compose multimodal compositions, by themselves and with others, that "write themselves into being" (boyd, 2008). Leander and Boldt noted that their focal participant, a ten-year-old manga-loving boy, was motivated by "friendship, love, and identity" to read manga, sword-fight with his friend, and discuss characters and storylines (p. 41). Lucy, Ryan, and

Lori were interested in making connections, self-expression, public recognition, being playful, creative, and honest.

Literacy practices on Twitter are also *reflective*, in that young people displayed sophisticated meta-awareness of their own Twitteracy practices. Though of course, these practices are also performative, as young people perform speak to multiple audiences on Twitter. Being “relevant” in teen parlance means knowing how to be on Twitter.

Performative practices spanned the spectrum among this study’s participants. Lori’s strategy of deliberation, which included her texts being “vetted” by close friends before public posting to Twitter, was different than Ryan’s individual composing process, in which he focused on the “economy” of crafting the perfect tweet. Lucy’s tweets were performative in that she seemed to be showing her followers what recovery looked like. Participants were also quite aware of their own literate performances on Twitter, perhaps because the act of participation in a networked, public space, they had developed insight into the act of composing on Twitter.

Reflective emergence strikes a different chord than mere planned or designed uses of Twitter. Here I am influenced by Leander and Boldt (2013), who argued for literacy research that does not assume forward-thinking by backward-looking investigation; that is, they attempt to introduce indeterminacy and “raucous play” via “moment by moment unfoldings” through embodied activity. Literacy, they argued, can focus on things other than student-designed futures through multimodal texts. It can be playful, embodied, and uncertain. Like them, I am arguing away from an analytical lens focused on purposeful or designed uses of Twitter. Unlike in other settings (e.g., a social movement) where Twitter users use a hashtag such as #OWS to organize, mobilize, and share information about

Occupy Wall Street in a planned and purposeful way (Gleason, 2013), youth in this study were engaged and mobilized by friends, emerging topics of interest, and a need to speak one's heart (and/or mind).

Thinking in Hashtags: Orientating Practices, Mobilizing Practices, and Reflective Emergence

Thinking in hashtags then is a mode of participating in the mediatized world of Twitter through the aforementioned new literate practices of composition. It is conceptualized as an interactive, co-constructed, social activity that facilitates literate practices by mobilizing engagement with the *vital life stuff* found on Twitter. Through highly engaging activity, such as lifetweeting a trip that involves multiple authors, or mirroring the cultural affinities of the crowd through multimodal text, users escape their own silo of individualized writing and become the vital life stuff for other people. Thinking in hashtags is an active process of participation that involves more than mere expression or communication via tweets. As Lucy reported in her interview, "Thinking was action for me when I was in high school, without a car, without any kind of activist community. That kind of thinking was much more active and intentional than it was [just] thinking. It was a way of engaging in action."

Engaged by the affective forces and intensities of relational connection, and interested in the collective affinities for cultural icons, young people take to Twitter as a way of mobilizing action and activity with close friends. There, they practice new literacies of mirroring, lifeblogging, and lifetweeting as they develop sophisticated approaches to multimodal composition. These practices are predicated on a notion of

Twitter literacy as partial, multiple, synthetic, and connective-- that is, the three practices introduced in this study are not about developing creative and communicative competence in isolation (i.e., as an individual Twitter user), but are about developing the capacity to join (and get others to join) others taking part in an emergent world driven by interests, relationship, and creative assembly.

Conclusions and Implications

The new literacy practices of multimodal composition on Twitter suggests important considerations for literacy research and practice, as well as important connections to informal and formal learning spaces. First, this study suggests that the complexity involved in the process of developing Twitteracy, or Twitter literacy (Greenhow & Gleason, 2012). Teenagers' Twitteracy practices of mirroring, lifetweeting, and lifeblogging were co-constructed, non-linear, multiple, creative, social, and action-oriented. Their participation in Twitter "allows young people to perform new social acts not previously possible," such as collectively composing creative, multimodal, nonlinear stories documenting important milestones for teenagers (i.e., the prom, graduation, or school trips) (Greenhow & Gleason, p. 471). Consider how Lori and her classmates lifetweeted their school trip to Washington, D.C.—their story was composed through different authors, representing multiple perspectives, and non-linear. Unlike formal academic literacy, with its stable, fossilized products (i.e., the five-paragraph essay or informational essay), teenage Twitteracy can be seen as a space where new literacies practices enable complex, creative, co-constructed composition. Ten years ago, Hull and Katz (2006) warned us that "we cannot afford to neglect such new meditational means,"

for they offer “personally and socially meaningful” uses of literacy (p. 72). Teenagers’ multimodal composition on Twitter represents an increasingly valuable space for the development of new literacy practices that are relevant in a globalized, networked world. Significantly, these practices encourage literacy researchers and practitioners to take seriously the idea that “thinking in hash tags” presents new ways of being in the world that are worthy of continued and future research.

Second, this study pushes us to consider the way that young people can access and mobilize resources (material, cognitive, and social) as they navigate spaces of emergent literacy activities. This focus on *orientating* and *mobilizing practices* pushes teachers, parents, young people, and researchers to consider social media participation as networked, sociocultural activity. Participation on Twitter requires young people to orient themselves, and then marshal resources to complete the activity. Consider the vast range of resources used across multiple times and spaces of composing—including *social resources* (e.g., friends, classmates), *cultural resources* (i.e., 21 Pilots, *Parks and Recreation*, Taylor Swift), *discursive resources* (e.g., teenage Twitter practices such as subtweeting, selfies, and lurking), *rhetorical resources* (i.e., knowledge of audience(s) and the like), *personal resources* (e.g., performed identity) and countless others.

Innovative educators and youth workers may find value in attempting to map the range of resources involved in new literate practice. Similar to the way that teachers imagine student writing as participation in formal discourse communities, educators may want to trace the process by which young people mobilize resources from a wide range of networks and communities in order to participate. Envisioning the act of mobilizing

resources as a kind of knowledge helps educators to see participation on Twitter as a space for new literate possibilities.

Finally, while it may be possible for innovative educators and literacy researchers to connect young people's new literacies practices on Twitter to formal literacy practices, I am not suggesting an uncritical (i.e., "out of the box") application of teenager's Twitter practices. As literacy scholars have argued (Paris, 2010; Hull, 2005; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Gleason, 2015), young people's unsanctioned literacy practices in youth spaces are worthy of study because they suggest creativity, aesthetic pleasure, and communicative prowess. Teachers who aim to facilitate these educational aims (i.e., creativity, pleasure, communicative competency, as well as others) may wish to highlight the experimental nature of using Twitter in formal and informal learning spaces. Rather than trying to meet particular curricular objectives through the use of Twitter—which would be *contra* the "indeterminacy" that I argued for earlier—teachers may simply want to consider Twitter use to be a grand experiment that may foster the kind of engaging, social, participatory, and reflective practices we see in teenage Twitter.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Table 6 Coding Design

Research Question: What kind of literate practices do young adult Twitter users participate in?	Sample Codes	Definition of Code	Participant Example
	Emotion, affect	Feeling or emotion suggested, expressed, or communicated by tweet.	<p>"I apologize for all the teenage angst tweets right now. #sorrynotsorry" (Lori, 9/8/12)</p> <p>"feels like she is going fucking insane and is really stressed out. :l" (Lucy, 1/8/10)</p> <p>"I'm thankful for my incredible friends. Couldn't have gone this far without them. Thank you." (Ryan, 11/22/12)</p>
	Everyday tweets	Record of daily ("everyday") experience that aims to suggest relevance to youth audience(s).	"My toenail just fell in my keyboard" (Lucy, 7/28/11)
	Learning to use Twitter	Suggests process of learning how to use Twitter.	<p>"hate having a new privated twitter but i can't stand people so..." (Lori, 6/22/12)</p> <p>"@mal I DON'T KNOW HOW TO WORK THIS." (Ryan, 8/24/12)</p>
	Lifeblogging	The process by which Twitter is used as a journal (as to record one's daily moments).	" why don't I have any motivation anymore? I just don't care" (Lucy, 5/11/10)
	Lifetweeting	In which one tweets as an event is happening, often through the use of a hashtag to organize the experience.	" finally about to start boarding" #LorTakesFlorida (Lori, 8/7/13)

Table 6 (cont'd)

	Meta-awareness of Twitter use	Beyond mere knowledge of how to tweet, this code expresses user's awareness of how audiences may react to tweets. This suggests deep knowledge of Twitter conventions and competencies.	"[Insert tweet here about scrubbing, hating school and getting up this early, and wanting your bed.]" (Ryan, 11/19/12)
	Meme participation	Users use knowledge of popular culture (including youth culture) to participate in trending topics, signified by the hashtag.	"#LyricsThatSavedMe It was only a kiss, how did it end up like this" (Ryan, 3/7/13) "Jude the Mainstream #LessInterestingBooks @thxwebz" (Lucy, 11/23/12)
	Multimodality	In this category, visual-based texts are shared as users circulate images of themselves, their friends, and favored popular culture icons (e.g., Sponge Bob Squarepants, Friends, Sara & Teegan, etc).	 (Lori, 9/9/12)
	Relationality on Twitter	Tweets adds another way to build connection between users, as young people retweet their friends to establish relationality.	"When I don't want to talk to Lori, I retweet her" (Lori's friend, 9/17/13)
	Selfies	These images often represent youth, alone or with others, typically friends, family members, or interesting spaces.	 (Lucy, 12/17/12)

Table 6 (cont'd)

	Subtweet	This kind of tweet does not use direct address (e.g., lacks the @+username convention) to mention a specific user. Rather, it relies on the expectation that the tweet suggests a particular user.	"One of my best friends. You'll go far. You're original, funny, brilliant more than you give yourself credit for. You'll go far kid; je le sais sans <i>doute</i> " (Ryan, 10/23/13)
	Surveillance aka "creeping"	This code emphasizes that tweeting is a public act; as users tweet, they are subject to surveillance by their followers.	"I really love creeping on nico" (Lori, 9/24/13)

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CHAPTER 2

BECOMING A FEMINIST IN TEENAGE TWITTER: NEW LITERACIES, COMMITMENTS, AND IDENTITY WORK

Introduction

In education, one powerful way to consider the process, dimensions, and outcomes of learning is by considering the degree to which the learner developed a particular identity. Conceptualizing learning as the development of identity within a particular discourse, the sociocultural tradition has long focused attention on joint activity, interaction, relationships and context at play (Gee, 1996). Through participation in a particular discourse, one authors an identity that is recognized by others (Gee, 2000), such as how a young woman comes to be recognized as a *feminist* by her peers. Research from this tradition is concerned with how formal and informal learning spaces offer opportunities to learn by developing one's identity as a feminist (Keller, 2012), scientist (Barton, 2012), mathematician (Nasir, 2002), or English speaker (Black, 2006). One of the key ways that people participate in the “work” of constructing, performing, or expressing identity is through the use of particular discourses (i.e., language and literacies) that signal group membership, competence, and expertise (Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984). People use language to align themselves with particular ways of knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs, especially in relationship to other cultures, and practices. When President Barack Obama said, “Nah, we straight,” during a visit to a Washington, D.C. restaurant, his words marked him as a speaker of African American Language (AAL) and suggested engagement with African American identities.

Within educational research, investigation has begun into the relationship between kinds of identities produced by language and literacy practices (Moje & Luke, 2009; Merchant & Carrington, 2009; Lewis & Fabos, 2005; Greenhow, 2011). As one of the dominant activity spaces for young people, online spaces have emerged as a site of identity construction. Researchers have explored how online spaces such as blogs, virtual worlds, fan-fiction sites, and instant message encourage the production and negotiation of social identities (Alvermann, 2008; Black, 2009; Steinkuehler, 2010; Lewis and Fabos, 2005). Through competence in the language and literate practices of online spaces, young people engage in identity work that reflects particular micro-moments or situated contexts as well as contributing to more enduring dimensions of one's identity. For example, Stornaiuolo and Hall (2014) investigated how identities are constructed through the "emergent semiotic activity" that reflects the interaction of local and global contexts, history, and culture; by tracing activity over time they could see how young people used literate practices, such as rainbows and colorful texts, to suggest particular identities (e.g., as bisexual).

The current study contributes to emerging research that investigates how people develop identity in formal and informal learning spaces through study of the relationship between online literacy practices and the construction of identity in online spaces. This study investigates the relationship between the new literacies practices of young people (aged 16-21) on Twitter and the identity work that they engage in on Twitter. It explores the question: How do young people use new tools of communication and interaction, such as the social media space Twitter, to figure out their world and themselves? How do young people author themselves as participants in various communities-- as feminists, as

informal (peer) counselors, as fun or funny-- through the use of relevant new literacies practices (such as hashtagging, livetweeting, liveblogging, etc)? Conceptualizing this authoring process as *identity work* rather than *identification* draws attention to, first, the young people's agency as they position themselves as particular kinds of people and second, the ways in which this *identity work* is recognized (or validated) by people in particular sociocultural and historical circumstances (Barton, 2012). While the first research question uncovers the range of practices that young adults engage in on Twitter, the second research question explores the bidirectional relationship between literate practices and the process of identification within Twitter. It acknowledges that culture is both a shaper of human development and is shaped by it.

This study examines how three young people participate in new literacies practices on Twitter (i.e., hashtagging, livetweeting, and information-sharing) that help them develop feminist identities.

Theoretical Perspectives: Social Practice Theory

This study is influenced by social practice theory (Holland and Lave, 2009; Urrieta, 2007). Social practice theory provides a sociocultural theoretical lens to an investigation of how people are shaped by enduring struggles (e.g., histories of oppression) as well as how they continue to shape their own practices, contexts, and lives. This theory is concerned with the “historical production of persons in practice...and to the ongoing struggles that develop across activities” (p. 5). Through participation in particular practices, people develop identities that suggest their own authoring activities, as well as the influence of other people, previous histories, and larger

structural forces. Social practice theory focuses analytic attention on two important elements: first, the identity that emerges through participation in practice; and two, the often contested relationship between local practice and sociocultural, economic, and political institutions.

Focusing on people's participation in local practice allows researchers to see the dynamic, contingent aspect of identity production—as people engage with others in locally-specific practices, they develop identities that respond to particular interests, roles, and histories of participation. This identity is formed “in the moment” and is responsive to local context, dynamics, relationships, and histories. At the same time, the process of identity development occurs in a material world, with its own history of institutional struggles, systems of oppression, and ongoing challenges, what Holland and Lave call “enduring struggles” (p. 5). These enduring struggles rise to the surface in the form of tension and challenge that emerges in local practice—for example, debates about the use of African American Language in this country does not start with its increased visibility and prominence in social media platforms, but represents a struggle that has taken place over the course of recent decades and further into the past. Thus, the use of social practice theory allows researchers to attend to the process of identity development that occurs as people participate in cultural practices, like using Twitter, while also grounding this analysis in the emergent, contested practices that develop as people live in cultural historic times. A focus on the “local contentious practice” encourages researchers to see both the improvisational, agentic nature of identity work—that people author themselves and others through social media play—as well as connect it to larger structural systems with longer histories.

A focus on the emergent dimension of identity work as young people use Twitter calls to mind theories of identity, and the performative nature of identity, issued by Stuart Hall (1996), Bauman (2004), and others. Hall theorized that the concept of identity, neither a “stable core of the self” nor a “collective self,” has been fractured and fragmented in late modernity. Whereas others envisioned identity as a monolith, Hall suggested that identity is “never singular, but multiply constructed across different...discourses, practices, and positions” (1996, p. 4). For Hall, the concept of identity is about using “the resources of history, language, and culture in the process of becoming rather than being” (1996, p. 4). Similarly, Bauman (2004) argued that “identities are for wearing and showing, not for storing and keeping,” and Merchant (2005), suggested that children and adolescents perform identity through digital writing, such as identifying themselves as sports fans.

In suggesting particular identities, such as sports fans or feminists, scholars have used social practice theory to examine the particular ways that identities are authored, and recognized, in everyday life. Barton (2012) suggested that, in analyzing the kinds of identity work that young people engage in through participation in figured worlds, researchers use three lenses: a) affordances and constraints (e.g., resources that are available for “up-take”); b) tasks and discourses (i.e., the kinds of activities, and ways of talking, acting, thinking and being, that are seen as legitimate); c) symbols and significances (e.g., what signifies “power” and “prestige” in this world). In my research, I am interested in analyzing how Lucy uses Twitter to engage in *feminist identity work*. It should be clear, however, that the practices taken up in this space are far from universal (e.g., recent conflicts between white-hetero-cis normative discourses around feminism as

suggested by Sheryl Sandberg-ian notions of feminism are challenged by historically-marginalized feminists, as in, women of color, genderqueer, transgender women, and others, who point to the need to expand discourse around what it means to be feminist).

Social practice theory suggests that viewing teenage Twitter as a space of “contentious local practice” (Holland & Lave, 2001; Lave, 2003; Holland & Lave, 2009) allows us to examine the ways in which Lucy’s historical development as a feminist is influenced by social, cultural, and political systems of oppression in mainstream heteronormative, cisgender U.S. culture. For example, viewing the act of becoming a feminist in teenage Twitter as “contentious local practice” encourages researchers to consider the conflicts and “drama” (Marwick & boyd, 2014) that emerge as networked young people struggle for agency, purpose, and social support in a neoliberal world that is deeply inequitable (i.e., sexism is but one obvious example here) and often unappealing.

The act of becoming a feminist is contentious local practice that pits the struggle for equality, human possibility, and connection against patriarchal conceptions of domination and oppression. Through daily participation in teenage life (i.e., participating in school and work, and hanging out with family and friends), participants’ paths to becoming a feminist are fraught with conflict that suggests the lasting imprint of enduring struggles such as racism, classism, and transphobia. For example, the process of becoming a feminist means asking the question: Who gets to be a feminist in this neoliberal society? What does it look like to be a feminist in a social space (e.g., Twitter, and more broadly, internet culture) that privileges creative expression and participation at all costs? What does it mean to become a feminist in a sexist society? While seeking to

understand how enduring struggles like sexism and racism intersect through the contentious local practice, this work also seeks to explore the differences at play as participants' draw on history in person to become a feminist. What individual characteristics, practices, or attitudes came to bear as these three young people developed as feminists through participation in daily teenage Twitter?

Review of Research: Identity Work in Formal and Informal Learning Spaces

This study investigates how three young people develop feminist identities through their participation in practices on teenage Twitter. Since the theme of feminist identity work emerged as a result of data analysis, post hoc, rather than as part of the conceptual framework, this work is guided more broadly by social practice theory that investigates identity work in formal and informal learning spaces. It is informed by research that examines how young women, and men, engage in identity work across a broad range of unmediated and mediated (i.e., digital) spaces. This brief review pushes researchers to imagine the unique affordances of identity work that exist in digital spaces.

Researchers interested in how people engage in identity work in education have emphasized that identity construction happens “in the moment” in sociocultural contexts that are informed, in part, by connections to literate (or discursive) practices. In her work on how urban students, mostly young men of color, practice literacy through graffiti writing (and reading), Moje (2000) found that most outsiders discount graffiti as a “real” writing and reading practice, as graffiti writing is associated with “deviance” (Moje, 2000, p. 229). Moje’s work raises a number of interesting points relevant to this work. The relationship between what counts as “literate practice” is informed, in part, by the

identity work that happens through practice; that what counts as identity work, as Moje demonstrated, is obviously shaped by institutional and cultural practices, ideologies, and social histories. Conceptualizing graffiti as a literate practice, with its own history, culture, and conventions of participation, invites researchers, teachers, parents, students and others to consider the connection to the identity work that happens as young people “try to be part of the story” through graffiti. Considering the range of identity work that occurs as these young men “tag” graffiti on their notebooks and clothing encourages us to consider who these young men become through their participation (i.e., writing, reading, thinking, and acting).

Literacy researchers investigating the relationship between literacy practices and identity work have focused their attention on the role that identity artifacts, such as books or labels (i.e., “struggling reader”), plays in people’s “self-making” (Bartlett, 2007, p. 56). Bartlett described how identity artifacts help people “feel” and “seem” literate, which positioned them as able to participate in literacy-and-identity making practices. For example, Bartlett reported how women labeled “illiterate” used artifacts, such as a blackboard and a sense of self as “literate” to counter stigma and social judgment against those who are seen as lacking literacy. From Bartlett, we are reminded that “doing literacy involves an ongoing, improvisational process of identity work in social interaction” (2007, p. 55).

