CONNECTIVE COMPOSITION(S) AND SITINGS OF SELVES: ELASTIC LITERACIES, QUEER RHETORICS, AND THE ONLINE/OFFLINE POLITICS OF LGBT YOUTH WRITING

By

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ABSTRACT

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Given the increasing presence and seemingly ubiquitous status new media and digital technologies have in mediating contemporary lives, this longitudinal connective ethnography explores how lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) and queer youth of color engage in varying levels of mediation as they navigate and negotiate community, construct visibility, and orchestrate convergent identities. "Connective Composition(s) and Sitings of Self/ves," draws on data collected contexts to understand how the various literacy "sitings" youth compose are operationalized as social tactics in navigating and combating real and perceived (in)equality, architecting experience, and designing more just social futures. By partnering sociocultural perspectives of literacy with theories of multimodality, electracy, and affect, this dissertation offers a new heuristic, *elastic literacies*, that blurs dualisms and folk distinctions in contemporary language and literacy research. An analysis of these literacy practices as youth social tactics reveals complex understandings into the mediational processes of youth composing. By accounting for the rich opportunities and nuanced processes of producing connective compositions, this dissertation highlights the way LGBT youth queer modes to stitch together convergent narratives and (re)author self/ves.

To Wanda (Or Nana, Babcia, friend, and mentor). My strongest literacy sponsor and the hypest remix artist I've met. Rest in power grandma.

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Although I have produced several hundreds of pages of text in this dissertation, I must first honor and acknowledge the severe grief I have encountered in its production. Throughout the latter stages of writing, my family and I witnessed great loss. Wanda (Grandma), Barbara (Aunt), and Cathy (Aunt), were taken from us. The personal interjected into the professional. As someone who held his personal life at bay throughout the bulk of graduate school, loss impressed itself upon me. I wrote to grieve. I wrote to mourn. Now, however, I write to restore the great power and literacy sponsorship these women shared with me during the legacy of their life. You leave a sister, Mary (my Mom), who has courageously encouraged me to continue this journey. To the Wargo women, I am forever grateful. You have taught my family and I what it means to be a leader, a nurturer, a friend, and most importantly a person. You will be missed.

Outside of my immediate family, I must also acknowledge my chosen family, the six young people, their teachers, and the larger youth communities of Kilgore and San Miguels County who have graciously opened up their lives for me to write and think about. Andi, Ben, Camille, Gabe, Jack, and Zeke, you are my greatest allies in this work. May you continue to write, compose, and architect more just social futures.

I must also make mention to and acknowledge my dissertation committee. My intellectual family, if you will. Trixie, thank you for encouraging me to wrestle with my inner demons and for pushing me to sustain the queer in a project that could have easily gotten lost in the closet of status quo K-12 writing research. Peter, you have been one of my biggest fans, a tremendous colleague, and a true friend. Thank you for the pep talks, the collaboration, and the laughter of helping me navigate the space and terrain of academia. To Elizabeth, my optimistic

UMICH outsider who has so graciously helped mentor me into an academic who cares about and is challenged by youth and youth culture. You have pushed me to critically think about *to whom* and *for whom* I write. Your membership on "Team Wargo" is greatly appreciated, even if you are forever a Boilermaker and Wolverine! Avner, I would not be here today if it were not for you. I remember pacing my apartment in Denver talking to you on the phone as you actively recruited me to come to Michigan State. Thank you for always being a phone call away, open to my crazy, and a dear colleague and confidant. You are an exemplar of mentorship. I am so thankful for the journey. Last, but not least, thank you Django. Since our earliest meetings, you have been the person who encouraged me to "stay true to the work." Our journey together has ebbed and flowed, each year bringing with it new challenges. Thank you for sticking with me. Thank you for encouraging me to stay the path. Thank you for embodying balance and for being a "friend who understand fully." Although this phrase has granted you membership and acclaim across academia for your commitment to ethical and more humanizing research, it is a mantra you wear in advising and chairing students to and through the program.

Typically, I am a lone wolf. Here, however, I must show love for the cohort members, junior graduate students, and Lansing townies that have made my stay in Michigan, and Lansing in particular, remarkable. You are the Wargo wolf pack. Jay, Raven, Kristina, Sara, Don, Erich, Yao, Chris, Scotty, Trace, Qiana, Kristen, Dali, Erik, Bernadette, and the many others I have forgotten in the midst of dissertation craziness, thank you for being the breaks in my day, the joy and laughter that feeds my soul, and for always lifting me up when I fall. To my #firstyearfavorite (Cassie), thank you for going on random road trips, being my conference wife, and down for my random research ideas. You are some of my closest colleagues and I look forward to many more years of collaboration and friendship.