Meanwhile, Calabrese Barton and colleagues (2012) investigated how girls develop science identities in three different spaces. In this study, participants engaged in “identity work,” or the process of authoring a self in a given practice. Calabrese-Barton et al. (2012) explored how young girls from marginalized communities develop science

identities through activity in science class, an after-school science club, and at home, finding that young people develop different identity trajectories (or traces of development) over time. Calabrese Barton and colleagues (2012) found that participants developed momentum toward science (as well as away from it), depending on the possibilities for developing new alignment with science, as in the case of a young woman who incorporates dance into a presentation on green energy. On the other hand, in a more traditional classroom that valued correct answers with minimal explanation of why, for example, rainclouds hold water, another young woman did not fully develop science identity, considering herself a B student and not being recognized by her peers for winning a contest in science class. The authors speculated that participating in a science club encouraged young women to incorporate different talents into their development as scientists-- and that these new identities developed in an afterschool club could continue to grow in different contexts, such as when the young dancer encouraged her grandparents to change their incandescent lights to energy-efficient fluorescent lights.

Keller (2015) explored how girls develop feminist identities through blogging. Calling attention to blogging as legitimate participation-- by using one of the only means accessible to girls (as opposed to attending political meetings or raising funds to support a cause)-- Keller documented how girls develop feminist identities in a consumerist, corporate culture through “education, community-building, and making feminism visible” (p. 20).

These studies encourage us to consider the ways that participation in practices, whether tagging, “feeling” and “seeming” literate in bureaucratic functions, or winning a science competition, is linked to the process of “identity work” that occurs as people act,

and are recognized, or seen as “part of the story,” as graffiti artists and “gangstas,” as scientists, and as literate people. As people engage in a wide variety of literacy acts and activities, they develop momentum toward particular kinds of identity work. In this study, I explored the relationship between young people’s literate practices on Twitter, and the kinds of identity work suggested by these practices. Findings from the pilot study conducted in the spring of 2013 (cf: Gleason, 2015) suggested that young people’s engagement with Twitter, such as sharing articles about intersectional feminism, eating disorders, and political events, might be linked to Lucy’s identity work as a feminist. The current study expands, and continues, the pilot study (described below).

About Larger Study

The data for this article derive from a larger study that focused on the following questions:

- *What new literacies practice emerge as young people (aged 16-21) use Twitter for a variety of purposes?*
- *What is the relationship between these practices and the kinds of people they become on Twitter?*

I used a case study method to investigate the new literacies practices of a select group of young people. Beginning in April 2013, I followed on Twitter five young people (aged 16-17 at the time) from two geographic areas in the United States: one, an upper-middle class suburb of a large East Coast metropolis; two, a primarily working and middle class city in the Midwest. Each participant attended public high school. To recruit students for the study, I used two different methods. First, I used the Association of Internet

Researchers (AoIR) to help me “make introductions” to researchers who had conducted research with adolescents. This connection brought three participants into the study. Second, I used connections from Michigan State University to meet teachers from the local area. These teachers, already trusted in the community, passed on study information to interested students, who then discussed their participation with parents/guardians. Participation in the study was voluntary, and five students were enrolled in April 2013. All five had used Twitter for at least a year, and claimed that they tweeted at least once per day.

Data collected from the five participants’ Twitter activity from a three-week period in April and May 2013 was analyzed, written up, and published (Gleason, 2015). The current study focuses on the literacy practices in Twitter of three focal students who elected to continue participating in the investigation. These three students, now aged 18-19, agreed to share their Twitter archive with me; this archive stored all their Twitter activity, every tweet, retweet, and reply uttered. For some participants, this archive went back six years; for others, five years. All three participants produced thousands of tweets in that time, with one creating over *twenty-thousand* tweets during the last five (or more) years.

Data Analysis

My analysis was guided by Social Practice Theory (SPT), which suggests that identities are formed through local practice (i.e., teenage Twitter). Social Practice Theory

recognizes local practice as being influenced by two related histories: the history in person (i.e., the biographical trajectory of the particular person) and the history in institutions (i.e., the long-term “enduring struggles,” such as particular systems of oppression, i.e., sexism). Social Practice Theory, as conceptualized by Holland and Lave (2009), focuses on identity formation “by emphasizing historical production of person in practice, and paying particular attention to differences among participants, and to the ongoing struggles that that develop across these activities around those differences” (p. 5). Holland and Lave reported how adults developed identities as environmentalists, noting their debt to Bakhtin’s theoretical notion of the dynamic, fluid nature of this identity work. While Holland and Lave noticed that many adults reported describing themselves as an “environmentalist,” the authors also noted how the participants routinely destabilized this identity work by using disparaging discourse (i.e., referring to themselves as “tree huggers” or “granola” when feeling disconnected or cynical). An important analytical emphasis then in a study of the local practice of teenage Twitter is the relationship between the historical production of persons, the larger “enduring challenges,” and how people use language, symbols, and other semiotic mediators to “write themselves into being” (boyd, 2008).

In this study, I used Social Practice Theory to focus on how participants develop feminist identities, paying attention to the different ways that this identity development takes for these three young people, Lori, Ryan, and Lucy. Using a SPT analytic lens meant focusing on the literacies practices and performances used by participants to develop feminist identities; this focus encouraged me to consider the complex, relational work involved as young people author a feminist identity through the use (or nonuse) of

particular new literacies practices popular among youth. This study focused on the how participants constructed feminist identities, and how the construction of these identities was recognized (or not) by others, and how this recognition positions them as feminists on youth Twitter. In order to better understand the relationship between young people's Twitter activities and the kinds of identity work suggested, and possibly recognized by followers, I began by systematically reading through participants' Twitter archive. Figure 1 presents Lucy's archive (e.g., her entire Twitter history).

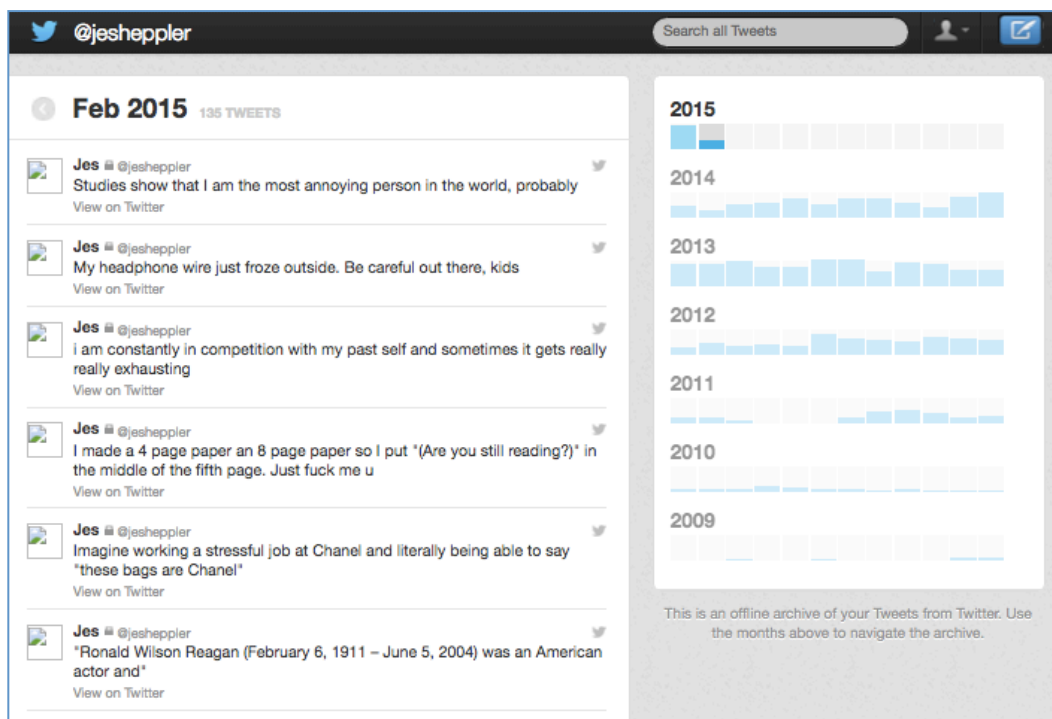


Figure 11 Twitter Archive

As seen above, a Twitter archive held the total of each participant's Twitter activity up to the present moment. Data for participants was collected up to February 2015; however, depending on participants' history of Twitter use, some archives present more

information. In Lucy's archive (Figure 1, above), it is possible to see all of Lucy's tweets arranged by month, and year. For example, 2015 is at the top, and the second blue box (indicating February) is highlighted, presenting all of Lucy's tweets for that month. On the left side of the archive, it is possible to see the tweets for February; they appear in reverse chronological order (i.e., the most recent is at the top, and earlier tweets appear below).

While reading through the entirety of each participant's archive, I wrote analytic memos for each participant that helped me think through the range, dimension, and recognition of the identity work each one was suggesting. These analytic memos helped me to begin to identify, develop, and adapt themes in participants' Twitter activity. Analytic memos were then compared across participants in order to highlight particular practices that may suggest patterns, themes, or emerging trends within young people's new literacies practices on Twitter. Regular weekly meetings with faculty mentors (e.g., dissertation co-director Dr. Angie Calabrese-Barton) provided opportunity to analyze, discuss, explore, and interpret participant Twitter activities.

A constant comparative approach (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2006) was used in order to develop an emerging repertoire of literacy practices (Gutierrez and Rogoff, 2003). Guided by a symbolic interactionist perspective that views data analysis and theory construction as a constructivist activity, I collected "rich, substantial, and relevant" data from youth constructed their identities, paying special attention to *how*, *with what*, and *to what end* this process occurred (Charmaz, 2006, p. 32). That is, I paid special attention to the themes that emerged as young people gained momentum toward particular identities, which drew on their interest, created connections with friends, and

gained recognition from peers and other audiences. Across multiple locations, over three, or more, years, from home to school to work, participants engaged in identity work that identified them as a: student-athlete, romantic partner, sibling/child, friend, worker. Participants were motivated by different identities at different times, in different domains. Participants suggested “athlete identities” when playing tennis, they were recognized for their “academic identities,” and they quibbled with their significant other, which suggested “dating identities.”

And yet, among all three participants, a common theme emerged as young men and women participated in their daily lives: feminism. By the second half of the second decade of the twenty-first century, young people are beginning to consider the notion that women are entitled to the same rights and privileges as men. And while some participants were eager to develop a feminist identity, suggesting support around women’s rights, others, including a young woman, were more resistant to calling themselves feminists. Thus, one common theme that emerged through analysis of young people’s Twitter archives, numbering almost 50,000 tweets, is the development of feminist identities. This theme will be explained in more detail in the findings section.

Table 7 Data Collection

Participant	Length of Time for Data Collection	Twitter Archive (# of tweets)
Lori	35 months (June 2012-May 2015)	20,465
Ryan	30 months (August 2012-February 2015)	26,723
Lucy	59 months (March 2009-February 2015)	12,208

Research Findings

In this study, participants revealed momentum toward a number of social identities, among them high-achieving student, student-athlete, loyal friend, boyfriend/girlfriend, and person in recovery. Over three years, participants performed a wide variety of social identities, but for this study I will focus on a common theme that I identified in the course of data analysis: “feminist identity,” theorized as someone who understands and engages in practices that support equality for women, all inclusive.

All three participants demonstrated engagement with “feminism” in its broadest connotations, generally agreed upon as the commitment to equality for women and anyone who identifies as such. Over the course of three years, participants developed their own understanding and sense of self as a feminist. For example, Lucy, whose Twitter biography read “intersectional feminist,” the path to becoming a feminist was direct and expedient. For Lori, meanwhile, it may be safe to say that her own process of becoming a feminist was influenced as much by popular culture, as it was by sharing or contributing “content” about feminism (i.e., articles, blog posts, and infographics). While

describing himself as a feminist, Ryan also participated in informal counseling, an activity I conceptualize to be part of what Nel Noddings referred to as an “ethic of caring,” (Noddings, 1988; Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 2007). An ethic of caring involves an ethical obligation to entering in relation to others. As the “one-caring,” a person recognizes their obligation to provide and maintain compassionate engagement with others. While there have been critiques about the reductiveness and the totalizing nature of an “ethic of caring,” Gilligan, Noddings, and others have argued for a recognition that caring for others is a moral act that situates the self in relation to others. For her part, Gilligan argued that an ethic of care is premised on “alleviating ‘the real and recognizable trouble’ of this world” (2007, p. 697). Noddings, meanwhile, suggested that an ethic of caring is rooted in meaningful activity, or relation, between people; as ethical action, caring is simultaneously “self-serving and other-serving” (2007, p. 709). In feminist ethics, as espoused by Gilligan and Noddings, then, there is an emphasis on how relationship between people is maintained, and how this relationship can be nurturing to others, and to the self.

Thus, considering how the participants come to develop an identity as “feminist” is useful because it points to complex, and contradictory, processes of becoming that young people undertake as they participate in literate practices on Twitter. For some, the route is more direct, while others it is circuitous, but both paths suggest the need to conceptualize how youth-initiated participation on Twitter may support the development of particular “identity work,” such as becoming a feminist.

Twitter Glossary

Tweet: a post on Twitter; limited to 140 characters, though additional media can be attached (e.g., image, video, or gif).

Retweet: when a tweet is shared with followers, as in “forwarding” email.

Like/Favorite: when people express agreement or validation with a tweet, they use the heart-shaped “Like” button (formerly the star-shaped Favorite)

Mention: when people brings others into conversation

Hashtag: a way of organizing information on a particular topic, such as #SuperBowl or #FlintWaterCrisis.

Hyperlink: a URL that provides additional information in a tweet

The Case of Lori: Accidental Feminist

Lori is a White young woman who was transiting from high school to college during the time of the study. At one time, Lori wanted to be a police officer when she grew up. She is close to her family, especially her sisters, in particular Amanda, whom she often retweets (e.g.: “Group chat with the 5 Vito sisters are crazy #Vitoprobs”). Lori’s dad commented ironically on the uncharacteristically close bond between Lori and her sister in a tweet, “can you two start acting like sisters and hate each other? #dad”.

Through 17,000 tweets in three years, which equates to around 15 tweets per day, Lori has suggested an identity as a unique, funny, young woman of strong opinions. In fact, Lori’s biography on Twitter noted her own “high self esteem” and “low tolerance for conservatives and dairy,” among other things. Lori’s conception of “feminism” and whether to consider herself aligned with being a “feminist” changed noticeably over three

years, going from an unstated topic, to opposing “feminists” to her eventual support and development into one.

On Twitter, Lori is the consummate scribe, documenting events and activities in “real time” through lifetweeting (Gleason, 2016a), and sharing information about local and global topics (i.e., school and *Pretty Little Liars*). Her interest and engagement with friends and followers on Twitter is organized around her interests, including playing tennis, appreciating music (attending concerts and being a radio DJ), following pop culture (favorites include *Friends*, Disney, *Pretty Little Liars*, and *Parks and Recreation*). Sharing in her interests are her good friends, often retweeted by Lori.

Lori’s Identity Work in Feminism Between High School and College All around player: Athlete and successful physics student. As a young woman living in a well-to-do suburban town on the East Coast, Lori had material and symbolic access to social, educational, and cultural capital. On Twitter, Lori described her social and extracurricular pursuits, such as playing on the school tennis team. During her first year of high school, Lori shared posts and images about tennis, suggesting an athletic identity. Lori often tweeted about practicing tennis, and in one post she referred to herself as a “#tennisgirl.” Another multimodal post documented a tennis bracelet, via Instagram image. In addition to playing tennis, Lori took to Twitter to describe her experiences in school; while many tweets describe daily activities of outlining, reading, and completing homework, Lori also seemed to take pleasure at succeeding in physics. In one tweet, Lori mentioned her (male) physics teacher’s recognition of her success on a standardized physics assessment: “You

got a 94 on the physics regents? I got a 94/95 on the physics regents and I'm a damn physics teacher. You should be one" #ornot” Physics is often perceived as a “male” space, due to the relatively low percentages of women; many visible physicists are men. Lori’s academic achievements in physics may serve as a reminder for herself (and a message to others) that women can succeed in a traditionally male dominated area like physics.

Being a “Girl” Means Being #Hipster, #Awkward, #Bitch Life in Park East can be somewhat challenging for Lori, as she tries to figure out her “place” in the crowd. Lori took pains to define herself as an outsider, often referring to herself as “awkward,” a “bitch,” and a “hipster.” More than just loving good music, being a “hipster” set her apart from her peers through a desire for perceived authenticity, self-acceptance, and rejection of the mainstream. Lucy often referred to herself as “awkward,” calling herself “an awkward duck” and “an awkward mess.” Eventually, it seemed that this repetition and up-take of Lori being “awkward” led to the *lamination* (i.e., stabilization) of her awkwardness; on one occasion, Lori quizzed her friends about her romantic “type.” Her friends’ reply? “Awkward.” It is also during Lori’s junior year of high school that Lori also repeatedly described herself as a “bitch,” as in the following tweet: “#highschoolmademerealize girls are complete bitches, including myself.”

Another post, describing her role on the tennis team, referred to her as a “walk on bitch.” Lori’s references to being “awkward” and a “bitch” serve as cultural markers of “outsiderness,” giving her a valuable perspective on teen life. On Twitter she repeatedly calls herself “hilarious” and “so funny,” which has the effect of giving her cultural capital

or increased recognition. In the process of learning how to become a feminist, Lori mobilized her sense of humor to suggest a sense of “otherness” apart from the mainstream. This sense of humor also aligned with her previous conceptions of being different, such as being “awkward” and a “bitch,” and a “hipster.” The following tweet illustrated Lori’s sense of humor:



Figure 12 Oh look, it’s all the 500 fucks I don’t give

This picture suggested that Lori, by not giving “500 fucks,” is literally standing apart from the rest of her classmates, her solemn face standing over the amassed legions. In a tongue-in-cheek request, Lori asked that this “legendary” picture be placed on her coffin. Incidentally, this tweet received 27 likes and 6 retweets, which Dana noted was the “tweet with the most favorites and it’s not even something I said.” With this image, Lori is outrageously claiming her stake to being an outsider. Riffing off the phrase, “I don’t give *a* fuck” (which emphasizes the indefinite article “a”), Lori remixed it, exploding it in scale. Lori’s hyperbole is recognized, first by Dana’s friends who like and retweet the

image, and second by Dana herself who acknowledged this as the “tweet with the most favorites,” a worthy honor.

“I Can’t Stand Feminists” During this stage of Lori’s life, during her junior year, Lori often posted about topics related to being a feminist, such as the role of gender and sexuality in contemporary teenagers’ lives. Although she did not explicitly use the term “feminism,” Lori’s Twitter activities suggested a desire for equal opportunity and full-fledged personhood, with all its associated rights and privileges, for women. For example, the following tweet from the spring of Lori’s junior year reflects her burgeoning understanding of the link between power and sexual violence:

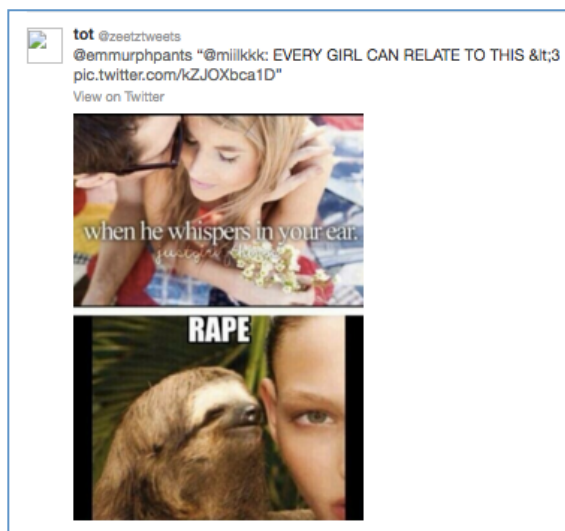


Figure 13 EVERY GIRL CAN RELATE TO THIS

The notion that “every girl can relate to rape” suggests an inherent understanding about how physical intimacy can be connected to sexual violence, as well as the desire to inform and educate others about the dangers of sexual violence. Around the same time, Lori posted an image from *Harry Potter* that suggested the reason “why girls never go to

the bathroom alone” is to avoid suffering injury or death, as characters in the popular *Harry Potter* series suffer.