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jonozzy12: THIS IS WHO I WAS WHEN I WAS 16, WHEN I CAME OUT TO MY PARENTS AND MY DAD KICKED MY MOM AND I OUT OF HIS HOUSE, WHEN HE UTTERED "NO SON OF MINE" AND POLITELY CLOSED AND LOCKED MY CHILDHOOD HOME'S DOOR AS WE DEPARTED

wonjargo: this is who I was when I found out what "queer" meant. When I discovered that LGBT and queer people have history/ies, history/ies rich in knowledge, culture, and legacy. This is who I was when I became comfortable in my own skin

In December 2000, *The New York Times* featured a cover story from its technology section entitled: "Lonely Gay Teen Seeking Same" (Egan, 2000). In the article, Egan explored the Internet use and online life of Jeffrey, an adolescent who used the Internet to surpass borders of rural teen life and conservative family values to build community, seek informational resources, and even cyber-date with other gay-identified youth. "For homosexual teenagers with computer access," Egan argued, "the Internet has, quite simply, revolutionized the experience of growing up gay." Fast forward two years and Jeffrey's story echoed my own. As a queer coming-of-age teen growing up in Indiana, I, too, was desperate to find a community to call my own. As the above epigraphs illuminate, my AOL instant messenger screen names and online identities were constantly in flux; taken off and worn again like clothes. Ever-changing, I was quick to find a more suitable skin and identity vis-à-vis screen names, hoping to capture the attention of other gay youth and men I met in chat rooms. I was looking for a paradoxical visibility, one wherein my anonymity online would keep my parents and schoolmates at bay

about my sexuality, while allowing me to roam freely across "the digital." Hence, the empirical project that I embark on in the following pages does not traverse across new terrain, but rather (re)surveys online/offline queer visibility and the literate and rhetorical maneuvers that queer youth have always already employed in negotiating and navigating identities and communities.

When my parents ask what I do, or I give the celebrated elevator pitch at academic retreats and conference venues, people are often shocked to find out that I am interested in the digital technologies that LGBT and queer youth employ and the virtual geographies they inhabit. Some of the more crude ask if I ever look at pornography the Internet proliferates, a medium notorious for its ease and access for under-age individuals yearning for clearance to see erotica. The more wary ask if I grow uncomfortable sitting with LGBT youth, working with them to dialogically select and mine writing across social networking sites and microblogs because, I, like the youth with whom I study, hold a sexual identity "in difference" (Munoz, 1999). "What would happen if they showed you something you shouldn't see?" I retort, "What shouldn't I see?" As a language and literacy educator, individuals are quite caught off guard when I argue that these youth develop their own sets of linguistic and textual cultures on and offline, cultures saturated with a literacy and rhetoric that center issues of gender and sexuality. Adults whom govern these youth according to their own archetype of childhood innocence and purity often keep their gender identities and sexual orientations at the periphery of institutional discourses. After all, as one parent asked, "How does a sixteen year old really *know* she is lesbian?" I contend, however, that the myriad of spaces and places that LGBT and queer youth traverse across and on are *connective*, offering them a place and space to tell *their* stories, suturing online/offline selves. But, before I tell *their* stories, I find it necessary to tell my own. It will cloud your read and shape what you walk away from this dissertation with. Think of this

prologue as the first, of many, reflexive turns in, a response to the feeling backwards that all ethnographic writing inherently is.

Far from feeling awkward or uneasy about my work with youth at Center Ridge and City Town high school, youth with whom you will meet and hear about in the coming pages, I often feel like I am coming home. A space that is eerily all too familiar while simultaneously strange and new. Growing up in the town of Merrillville, Indiana, I was bookended between the large urban environs of Chicago and the vast expanse of Indiana rurality. When people ask what growing up gay in Indiana was like, I snicker. I don't know if I grew up gay or if my sexuality suddenly bloomed, rather awkwardly, on my body. Coming from a multi-ethnic family with a Latino father and a White American mother, words like queer, joto, and faggot were used only in the pejorative. Gay was not an identity it was a put down. I am the only child of two blue-collar parents who worked long nights to just get by. Living paycheck to paycheck they ensured their son had the opportunities they did not. When I came out at sixteen, my father gently escorted me out of his house for a small tenure of 6 months. During that time, I grew uneasy about what it meant to come out. Should I have come out? What would it mean to stay in? During my senior year of high school, a social work intern from a local university called me down to the guidance counselor's office to ask if I had any interest in starting Merrillville High School's first "Gay Straight Alliance." I wanted no part of it and quickly asked her if I could return to the classroom I was called out of. The spotlight visibility that leading the charge of the school's GSA would bring was something I avoided. Instead, I found solace in the chat rooms and underground meet ups at the local Barnes and Noble. High school was a time where I wanted to fit in. I, taking heed of my father's sage advice, "kept my head down," and got through it.

When I moved away from home at 18, I soon realized that I could never go back. Bloomington, Indiana, or the "bubble" as some like to call it, is a microcosm of blue liberals in a landscape of red politics. Bloomington was the first place where I saw and heard people like me. Majoring in English and Gender Studies, Indiana University fostered a queer kinship and network of colleagues and mentors alike who taught me valuable life lessons. Scholars such as Karma Lochrie, Scott Herring and Rae Greiner mentored me through literary study that I can only acknowledge now, later in life, for its profound impact on how I read the word and the world. Colin Johnson and Mary Gray were individuals who mentored me not only through academia, but through life in my early 20s, a tumultuous time for my parents and I as they were still dealing with the residue of acknowledging their only son was gay. I was having my own queer enlightenment of sorts.