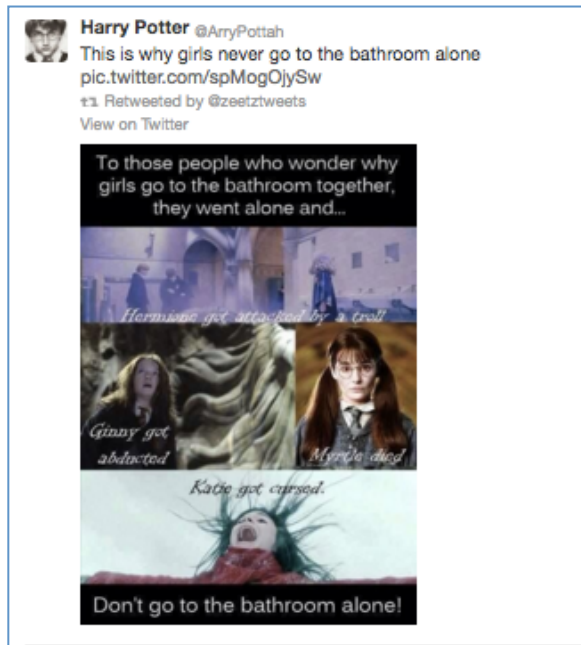


Figure 14 This is why girls never go to the bathroom alone

A tweet from this time period, “I’m all for equality for all, but I can’t stand feminists #sorrynotsorry” seemed to indicate a burgeoning sense of alignment with equal rights, while at the same time not feeling drawn to self-identifying as a “feminist.” This period suggests a time of transition, as Lori begins to situate the experience of being a “girl” in contemporary US society that has a history of sexism, marginalization, and violence toward women. For example, Lori’s rhetorical question, “Why am I the only girl at the gym every time?” suggested a desire to understand how women find their “place” in society, especially in teenage society. Thus, while Lori is interested in the idea (and perhaps the reality) of working toward “equality for all,” she is unable at this time to commit to an explicit process of becoming a feminist.

Feminism is About Equal Rights. By the time Lori graduated high school, and entered college at a medium-sized private university in the South, she had begun to change her notion of what feminism is. In the fall of her first semester of college, Lori tweeted, “i don't understand how all women are not feminists. feminism is about equal rights, not about making men inferior,” a tweet that received 1 RT and 4 Favorites. In this conception, feminism is about “equal rights” for men and women, which she contrasted with “making men inferior.” Thus, as the argument goes in the famous book, *Feminism is for Everybody*; feminism is for everybody who supports equal rights. Lori’s sense of alignment with being a “feminist” seemed to work through an engagement with popular culture. As a consummate fan of popular culture, Lori is drawn to television shows, music, movies and all sorts of media-- her well-developed sense of humor is engaged by captivating and engrossing shows like *Parks and Recreation*, *Pretty Little Liars*, and *FRIENDS*.

The following tweet, which references the popular Cyndi Lauper song, seemed to illustrate Lori’s emerging interest in becoming a feminist: “girls just wanna have fun(damental human rights).” The statement that women have human rights gradually became laminated through a growing tendency to value and legitimate feminist ideas. Lori’s retweet from an account called “We Need Feminism” suggests a strong alignment with feminism, as well as an acceptance of being seen and recognized as a “feminist” by her followers. Finally, Lori’s retweet from *Parks and Recreation* suggests a continued interest in the use of humor to achieve rhetorical goals, as well as a developing interest in

being seen as someone who uses humor to inform, educate, and critique the uneven treatment between men and women.

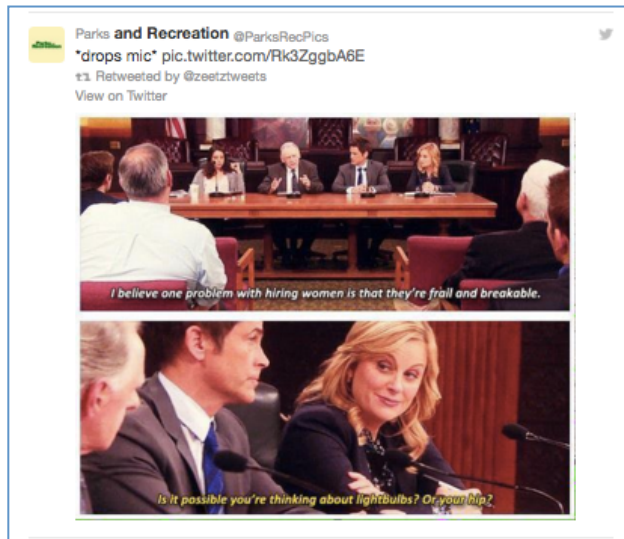


Figure 15 drops mic

This series of tweets is indicative of how young people can begin to enter conversations about “serious topics” like feminism, through accessible materials that are multimodal, engaging, and rooted in popular culture. At the same time, it suggests that these interests can begin with popular culture and can eventually incorporate more “decontextualized” (abstract, objective, rigorous) materials and sources such as information from the Pew Center:

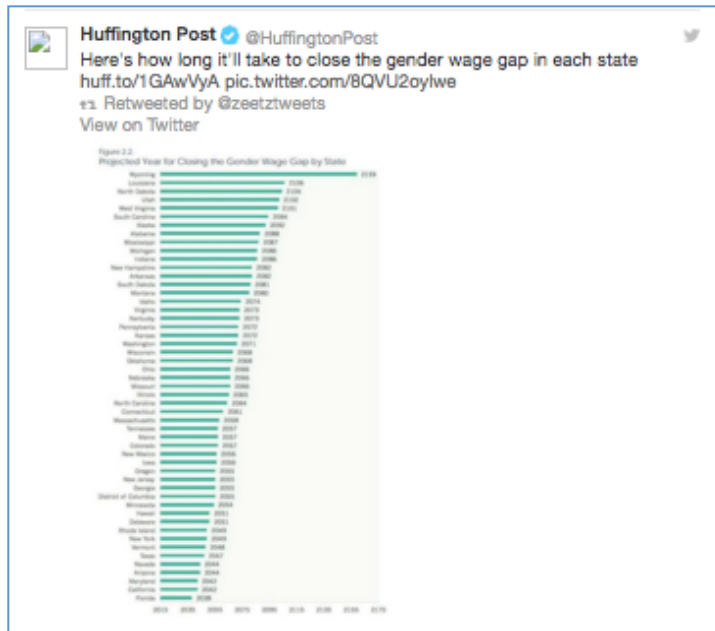


Figure 16 Here's how long it'll take to close the gender wage gap in each state

Thus, as Lori developed her own understanding of mainstream feminism-- defined by a concern with “gender equality” on such matters as pay equity, equal housework, and the like (hooks, 2000) -- she is moved by the “vital life stuff” of everyday Twitter (i.e., pop culture, humor, quirky memes, and daily reportage) to engage more deeply with complex issues, such as sex, sexuality, and gender issues, that intersect with feminism. Moved by a guiding philosophy of gender equality, Lori often suggests a feminist identity through drawing on mobilities from “glocal” sources, representing both “global” and “local.” In expressing momentum toward feminism, Lori is moved by both the Huffington Post and by that local to her, such as her lived experience. Critiquing her college professor for “victim blaming” in an introductory criminology class (e.g., “please leave bye”), Lori put forth a claim for gender equality and was rewarded with public recognition; three friends favorited her victim blaming tweet and a conversation unfolded. Similar critiques of anti-

feminist attitudes in mainstream society-- “PSA: don’t slut shame. just don’t do it”-- received multiple favorites, started a conversation, and laminated her (mainstream) feminist identity work.

The Case of Ryan: The Informal Counselor to his Peers

Ryan is a young White man who is now a second year college student at an Ivy League university on the East Coast. In high school, Ryan seemed committed to an achievement orientation, taking many Advanced Placement classes, offering private tutoring to his classmates (for a fee), and maintaining an interest in a wide variety of hobbies, including digital photography, improving his French language skills, and working on his tennis game. On Twitter, Ryan was a loyal friend, participating in many memes with his crew, such as #EmbarrassYourBestFriends, which he created for each of his many friends, resulting in waves of embarrassment for his tight-knit social group. He was a prolific tweeter as well, totaling more than 22,000 tweets in about two and a half years, averaging almost 70 tweets per day at his highest output.

Yet Ryan also suffered from mental health challenges, such as anxiety and depression. In the fall of his junior year, Ryan announced, “I suffer from Chronic depression. It feels good to say.” On Twitter, Ryan was forthright with the challenges of daily dealings with depression and would often contribute posts like: “perpetually in a pit of depression.” Occasionally, Ryan shared articles about living with depression, such as musical interventions to improve treatment, or how to navigate social pressures. And yet, even in his dark moments, Ryan also wanted to help others by offering social and psychological support. While tweeting about being “cold and depressed” in his room,

Ryan declared that he wanted his friends “to be happy” and that he would do “anything” for them. After a while, Ryan began to get more specific. In the winter of his junior year, Ryan tweeted, “If anyone wants to talk about their problems, or even just talk, anonymously or not, you can text me now at (415) 707-2425 I’m here,” which was favorited twice.

Ryan’s Identity Work in Feminism Between High School and College

“*I’m a feminist*” Ryan began using Twitter in the fall of 2012, when he noticed that he was one of the few friends not to use Twitter. Almost immediately, Ryan began using Twitter to develop and share his personal (and political) beliefs. A committed Democrat, Ryan often tweeted his support for President Barack Obama and other national politicians. At the same time, Ryan signaled his support for women’s equality while also suggesting alignment with liberal and progressive ideologies, as in this post he retweeted from the fall of 2012: “Conservatives are outraged by @lenadunham video that portrays sex as something a woman can actually have a say in.” This tweet suggests that Ryan recognizes one of the goals of feminism is to promote equal social relations, including around sexual relations; by promoting a statement based on a desire for women to “have a say,” he is suggesting that he is, in fact, a feminist. After President Obama was resoundingly re-elected as President, Ryan retweeted an image of Barack and Michelle Obama hugging (Figure 7).



Figure 17 Four more years

This image of the Obamas hugging aligns generally with Ryan’s democratic leanings of equality, respect, and partnership. In this image, the First Couple hugs, leaving the viewer to acknowledge Michelle’s presence. As a successful lawyer, Michelle is a vital partner to her husband, and this image reminds followers that women play significant roles in political life, as well as in other spheres.

Ryan “came out” as a feminist in the spring of 2013, in his junior year with the simple words, “I’m a feminist.” His declaration came after answering questions on Ask.fm, a question-and-answer site popular with his peers. Earlier that morning, he was asked if he was athletic, if he preferred the heat or cold, and his age. When he noted that he was a feminist, there was little public reaction; there were no replies, retweets, or favorites to his tweet. Over time, Ryan continued to demonstrate his commitment to his identification as a feminist. The next month, when asked about his political ideology, Ryan argued, “I’m a very strong feminist,” while also supporting gay rights and other traditionally Democratic ideals. Ryan’s self-identification continued through his creative participation in new literacies practices, such as memes. In the spring, Ryan tweeted,

“Getting into political debates on the bus. #PerksofBeingALiberal #Feminism #Equality.”

“I Set This Up so I Could Help People with Problems” While Ryan was getting into political debates on his school bus, he was also attempting to create a dedicated space to support the personal, social, and emotional needs of his classmates. He created a question-and-answer forum specifically to respond to the pressing needs of his peers through the use of Ask.fm, popular with teenagers and young adults. He tweeted, “I set this up so I could help people kind of like therapy with problems. Or if you just want to ask me questions: ask.fm/RyanSmith.” While Ryan had issued a similar offer to “help people with problems,” including posting his cellular phone number, Ryan’s decision to use a dedicated Ask.fm account for this purpose marks it as significant and suggestive of alignment with a feminist ethic of care (Noddings, 1996; Gilligan, 1992). Ryan’s commitment to “helping” people was not always reciprocated. The day after Ryan “set this up,” an anonymous commentator replied, “We dont [sic] want your help!!” and then he replied, “I’m sorry you feel that way. I’m here for anyone who does though.”

Ryan’s persistence in his desire to help people was matched by his ethical decision to share stories of personal vulnerabilities. For example, when a presumed peer wondered if they should tell their parents about mental illness, Ryan responded by acknowledging his “Clinical Depression,” and then recommending that they share “exactly the thoughts and feelings” in order to help parents “truly understand your situation.” Ryan’s admission of his clinical diagnosis also allowed him an opportunity to make connections to social support structures already in place. When he is asked about

the origin of his diagnosis, Ryan encouraged his friend to visit the “school psychologist.” For his work helping people, Ryan is regularly recognized by his friends and peers. One commentator wrote that Ryan helped them when they needed it most, “even though you don’t know who I am.” The commentator noted that Ryan has already “helped so many people” and that he has the support of his classmates. Similarly, at the end of junior year, when his Ask.fm forum had been open for a few months, Ryan posted the following conversation between two friends, and himself: "Shariq: I can see you as a psychiatrist sitting in a room helping people." Me: "why's that?" Lori: "Because that's what you already do! □ “

Still Can't Resist her Charm Ryan is beginning to be recognized for his efforts at helping others with their problems, positioning him as someone aligned with an “ethic of caring” (Noddings, 1986). Ryan’s work as an informal peer counselor on Ask.fm where he provides social and emotional support to his peers suggests a commitment to a philosophy of care, which can be considered to be feminist in orientation. However, Ryan’s feminist education and orientation are still being developed in his final year of high school. Toward the beginning of his senior year, Ryan tweeted that Jennifer Lawrence would be a “charming Belle from *Beauty and the Beast*.” Lucy, the staunch intersectional feminist, responded with a link to a news article, alleging that the actor is “actually very sexist, homophobic and ableist.” While admitting that Lucy’s critique may be true, Ryan noted that he “can’t resist her charm” and that the actor was joking during the interview. However, Lucy called him out for claiming a feminist/activist identity,

noting that “appropriating LGBTQ people and glamorizing mental illness” is not a joke. Ryan demurred, arguing that Lawrence’s words have been misrepresented.

In another example, we see tension between Ryan’s understanding of the significance of participation on Twitter, and how that participation might signal the kind of identity work being performed. When participating in a Twitter meme that asked people to share “the first wallpaper” associated with an account, Ryan shared “gay,” which Lucy objected to. Ryan suggested that his participation in the meme should be the focus, not the outcome, and that criticism over his participation was just an attempt to “accommodate every single persons minutest problems.” For her part, Lucy reminded him that he has the “privilege not to have your identity be mocked constantly” and then recommended that he “apologize and move on.”

Conflict in Teenage Twitter While Lucy’s challenges to Ryan suggested a tension between Ryan’s participation in Twitter memes and the risks of representation, at the same time Ryan was beginning to become recognized as a feminist by his social network, including peers and teachers. Linking this change to his own deepening political education, Ryan called this change “amazing.” While Ryan recognized a change in his beliefs, his teachers did as well. In a tweeted exchange with Mrs. Murphy, one of his “favorite” teachers, she suggested that he identifies with women on an empathetic level by making himself vulnerable with others. In fact, Ryan gained notoriety for being willing to stand up for feminist principles, including challenging the offensive speech of a classmate who made a “rape joke” (Gleason, in preparation). As a result of Ryan’s principled stand for feminism, he was now being tagged (i.e., mentioned) in conjunction

with rape “jokes” on Twitter. The tweet below was from one day after the “rape joke incident.” The tweet features an attractive young woman in athletic clothes, with a comment: “id definately [sic] rape her if I seen her alone.” Being recognized by others who will intervene in support of a pro-social space seems, as Ryan was, also seemed to encourage peers to continue to instigate conflict. Being seen as a feminist willing to stand up for others by critiquing a peer’s rape joke (Gleason, 2016b) presents opportunity for others to introduce conflict with Ryan; these conflicts are explored further in the discussion.

The Case of Lucy: the “Intersectional Feminist”

Lucy is a young White woman who is now a third year college student at a public university in the Eastern U.S. We first met Lucy in the fall of 2009, her freshman year of high school, when she sent her first tweet that simply read, “doing homework.” Lucy tweeted sporadically, roughly once per day, with tweets about school, “loving” Rocky Horror Picture Show, and, a connection to mental health and suicide prevention with the following tweet: “Write love on your arm today.” As Lucy first begins to use Twitter, she often posted about her daily happenings, such as cutting her bangs, eating caramel apples, and her affinity for the singer Amanda Palmer. She has started to post occasionally about things related to intersectional feminism, such as tweeting support for the actress Lindsey Lohan, who is undergoing her own struggle with substance abuse. Lucy’s identity work builds momentum toward becoming an intersectional feminist, or someone who understands that systems of oppression intersect for marginalized people.

Lucy's Identity Work Between High School and College

"I'm officially @FeministPope" On Twitter, Lucy performed feminist identity work by proclaiming herself to be a feminist leader on Twitter; on March 26, 2013, Lucy wrote, "I'm officially @FeministPope." Lucy used two affordances of the Twitter platform (i.e., the username and the biography) to suggest a feminist identity. Lucy suggests that she is not only a feminist, but the most revered one in the world. Lucy's nom de plume referenced the historical papacy of Pope Francis, elected to the papal office in the spring of 2013, while also suggested her own position as someone recognized by her followers for her wisdom, beliefs, desire to spread the (feminist) gospel throughout the land. Second, Lucy further laminated her feminist identity by describing her interests as "intersectionality, feminism, and fierce eyebrows" in her brief Twitter biography. Though Lucy performed a number of other social identities, including high school student, literature fan, and person in recovery (Gleason, 2016a), her explicit self-identification as a feminist (i.e., calling herself @FeministPope, and listing "feminism" in her Twitter biography) make it clear that this identity is emphasized in this online space. Critically, Lucy's self-authored identity as a "feminist" is recognized by her peers through a "favorite" (or "like"), as well as a reply. One peer tweeted that he was "digging the new handle," which seemed to validate her proposed identity.

Through her Twitter handle and her biography, Lucy suggested that she would use Twitter to literally *be feminist*, which included everything from participating in feminist activities, such as mobilizing support for political events aligned with feminist causes, such as a Take Back the Night, to recommending feminist art to her followers. Lucy often shared information about feminist issues, broadly defined. Here, Lucy

retweeted noted feminist (and columnist) Jessica Valenti, who linked to a story about sexual violence.



Figure 18 17 year old girl commits suicide

In addition, Lucy also offered her opinion on the link between misogyny and sexual violence, as in this tweet: “Statistically, a man will often stop flirting only if she has a boyfriend. Conclusion: The boyfriend is respected more than the woman.” In addition to curating information about feminist issues, Lucy also is recognized for her public contributions (e.g., her opinions). In the last tweet, for example, Lucy was retweeted (once) and favorited (twice). Occasionally, Lucy’s opinions started conversations, as her point about the beauty industry did here: “For those of you loving Dove's new campaign (mostly white women), just remember their parents company promotes Slimfast and Axe Body Spray.” After this tweet was published, one of Lucy’s followers replied to it, sharing their organization’s parody of the “mostly white women” in Dove’s new advertising campaign:

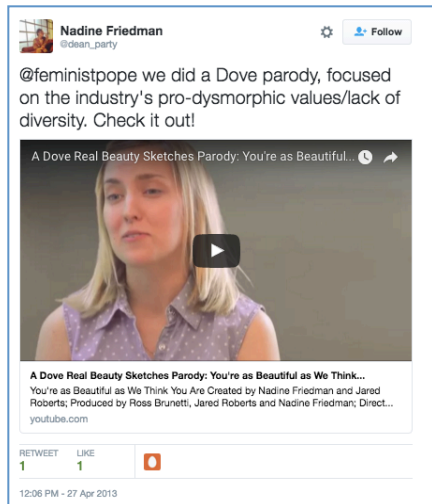


Figure 19 we did a Dove parody

That Lucy started a conversation critiquing the so-called “body positivity” of Dove soap suggests that being recognized as a feminist means sharing relevant information.

However, Lucy’s feminist identity is further laminated as she “became a part of the story” (Moje, 2000) by sharing her own vulnerabilities, as in this tweet: “Can mainstream queer and lesbian icons please stop making me think I have to be extremely thin thank you!!!!” In this way, Lucy is articulating her own vision of feminism, which put in the spotlight the intersecting issues of health (mental and behavioral health), gender, and sexuality. That is, while Lucy draws on her feminist skill of critique to challenge the dominant practice of privileging being thin, she further marked herself as a feminist by introducing a major part of herself-- her sexual orientation-- to the conversation. That is, Lucy’s feminist identity is marked by her knowledge, opinions, *and* her private orientations. Her feminist identity, as ever, is intersectional as she acknowledged how gay and lesbian women are doubly oppressed, as a woman, and as gay (e.g., women are

oppressed by unhealthy beauty standards, and gay/lesbian women face additional pressure to be thin).

“Oh Dear God Lucy Come On.” As Lucy continued to develop her feminist identity, her practice of *speaking truth to power* became more established and routine. With the adoption of her outrageous Twitter handle @FeministPope, Lucy anointed herself the leader of a large mass of feminist followers. She has begun to share information about feminist issues, such as the commonplace nature of sexual violence against women, and has begun to focus on the intersections of mental and physical health, gender, and sexuality. At the same time, Lucy has “come out” as gay, noticing that the pressure to be thin is common in gay and lesbian communities, asking “gay and lesbian icons” to de-privilege being skinny. While Lucy does not explicitly address these icons, she is learning to leverage Twitter to critique what she sees as anti-feminist attitudes. In the examples below, we see Lucy using the cultural practices of Twitter (i.e., heavy doses of sarcasm; and, unironic hashtag use) to challenge her peers’ behavior, which she considered anti-feminist. In the first, she subtweeted Ryan for using “gay as a joke” while he participated in an internet meme. She employed sarcasm and irony, noting her “love” for “activist” and “feminist” guys who use “gay” as a put-down. Lucy even used a hashtag unironically (e.g., “#doingitwrong”) to make an explicit point that being a feminist is incompatible with using language to degrade. Equal rights for men and women, regardless of sexual orientation.

In the second example, she composed series of tweets about what she considered anti-feminist behavior. Her first tweet read: “wow gr8 male feminist, making fun of

"every girl" for saying "like" and being unsure about an answer in class. much ally. very progress." Her second tweet continued: "most male feminists are awful and making fun of "'white girls' (e.g., pumpkin spice latte, yoga pants) is such a copout for your misogyny" Finally, she wrote: "the butt of the joke is always "HA, they're girls! mainstream! haha y can't you be more intelligent...lol jk you're being a bossy bitch now"

Both examples suggested part of Lucy's identity work as a feminist is to continue to define what feminism is for her, by challenging practices of others that work against this goal. They draw attention to how language is used to demean others ('like' and calling women 'bossy' or 'bitch' or making girls 'the butt of the joke') and how this association is often used to insult women. At the same time, using 'gay' as a joke further marginalizes women who are gay, lesbian, or queer.

However, Lucy's statements, while directed at Ryan, travel beyond him. They circulate among her follower network, and beyond. Her conversation with Ryan may travel to other feminists, bringing her into contact with other feminists, activists, radicals ("I would call myself a radical except for the violent overtones"). When she is critiquing Ryan, she is of course, calling him out, but also speaking up for others on the constant gendered oppression in mainstream society. That it comes from an "activist" and an "ally" belies the threat to feminists who want equality and equal relations between men and women. As the "feminist pope" Lucy is addressing her mass of followers who recognize her for her feminist knowledge and wisdom, not to mention her "perfect eyebrows." Thus, part of being a feminist means challenging oppressive positions, even from those who are seemingly "allies" or "activists."

“Everyone. THIS is Fourth Wave Feminism.” A large part of Lucy’s expressed feminist identity seems to be challenging oppression when and where she sees it. In this mission, she considers herself an active participant, even though she would not call herself an activist: “I follow so many wonderful twitter activists and I constantly RT but I want to contribute. But I feel I have nothing salient to say.” Lucy’s belief that she has “nothing to say,” while misinformed, actually hints at the complexity of participation in online activities. While Lucy thought that she has nothing to contribute, she actually deprivileged her other contributions, such as information sharing (“I constantly RT,” or retweet) and identifying a list of influential feminist activists on Twitter (“I follow so many wonderful twitter activists”). These Twitter-specific communicative practices may actually support the development of Lucy’s feminist identity by positioning her as someone who is knowledgeable and committed to active participation, even though she noted her desire “to contribute” in more significant ways.

Lucy’s desire to contribute meant seeking out new forms of participation aside from information sharing, making connections, and critiquing local “allies” and “activists” for their anti-feminist views. This participation, as might be guessed, is happening online, reflecting a perspective that “online feminism has become the training ground for young feminists,” a message retweeted by Lucy. What did this form of feminist participation or activism look like for Lucy? On Twitter, Lucy engaged in participatory politics that she called “fourth wave feminism,” such as taking part in political activism to draw attention to legislation that would reduce abortion access in Texas. In 2013, Texas state senator Wendy Davis began a campaign to draw attention to a bill, Senate Bill 5, or #SB5, that would close abortion centers in Texas. Davis attempted

a 13 hour-long filibuster to prevent vote on the proposed bill, in the process becoming a trending topic on Twitter (Burton, 2013). Davis's dedication to defeating the bill captured national attention, spurred on by the sociotechnical practices of a committed group of activists, politicians (including President Barack Obama), and an army of supporters. The hashtag #StandWithWendy was created to help organize and mobilize people against the legislation. Lucy implored her feminist followers ("those who care about women's rights") to follow #StandWithWendy as a way of supporting feminism and feminist causes. Her Twitter feed captures Lucy's enthusiastic engagement with this emerging activity.

Lucy's range of Twitter-specific practices laminated her feminist identity work. In addition to sharing the livestream of Davis's filibuster, which was being watched by almost 200,000 people (Burton, 2013), Lucy livetweeted the events, identifying for her followers relevant quotations, such as when Texas state senator Leticia Van De Putte asked poignantly, "At what point does a female senator need to raise her voice to be heard over the male colleagues in the room?" Lucy's Twitter practices worked well together to suggest Lucy's feminist identity, laminated by her alignment with the "#FeministArmy." Lucy made clear that this kind of feminist activism is enabled by the affordances of the internet and especially social media. She tweeted, "Everyone. THIS is fourth wave feminism. Activism through social media. There would not be 180,000 viewers otherwise. #standwithwendy" While activists mobilized hundreds of thousands of people to participate in emerging political events, representing a powerful form of internet activism, traditional media organizations were slower to respond; for their part,

CNN famously aired a report on blueberry muffins during Davis’s filibuster (Burton, 2013). Her participation in #StandWithWendy allowed her to excitedly claim:

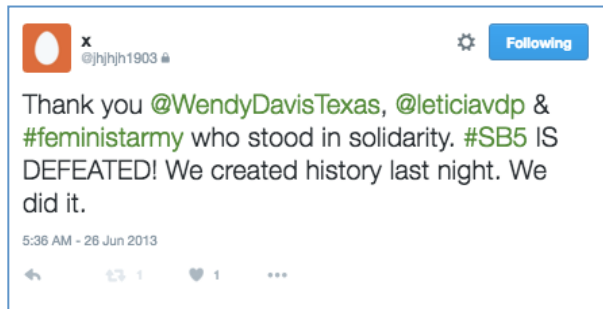


Figure 20 Thank you @WendyDavisTexas

Here, we see another lamination of Lucy’s feminist identity, aligning herself with the “#feministarmy” who mobilized “in solidarity” to challenge anti-feminist ideologies and actions, such as reducing access to abortion centers. Through her statement, “we did it,” Lucy is observing her participation in the #feministarmy.

Discussion

How do the stories about Lori, Lucy, and Ryan work to add depth and meaning to our understanding of teenagers’ identity work on Twitter? The findings from the study suggest that teenagers used a wide variety of new literacies practices to suggest identities that are recognized as relevant, valuable, and authentic within youth culture. Now, I will examine how participants’ new literate practices suggest momentum toward the figured world of feminism or intersectional feminism and consider the strategies and resources young people use to develop their feminist identities. “Becoming a feminist” considers the authoring practices young people use to suggest that identity and *developing a*

feminist identity provides an example of how recognition works (or doesn't) in teenage Twitter.

New literacies practices that suggest feminist identities

Looking across the cases of Lori, Ryan, and Lucy allows us to see how young people used new literacies practices of *hashtagging*, *information-sharing*, and *livetweeting*, to suggest feminist identities on teenage Twitter. In teenage Twitter, participants created and shared knowledge about feminism in a number of ways. Ryan, for example, acted as an informal peer counselor on Twitter, sharing his personal experience with clinical depression and attempting to support the social, emotional, and intellectual development of his peers. Lucy, meanwhile, circulated information designed to educate her followers, sharing bell hooks' classic primer on feminism, *Feminism is for Everybody*, while also developing as a feminist activist through #StandWithWendy. Lori, meanwhile shared her opinions about feminism, as well as information to educate her followers.

One of the most common new literacies practices utilized by participants in order to suggest feminist identities was *hashtagging*. Hashtags are "multiple-purpose tools that are used for grouping conversations thematically" (Gleason, 2015, p. 9). Hashtags organize information by alerting readers to the presence of new or relevant information, such as the use of #FlintWaterCrisis to share group information about unsafe drinking water in Michigan. Participants in this study used hashtags for a variety of specific rhetorical aims in order to develop feminist identities.

First, participants used *hashtags* to engage in conversations or actions about feminism, such as when Lori composed a multimodal tweet alleging “#sexism” in a children’s cleaning set marketed to girls, or when Lucy named herself a member of the #FeministArmy and shared information about social protest. By tweeting, young people contributed to ongoing (inter)national discussions about the importance of feminism in their lives through multimodal production (cf, Gleason, 2016b). Second, young people used hashtags to reflect or evaluate events in everyday life. Importantly, young people did not *only* use hashtags obviously aligned with feminist aims (e.g., #FeministMajority or #Feministing), but rather used “everyday” hashtags circulating in teenage Twitter in order to evaluate or reflect on the process of being a feminist. Hashtags like “#PerksofBeingaLiberal” and “#highschoolmademerealize” provided opportunities for participants to reflect on the central focus gender plays in adolescent lives, such as when Ryan equated the act of “discussing politics on the bus” with “#feminism” and “#equality.”

In addition, hashtags were also used to indicate evaluation of feminist (or anti-feminist) behavior. For example, Lori used the hashtag “#sorrynotsorry” to proclaim her disdain for “feminists” while arguing for equal rights. Her use of the popular hashtag “sorrynotsorry” permitted her to do two things: first, offer an opinion about feminists: (e.g., that she “can’t stand them”); second, supports a particular kind of feminism (i.e., “equal rights”); and third, provide an evaluation of her overall point (e.g., “sorry not sorry”). Lucy, meanwhile, used the hashtag #doingitwrong to draw attention to a peer’s anti-feminist behavior, which allowed her to call attention to the gap between a peer’s feminist commitments and his behavior.

Finally, hashtags were used to indicate participation in memes, such as #embarrassyourbestfriend. In this straightforward activity, Ryan and Lori's participation involved multiple steps, including: selecting an embarrassing image; sharing it with friends and followers; tagging your best friend; and evaluating the multimodal composition with another hashtag (e.g., #somanypictures or #sorrymeg).

A second common new literacies practice that contributed to the development of feminist identities was *information-sharing*, as young people contributed, curated, and circulated information of all kinds that related broadly to feminism. Ryan, Lori, and Lucy shared information related to feminist topics, including primary source materials (e.g., bell hooks' book, *Feminism is for Everybody*), secondary source materials (i.e., information from Pew Research Center about the wage gap), and "expert opinion" (e.g., Ryan's advice to peers via Ask.fm). All three participants shared information about feminist issues, but for now I want to focus on Ryan's practice of being an informal counselor, which I conceptualize as providing "care" to peers and other followers (Noddings, 2007). Ryan's counseling practice was provided as a service to "help people" deal with the challenges and stresses of adolescent life. While Lori and Lucy demonstrated their "care" for friends and followers in a number of ways, from an inspirational reminder that a woman's body is her own to a joke about sexual harassment, Ryan's practice of using an online question-and-answer site to provide advice was unique and significant to becoming a feminist. Here, Ryan's aim to help young people with their problems aligned with his self-proclaimed identity as a feminist, and the recognition he received marked him to his peers as a feminist.

The third new literacies practice observed in this study was *livetweeting*, such as Lucy's participation in #StandWithWendy. Livetweeting is the process by which people participate in major events, such as the Oscars, political debates, sporting events, television shows, and/or concerts, through "just in time" tweeting (Gleason, 2016a). In Lucy's case, she livetweeted the emerging social protest of Wendy Davis, the Texas state senator whose live filibuster captivated millions, and signaled the power of social media to organize and mobilize public opinion around a controversial issue. Over a span of a few hours, Lucy contributed (e.g., tweeted or retweeted) over thirty posts, providing "breaking" news for those following #StandWithWendy. As a new literacies practice, livetweeting provided much new information (and multiple perspectives) on the matter of reproductive rights, including links to related hashtags (e.g., #SB5, for Senate Bill 5), newspaper articles, influential feminists and feminist organizations, and others. Through livetweeting Lucy shared information about reproductive rights, a key issue for feminists and allies; she contributed her voice to the emerging conversation, writing, "WE WILL NOT BE SILENCED." Thus, through livetweeting Lucy is able to share information, add her voice to the conversation, and develop as a feminist activist.

Here, becoming a feminist in teenage Twitter is a process of self-authoring through the use of new literacies practices such as hashtagging, information-sharing, or livetweeting. New literacies practices are used to suggest momentum toward becoming a feminist, such as Lucy's self-identification as an "intersectional feminist" in her Twitter biography. Lucy's self-depiction as a feminist was recognized by her peers and followers, suggesting an orderly process of identity development and expression in teenage Twitter. However, becoming a feminist is far from a straight-forward proposition, as it brings to

light challenges and systems of oppression that exist in teenage Twitter as well as life beyond it.

Participants engage with different commitments

Participants in this study used a variety of new literacies practices to self-identify (and be recognized) as a feminist. Yet, despite each participant claiming to be a feminist, young people in this study demonstrated differences in their feminist identities through their (obviously) different experiences. Holland and Lave (2009) used the term “history in person” to describe people’s unique individual experiences, as well as their interests, desires, and imagined futures. Through participants’ history in person, they developed what I am conceptualizing as *core commitments*. These core commitments represent an enduring part of young people’s feminist identity, and include Ryan’s ethic of care, Lucy’s activism, and Lori’s concern with humor. Each participant expressed these commitments in their own ways, of course, leading us to see an important effect, outcome, or possibility of teenage Twitter-- how engaging with these commitments on Twitter makes young people come alive.

As a self-described “intersectional feminist,” one of Lucy’s strengths is her unrelenting drive for a society that is more just and fair for everyone. Starting in high school, and continuing into college, Lucy developed her understanding of feminism by reading widely, talking with more knowledgeable others, and writing a column in her college newspaper about social justice issues. Lucy’s developing expertise in feminism intersected with her interest in activism. Both relied on Lucy’s sense of moral outrage, especially in regard to gender, sexuality, and reproductive rights.

Similar to Lucy, Ryan considered himself an activist who pushed for a more just and equal society, especially concerning the rights of women. Through his question-and-answer forum, Ryan provided social and emotional support for peers seeking help with the burdens of adolescence. In this capacity, Ryan provides guidance based, in part, on his own struggle with mental health issues. Ryan's commitment to offering support is based, in part, on a belief that "helping others" means caring for them and their problems.

Formula for Feminist Identity: Commitments + New Literacies Practices

First, Lori's new literacies practices (i.e, information about gender equality) draw on her ability to recognize and mobilize *humor*. Throughout her Twitter archive of more than ten thousand tweets, Lori repeatedly expressed momentum around the notion of *humor*. First, she reminded followers that she was hilarious, using the hashtag #imhilarious to suggest her point. Second, she repeatedly retweeted jokes, memes, and humor relevant for network, including her favorite television show *Friends*. Third, she produced identity artifacts such as the class picture described above. Lori expressed her commitment to humor as a valuable resource to mobilize herself and others to engage with feminism. Through pop culture products such as *Parks and Recreation* and *Harry Potter*, Lori introduced discussion of sexual consent, sexual violence, and gender equality. Lori was able to use the accessibility and humor of popular culture to initiate, and contribute to conversations about feminist topics.

Lori's feminist identity was not always preordained. Her early statement that "I can't stand feminists" revealed her perceptions about a typical "feminist," and her antipathy toward them. However, through the years, Lori began to engage with feminism

through her desire for gender equality. Her statement about the importance of “equal rights” for men and women revealed momentum toward feminism focused on gender equality. The clip from *Parks and Recreation* used humor to draw attention to the absurdity of gender inequality. Though Lori did not show much momentum toward feminism early in her high school career, over time she participated in activities that suggested the development of a feminist identity. Her multimodal composition critiquing #sexism in children’s toys (Gleason, 2016a) was recognized by her local network (i.e., teacher, classmates, and school) as well as global networks (e.g., included in a BuzzFeed article about sexism in our culture). Thus, Lori was able to align her knowledge sharing and resource mobilization practices to suggest a feminist identity.

On the other hand, Lucy’s new literacies practices were focused on information-sharing (i.e., news articles about sexual consent *and* providing expert opinions about how to learn about feminism) and social activism (i.e., “4th wave feminism”), which marked her as an intersectional feminist. Lucy used a number of resources, beginning with the affordances of the platform itself (e.g., her @FeministPope username and describing herself as a feminist in her Twitter biography) to suggest an identity as a feminist. Lucy’s username suggested an interest in participating, or leading, an army of feminists. This strategic act of identity work indicated an interest of engaging with others in feminist activism. For example, Lucy’s repeated claims that feminism be “intersectional or it’s bullshit” proposed a particular kind of feminist identity-- activist and intersectional-- that itself continued to mobilize others. Lucy’s self-authored identity as a feminist is recognized as she begins to develop an interest in intersectionality. By contributing knowledge in the form of educational articles and books, she authored an identity as

someone who is educated, and can educate others, about this field. Through #StandWithWendy, Lucy expressed momentum toward an important resource-- activism- - that forms another facet of Lucy's feminist identity. Lucy's interest in capacity (or network) building is seen in her call for others to join the "#femininstarmy"

These examples show the complexity of the relationship between new literacies practices, commitments, and becoming a feminist in teenage Twitter. Through the use of particular literacies practices, including livetweeting, Lucy becomes a feminist through her expressed commitment to social justice activism. As Lori shares information about the absurdity of gender inequality, she draws on her commitment to humor (e.g., recall her tweet that claimed "#imhilarious"). Lori's use of accessible material, i.e., a clip from *Parks and Recreation*, aligned with her desire to disseminate an infographic about the wage gap; both worked together to suggest her a feminist identity. Through their individual commitments, and their particular new literacies practices, young people worked to develop feminist identities. However, sometimes these acts of self-authoring are more contested. For example, Ryan acts an informal peer counselor on Ask.fm, contributing personal stories about his experience with clinical depression. In this capacity, his "ethic of care" (Noddings, 2007), which I argue as feminist identity work, is recognized by his followers. On the other hand, Ryan's new literate practices of meme participation (Gleason, 2016a) are critiqued as anti-feminist, and challenged by intersectional feminists (e.g., Lucy), as explained in greater detail in the next section.

Contentious Local Practice: When Commitments to Feminism Conflict

In seeking to understand the ways that young people developed feminist identities in teenage Twitter, it is necessary to explore the context in which that happened. Holland and Lave (2009) introduced the concept of “contentious local practice” to describe the conflict that often emerged as people develop identities in a particular local, historical, social, and cultural context.