Unable to go home after undergrad, I bungee tied the trunk of my 1999 Saturn four door coupe and drove to Denver, Colorado to teach Kindergarten in the summer of 2008. I like to think of my pathway into education and teaching as a trip, an accidental fall that occurred at the most perfect moment. Not majoring in education, I found an alternative pathway into the classroom and stayed there for the next three years. While I will never forget the 75+ Elementary students I had the opportunity to teach in Southwest Denver, I meandered my way most days after school to the adjacent high school. A student, whom I will call Emilio here, picked up his 1st grade brother one day after school in my classroom. Emilio was a 17-year-old queer Cambodian youth who attended the nearby high school and who was part of the afterschool club called Spectrum. Spectrum was a secret GSA of sorts, a safe space that many local LGBT and queer youth of color would gather to discuss issues in Southwest Denver and the larger environs. Emilio had read me, his brother's teacher, as queer, and asked if I would have any interest in

being their faculty sponsor. While I could not lead the group, as I was not employed by the school, I told Emilio I would check it out sometime if the group allowed me. Emilio, and the other young people at Spectrum are the reasons why I do what I do. For two years, I had the privilege of seeing these young people discuss intersecting issues such as the school's pervasive heterosexism and racism. I saw them rally and raise awareness to social issues plaguing their neighborhoods like the school to prison pipeline or the number of queer youth of color who were homeless, cruising for money, and living in neighborhood parks. This counter-economy of schooling, a queer "extracurriculum" (Gere, 1994) if you will, was one of the many funds of knowledge Emilio's teachers did not readily draw upon, but one that sparked interest for me to return to school.

Coming to Michigan State University, I had a plethora of research interests. I was interested in language and literacy education, cultural studies, gender, sexuality, and its intersection with the institution, and curriculum theory. Rooted in issues of equity and urban education, I like to think that my study and journey through coursework helped crystalize and bring to fruition the current project. As a way to stay sane amidst the hype of writing papers, reading hundreds of pages, and teaching, I sought out school-sanctioned spaces to actually *see* youth in classrooms. I needed a touch point to reaffirm the work I was doing. In my first year of graduate school, I reached out to over 30 schools and queer youth programs in Michigan. Wary to let a stranger in, I found community in three local high school GSAs and an out-of-school LGBT oriented youth space. In years two and three of graduate study, I decided to spend more time at particular sites and less in others. City Town and Center Ridge HS, two of the focal "sites" among the network we will travel through, have come to be homes. Alongside of teachers whom I call Ms. Janice Lawrence and Ms. Clare Oakley, I worked with over 30 youth in my three years

of fieldwork. Some came regularly, some came for the food and then dip out for newspaper club or choir rehearsal, and some just peeked their heads in to see the topic of conversation that pervaded circle time. The groups' discourse(s) (Gee, 1996), the type of community activism Center Ridge and City Town youth engaged in, and the multiplicity of identities these students hold and held as they navigated institutional spaces of school, church, and home, were catalysts for the project.

Like all ethnographies, there was an inciting incident, a rich point if you will that, quite serendipitously, helped crystalize my own thinking about the nexus of school and classroom literacies for LGBT and queer youth. One Thursday in January 2013, well into my time at Center Ridge, Camille, a cisgender biracial lesbian student, came into Room 104 visibly upset. Angry about something, Camille helped the group and I transform the room of 32 chairs into a circle for 10. As individuals shared during circle time, Camille remained disconcerted. Ms. Lawrence asked if she was okay. Camille retorted with a loud, "No! She just doesn't get me!" I looked to Ms. Lawrence, and then turned to Camille and said, "Who doesn't get you? What's going on?" Camille responded that Ms. M, an English teacher at Center Ridge, "hated kids." I laughed, and said, "Ok, but really, what's wrong?" As it turned out Ms. M gave Camille and other students detention for not participating in the daily free write exercise. When I asked Camille why she refused to share, she said, "I'm not going to write for that bitch! I'm not going to share my personal life with her. She says I don't write? I write all the time, just not where or how she wants me to." Inquisitive, I asked Camille *where* and *how* she wrote. Camille retrieved her mobile phone and unearthed an archive of social networking spaces and microblogs that housed her writing. This writing, much of it deeply personal, detailed her mixed race lesbian identity. Additionally, she began showing me the tools she used to compose and create these narratives of

selves and gain a following and visibility she felt unwarranted by school given her status as youth minor. Others, like Camille, quickly adopted the mobile-in-hand approach to show me their writing, citing spaces such as Tumblr, Snapchat, and Twitter as those where they are most engaged with literacy work. This moment led (and continues to lead) me to formally engage with these types of digital literacy practices, practices I knew all too well, but were technologically and rhetorically quite different. It also led me to question how Center Ridge and City Town HS, two schools in districts who had recently received over 5.5 millions dollars in technology bonds were engaging students in techno-pedagogy and classroom practice. What, if anything, could we learn from these everyday youth digital literacy practices? How are these "youth techtual counter-economies" (Wargo, 2016) leveraged by youth to (re)author selves and design more just social futures? How is sexuality and gender foregrounded through the techne of electracy?

In the following pages, I detail how youth at Center Ridge and City Town engaged digital technologies to travel across connective geographies. I highlight how they navigated and negotiated (in)equality, created and composed identities, and explored, sustained, and built queer alliances and communities. Lined with data from in-person and online interviews, hundreds of hours of participant observation, detailed textual and visual analyses of youth writing, and live field notes, I spent 30 months just "hanging out with a notebook" (as my participant Andi describes) to question my own assumptions about digital technologies, queer youth culture, and the power of new media making as critical literacy. At the center of this dissertation is the hope that scholarship and research in language and literacy study moves away from the shallow line of digital inquiry concerning the Internet as site and/or tool for social transformation. I call for a more expansive method(ology) and deeper ethnographic analysis in literacy research that

illuminates the connective literacies youth, LGBT and otherwise, employ as catalysts for being heard in a cacophony of disciplinary discourses.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Leaving Center Ridge HS's Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) meeting today, Zeke and Camille escorted me to the "student" doors of the school as ongoing construction obstructed the front entrance marked for visitors. Snaking our way through Center Ridge's dimly lit hallways, I noticed Mrs. G, a history teacher whom I had limited interaction with, but who regularly noticed my presence in the school, cleaning an over-the-door shoe organizer. Above the shoe organizer turned cell-phone holder, Mrs. G placed a sign that read "Unplug Here!" As Camille, Zeke, and I passed she remarked, "You got to have them unplug! Take away the distractions." Smiling, I exited the student doors to find Zeke and Camille recounting the story to four others, Andi, Gabe, Ben, and Jack. The group thought it was humorous that Mrs. G would say that to me, someone they have come to know through my study of the counter-economies of digital composing and connective literacies. As we paused on the steps and stood on Center Ridge's campus, Zeke and Camille elaborated. Soon, a cacophony of dissent emerged. The youth argued that they could not have their cell phones and/or mobile devices in classroom spaces as it "distracted" them. Other students quickly joined the now large group and echoed their discomfort with the situation, Yeah!" "Can you believe that?" and "Uh huh" reverberated across the campus. Many of the teachers (and as I later found out administrators) found Mrs. G's shoe organizer useful. Center Ridge adopted the "unplug" stance. Students were being asked to disconnect from twenty-first century tools and practices to strap into what many would consider traditional or more formal (and I would add isolating) forms of teaching and learning. Rhetoric surrounding the "unplug" stance stains my mind as I am taken back to three other moments that spotlighted youth and user engagement online.

****

"For starters I'm gay. I just thought whoever is reading this should know that before you start scrolling down my blog and see: gay marriage this and equality that…I see Tumblr as a kingdom, forget kingdom Tumblr is more like Wonderland….in this blog [my only blog], I write things that happen in my life. I also upload / re-blog pictures that inspire me or just catch my attention. Lastly I upload music that I adore. I hope you enjoy it :-D"

- *Zeke (Tumblr Biography)*

****

"It's more than just writing on a blog, it's about making an experience…"

- *Andrea "Andi" (Participant Interview)*

****

"One thing, every gay guy on earth has a tumblr account. all of us. (sic) Tumblr is [a] stronghold for LGBTQ people…"

- *Ben (excerpt taken from personal e-mail correspondence)*

> *As someone whose research and scholarship examines how lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) and queer youth navigate (in)equality through their encounters with literacies across virtual and embodied geographies, I am troubled by the powerful identity work students were asked to disconnect from. When I go back into the school environs, I want to ask Andi, Zeke, Camille, Gabe, Jack, and Ben, do these identities in difference not intertwine with your role as student? To the content you're learning? What are the teachers so afraid of?*
>
> *(Fieldnote, October 11, 2013)*

"You Got To Have Them Unplug!"

Across 30-months of fieldwork, I examined various "sitings" of literacies work to trace digital practice and the connective identities LGBT and queer youth orchestrated and felt across online/offline geographies. Like Leander and McKim (2003), I adopt "sitings" rather than "site" or "sites" in my ethnographic examination to illuminate the ways in which these virtual environments and digital spaces work discursively to blur boundaries of the real/unreal. Similar to Zeke and Camille, two African American youth whom you met in the above field note, I do not see these binaries as helpful, nor do I think they fully account for the sophisticated rhetorical and activist work youth were engaging in. Instead, I contend that these literacy flows must be interpreted collaboratively. *Connective Compositions and Sitings of Selves: Elastic Literacies, Queer Rhetorics, and the Online/Offline Politics of LGBT Youth Writing* uses a connective ethnographic (Hine, 2015; 2000; Leander, 2008) approach to illuminate how writing with mobile media stitches together the use and construction of queer identities across space and place.

The larger network and backdrop for this work consisted of microblogs (Tumblr and Twitter), mobile media applications (Snapchat), social networking sites (Facebook and Instagram), and larger Internet-based design platforms and digital technologies (StoryMap). Running parallel to this more electric network was an array of geographical locations, "flesh" places where this type of digital literacies work stretched into the everyday. From a local community garden and Farmer's Market to the English language arts classroom, I observed

literacies stretch across a variety of angles. While they are separated above as a heuristic strategy, describing each mobile application (tool) and/or environment in isolation from the others, my data and analysis intertwine these to highlight the visible material paths that stretched across scale (Lemke, 2000). As Andi, Ben, and Zeke illuminate in the data snapshots, "it's more than just… a blog," it is both a "stronghold" and an "experience."