Lave (2003) discussed how schooling became a contentious local practice, as members of a mercantile class sought to perform their Britishness through a commitment to English-style boarding schools while members of the corporate managerial class, less invested in a colonial British identity, pushed for education styled on the International Baccalaureate program. Lave reported how certain “leading families” used the practice of exclusion (e.g., excluding Portuguese families from voting in serious matters of the boarding school) to maintain a colonial British identity in a rapidly changing society, while younger members of the managerial class sought to suggest a different sort of British identity by showing momentum toward an international (i.e., contemporary, as opposed to neocolonial) schooling system.

A focus on how participants become feminist encourages us to consider the relationship between the “contentious local practice” of participatory, interactive teenage Twitter and enduring struggles such as sexism and cisgender privilege. Seeing the differences in how participants became feminists on Twitter encourages us to see the process of identity work as “local contentious practice.” First, one’s identity as a feminist can be seen as a process of negotiation by which people use new literacies practices (i.e., hashtagging, information-sharing, and livetweeting) to declare themselves feminists;

however, mere use of these practices is no guarantee of successful identification (or identity work) as a feminist. One's feminist identity must be recognized and validated by other feminists; the potential for conflict comes when people who self-identify as feminists are not recognized as such. Second, becoming a feminist on Twitter means participating in a world that is, at times, outwardly hostile to women, in which women routinely face harassment and violence.

Becoming a feminist in teenage Twitter is a complex process that occasionally causes drama as conflicts emerge when commitments are laid bare. While the cases of Lori and Lucy detailed how their commitments to feminism (e.g., through activism and humor) align with their proposed identity as feminists, other cases are more complex. In Ryan's case, his claimed commitment to an ethic of care conflicted with his behavior that was seemingly anti-feminist. Ryan's use of offensive speech (e.g. using "gay" as a joke) caused Lucy to challenge his feminist commitments; she used a hashtag, #doingitwrong, to offer her judgment about Ryan's values as a "feminist." On another occasion, Ryan's feminist commitment is again challenged by Lucy, who claimed that Ryan is "making fun of 'every girl' for saying like and being unsure about an answer in class." Lucy employed irony, "wow gr8 male feminist," to critique Ryan's behavior, which was anti-feminist in its lack of caring and understanding of women and girls' ways of being.

This conflict between two young people, Ryan and Lucy, also suggests the contentious local practice of becoming a feminist. As a "networked public" space, Twitter presents unique opportunities, as well as challenges, in the process of developing feminist identities. boyd (2014) proposed that networked publics offer unique social and technical features, including "persistence, visibility, spreadability, and searchability" (p.

10). Participation in a “networked public” space such as Twitter lets people voice messages, connect with others, and find, and archive, important conversations. At the same time, participation on Twitter presents challenges due to the same affordances. As a space of contentious local practice, Twitter surfaces the “enduring struggles” seen in the conflict between Ryan and Lucy. Their conflict highlights the challenges that women face in online settings, such as online harassment. Women have been subject to harassment, threats, and abuse in the course of routine Twitter participation. This conflict between two young people is about a meme, as well as signaling larger struggle over a person’s right to public space free of harassment (i.e, a joke about one’s sexual identity). That Ryan, a self-described “feminist” and informal counselor who wants to “help people” in an ethic of caring, presents different, and often contradictory opinions about women, suggests the “contentious nature” of teenage Twitter. The challenges of a networked public space, such as visibility and persistence, are brought to bear in contentious local practice of becoming a feminist. Ryan and Lucy’s conflict over the use “gay” in a Twitter meme then suggests not only interpersonal conflict, and enduring challenges women face in fighting sexism, for example, but how these intersect in the “networked public” space of teenage Twitter.

Thus, there is a complex relationship between new literacies practices and the development of feminist identities in the contentious space of teenage Twitter. Through hashtagging, livetweeting, and information sharing young people become recognized (or not) as feminists. Participation in the space of teenage Twitter is an active process of self-authorship through competent use of new literacies. When new literacies are aligned with a person’s commitments to feminism, the process of becoming a feminist seems more

likely. For example, Lucy's practices of livetweeting #StandWithWendy, a social protest for reproductive rights, align with her commitment to social justice activism. It is likely that her proposed feminist identity will be recognized by peers and followers. When new literacies practices of information-sharing (e.g., participating in a meme) clash with Ryan's commitment to an ethic of care, however, Ryan's feminist identity will likely be in dispute.

Implications and Conclusion

In this article, I have explored the complex process of becoming a feminist in teenage Twitter. I have described three new literacies, and how young people used them to suggest progress in their process of developing as a feminist in teenage Twitter. And yet, the opportunities to develop feminist identities brings larger questions about the possibility of new ways of knowing, becoming, and participating. Over a decade ago, Lewis and Fabos (2005) reported on the relationship between the “performative and multivoiced nature” of teenagers’ literacy practices through instant messaging, calling attention to how changes in literacy practices caused changes in epistemologies. Since then, digital media have expanded, becoming “pervasive and commonplace” (Greenhow, Sonnevend, & Agur, 2016) suggesting that new ways of reading and writing via Twitter are supporting new ways of knowing (and learning).

Teachers, researchers, parents, community members, and students should take solace that young people are discussing issues of gender equality, sexual consent, sexual violence, wage gaps, and issues of representation in popular culture with their friends and followers *outside of school*. While some have claimed that social media is a “waste of

time” (Richtel, 2012) and a “distraction,” this study suggests that Twitter can be a space for young people to use new literacies practices of teenage Twitter to develop feminist identities. Through Twitter, young people are presented with an opportunity to learn about feminism, make connections with feminists thinkers, participate in emerging feminist activities, and contribute to larger discussions (i.e., about #sexism). The opportunity to learn about feminism is an important one, since many people report that gender inequality remains a challenging problem in mainstream US society. At the same time, opportunities to learn about feminism in formal and informal learning spaces are still rare. With the notable exception of Ileana Jimenez (@FeministTeacher), many schools do not yet offer courses or integrated curricula on feminism. Thus, Twitter may represent an engaging opportunity for young people to develop feminist identities by learning about, and participating in, feminist activities and communities.

It is my contention that through young people’s participation in teenage Twitter, through new literacies practices of hashtagging, livetweeting, and information-sharing-- though obviously not limited to these few examples-- present an opportunity for the development of feminist identities. Feminism has not only burst into the mainstream, ushered in by popular cultural superstars such as Beyonce, and presents an opportunity to discuss, listen, and intervene in the “enduring struggle” (Holland & Lave, 2009) of oppression against women. Thus far, research in the area of social media in education has been primarily focused on the use of social media as a *tool* to support particular learning outcomes (e.g., improved discussion of course themes, increased class participation, more experiential education, introduction of other communities of practice into the course, etc). Less explored is how people develop identities in formal and informal learning spaces.

This paper contributed examination of how young people use new literacies practices, mobilize resources, and finally are recognized (or not) as a feminist. Through analytical focus on the ways that different people develop “intimate identities,” and how these identities are recognized (or challenged) points to larger histories of enduring struggles, such as sexism, gender inequality, homophobia, and inequality, we see how young people become (or not) feminists in teenage Twitter.

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CHAPTER 3

TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH TEENAGE TWITTER: THE POSSIBILITY OF HUMANIZING PEDAGOGY

Introduction

Social media (i.e., social network sites such as Facebook, microblogs like Twitter and Tumblr, and image-based applications like Snapchat, Instagram, and Vine) are becoming ubiquitous, with hundreds of millions of users around the world. Educational research has suggested that social media are transforming society by “changing patterns in personal... and cultural interaction. These changes offer a window into the future of education, with new means of knowledge production, and reception and new roles for learners and teachers” (Greenhow et al, 2016, p. 1). And while emerging researchers and practitioners have reported on a number of educational outcomes from social media use (Junco, 2011; Gleason, 2016; Dunlap, 2011), the majority of teachers have not integrated social media into formal and informal teaching and learning practices (Lindstrom et al, 2016). According to Lindstrom, “K-12 teachers remain unconvinced” that technologies used outside of school, including social media, support learning in school. Many teachers perceived these social technologies to be “contributing to decreased ability to develop, organize, and express complex thoughts” (p. 3).

Despite teachers’ concerns about the relationship between social media use and learning, recent educational research has found that social media can facilitate active learning and increased connection with course materials and co-learners (Junco, Heiberger, & Lokken, 2011; Krutka, 2014). The use of Twitter in an undergraduate

course facilitated active learning, rich discussion of course themes, and encouraged faculty to respond to student needs, interests, and questions (Junco, Heiberger, & Lokken, 2011). Meanwhile, Krutka (2014) found that the use of Twitter in a high school social studies classroom offered engaging opportunities to develop historical knowledge about key historical events, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis. These studies suggest that Twitter's affordance of facilitating *interaction* can support teaching and learning in formal and informal learning environments. Focusing on how social media can facilitate "new means of knowledge production" and "new roles for learners and teachers" means paying attention to *interaction* between teachers and students on social media.

At the same time, educational researchers are beginning to envision the potential of social media to be used in ways that align with humanizing pedagogy (Bartolome, 1994), that "respects and uses the reality, history, and perspectives of students as an integral part of educational practice" (Bartolome, 1994, p. 173, in Ladson-Billings, 1995). "Acknowledging and using student language and experience," Bartolome explained (1994), "constitutes a humanizing experience for students traditionally dehumanized and disempowered in schools" (p. 183). Efforts to consider how social media can be used pedagogically to humanize and empower students in schools are just beginning (Krutka & Carano, 2016), and this study continues that work to consider what happens as teachers and students interact on Twitter. In addition, it explores how the use of Twitter changes (or doesn't) the normal practices of student-teacher interaction, paying careful attention to how Twitter might re-organize power dynamics.

A focus on teacher-student interaction on Twitter encourages teachers, researchers, students, parents, and others to consider the ways that using student language

and experience may lead to a change in teacher-student relationships, as teachers are invited to connect with students in a social space that is youth-centric: teenage Twitter. By beginning where students are, teachers who interact with students on Twitter may be contributing to the social, emotional, and intellectual development of students. For example, as young people interact with their friends around shared interests, connect with others, and participate in social activism, they develop identities through participation in practice, such as becoming feminists (Gleason, 2016b). Through interaction with students in a youth-dominant cultural space that has its own (new) literacies practices (Gleason, 2016a), teenage Twitter presents opportunities for students and teachers to construct new forms of communication, relationship, and learning experiences.

This study explores how the use of Twitter can change the relationship between young people and their teachers, investigating how it might offer opportunities for connection (i.e., emotional, intellectual, and relational) which may re-orient traditional power relations between teachers and students. Through participation in a shared space that is youth-centric, young people may seize on emergent local problems to promote pro-social norms of respect and freedom from harassment. Young people in this study resolved a local conflict that began when high school classmates made an offensive joke about rape; their response to this joke suggested the need for a “safe space” free of harassment, intolerance, and threatening behavior. This study aims to answer the following research questions:

- *How do norms of participation and interaction on Twitter shape how teachers and students relate to each other and learn from each other?*

- *How do Twitter interactions re-organize power relationships, norms, and expectations which traditionally guide student and teacher interactions?*

Research Review: New Literacies as Supporting Learner Agency and Critical Awareness

Within the field of educational research, there has been a renewed interest in the social context of teaching and learning, or the sociocultural factors that influence how learning occurs (or doesn't) in particular contexts. One important dimension of learning that researchers have explored is the teacher-student relationship. While some have focused their attention on how a strong teacher-student relationship supports increased academic achievement (Cornelius-White, 2007), other researchers investigate how a strong teacher-student relationship can support learner agency, development, and growth (Frymier, 2000). One important set of tools or practices to help students develop agency, make connections to peers and mentors, and solve pressing real world problems are new literacies practices (Greenhow, 2016; Garcia, 2015; Gleason, 2016). New literacies (Coiro et al, 2008), the print-based and digital media practices that draw on the rapid advances in internet technologies, enable new kinds of communication, connection, and learning. Many scholars (Hull & Schultz, 2001; Morrell, 2004; Moje, 2004; Alvermann, 2008) have noted how young people often practice literacy in creative and engaging ways in out of school settings (Mills, 2010). New literacies practices of blogging, microblogging (i.e., Twitter), and the use of other social media like YouTube, Instagram, Tumblr and Snapchat, may be an important element in developing teacher-student

relationships, as they may suggest new practices and forms of participation between teachers and students.

The use of social media for teaching and learning demands an orientation that begins where young people are. Vasudevan and Campano (2010) proposed that researchers begin with the notion of “youth as knowers of their own literacy,” which ascribes agency and purpose to youth-initiated practices, such as using Twitter. Some educational researchers (Mills, 2010; Lewis & Finders, 2002) draw attention to the way that new literacies practices transform the notion of what counts as knowledge in these settings. Rather than adults (e.g., teachers or mentors) as the expert or authority, youth draw on their own history of participation, as well as that of the collective culture, to shape the cultural practices of a given space (Davies, 2012; Ito, 2008; Greenhow, 2009). In social media spaces such as Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram, young people shape cultural norms of participation through language, literacy, and relational practices (Gleason, 2016a). In this way, the student is able to invert the traditional, hierarchical relationship in which the teacher banks knowledge into the novice student.

One study that is particularly relevant here is the work of Garcia and the National Youth Council (2015), that investigated how social media use in formal learning settings (i.e., a high school class) influenced teacher-student dynamics in the class. Garcia et al. found that “digital media retunes social relationships, mentorship & collaboration through technology” (p. 155). Through knowledge production and circulation (e.g., such as collaborative research, presentation, and dissemination), teachers and students “shifted relationship” roles and became co-learners (p. 158). In this model, social media are

conceptualized as an “alternative space” for students and teachers to “challenge and deconstruct the social understandings” of school discourse (p. 159).

Thus, social media spaces such as Twitter may serve as a way for young people to create new practices of interaction that extend, challenge, deepen, and intensify their relationships with their teachers. Through participation in a social media space popular with youth, teachers and students can define new ways of communicating, interacting, and shifting ways of being. One example from the present study was a participant’s use of a nickname for his teacher, calling his teacher “scrunchie,” in reference to the hair accessory. This example suggests small acts of improvisation that young people may engage in on social media to challenge the norms and practices of formal education. This study seeks to extend the research on young people’s use of Twitter in formal and informal learning spaces (Greenhow, 2009; Greenhow & Gleason, 2012; Junco, 2015). It aims to contribute a focus on how young people and teachers interact on Twitter, and how these interactions may challenge traditional teacher-student relations (i.e., power relations between the them). Simply put: how might the use of a popular social media platform create new ways of interacting between teachers and students that may suggest opportunities to extend teaching and learning?

Conceptual Frame: Figured Worlds and Lamination

This study is informed by social practice theory (Holland & Lave, 2001, 2009; Urrieta, 2007; Holland & Leander, 2004), which theorizes that identities are formed in everyday practice; they are shaped both by a person’s unique experiences and perspectives and “enduring struggles” such as histories of oppression. In social practice

theory, identities are formed (often in conflict) in the particular lifeworlds known as *figured worlds*. Figured worlds are a “landscape of objectified (materially and perceptibly expressed) meanings, joint activities, and structures of privilege and influence” that “provide the context of meaning and action in which social positions and social relationships are named and conducted” (Holland et al, 1998, p. 60).

A figured world frame suggests that researchers focus on the improvisational activity that emerges as individuals come up against normative demands of culture and find ways to make meaning by negotiating with forces outside of their explicit control. Holland described how inquiry into the “artifacts of the moment” and to what end they are used suggests a focus on agentic “appropriation” of other people’s artifacts (i.e., on Twitter, this may be photos, words, hashtags, and memes). This approach understands that people use the tools and resources available to them, such as discourses and practices of their individual selves, as well as those in the culture, to find their way in a world that often exerts its power on individuals (Holland et al, 1998, p. 28). Most basically, Holland’s concept asserts that an individual “self” is a social construction, enacted through practice, responding to social, cultural, and historical influences that produce particular meanings in an imagined space called a figured world. In a unique space of activity, such as teenage Twitter, identities are developed through participation in specific cultural practices that are enacted (and re-enacted) daily, such as participating in an of-the-moment meme, or favoriting a trending tweet.

In the figured world of teenage Twitter, identities are formed through a process known as lamination (Holland & Leander, 2004). Holland and Leander proposed that through hybridized social and cultural activity-- such as the “feelings, bodily reactions,

and the words or glances of others”-- identities are formed (p. 131). Through each interaction, each new arrangement of the social, personal, and cultural, brings the possibility that a new layer is added down, “congealing” (Moje & Luke, 2009) through the “thickening” of experience. Each new layer, according to Moje and Luke (2009), contributes “new practices, discourses, dress, and thinking” (p. 431) that may lead to new identity positioning.

Using social practice theory, and the concept of laminations, allows for inquiry into the relationship between the constructive process of identity, and the “power relations” that “shape a person’s self” (Holland & Leander, p. 127). Identities are constructed in contested practice between an individual’s unique collection of personal histories and the influence of generations of institutional oppression and conflict. The contested nature of local practice shapes how identities are produced, received, and circulated; for example, power relations influence who gets to position themselves as a “good student.” Leander (2002) reported how students in a high school English class drew on larger cultural narratives linking particular behaviors with being “ghetto,” leading to the lamination of Latanya’s identity as “ghetto.” This act of identity work positions Latanya in a particular way that is at odds with the white, middle-class sensibilities of public education.

This study contributes analytical focus on how student-teacher interactions on Twitter shape how students and teachers relate to each other, specifically paying attention to changes in power relations made possible through their use of Twitter. Focusing on how young people’s interactions with teachers on Twitter afford new practices encourages us to consider how these new practices may make possible new forms of

relationship between teachers and students. That is, beginning with the social lives of teenagers (i.e., mediated through Twitter, one of the most popular social spaces for young people) allows researchers to explore how identities are produced and then “laminated” through complex processes that blend the social, cultural and personal worlds of participants.

Methods

I used a case study method to investigate the Twitter practices of a select group of highly active users, who used Twitter daily. Three participants were enrolled in the study in March 2013, as participants in an earlier study that investigated teenagers’ literate practices on Twitter (Gleason, 2015). All participants in the current study were from a suburban town on the East Coast and were acquainted with each other prior to the start of the study. As a result of the initial study, I was familiar with the participants and wanted to continue to investigate their literate practices on Twitter over an extended period of time. In addition to my familiarity with the participants, I am also a seasoned Twitter user (e.g., I began using the service in 2009) who participates multiple times per day on Twitter and considers Twitter to be a significant social space. Throughout the study, I communicated with participants in this study through Twitter, occasionally tweeting @ them, retweeting them, or using the direct-messaging feature. This level of familiarity with participants, and my positioning as someone who “gets” Twitter, allowed me a certain level of expertise and experience that deepened my understanding of literate practices of teenage Twitter.

Data from three focal participants included data from their archived Twitter feed (e.g., “archive”). All three participants produced thousands of tweets in that time, with one participant creating over 20,000 tweets during this period. For this study, focused on exploring young people’s interactions with teachers on Twitter, I collected Twitter data representing *all* their Twitter activity, up to the time of data collection. Data collection, in my case, meant that each participant requested their Twitter archive from Twitter.com, which was then sent to me. Data was obtained for participants, representing years of Twitter activity, as can be seen below:

Table 8 Data Collection Strategy

Participant	Length of Time for Data Collection	Number of Tweets Collected
Ryan	24 months (August 2012-August 2014)	22,529
Lucy	53 months (March 2009-August 2013)	7,033
Lori	26 months (June 2012-August 2014)	16,366

Looking at the table, it is apparent that the data collection periods are not uniform for participants. Rather, data was collected from when participants began using Twitter, and it was collected through the period when they began college or university. This methodological decision is consistent with my theoretical focus on exploring new literacies practices of adolescents (e.g., high school students) over time.

Data Analysis

In order to better understand the new literacies practiced by case study participants on Twitter and their interactions with their teachers, I began by analyzing participants' Twitter archive. As the archive held the entirety of participants' Twitter production, I wrote analytic memos for each participant to help me think through participant patterns and practices. These analytic memos provided a way for me to "go deep" into particular questions, issues, or topics that emerged during analysis. For example, an analytic memo from April 28, 2015 included examples from Ryan's Twitter activity of an initial code called "creative multimodal participation," as well as analysis of what this participation might mean in Ryan's context. Analytic memos were then compared across participants in order to highlight particular practices that may suggest patterns, themes, or emerging trends within young people's new literacies practices on Twitter. Regular weekly meetings with dissertation director Dr. Angie Calabrese-Barton provided an opportunity to analyze, discuss, and interpret participant Twitter activities.