In conjunction with the material texts and realia from spaces considered more "formal" (e.g., school), the networked applications and sites served as a backdrop to the digital composition landscape examined. Using the landscape metaphor, I draw attention to the composing paths and processes that illuminate the relational practices that youth enact in these literacy flows to create, curate, and compose identities. As a way to bind the study, I used the aforementioned tools and networks to examine the compressed stories and worlds LGBT youth navigated and blurred as they refracted identities through other types of practices and processes of literacies work. These texts and spaces illuminate, I contend, the dynamic being and becoming youth compose. It is, as Duggan (1993) posits, a "process in which contrasting 'stories' of the self and others – stories of difference – are told, appropriated, and retold as stories of location in the social world of structural inequalities" (p. 793). These spaces, places, and tools, however, do not function in isolation from one another. The activities within each space bleed into the next, creating an imagined space and/or figured world (Holland et al., 1998) designed through a variety of media for a myriad of purposes.

I open the manuscript with my interaction with Mrs. G not to call attention to her or the school's inability to "connect" with students and their digitally mediated lives. In fact, I want to caution us from evaluating Mrs. G's disposition towards more "schooled" notions of learning as her "unplug" stance was one that I also saw enacted at City Town, the more affluent suburban

secondary school just 20 minutes from Center Ridge. The over-the-door shoe organizer, however, lends itself as a useful metaphor to question and (re)examine what authentic, collaborative, and participatory teaching and learning looks like given our ever-expanding and digitally connective world. As teachers and administrators rushed to ensure students were "college and career" ready, I was curious if they considered how, if at all, students were community ready.

Research Questions and Project Overview

Given the increasing presence and seemingly ubiquitous status new media and digital technologies have in mediating our contemporary lives, this dissertation addresses how six young people who lay claim to LGBT and queer youth identities engaged in varying levels of mediation to navigate and negotiate community/ies, construct queer visibility, architect experience, and orchestrate convergent identities across online/offline contexts. I take a connective ethnographic and interdisciplinary approach to examine how writing with mobile media, contrary to it's perceived status as a mundane "youth" phenomena, is leveraged by LGBT young people to (re)author narratives of self.

Saturated with discourse analytic methods, this multi-year connective ethnography addressed the following research questions: (1) *How do LGBT and queer youth deploy elastic literacies practices to compose and feel connective selves across mediated geographies of writing?;* (2) *How do LGBT and queer youth enact and construct identities in difference (e.g., gender expression, race, linguistic diversity) through connective encounters with digital language(s) and locative literacy/ies?;* and (3) *How (and why) do LGBT and queer youth navigate and negotiate online/offline geographies through emergent social practices in digitally mediated (counter)publics?* Laying claim to community through mainstream new media and networked communities, I argue that LGBT youth compose queer narratives to comment on what

it means to be an LGBT-identifying young person and what it looks like to render your gendered identities and sexual desires visible online while simultaneously concealing them offline. In their design of more just social futures, the digital literacy practices these youth employ are used as social tactics to comment on larger issues of power, equity, and justice. In equal measure, I illuminate how LGBT youth use popular discourses and contemporary social issues to discern and describe what it means to "experience" queer or "feel" race and sexuality. In sum, they make the global local and the local global as they collect, curate, and design fashioned versions of queer cosmopolitan selves with mobile media and digital technologies.

Theoretically, I connect and intervene in dialogues across writing and literacy research, cultural rhetorics, identity and visibility, and digital culture studies (paying particular attention to the role of digital literacies, multimodality, and new media in everyday youth culture). I explore how issues of LGBT identity and community are shaped and influenced by the networked literacies of the Internet. With the help of these more academic conversations, refracted through the lens of connective ethnography- the qualitative study of participants' online/offline interactions, perceptions, and responses to the Internet as a social and cultural artifact- I set the stage for readers to consider how practices like the snap of a selfie, the haptic project of clicking reblog/retweet to align affinity, and/or the temporal streaming of digital texts drive issues concerning visibility and community for queer youth. As a literacy researcher, writing instructor, and teacher educator more broadly, I ask, what can we a learn from the sophisticated composing work LGBT youth are a part of and how does it help us (re)imagine writing in the age of electracy? How are queer youth hacking the social practice of writing and giving *experience* a higher register of resonance then *ekphrasis* (description)?

My ways into the analysis were varied and at times seemingly incommensurable. In the next section I briefly situate the dissertation within these intersecting "paths of complementarity" (Kress, 2011) to better nuance how theory guides my understanding of composing. I argue that although a sociocultural perspective (e.g., [re]mediation) allows for the explicit attention to, and microanalysis of the elastic literacy practices participants employed across action and place, it discounts the more affective registers (electracy/non-representational) participants felt and were pushed by in composing. In other words, I show how complementary paths into data attended to the networked findings of power and affect that previous research on writing and digital literacy discount as unitary.

Designing More Just Social Futures: Queer Connections, Rhetorical Convergences, and the Rise of Writing Resonances

Marked by its accelerated flows of media, texts, commodities, and bodies, our contemporary time and culture has come to be described as hyper-mediated (Appadurai, 1996). Youth and emerging adults are living more connective lives than before (boyd, 2015; Madden et al, 2013) and the so-called "app-pendent generation" (Gardner & Davis, 2013) has come to be named as digital natives (Prensky, 2001). This "native" status for youth users, however, is not unwarranted. As a 2010 Pew Research Center report illuminates, over three quarters of U.S. youth now own cell phones (Pew Research Center, 2010). This statistic, along with the reported seven plus hours a day of youth media consumption (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010), has led adults, parents, and teachers alike to inquire whether this media obsessed generation needs to unplug and tap back into the so-called "real world."