A constant comparative approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2006) was used in order to develop an emerging repertoire of literacy practices (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). Guided by a symbolic interactionist perspective that views data analysis and theory construction as a constructivist activity, I collected "rich, substantial, and relevant" data from young people's Twitter archive (Charmaz, 2006, p. 32). Following constant comparative approaches (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), I created a series of codes related to "New Literacies practices." This code, for example, was created as an umbrella category to mark how common digital media practices, such as taking selfies, play out in the specific local context of teenage Twitter. Typically, these codes were

developed in conjunction with analysis provided through the structure of writing analytic memos. Twitter activity was deemed as belonging to the family group of “New Literacies practices” if it had something to do with *ways of reading, writing, and being on Twitter*. For the participants in this study, there are particular ways of “doing things with words” on Twitter that are different than in other spaces. Tweeting is different than “classroom discourse,” and different kinds of meanings, feelings, and relational codes are caught up in these practices.

Data was analyzed through a series of steps. In the first step, participant Twitter data was collected and analyzed in service of the first research question. In this step, I analyzed participant Twitter activity, looking for instances of *teacher-student interaction on Twitter*. Next, I looked for dimensions or features of *teacher-student interaction on Twitter*, finding practices of “emotional bonding” and “social relationship.” Finally, to address the second research question, I sought out examples of *teacher-student interaction* that suggested transformation in traditional teacher-student practices; here, I included one particularly salient example (i.e., “the rape joke incident”) as a provocation for how the use of Twitter may work to reorganize power dynamics between teachers and students. In this next section, I introduce each of the three participants before reporting the findings.

Participants

Lucy

Lucy is a 20-year-old White student at a public university on the East Coast who is intellectually curious and motivated toward academic achievement. Now finishing her

third year of college, Lucy aims to study philosophy and/or womens' studies in graduate school, though she has been angling toward graduate study for a few years. Consider this tweet from her first semester of college: "No of course I'm not looking into grad school a month into freshman year #killme." Lucy has already developed a strong college career, with a number of prestigious opportunities, including a summer as an Undergraduate Research Fellow at Harvard University, and a semester of "reading" philosophy at Oxford University.

Lucy is extremely thoughtful, reflective, and curious about the world. She often reflects on her life through writing; on Twitter, her daily writing about her process of #recovery from emotional trauma was similar to blogging (Gleason, in preparation). Through her writing focused on recovery, she attempted to understand her position as a participant in larger systems of oppression. While she appears drawn to intellectual endeavors, Lucy is also at home in the daily minutiae of everyday life. She tweeted about everything from her job at Mandeos, a clothing chain, and at Lowes, a home improvement store (where she was called "sir? I mean ma'am"), and about the fluidity of her sexuality: "#thataawkwardmoment when you figure out you're straight after being bisexual, pansexual, lesbian, and bisexual again..." She seems able to make a joke about her fluid sexual identity, calling it "awkward" rather than unsettling or potentially uncomfortable. By calling it "#awkward" Lucy is able to participate in a relevant youth practice, sharing awkward moments through the use of a hashtag-- thereby, her self-deprecation marks her story as both unique (individual to her) and collective (part of a specific youth practice designated by a particular hashtag).

Ryan

Ryan is a 19-year-old White college student at an Ivy League school on the East Coast. Similar to Lucy, Ryan demonstrates strong tendencies toward achievement; in high school, he took a full load of Advanced Placement courses, and in college he is double majoring in political science and pre-law. This double major captures his long-standing interests in politics and the law, specifically his interest in creating and supporting political opportunities for people who are typically marginalized from the political process. Ryan used Twitter to participate in a number of political activities, from creating an online petition on the White House's website to designing a campaign to build support for a budget increase for his town. Ryan's involvement in political activities mirrored his overall Twitter activity, which was quite prolific.

Though Ryan is an accomplished student and activist, he is also committed to his social network, many of whom share common academic or recreational interests. Ryan and his friends often attend rock concerts together, such as 21 Pilots, The 1975, Panic! At the Disco, and a number of other bands. And yet, Ryan also understands his own need for personal and emotional space. Over the years, Ryan often described his desire to be alone as a refuge from the intense rush of typical college life. His emphasis on being ok with being alone suggests a maverick streak that sets him apart from many of his peers.

Lori

Lori is a 19-year-old White college student who is studying music production at an arts school on the East Coast. Lori's major takes advantage of her fanatical interest in pop music, notably bands such as 21 Pilots, Taylor Swift, Bo Burnham, Ed Sheeran, and

the Jonas Brothers, and her experience as a radio DJ, which she began in high school. Unlike Ryan and Lucy, Lori tends to post minimally about school (and school-related issues) on Twitter. Her Twitter activity seems to be driven by friendship and affinities; that is, relationships with friends and her interests, such as music, television shows such as *Friends*, *Pretty Little Liars*, *Parks and Recreation*, and Disney movies.

On Twitter, Lori is a committed scribe who often documents the emerging happenings, from tweeting a popular television drama, such as *Pretty Little Liars*, with friends, to sharing information about the high school bell schedule, or the calendar for Driver's Ed. Unlike Ryan and Lucy who often link to information about politics, current events, or unfolding action, Lori seems to share information that is pertinent to her local social network, or those in her immediate vicinity. At the same time, Twitter allows Lori to express her sense of humor, or what she calls her "hilarious" side. Lori's facility with humor aligns nicely with existing cultural practices of Twitter-- her emphasis on humor as a rhetorical tool positions her to take advantage of the possibilities of Twitter.

Research Findings

Participants in this study interacted with teachers on Twitter in a variety of ways that suggested the possibility of using the social media platform to support new relationships, practices, and ways of becoming with teachers. Through the use of Twitter, students and teachers drew on a range of social, emotional, and relational resources and competencies that opened up new possibilities of deepened and subjectively "different" relationships. Specifically, using Twitter created for the participants new *ways of becoming* with teachers, as teachers participated in an unsanctioned youth space

dominated by the cultural practices of teenage Twitter. Students “invited in” teachers to this space, and, in doing so, set up the social context that encouraged the development of a learning space. In this learning space, students pursued interests, or what I conceptualized as *learning connections*, such as around psychology, history, and orchestra. On Twitter, as students and teachers expressed momentum toward particular learning connections, participation in the cultural practices of teenage Twitter made possible new forms of student-teacher interaction. Some participants continued to interact with teachers in traditional ways, while others (e.g., Ryan) challenged social norms of teacher-student interaction on Twitter. Both students and teachers participated in a controversial discussion on Twitter in ways that reinforced pro-social norms of gender equality, suggesting that teacher-student interaction on Twitter may support new kinds of interaction between students and teachers that reflects increased youth agency.

The Figured World of Teenage Twitter

Participants in this study primarily engaged with friends and peers on Twitter, discussing a number of topics relevant to youth (e.g., teen friendly bands, school, friends, etc) and using language that might be offensive or inappropriate for adults. On teenage Twitter, young people discussed a number of topics that suggest it is an unsanctioned space for youth, including social drama with friends, family, and relationship partners; sex and sexuality; violence; and mental health issues. The use of language considered “offensive” in other settings (i.e., school, work, and home) was a common practice for focal participants. Here we see all three participants engaging in this practice. Responding to an incident of hate speech from one of his classmates, Ryan asked,

“@joey are you ignorant or just fucking stupid?” Lucy also used discourse that might be inappropriate elsewhere, tweeting “All I'm going to say is, if you don't believe in climate change, fuck you.” Lori, too, often used explicit language or content, as evidenced by this post: “Up yours, you fucking asshole”

Teenagers also frequently post about sex and sexual issues, which outside of sexual education class, appears infrequently in formal academic settings. Lori posted about her affinity for the frontman of band Panic! At the Disco, “Brendon Urie is literally sex” while Lucy described one of her preferences here: “Short hair is sexy as fuck, actually.” Meanwhile, Ryan created a collection of #HistoryPickUpLines, which contain heavy sexual innuendo: “You can call me Teddy Roosevelt because ill speak softly and carry a big stick with you all night girl” and “I was commanding officer in The Battle of the Bulge if you know what I mean.”

Meanwhile, the theme of social drama, a common one for participants, was often described using explicit language as well. Here is Lori describing a peer: “This bitch better not give me death stares like i don't even like your not-boyfriend boyfriend calm the fuck down.” Lucy offered her take on drama: “Oh, and #thataawkwardmoment when your ex who cheated on you comes into the store and tries to act like you actually give a shit about her.” Participants also described family conflicts, as in this tweet from Lucy, “My mom is such a fucking hypocrite” and this one from Lori: “k mom y do u suck so much”

Participants also posted language that suggested violence, as we see in the example from Lucy, “I'm going to punch you with 50 Newtons of fortune.” Meanwhile, Lori wrote, “i want to do #embarrassyourbestfriend but i feel like @AmandaSluzewski

would stab me on the bus tomorrow if i do” and Lori again, “If Mrs D makes fun of me one more time I'm going to punch her in the throat.” For his part, Ryan contributed: “there's a man who looks like Mitch McConnell on this train and I have an overwhelming urge to punch him in his face” Ryan also retweeted a post that read, “Someone please jam their dick into Natalie so she shuts the fuck up.”

Ryan, Lori, and Lucy also used Twitter to share the mental and emotional health challenges of being a teenager. Here's Lucy's tweet: “RAGE RAGE GO THE FUCK AWAY COME BACK AGAIN SOME OTHERFUCKING DAY #wherecanisignupforangermanagement” and, again: “Lol no teenagers in courtyard? fuck you mall cops~” Lori described her mental state in this way: “so stressed it's not even funny,” and Ryan reported in his tweet that he was “perpetually in the pit of depression.”

Participants in this study primarily interacted with other youth, as opposed to teachers and other education professionals. For example, during the course of this study, Ryan tweeted over 22,000 times and interacted with teachers around 600 times, or less than 1% of the time. Lori and Lucy interacted with their teachers less frequently (e.g., less than 1% of the time). At the same time, participants proclaimed their affection for their favorite teachers and seemed open to the possibility of interacting with teachers on Twitter. Participants expressed mixed feelings about teacher participation in what is seen as a “youth space” (e.g., one student wondered, “why is Ryan retweeting Mrs Murph get away” and Lori noted that having teachers in this space would make it “difficult” to subtweet teachers, or to discuss teachers without mentioning their @username). At the same time, participants in this study also expressed a desire to interact with their “favorite” teachers on Twitter. Ryan indicated a desire to interact with a favorite teacher,

tweeting, “why can’t you just tweet about me? LET ME BE YOUR FAVORITE.” And Lucy reported that “a RT from @thywebz is the collective goal of East High School.”

It seems clear that young people want the flexibility to determine who they interact with and who has access to these interactions. For example, while Lori interacted with her favorite teachers, telling her Sociology teacher that she “loved” her class freshman year, and that she “misses” her teacher when she’s out, Lori also acknowledged that she *doesn’t want* many teachers to use Twitter because that will change the space. For example, she fears that will make it difficult to “subtweet” teachers (because other students tag teachers & thus make public what was an implicit critique). Having teachers present in a youth-radical space (e.g., where youth practices may be counter to norms of adult participation) brings up numerous issues; for example, young people often use language in Twitter that conforms to the larger cultural dimensions of this space. Playful, obscene, ostentatious, offensive language can be used in ways that mark it as different than other spaces (i.e., the space of school, work, home, and other social spaces).

Building Emotional Connection in Public: “Invitation in” to Teenage Twitter

On Twitter, students engage in public performance of emotional connections with teachers through direct and indirect interaction. That is, through conversation with teachers, and in other conversations about the social context of doing school, young people participate with teachers on Twitter, creating a new space for communication, relationship-building, and learning. In their desire for interaction with teachers on Twitter, it may be the case that young people are looking for a space in which they can bond with their teachers. That is, a desire to both see and be seen by teachers in a

primarily youth space suggests a human desire for emotional connection. On Twitter, then, it is possible to develop emotional connection with teachers, and other students, in ways that not only suggest connections to teaching and learning, but also hint at ways that both students and teachers can cultivate norms and practices that maintain safety, tolerance, and dignity.

Before emotional connections can be made and learning connections developed, young people must first “invite teachers in” to what is previously conceptualized as the “youth space” of teenage Twitter. As described above, the space of “youth Twitter” is characterized by language, behavior, and practices focused on young people, not adults. Young people patrol this youth space, paying careful attention to who’s residing in the space and who needs to leave. For example, the presence of a teacher, choir teacher Mrs. Murph, leads a teenage friend of Ryan to notice and question why Murph is here: “Why is Ryan retweeting Mrs Murphy get away.” Through the clear directive to “get away,” the friend is making the claim to both Ryan and Mrs Murphy that teacher presence in this youth space, unlike in adult spaces, is not automatically validated. That is, while teachers are a normal presence in the brick-and-mortar school building, on Twitter teacher presence causes a disruption and must be handled.

All three participants in this study expressed a desire for emotional connection with teachers on Twitter, and many initiated contact with their teachers. For example, Lori tweeted at her Sociology teacher on Twitter, telling her teacher, Mrs. Gearns, that she “loved having you freshman year.” On another day, when Mrs. Gearns is absent, one of Lori’s friends tweeted that she “misses” Mrs. Gearns, and the teacher reassured the anxious students that she will “return tomorrow.”

For his part, Ryan routinely lauded his favorite teachers through his tweeting. In the fall of his senior year, participating in the #MentionSomeoneYoureThankfulFor meme, Ryan named four of his teachers: Mrs Downs, orchestra; Mrs Melandro, history; Mrs Heinrichs, psychology; and @Webst, English. About six months later, Ryan made explicit the connection between teachers using Twitter for teaching, learning, and relationship-building, and his own satisfaction: “coincidentally my 4 favorite teachers are the ones with Twitters.”

Lucy also sought out interaction with her teachers on Twitter and seemed to take joy in showing them how to use popular social media spaces. In one instance of this, Lucy introduced her teacher, @Webst, to the popular image-sharing network, Instagram, and then provided step-by-step directions for how to begin to use the space. This ‘invitation in’ indicates, as suggested above, a desire for emotional connection with their teachers. At the same time, it highlights student agency in defining who, and in what way, they want to interact with, about what, and for what purposes. On Twitter, young people engage in literate practices that encourage them to reflect on their own behaviors on Twitter (Gleason, in preparation). One outcome of these literate practices might be a greater self-awareness of the kind of relationships and the kind of connections they wish to have. For all the participants, inviting teachers to interact with them on Twitter can be seen as fulfilling multiple goals at the same time: a desire for communication and interaction that is as engaging, authentic, and “life like” as possible; an opportunity to demonstrate sociotechnical competence in a popular space; recognition from peers and mentors.

The dimensions of student-teacher interaction on Twitter

Student-teacher interactions on Twitter are complex, containing a number of dimensions that go beyond teacher and student exchanging “mere content” about a curricular topic. Thus, I am claiming that if we are concerned with how the use of Twitter might re-orient power dynamics between teacher-student, it is necessary to go beyond a vision of Twitter as “information exchange” or “link sharing” to consider how multiple factors influence the shape and texture of learning. These factors that are at play in teacher-student interaction on Twitter include references to other practices, including new literacy practices on Twitter, such as multimodal composition (Gleason, in preparation).

In fact, teacher-student interactions in this study contained a number of elements, including:

- emotional bond;
- subject-matter content that I conceptualize as a *learning connection*;
- social relationship (i.e., the context around the interaction, often including friends and peers);
- Twitter practices that inform the interaction;
- recognition suggested or received as a result of interaction.

While not all of these elements may be present in every interaction between teachers and students, together they suggest the complexity involved (or implicit) in these interactions. Next, I discuss each of these themes in detail using excerpts from the tweet stream to substantiate these claims.

Emotional bond

Discussed in previous section.

Learning connections

Young people in the study took to Twitter to discuss shared interests, exchange resources (i.e., political websites that quantified or visualized political perspectives), seek and receive help, produce and circulate knowledge, receive recognition and express creativity.

Ryan interacted with teachers hundreds of times throughout the two years of the data collection period, sharing information, building connections, and engaging in conversation. With his orchestra teacher, Ryan bonded over politics, as seen in this example. Mrs Downs wrote, “I side 97% with Green party [link] sorry @Ryan. Only 76% socialist” and Ryan replied, @MrsDowns, take politicalcompass.org [link]”. In this exchange, we see the teacher asserting her Green party credentials, and saying that she is “sorry” that she is not more socialist. Through a shared interest in politics, Ryan and his teacher build emotional connections. In psychology, Ryan created and circulated memes that relied on humor for their success. Here, subject matter knowledge of psychology is necessary to “get” the joke.

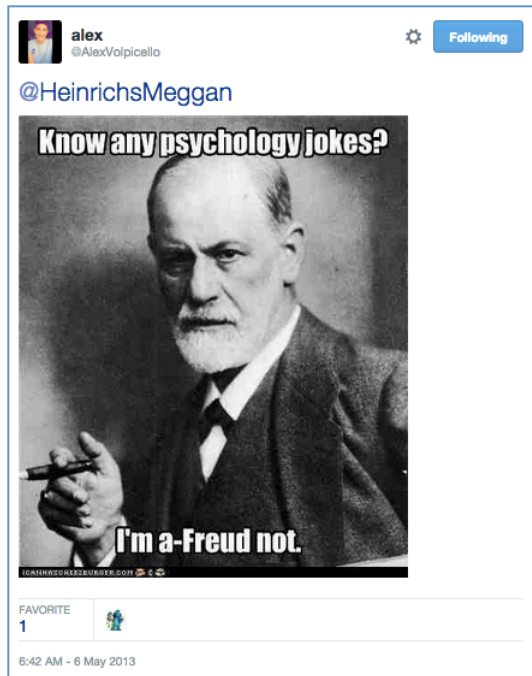


Figure 21 Know any psychology jokes?

In addition, Ryan interacted with his teacher, @Webz, often tweeting about his assignments. In one tweet, he posted that he was “annotating like crazy” and another described how he wrote too much for an assignment and had to “delete half,” and his teacher joked in a tweet that he could “sell it to others.”

Lucy meanwhile interacted with teachers on Twitter, sharing jokes with her favorite teachers and also requesting help. In the fall of her junior year, Lucy used Twitter to ask her English teacher about symbolism in a class text. In the spring of senior year, Lucy linked to an article about a controversy within the evolutionary psychology field, and later shares a video about object constancy.

For her part, Lori too interacted with teachers on Twitter; in the spring of her senior year, Lori, classmates, and their teacher used Twitter to join a conversation about

sociology (explained more in “Engaged teaching and learning with Twitter” in the next section).

Social relationship

One of the key elements of participating on Twitter is the social aspect-- that is, how Twitter makes visible (and maybe even makes possible) the social relationships between people on Twitter. This is to say that the “content” of the message (i.e., learning connection) is intertwined with social and emotional elements. As participants interacted with teachers on Twitter, they made explicit their social network. That is, through their interactions with teachers, students mobilized resources of their social network. One common dimension of teacher-student interaction is how a conversation between two people can quickly expand to include other participants. For example, after an initial back-and-forth between Lori and her sociology teacher about course logistics, Lori announced her plans for the weekend, mentioning two friends: “me and @sasha are going people watching with @nellie.” For her part, Lucy too introduced social connections into her interaction with a teacher. As Lucy introduced @Webst to Instagram, explaining the overall function of the space, and how to use it, Lucy mentioned a close friend of hers as a resource, “Look at mine and Rory’s. Make an acct > press the ID thing > search or go to Twitter friends > roryblog and/or lucyblog” Ryan, too, made his interaction with his teachers social by including multiple friends in the tweet. For example, as Ryan composed a multimodal image of a favorite teacher, @Webst, he included two friends in the tweet: @natalie and @jesse.