These digital natives, however, like their teachers, are paradoxically digitally naïve (Hargittai, 2010). The consumption of media and owner status of digital technologies does not necessarily permeate youth with the know-how needed to rhetorically understand how these new

media (through their varying modes) speak to the rhetorical affordances of delivery, purpose, audience, etc. Nonetheless, competence in digital literacy, oft cited as the key lever to preparing students to be global thinkers and learners, is quickly becoming a prerequisite skill in the 21st century workforce. Rhetoric of digital competence is already relatively passé. Technology is not an innovative approach; it is a mandatory and needed facet for teaching and learning. Thus, just as contemporary education and reform is backdropped by an age of measurement, it is also an institution that sees techno-inclusionism as a panacea to student engagement, motivation, and achievement.

Techno-inclusionism, Electracy, and the Rise of Writing

Born out of a crisis and fear of U.S. students falling behind their global peers, techno-inclusionism has come to be one of the piece de résistances in school turnaround. By techno-inclusionism, here I mean "the drive to include the new information and communication technologies in the composing process and in our curricula" (Alexander & Rhodes, 2014, p. 46). Take for example, a now dated 2011 New York Times piece, an op-ed in which Virginia Heffernan takes K-16 education to task and asks for a "digital-age upgrade." In the piece, Heffernan surveys the antiquarian institution of school to question whether it is time to "redesign" American education. In examining a University writing instructor, Heffernan illuminates how students were less eager to write the formal term paper and more keen on blogging to peers. Heffernan, whose concluding remarks I agree with, argued that, "A classroom suited to today's students should deemphasize solitary piecework. It should facilitate the kind of collaboration that helps individuals compensate for their blindnesses instead of cultivating them" (Heffernan, 2011). Focusing on the "huge array of complex skills" students need to acquire through this institutional reimagining, the effects are largely rooted in facets of digital literacy, and writing in particular.

But why the focus on composing (and writing more specifically) and how has digital literacy come to be the cornerstone of technological innovation in pedagogy and K-16 schooling?

Techno-inclusionism positions technology and technologically enabled media in the service of print-based writing. It orients us towards what Arroyo (2013) and Ulmer (2007) have named as "electracy," and away from more autonomous notions of skill-based oracy and literacy. If literacy is concerned with issues of method, knowledge, and epistemology, than electracy is concerned with entertainment, aesthetics, and experience. As Brandt (2015) highlights in her gloss on late 19th and early 20th century reading habits, new types of reading publics elicited new forms of citizenship. Thus, mass reading was indispensable to the rise and formation of a modern democracy. Comparatively, the rise of writing, an era some would mark our contemporary time by, came to fruition through vocation. Writing, in all its forms, became a job that has grown exponentially since the birth of the Internet and new digital technologies. If we zoom out from the larger historical contexts of mass writing and zero back in on the institution of K-12 schooling, the rise of writing encourages collaboration and open participation. It fosters what Jenkins (2006) and his colleagues have called a more "participatory culture." But are these new techno-infused classrooms more participatory or more detached? Like the opening field note and vignette suggests, are we asking students to unplug from personal and local knowledges?

Many of the teachers I observed *valued* techno-inclusionism in their daily instruction. Few, however, knew how to make it a meaningful reality. Techno-inclusionism, in the classrooms I participated in, often fostered using technology only as an additive to traditional forms of school-ed writing. A YouTube video would "hook" students or a quick write would transform into a "quick tweet" where students wrote, still in their notebooks, 140 characters of thought. These examples, however, are not only common in practice but also reminiscent of the

types of exemplars included by larger national organizations for English educators and teaching language and literacy. In the 2012 version of the "NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing," "Writing" was considered as "not just one thing. It varies in form, structure, and production processes according to its audience and purpose." Moreover, "writing…should not be viewed as an activity that happens only within a classroom's walls." As a national organization, the council was cognizant that the practice and process of writing occurs in relational contexts. It also valued the tenet of design in multimodal composition beyond text-based print. I worried, however, if NCTE, like many language and literacy educators, created a hierarchy of composing wherein text looks and is read a certain way. Although the new "2016 Professional Knowledge of the Teaching of Writing" forefronts the aesthetic and the ability for writing to improve society, the teachers at City Town and Center Ridge used the 2012 statement as their vision for "sophisticated" (their word, not my own) composition. The techno-exemplars NCTE included reifies my belief, as they relied solely on alphabetic print – naming "web pages," "e-mail and chat," and "basic html" as the criterion teachers need to understand to be "excellent at teaching composition." The focus on print, backdropped by the Common Core State Standards (whose overarching writing aims focus on competency in organization and style) has led writing and the teaching of writing to be focused largely on production. Writing, however, is more than that. Writing, and its at-times synonymous verb composing, is a multi-faceted complex process, one whose orientation should not fall under the guise of product or process instruction, but rather problem solving and feeling experience.