Learning the literacy practices of teenage Twitter

As young people interact with teachers on Twitter, these interactions are often colored by norms and conventions on Twitter. For example, one common practice on youth Twitter is to use colloquial language, or “youth speak.” In one of her first tweets, English teacher @webst ventriloquated this youth discourse: “tis the real Webzy...all you haters stop frontin.” Perhaps picking up on her teacher’s desire to participate, Lucy apprenticed her teacher about the relevant youth practices of Instagram: “you’ve got it down, just need the duck face now.” Another common practice on Twitter that we see employed as teachers and students interact is the use of multiple representational systems for composition, including visual, image-based systems, as well as graphical linguistic systems, such as emojis (Gleason, in preparation). Ryan’s orchestra teacher, Mrs. Downs, posted the following multimodal composition featuring Batman & Robin:

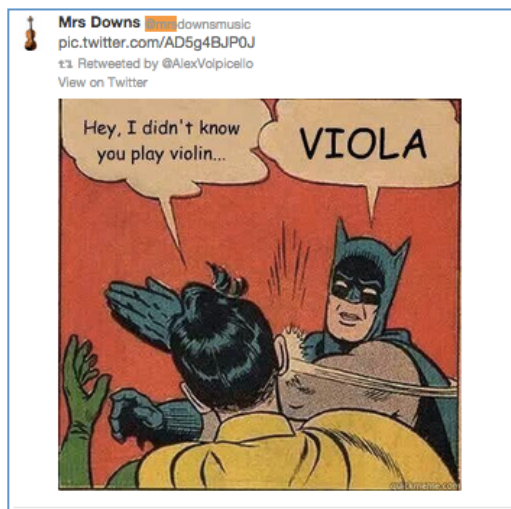


Figure 22 Hey, I didn’t know you play violin...

Both students and teachers use the cultural language and literacy systems of Twitter. For example, Mrs. Gearns demonstrated her developing level of competence of Twitter literacy practices, including the use of the hashtag to indicate an evaluation here: “I

would like to apologize for @Lori for not understanding how to give you credit for your awesome soc. Tweet #teacherfail” In this example, Mrs. Gears acknowledged that she is a newcomer in Twitter (e.g., “not understanding”), while also suggesting her competence in Twitter through appropriate (and humorous) use of Twitter hashtags. Interactions on Twitter are not isomorphic literate activities, but are deeply informed by cultural practices and conventions of Twittersphere at large.

Recognition

A key dimension of any educational activity comes in the form of feedback or recognition from those in the network. On Twitter, recognition, agreement, or validation can be given through “likes” (formerly called “favorites”). When Ryan tweeted that the Democratic Congressional Campaign Caucus (DCCC) was following him, his teachers Mrs. Downs liked it. In addition to the obvious validation from a follower for a discrete activity (i.e., a tweet about a political organization), this form of recognition acknowledges the tweeter’s affinity (or topic of interest). Through this acknowledgement in public, often in the presence of social network mentioned above, the person “liking” the tweet is often implicitly forming a connection to the person.

Engaged teaching and learning with Twitter

This example highlights positive educational outcomes that come from integrating Twitter into formal teaching and learning spaces, including creating multimodal compositions, contributing to larger conversations about important issues (e.g., sexism), and engaging in participatory, active learning. In her senior year, Lori enrolled in

Sociology, and in the spring, her teacher, Mrs. Gearns, began to incorporate the use of Twitter into her class. Over three months or so, Lori and her teacher interacted on Twitter three times, supporting the notion that the use of Twitter can support active, participatory learning. First, Lori tweeted about gender to Mrs. Gearns, initiating a short conversation. Mrs. Gearns mentioned that she is “unimpressed with the new Legos” that are pink and aimed at girls. Second, a couple of months later, Lori again tweeted about gender-related issues, this time contributing a picture of a “cleaning set” with a broom, dust-pan, and assorted instruments. This text combined image and the words “It’s Girl Stuff!” causing Lori to tweet, “I quit.” Next, Lori composed another multimodal composition (i.e., taking a picture of “Women in Charge Earbuds,” and contributing the text, “Didn’t know women needed different earbuds #sexism.” Then, she tagged @Sociological_Images, an account that is popular with instructors of Sociology. Mrs. Gearns RT’ed Lori’s tweet and added her own commentary, “My soc. [note: sociology] students are on the look out.” Lori’s multimodal composition that documented #sexism in audio equipment eventually found its way onto a BuzzFeed article, “It’s a Boy Girl Thing,” causing her to tweet with delight, “We made it!”

This example suggests that using Twitter in formal learning spaces presents new opportunities for teaching and learning. The teacher facilitated an educational environment in which students are encouraged to learn about sociology through participating in emerging conversations about important issues in the field, such as sexism. Their multimodal compositions that combined image and text, tagged for relevant audiences (e.g., *hashtagging* #sexism and *mentioning* @Sociological_Images) suggested developing competence in new literacies practices. By facilitating pedagogical

practices that center multimodal participation in “real world” conversations that are relevant, authentic, and meaningful to young people, teachers and students can support rich learning opportunities through the use of Twitter. For example, Lori’s comment that “We made it” suggests that for many young people, learning means participating in authentic conversations in relevant spaces (i.e., Buzzfeed). Lori’s contribution was considered valuable not only by her teacher, but by audiences beyond the four walls of the classroom. This may lead credence to the notion that one educational outcome of teaching and learning with Twitter is the possibility of learning through participation in conversations (e.g., by Lori’s multimodal composition).

Transforming power relations between teacher and students through Twitter

On Twitter, young people and teachers interacted in ways that were transformed by the use of Twitter. The simple fact that teachers may choose to interact with students in a youth-sanctioned space sets up the potential for disequilibrating experiences for both teachers and students. With its recurring themes of drama (i.e., social, familial, and relationship), sex, and threatened violence, the figured world of teenage Twitter can appear to be an alien landscape, requiring new ways of communicating, interacting, and being in public. Consider the language used in Mrs. Webber’s tweet: “Tis the real Webzy...All u haters stop frontin.” Mrs. Webber seemed to appropriate teen discourse (e.g., “haters stop frontin”) in her post; to which Lucy responded in kind, tweeting, ““All the haters gonna h8.” Continuing the conversation, Mrs. Webber posted this tweet, “Thank you all for a wonderful year! #crying like a baby right now” This brief interaction suggests the potential for Twitter to transform traditional teacher-student interactions,

relationships, and practices. In this playful exchange, Mrs. Webber used language and literacy practices more commonly used by youth in the figured world, eliciting a response in kind from Lucy. Later, the teacher tweeted her appreciation to her followers, using a hashtag to mark her emotions (e.g., #crying). It may also be significant that Mrs. Webber noted that the “real Webzy” appears in the figured world of teenage Twitter; the use of Twitter may facilitate the kind of interactions (e.g., emotional, playful, using borrowed language) that transform relations between teachers and students.

Taking it one step further, through the use of Twitter, young people suggested agency and increasing authority over these interactions. Lucy participated in Twitter practices that seemed to suggest new orientations to power in the classroom. For example, Lucy’s invitation to @Webst initiated a new dynamic where Lucy’s expertise and practices is valuable as “expert knowledge.” Lucy’s knowledge and competence in social media, and her desire to apprentice @Webst into this practice, opened up the possibility of reconfigured relationships between teacher and student, as well as the possibility of what it means to participate online. As Lucy explained in step-by-step instructions about how to download Instagram, Lucy suggested herself as a resource to help her teacher understand the technical competencies needed to enter the space. Lucy helped her teacher to orient herself to a new social media space, using positive language to support her teachers, saying, “You can do it. I BELIEVE IN YOU.” At the same time, Lucy attempted to teach @webst new cultural practices and conventions of this new space by introducing a youth cultural practice that Lucy called the “ghetto pose.”



Figure 23 WEBER, THIS IS THE GHETTO POSE

Here, we see Lucy linking youth cultural practices together: the “duck face” as an integral part of the “ghetto pose.”

Of all three participants, Ryan was the one who took advantage of the unique cultural practices of youth Twitter to transgress or challenge the dynamics of a traditional teacher-student relationship, with teacher as expert and student as learner. Over two years of interactions with five teachers, Ryan consistently engaged in Twitter practices that seemed to disrupt social norms or suggest the possibility of doing so. One of the most interesting ways that Ryan used Twitter to challenge norms in the teacher-student relationship is through the physical body, or representations of it. Ryan posted candid pictures of teachers (with consent not explicitly stated), with his hands on their face, as in this tweet below:



Figure 24 LOL I can’t take you seriously with that Twitter picture

This image seems to encapsulate the transgressions quite aptly. For example, it shows Ryan not only touching his teacher (generally off-limits in the classroom), but is touching her face, causing her head to drop and her mouth to open. At the same time, Ryan’s mouth is open in a seemingly joyous fashion. This emergent moment of physical contact is expressed as joy or delight, and Mrs. Heinrich seems to agree too; she “liked” (or “favorited”) it on Twitter.

In addition to transgressing the norms of physical contact between teacher and student, Ryan used language-based practices with his teachers. First, he used a range of names (e.g., nicknames and familial names) to address teachers. With Mrs. Downs, the orchestra teacher mentioned earlier, he used “scrunchy.” With Mrs. Heinrichs, the psychology teacher pictured above, he used “Mom.” Ryan also participated in a #HistoryPickUpLines meme, in which he created over twenty tweets about historical

events that carried sexual innuendos (sample: “#HistoryPickUpLines they call me Karl Marx cuz I’m feeling an uprising in my lower class”).

Teenagers Solve Conflict on Twitter: the “Rape Joke” Incident

Now we have seen how teenage Twitter, an unsanctioned youth space, serves as a space for young people to interact with their teachers around shared interests, often deepening social and emotional bonds between them. These public performances of emotion, while deepening bonds and connection, also presented opportunities for young people to challenge and critique power dynamics in formal learning spaces. Lucy’s invitation to her teacher to appropriate practices of teenage Twitter (i.e., the duck face) and Ryan’s physical contact with his female teacher suggests opportunities for young people to transgress traditional power dynamics between students and teachers. The extended example below suggests how teacher-student interaction on Twitter presents an opportunity for young people to assume agency through “problem solving” a local conflict. In this example, Ryan and his choir teacher, Mrs. Murphy, were informed that a student “tweeted about a girl being so hot he’d rape her and then shit hit the fan.” While Ryan and Mrs. Murphy share a common unease and concern about the escalating drama, they responded in different ways that suggest emerging conceptions about how to respond to offensive behavior (and speech).

Ryan employed a number of responses on Twitter that made it clear that that this offensive speech is inappropriate in this space. These responses included direct address; subtweeting the offender, Jesse; a photo of a tweet by one of the offender’s friends; and addressing the school principal. First, Ryan addressed the instigator, using language that

is atypical for him and reflected the severity of the incident: “are you ignorant or fucking stupid”? In addition to directly addressing the instigator, “Jesse,” Ryan subtweeted him in the following tweet:



Figure 25 If you really like your crush...

Ryan’s ironic subtweet that satirized the notion that sexual violence is a sign of admiration for a person’s beauty was well-received; 3 people retweeted it and 28 people liked it. Another subtweet that was equally recognized was when Ryan printed out a tweet from one of the offender’s friends, calling him a “pussy” and wondering why Ryan “always got a problem wit [sic] me (seen below):

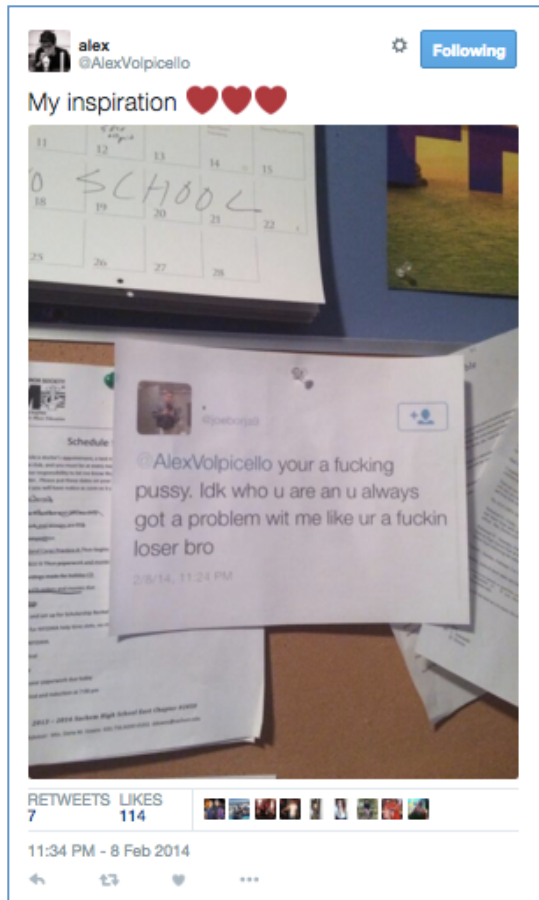


Figure 26 My inspiration

In order to suggest that Jesse’s inappropriate behavior on Twitter is linked to his offline behavior, Ryan mobilized resources and discourses through posting and circulation of a particularly emblematic identity artifact (Pahl & Rowsell, 2007): Jesse’s report card. Ryan posted the report card, in part, to draw audience attention to a teacher’s comment that Jesse “needs constant supervision.” Finally, Ryan posted a tweet to the school principal, suggesting that there is need for an intervention in the form of a school “assembly” about how to prevent sexual violence.

Ryan’s varied and multiple responses stood in contrast to Mrs. Murphy, the teacher present during this conversation. As opposed to Ryan, who used a number of

provocative strategies, including insulting and continuing to communicate with the instigator of the online fight, Mrs. Murphy responded by documenting the altercation and passing it on to school officials, including the principal. Once Murphy heard about the rape joke, she intervened by providing evidence of the offensive speech to the principal. In addition to providing an administrative intervention, Murphy also contributed her personal opinion to her followers, writing that the joke “is hurtful to the core for some people, including myself.” Murphy’s statement suggesting her own vulnerability was supported by her followers; it was retweeted twice and favorited 8 times. Lori, meanwhile, noted how strongly she identified with her teacher with the following tweet: “Margaret Murphy for president.”

This event demonstrated how a local conflict provided an opportunity for young people, in conjunction with their teacher, to challenge harassing behavior and to suggest pro-social norms. The incident also suggested how young people are able to mobilize resources (e.g., peers) and structures in *and* out of school (i.e., school assembly) to resolve this pressing problem; at the same time, it detailed how young people’s problem solving behaviors might suggest new power relations between teacher and students.

Teacher-student interaction in the figured world of teenage Twitter

Overall, teacher-student interaction in this space is marked by a number of important dimensions, including emotional bonds, social relationships, and shared learning connections (i.e., psychology or literature). The use of Twitter in a formal learning space presented opportunities for participatory learning in which students and teachers create multimodal compositions that document examples of #sexism in U.S.

mainstream culture. At the same time, teacher-student interaction may also transform traditional power relations between teachers and students, as students use the cultural practices of teenage Twitter to resolve a pressing local conflict. By mobilizing resources, including peers, school authorities, and language practices of teenage Twitter, young people resolve problems in ways that suggest their expertise.

Discussion

In this section, I address the research questions guiding this study: How do norms of participation and interaction on Twitter shape how teachers and students relate to each other and learn from each other? How do Twitter interactions re-organize power relationships, norms, and expectations which traditionally guide student and teacher interactions? These two questions invite us to consider how teacher-student interactions on Twitter may support teaching and learning by changing the social context of education to emphasize youth agency and purpose. These questions allow us to ponder how student-teacher interaction in an online space may support the development of new learning practices and behaviors, such as those that build off student experiences and expertise.

The Figured World of Teenage Twitter

This study found that through the use of Twitter, teachers and students interacted and related to each other, often performing an emotional connection that maintained, deepened, or initiated a new form of relationship. That teachers were “invited in” to teenage Twitter suggests that teacher-student interaction was predicated on, or at least initiated by, student desire for emotional connection with teachers. After being invited

into a youth space, teachers and students bonded over learning connections and shared interests, such as music, politics, psychology, and current events. Students and teachers exchanged jokes, memes, and mobilized humor to suggest a transformed relational dynamic between teacher and student. Through the figured world of teenage Twitter, teachers and students interacted in a space predicated on youth practices.

These interactions may cause some disequilibrating experiences, as teachers and students figure out the social, cultural, literate, and historic practices of youth Twitter. Consider @Webz's initial tweet that appropriated youth "textese" or "digitalk": "Tiz the real Webzy...all you haters gonna hate." In another example, Ryan asked Mrs. Webber if she were "hip enough" to understand a reference to youth internet culture (e.g., an image of doge); she did not get the cultural reference and replied, "that is not my dog." In both of these examples, the interactions are playful and light-hearted, yet they also signaled a recognition of that the figured world of teenage Twitter. Both the teacher's appropriation of youth language and her lack of knowledge about *doge*, a popular figure in internet (youth) culture, signal that teenage Twitter is a place with particular cultural practices that require different ways of communicating (i.e., than in the traditional classroom).

In the figured world of teenage Twitter, young people expressed momentum toward engaging interactions and relationships with friends, peers, and teachers; through these interactions, students and teachers engage in conversation about "real world" issues that are most critical to them, including feminism (Gleason, 2016b), sexism, politics and political identities, and others. Young people participated in these conversations through the use of new literacies practices *and* their individual commitments; for example, Lucy expressed a commitment to social justice and activism by livetweeting a social protest

(Gleason, 2016b). Lori, on the other hand, created multimodal compositions in order to critique the sexism in mainstream US society. Ryan, meanwhile, expressed a commitment to an ethic of care that critiqued sexist and misogynistic attitudes and behaviors evidenced through the rape joke. Young people's momentum to critique and challenge systems of oppression speaks to the ways that the figured world of teenage Twitter might be a space that aligns with theories of humanizing pedagogy.

New Literacies and Opportunities to Learn in Teenage Twitter

As a space to develop literacy, teenage Twitter represents a powerful medium. A few years ago, we proposed that Twitter literacy, or "Twitteracy," represented a new literacy that offers new ways of reading, writing, and meaning-making (Greenhow & Gleason, 2012). As literacy practices in Twitter are multimodal, dynamic, socially-mediated and situationally specific, they may offer new ways of being in the world. New literacies scholars proposed that literacy entails knowing "which technologies and what forms and functions of literacy most support one's purposes" (Coiro et al, 2008, p. 5). Participants in the figured world of teenage Twitter constantly had to figure out how to participate in an evolving conversation—what tools, resources, audiences, and cultural practices are considered appropriate for their particular situation. For example, Lori created a multimodal composition documenting #sexism in children's toys, challenging the need for gender-specific earbuds. It is particularly telling that Lori created this composition in Twitter, given that she was an active participant on multiple social media spaces, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, SnapChat, and others. Simply, the affordances of this social media platform—the economy of 140 characters; its

multimodality; its ability to share information instantaneously—mark these practices as unique, and thus indicate emerging literacy practices.

New literacies scholars (Rowse et al, 2016; Vasudevan & Kerr, 2016; Miller & McVee, 2013; Shanahan et al, 2013) have proposed that the process of multimodal composition is a creative, intellectual process. On its most basic level, argued Hull and Nelson (2005), the use of images is no mere addition to printed text, but transforms the text. Meanwhile, Vasudevan and Kerr highlighted the process of multimodal composition as “artistic creative practice” that promotes a social, collaborative, situationally-specific, co-constructed way of reading and writing (2016, p. 104). Finally, Shanahan et al argued that multimodal composition “promotes higher order thinking” by facilitating metalinguistic and metadiscursive awareness (2004, p. 48).

So is there anything new about this process of multimodal composition, or is this another case of “old wine in new bottles” (Street, 2003)? Put another way, how might the use of teenage Twitter support new literacies, or new and improved ways of reading and writing? On teenage Twitter, young people’s literacies are multimodal, participatory (e.g., engaging in broader discourse about sexism and sexual violence), interactive (i.e., interacting with multiple audiences, such as Ryan’s desire to lead a dialogue “an intervention” about rape culture, or Lori’s publication on BuzzFeed “we made it”), and, pleasurable (e.g., emotional, emotive, or energizing). Running through these literacies is a clear emotional current in which young people develop social connection through shared interests, curiosity, interest, and relationship. Through interaction on Twitter, teachers develop their connections with students, gaining an understanding that young

people are individuals with particular preferences, social networks, and things that make them tick.

These emergent literacies found in teenage Twitter are new and important because they contribute to an “always on” orientation in which opportunities for teaching and learning are ubiquitous; however, in order for these moments to matter, they typically represent conflicting interests or practices, what Holland and Lave have described as “local contentious practice” (2009; cf: Gleason, 2016ab). That is, the rape “joke” was contentious not because it violated school rules or authority, but because it violated common norms of anti-oppressive spaces (not to mention Twitter terms of service). This emergent nature of teenage Twitter means that opportunities for teaching and learning are to be found in the “vital life stuff” of teenage culture—the exuberant and raucous activity that makes it an unsanctioned space (which includes the gamut of language vulgar and not). In teenage Twitter, young people seek out empathetic and humane relationships with peers, as well as with their favored teachers. In fact, when she was in high school, Lucy reported that a retweet from her English teacher was valuable social currency at her school. For his part, Ryan that his “four favorite” teachers were ones he interacted with on Twitter. And Lori tweeted frequently with teachers, setting up reunion visits and wishing them well when they’re out sick.

It seems clear that young people are looking for relationships that support interaction with teachers—humane relationships that are centered on student language, experience, and culture. The use of social media has been suggested as a way to increase opportunities to learn by valuing student voice and potential opportunities to learn by challenging conventional norms of discourses—in this case challenging norms of school,

in which teacher-driven curricula, standardized testing, and achievement orientations are profligate.

Through Twitter, teachers and students center young people and their lived-in world. By interacting with teenagers on Twitter, educators, researchers, parents, and the community begin to acknowledge the diversity of their literate practices—that a provocative multimodal composition, with an appropriate tag (e.g., #sexism), can become part of a larger conversation via BuzzFeed. That a contentious discussion about offensive speech (i.e., a rape “joke”) could spiral into larger topics such as the relationship between threatening language and criminal behavior, often against women. Through Twitter, young people are not just “exposed to” these conversations through flash-inoculation, as in a typical social studies class. Rather, young people not only contribute to the discussion, but shape discourse within local and global networks (i.e., consider how Lori’s tweet originated within her local network and then “went viral” on BuzzFeed).

The use of teenage Twitter in formal and informal educational settings represents a powerful force because it seems to suggest new and improved “opportunities to learn,” theorized as chances to participate (with the goal of eventually becoming a member) in discourse communities (Moje & Lewis, 2007). Through participation, learners express agency and gain expertise within their specific discourse community; at the same time, opportunities for authentic learning are afforded or constrained as particular discourses, voices, and notions of expertise are promoted (e.g., in many schools, adult power is manifest in teacher-controlled curricula, organization of learning, social grouping strategies, and many other forms). Whereas the high school students in Moje and Lewis’ study felt constrained by the cultural discourses of school to silence themselves during

class discussion, participants in my study were relatively free to express themselves in the unsanctioned youth space of teenage Twitter, and took advantage of this opportunity to practice (new) literacies of multimodal composition.

In an essay on the relationship between pedagogy, emotion, and teacher education, Boldt et al (2015) articulated a vision of learning as occurring through relationships and emerging events and activities. Critiquing what they call a “fetishization of standardization, testing, and methods at the expense of ambiguity, improvisation, and enlivening classroom relationships” (2015, p. 432), the authors described a reconception of learning as happening “in moments that leak through curriculum when the children are able to snatch something that empowers their own ‘forces of life’” (p. 431). What Boldt et al refer to as “forces of life” I have referred to as “vital life stuff” on teenage Twitter—those energizing, affective intensities that motivate interest, relationship, and creation. (Gleason, 2016ab) Participation in this setting “depends on both intellectual support and positive emotional climate,” suggesting that teacher-student interaction, based around emotional connection, is a necessary precondition for teaching and learning on Twitter (DiPardo & Schnack, 2004, p. 17). This emotional connection, argued DiPardo and Schnack, can serve as the “foundation” that makes possible intellectual “critique and discussion of touchy subjects,” such as sexual violence and sexism in my study (2004, p. 33).

Developing a Humanizing Pedagogy with Teenage Twitter

Through interaction on teenage Twitter, both students and teachers can begin to develop more humane, caring, and productive relationships with each other. Through

connection over shared interests and social relationships, teachers and students interact in a youth-centered space that privileges student expression and experience. Critically-minded educators may leverage the sociotechnical affordances and cultural practices of teenage Twitter in order to develop a *humanizing pedagogy* that incorporates student language, experience, culture, practices, and history (Bartolome, 1984; Freire, 1970). According to Salazar (2013), humanizing pedagogy involves a “problem-posing education where students are coinvestigators in dialogue with their teachers” (p. 127). Through working through problems of practice, students develop critical consciousness, which allows them to take action against systems of oppression. Humanizing pedagogy aligns with recent attempts, including critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Darder, 1991; McLaren, 1989), engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012), culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Milner, 2011), critical research (Morrell, 2009) and multicultural education (Banks, 1993), which, broadly aim to empower students through learning “literacy and civic engagement skills that will allow them to more effectively navigate, resist, and ultimately transform institutions of power,” including schools (Morrell, 2009). A central theme of these distinct but related approaches is an argument that schools do not automatically “function as major sites of social and economic mobility,” but that rather schools position students in “asymmetrical relations of power on the basis of specific race, class, and gender groupings” (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 23). That is, schools can reproduce social inequities through undemocratic forms of education that do not develop student interests, intellectual abilities, or provide opportunities to develop agency or leadership (Shor, 1992; Duncan-Andrade, 2008). Humanizing pedagogy challenges the neoliberal, corporate agenda

presented in the education reform literature that lionizes academic achievement via “adequate yearly progress” as a significant goal.

In traditional public schools, the aim of meeting AYP often comes at the expense of practices that dehumanize students *and* teachers on the basis of gender, sex, race, and class. For example, recent laws that began in North Carolina but may be adopted in 18 states, criminalize students’ gender identities (e.g., transgender students are prohibited from using bathroom that corresponds to their gender). In many urban schools and in communities of color, student funds of knowledge, including linguistic, cultural, and social resources, are often ignored or devalued in favor of assimilationist models. Giroux (2014) noted that “market-driven educational reforms...exhibit contempt for teachers and distrust of parents, repress creative teaching, destroy challenging and imaginative programs of study, and treat students as mere inputs on an assembly line” (p. 492). Grouping these traditions together under the banner of “humanizing pedagogy” focuses attention on the dialectical relationship between the liberatory nature of education through large scale social change and civic engagement, and the process of humanization, by which individuals become free through recognition of their oppression (Salazar, 2013, p. 126).

Humanizing pedagogy begins with the process of developing the whole person, facilitated through social relationships with others. Salazar wrote that humanization demands that educators connect with students emotionally. Through interpersonal relationships with students, teachers begin to value “the richness of teacher-student relationships” (2013, p. 129) Humanizing pedagogy is about the humanization of education; as such, it requires transformation by all parties, including students *and*

teachers. The feeling of “disequilibrium” is more than mere discomfort as teachers and students work to construct new norms, practices, and relationships; disequilibrium may be a signal that the process of humanization is happening. However, teachers and students interested in engaging with the rigorous work of humanizing pedagogy need to do more than incorporate Twitter into the formal classroom. As Freire and Macedo warned (1995), sharing student language, culture, and experiences without overt political analysis, reflection, or action often leads to a “pedagogy of middle-class narcissism” (p. 381). Sharing experiences, then, is adequate but not sufficient; the work of humanizing pedagogy requires teachers and students to link student experiences to larger social, cultural, political, historical and economic systems.

One of the key means of learning in humanizing pedagogy is through problem-posing, or what I referred to earlier as “problem solving.” Both problem-posing and problem-solving have similar aims: to connect student lives to global issues (i.e., sexism, racism, misogyny, sexual violence, white privilege, etc); to develop critical perspectives; and to help students see the connection between self and society. Here, student resources of experiences, language, and culture are leveraged in order to facilitate education that helps students address local instantiations of global problems (i.e., sexism; sexual violence; and online harassment). Freire and Macedo (1995) argued that problem-posing allows students and teachers to “pedagogically engaged with... the social, economic, and cultural conditions that lead us to the conditions of savage inequalities in East St. Louis” and other places around the world (p. 387). Thus, problem-posing and problem-solving is always a political endeavor that challenges and critiques the dehumanizing consequences of hypercapitalist economies.

While one goal would be “to challenge structural forces preventing humanization,” humanizing pedagogy also acknowledges that critical reflection is action that can interrupt inequalities. Thus, action and reflection mutually reinforce each other, suggesting that both activities support the transformative vision of humanizing pedagogy, and reminding educators, students, administrators, parents and others that critical reflection is a form of intervention against oppression. It may be the case that critical reflection, seen as young people develop a meta-awareness of their own new literacies practices on Twitter (Gleason, 2016a), may work as a pivot (Vygotsky, 1978) to engaged action that challenges structural forces preventing humanization (Salazar, 2013).

Through participation in teenage Twitter, a cultural space with unsanctioned youth practices (Gleason, 2016ab), teachers and students work to create a space for teaching and learning. As an unsanctioned space, diverse youth practices, including use of multiple languages and norms of participation, reign on Twitter. Students communicate in home languages, such as African American Language (AAL), as they participate in energizing practices, such as livetweeting a reality television show (Gleason, 2015). Envisioning student-teacher interaction on Twitter as humanizing pedagogy does more than just incorporate a new media tool into education, but rather may position student lives, and their social, cultural, and historical connections, at the curricular center.

Humanizing Pedagogy with Teenage Twitter Renegotiates Power Dynamics

As teachers and students interact in teenage Twitter, creating emotional bonds around shared learning connections and pressing local problems, their interactions may

work to destabilize traditional teacher-student norms and practices. These destabilizing experiences may eventually lead to renegotiated power relations that traditionally guide teacher-student interactions. Here, the concept of identity lamination (Holland & Leander, 2004) can serve as a useful metaphor for how people draw on particular identities to suggest power relations (i.e., that they are powerful or not). Holland and Leander (2004) introduced the idea of laminations to refer to the cumulative process of “layering” down subject positions that gradually accumulate to suggest a particular identity or position in a specific sociocultural context. The notion of laminations is particularly valuable because it speaks to the way that people’s self-authoring and recognition work, conceptualized as identity work (cf, Gleason, 2016b; Barton, 2012) may carry over into other social spaces, leading to the possibility of changed or transformed social relationships and practice.

Again, let us reconsider the “rape joke incident.” Drawing on his identity as an informal youth counselor operating with an “ethic of care,” (Gleason, 2016b) Ryan responded to a local injustice in a way that stabilized his identity as an expert through his mobilization of resources and structures. Traditional authorities, including the principal and teachers, were involved in this conflict but their power was incidental rather than primary. Ryan’s identity as a caring individual was strengthened and stabilized through his intervention on behalf of someone who has been victimized in public.

This incident demonstrated that the particular practices of teenage Twitter, including how resources were mobilized, suggest new power dynamics between teachers and students. To resolve the problem of harassing behavior, Ryan mobilized his local network, composed primarily of peers, but also including high school teachers and

administrators, to suggest that the offensive behavior is not acceptable in this space. Here, Ryan used humor, irony, and multimodal identity artifacts, such as the instigator's report card, to suggest that harassing behavior is an unwelcome practice. Ryan's breezy address to the school principal ("hey my man") suggested a leveling of relations and power between student and principal; he was not cowed by the principal's authority, but acknowledged the importance of the institution of school as a partner in supporting the creation of a pro-social "safe space" free of harassment, discrimination, intolerance, and other forms of oppression. Ryan's decision to advocate for an "intervention" in the form of a school assembly to address sexual violence represented the lamination of Ryan's identity as someone in the "caring" professions as well as an example of how young people can work to solve important educational conflicts, such as an offensive joke in a popular social space for youth and adults.

Educators who use a humanizing pedagogy framework are likely to structure experiences, activities, and opportunities to learn around student assets and resources, while also providing appropriate recognition and feedback. In a humanizing pedagogy, teachers and students are partners in the creation of new language, literacy, and educational practices that provide opportunities for student-centered teaching and learning.

Looking Forward: Implications for teaching and learning

This study investigated teacher-student interaction on Twitter and found a number of fascinating findings that suggest how the use of Twitter in formal and informal learning spaces may support a dramatic shifting of the traditional hierarchical curricula

and structure of public education. Rather than standardized curricula that posits the teacher as expert and student as novice, the world of teenage Twitter presents opportunities for young people to learn by participating in important conversations (i.e., #sexism), creating multimodal compositions that are circulated in widely-read platforms, such as BuzzFeed, and facilitating interactions in which emotional, social, and intellectual connections are developed. This study included examples of how these new learning spaces push us to consider how social media can help to renegotiate power dynamics and learning orientations. Garcia et al (2015) argued that digital media “renegotiates relational & social power for participants” (p. 155). In this model, social media is an alternative space for students and teachers to “challenge and deconstruct the social understandings” of school discourse (2015, p. 159). Participants took to Twitter to have fun and be social; in doing so, they exerted agency and purpose in their life through interactions with trusted teachers. In a space of co-constructed activity (i.e., consider how Mrs. Gearns and her group of student co-learners used Twitter to observe, document, and critique sexism in US society), young people and teachers draw on resources from their personal lives, networks, and sociotechnical competence in order to respond to emergent issues and problems.

The use of Twitter in formal and informal learning spaces presents the possibility of a number of positive educational outcomes. First, there is a strong relationship between conflicts that occur in our daily lives and larger histories of oppression. For example, a rape joke highlights both individual level offensive behavior, as well as the enduring struggle of sexism, misogyny, and real and symbolic violence against women (Holland & Lave, 2009). One way to use Twitter for teaching and learning would

encourage students and teachers to see their Twitter activity as participation in ongoing struggles, such as against sexism, racism and white privilege, gender inequality, and many others. Through daily activity on Twitter, conflicts will inevitably emerge that can serve as an opportunity to situate local activity (i.e., a contentious tweet) in a historical, social, political, and aesthetic context. Second, conflicts that emerge in local practice provide an opportunity for students to develop expertise and receive public recognition. Young people can draw on their deep and extensive histories of social, cultural, and personal participation as resources to work to solve real world challenges in what Emdin (2016) called "reality pedagogy." This humanizing pedagogy "focuses on making the local experiences of the student visible and creating contexts where there is a role reversal of sorts that positions the student as the expert in his or her own teaching and learning, and the teacher is the learner." Through the use of Twitter, students and teachers may develop learning opportunities that value student language, experience, and voice. Crucially, these interactions may also serve to position the student as expert by facilitating a way that students can resolve local pressing problems through their own agency (as opposed to a teacher's or principal's). Like Emdin, I am hopeful that by meeting students where they are-- valuing their language and experience-- and recognizing their knowledge, students and teachers will create a shared learning space that positions students to solve complex problems, perform emotional connection, develop social relationships, and simply enjoy being with each other.

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CONCLUSION

This study began with the intention of investigating the rich life worlds of teenage Twitter for the purpose of learning more about how young people read, write, develop and express identities, and participate in teaching and learning activities. I conducted a case study of three young people's engagement with Twitter over multiple years that involved looking for emerging practices, especially those were contested or contentious; the justification for this stems from social practice theory (Holland & Lave, 2001) in which identity development often involves conflict between different ways of life, perspectives, and behaviors. This study collected almost 60,000 tweets from three participants, forming a rich discursive base from which to investigate young people's literacy, identity, and learning practices.

In this final chapter, I will: a) review the findings from the previous manuscripts to suggest how they represents answers to my research questions; and b) discuss implications these have for research and practice.

New literacies

In the first manuscript, I focused on how young people practice literacy on Twitter through multimodal composition. This study found that as young people participated on Twitter, they often participated in new literacies practices (e.g., mirroring, lifetweeting, and lifeblogging) that allowed them to create complex, co-constructed narratives. These narratives capitalized on the popular *vital life stuff* of the moment, such as when Ryan remixed cover art from 21 Pilots for his unofficial prom portrait, or when Lori and friends created a "story within a story" about their clique's experiences on a senior class trip to Washington, D.C. As young people engage with Twitter, they are

faced with multiple ways to tell their story—do they prefer to envision Twitter as a journal, a live broadcast, or as a documentary? In whatever form they choose (e.g., mirroring, livetweeting, or lifeblogging), they will mobilize friends and resources to participate in collective activity which often leads to reflection on their activity. For young people such as my participants, Twitter is not just another social activity, but one that pushes them to reflect and participate anew in multimodal composition. These new forms of composition are both personally and socially meaningful practices that draw on a range of networked activity.

Identity work

In the second manuscript, I focused on the relationship between young people's participation in new literacies (i.e., hashtagging) and the development of feminist identities on Twitter. A social practice theory approach allowed me to situate this identity work as both indicative of an individual's history of participation as well as suggestive of larger, institutional struggles (e.g., sexism). Participants in this study used new literacies to create and share knowledge in a variety of ways, from Ryan acting as an informal peer counselor, to Lucy's circulation of feminist primary source material. Becoming a feminist in teenage Twitter is a process that goes beyond mere participation in new literacies such as hashtagging, information-sharing, and livetweeting. This process of self-authoring feminist identities involves the demonstration of particular commitments, such as Lucy's commitment to activism, or Ryan's ethic of care. While some people are recognized as feminist when their commitments align with their public behavior, other times the process of becoming a feminist on teenage Twitter is more contentious and suggests tensions within society at large.

Humanizing pedagogy

In the third manuscript, I attempted to explore how the use of Twitter in formal and informal learning environments can restructure practices of teaching and learning, offering the possibility that the use of this social media platform can make our pedagogy more “humane.” This approach aims to offer social, emotional, and intellectual development of students based on centering student language, culture, and experiences. In fact, as participants interacted with peers and teachers on Twitter, they suggested a desire for greater emotional connection with teachers, while also demonstrating shared interests in common curricular and non-curricular content (e.g., psychology, history, and physics). Through the use of Twitter, students and teachers develop new practices that offer new forms of participation, communication, and learning experiences. Lori’s multimodal composition about #sexism, and Ryan’s involvement in the “rape joke incident,” suggest that Twitter can be a site of rich, authentic, and meaningful learning for students and teachers.

Through participation in the dynamic figured world of teenage Twitter rooted in youth language, culture, and experiences, teachers and students interact in ways that destabilize traditional norms and classrooms practices; this process of destabilization may be the signal that humanization is happening. Through a focus on problem-solving (or problem-posing), young people and teachers are engaged in a dynamic process that aims to address local instantiations of global problems, such as sexism or racism. Viewing Twitter use in the classroom as participation in ongoing struggles, such as fighting #sexism, is one approach to respond to the global social ills of gender inequity, racism, and sexual violence. As student participation works to respond to emerging local conflict,

such as Ryan's intervention in the "rape joke incident," educators would do well to develop this emerging expertise.

Across all three studies, I aimed to investigate the meanings of young people's participation in the figured world of teenage Twitter, in part because I was struck by the complexity involved in the process of *thinking in hashtags*. What emerged as a result of this three-year study was that *thinking in hashtags* is a form of "active and intentional action," to use Lucy's words, that rely on young people's affective forces, social relationships, and cultural affinities in order to develop new literacies, construct identities, and engage in new ways of teaching and learning. This study suggested that the figured world of teenage Twitter, with its colorful language and vitality, can serve as a site of critical teaching and learning. *Thinking in hashtags* is a metaphorical conceit that aims to uncover and explore the practices, possibilities, and pragmatics of engaging with Twitter. It suggests that through participation in teenage Twitter, young people develop new forms of literate practice that allows them to tell stories in unexpected ways. Through multimodal compositional practices that are nonlinear, interactive, and predicated on multiplicity (multiple authors, numerous hashtags used or not used, stories within stories), young people are authoring stories that are impossible without Twitter.

These new literacies (e.g., hashtagging, information-sharing, and livetweeting) are used in conjunction with individual core commitments to suggest identities. *Thinking in hashtags* then involves recognition that these new literacies can be used to suggest core commitments (i.e., to activism, care, and humor) that they aim to align with feminist identities. *Thinking in hashtags* implies an understanding that one's identity as a feminist (or any seemingly limitless form of identity work) is not a solo production, but rather a

socially-mediated, co-constructed process in which one's ability to mobilize social resources stands as a vital part.