Techno-inclusionism magnifies the widening gap between composing text (here I mean alphabetic print) and what some may call more "multimodal" composing (image/audio/video) or electric experiences. Composing a persuasive essay through five paragraphs of alphabetic print is

much different than making a movie persuading individuals to be wary of their natural resource use. Kress (2003) warns of these design differences when he writes, "…the two modes of writing and of image are each governed by distinct logics, and have distinctly different affordances" (p. 1). In sum, not everything is writing, and as Alexander and Rhodes (2014) argue, "…we would do well to remind ourselves that the 'distinct logics' and 'different affordances 'of various media and modes are not reducible to one another" (Alexander & Rhodes, 2014, p. 17). LGBT and queer youth and their everyday digital technologies seem to be savvier in navigating these logics and affordances as they are always, in some ways, composing selves. From the digital mobile application of Snapchat to tweeting on Twitter, youth use the varying modes of design to garner visibility, to brand themselves, and/or to find community. In the next section, I take up these everyday technologies to operationalize and define what I mean by literacies. I then speak across the tensions and possibilities of tracing these types of writing resonances and literacy work through reviewing literature as it pertains to LGBT youth digital literacies and identity texts.

On Not New Literacies

Grounded in understanding literacy both as a social practice and as an affective emergence, this study utilizes theories informed by issues of context(s) and culture(s) (e.g., logical empiricism) as well as the more non-representational lines of flight. The constellation of such theories is vast, as they are categorized as: "situated literacies" (Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 1999), "New Literacy Studies" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Street, 1984), "social literacies" (Gee, 1996), "multiliteracies" (New London Group, 1996) and "electracy" (Arroyo, 2013; Ulmer, 2007). By understanding literacies across these seemingly incommensurable perspectives, I illuminate the ideological underpinnings of its socio-political and socio-cultural dimensions, while simultaneously attending to its capacity to emerge, feel, and desire.

When I use the term literacy, in its singular form, I refer to it as "the reading and writing of written texts, with the acknowledgement that reading and writing are always acts situated in social practices, purposes, and contexts (cf. Scribner & Cole, 1981) and that texts can encompass many forms" (Moje, 2000, p. 655). My decision to limit literacy, like Moje who draws from Scribner and Cole (1981), is intentional. It draws attention to the indexed systems of codified meaning that symbol systems and print extend in the reproduction of power and privilege. However, using literacy in this way accounts for only a small number of the social tactics and practices youth enacted across environments. It does not account for the agentic action, youth resistance, narrative architecture of experience, and/or more experiential and felt activist practices brought to fruition through the dynamic practices of connective composing.

The multiliteracies framework centers my view of the socially situated nature of writing, insofar as it accounts for the "Linguistic, Visual, Audio, Gestural, Spatial, and Multimodal patterns of meaning" (New London Group, 1996). I align myself, more broadly, with the New London Group and their "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies," as they too were curious in exploring how youth were designing more just social futures. Fast forward twenty years, heightened by techno-inclusionism's focus on the digital, and the multiliteracies framework is used by scholars of contemporary language and literacy research to consider issues of multimodality and the "new" emergence of multiple communicative means. Like Wooten (2006) and Moje (2009), however, I contend that the multimodal nature of texts and literate practice is not new. Rather, refracted through our focus on the haptic project of digital literacies, our attention to the dynamism of modes, to relationships, and experience is. The multiliteracies framework, despite its focus on design and equity, does not explain everything. It discounts the multiple identities youth take on in (re)presenting and experiencing selves across sitings. It fails to consider the affective

emergences and sensations of Tumbling and/or Snapchatting *in situ*. It is but one possible path to consider. Thus, and as this section's title suggests, everything is not a new literacy.

Straining and Stretching Perspective: On Elastic Literacies

In order to stretch, strain, and perhaps even break understandings of LGBT youth writing across contexts, I offer the heuristic *elastic literacies*. An emerging perspective that works to complicate and blur representation, elastic literacies stretches across varying "paths of complementarity" (Kress, 2011, p.246). I draw on Kress (2011) here to suggest that seemingly incommensurable orientations into meaning making and composing (e.g., logical empiricism vs. non-representational ways of knowing and understanding the world) may in fact render greater analyses into the specialized insights of each of these intersecting and overlapping approaches. I also use the "path" metaphor rhetorically, to augment my argument that varying meanings and orientations into texts can lie on the same plane of immanence. Elastic literacies understands composing as a stretch towards, rather than a turn away.

The first path or stretch, for example, may consider the mediating activity. In writing research, for instance, this could be a young person composing with a tool. Taking into account the varying scales (Lemke, 2000) of the ecosocial system youth traverse in all activity, the second path or stretch can account for and attend to the spatio-temporal traversals of the mediated action *in situ*. The third path that elastic literacies may account for is the affective, the diagonal that cuts across activity and scale to account for how affective intensities of enfolding make the practice, action, and reception motile, how it renders itself as an experience for others. Deleuze (1988) accounts for this elasticity as inflection, the "genetic element" of the action/line, which is the point of the movement. Movement, for Deleuze (1982), "is not explained by sensation, but by the elasticity of sensation, its vis elastic" (p. 45). Elastic literacies and its

varying paths of complementarity is cognizant of the balance that must happen between the intersections of semiotic empiricism and techno-material/networked exchanges of more affective registers of feeling and non-representation. In chapter 2, I continue to nuance these varying "paths of complementarity" to trace resonance across a participant's longitudinal writing and felt composing. Taking heed of electracy and what Lewis and del Valle (2009) identify as the third wave of literacy and identity research, I argue that elastic literacies paradoxically illuminates how at once identities are "hybrid, metadiscursive, and spatial" (p. 316), while simultaneously underscoring how they are always fallible and fragmented by the affective frequencies, desires, and non-representational resources used to (re)present them.

A Caveat

Elastic literacies stretch far beyond the local. Thus, I find it necessary at this point in the dissertation to provide a caveat, and ask, as Collins and Blot (2003) do, "what is a text?" Elastic literacies takes into account actors or, as Latour (2007) would name them - *actants*, beyond the individual human. The text or trace of composition itself, through an elastic literacies lens, garners just as much intellectual curiosity as the individual youth composer. When I talk about "text(s)" I think of them as a type of "literacy-in-action" (Brandt & Clinton, 2002), wherein attention is equally paid to the "material dimensions of literacy, its durability, its capacity to connect, mediate, represent, and hold together multiple interests" (p. 355). Elastic literacies, as I illuminate here, is a preliminary presentation, meant to be suggestive if not yet fully integrated. I introduce it to hypothesize what new questions can be asked (and perspectives gleaned) if we are to understand texts and the process of composition as more than just an "event" (Heath, 1983) and begin to deconstruct the logics of observational empiricism to reorient the material body, affect, mobility, and spacetime.

In providing this caveat and context, I have yet to respond to the individual actors who identify as writers and whose writing I am most interested in examining in the dissertation. While I attend to the multimodal features of youth writing and composing across online/offline spaces, I also promote, as Yagelski (2009; 2012) so aptly coins, a philosophy of "writing as praxis" (2012, p. 189). That is, I conceive of writing "as a way to experience ourselves in the world" (2012, p. 191). Viewing writing as praxis allows for a reimagining of multimodality that is often blind sighted by a focus on the digital in techno-inclusionism. For these purposes, when I speak about multimodal compositions or multimodality, I simply mean "communication using multiple modes that work purposely to create meaning" (Lutkewitte, 2013, p. 2). By adopting this stance towards multimodality I hope to privilege the experiences that LGBT and queer youth compose across diverse modes and platforms of content creation and the multiplicity of communicative strategies they employ.

Focusing on Queer Youth: Focal Participants

While the dissertation is largely about digital technologies, multimodality, and the politics of LGBT youth writing across contexts, I would be remiss to not forefront here the individual young people I learned alongside of. As I bore witness to Andi, Zeke, Jack, Camille, Gabe, and Ben *making* culture, so too was I privy and invited into the ways in which they were *making* selves.

Andrea (Andi): With an a-symmetrical bob, Andrea (who likes to be called Andi given its gender fluid ambivalence) was a rising senior at Center Ridge HS. At 17, Andi was one of the more transient students at the arts-magnet school. After the first year in the study, Andi, as discussed earlier took a year off to pursue her high school degree online as her mother cited her being "too distracted" during the school day. Being the most competent in discussing issues of

non-normative gender and sexuality of the Center Ridge group, Andi was quick to respond to one of my first e-mails detailing my interest in attending GSA meetings during my early years of graduate school. It is, according to Andi's mother, that Andi's self-assurance in her gender identity had to do with her own lesbian self-identification. Donning various band pins, dark eyeliner, and sitting cross-legged on top of a student desk, Andi, when asked how she would like to be described replied, "…you can tell them I'm the punk femme."

Ben. As an AP and IB student, it was hard to run into Ben without seeing him carrying a book. From Morrison's *Sula* to Mahfouz's *Midaq Alley*, Ben was always reading. As a "cis-kid" who struggles with his own queer masculinity, Ben, like Andi, was quick to flex his skills in coiffing his hair to the latest trends and/or colors. Ben, whom I first met at City Town HS while doing a unit-study project for a graduate course, was a fluent Spanish speaker, just returning from a summer in Spain. When Ben became part of the larger project, his mother asked if she could tag along to interviews. Prior to starting our first interview, Cheryl (Ben's mom) told me that Ben hadn't even kissed a boy. I assured her, "that's ok, the project is about literacy and some of the writing he does online." Inquisitively, she cocked her head and asked, "Oh, but I thought you were talking to kids about their sexual orientation?" As Ben overheard his mother's inquiry, he asked her to go sit down. Soon thereafter we began talking about the pressures of being a student at City Town and how he often escaped the confines and constraints of suburbia for Spain, a more "liberal" place, according to Ben, to grow up. He reassured me that I would see his "gay-ness" in his school assignments and informal literacy work.

Camille. Otherwise known as "Hurricane Cammie," Camille was the secretary of Center Ridge's GSA. In her own words she's the "ballbreaker of the group." As editor-in-chief of Center Ridge's school newspaper, Camille was quick to assert that she would be an ideal

candidate for the larger study given her expertise in composition and English language arts. Camille, often moving between her aunt and mother's homes was, and is by far, the surest of herself. Having come out to her mother at 15, Camille (whose own sexual identification was not well received by her family and peers) often took care of her younger brother Wilson when her mother was away at work. Out of all of the youth with whom I worked alongside of at Center Ridge, Camille was most proud of her community. Often doing interviews at local hotspots like the community library or park benches behind her favorite ice cream store, Camille asked me to share the "real" story of Center Ridge. In framing Center Ridge, she argues "…Center Ridge is ratchet, but we're all kind of ratchet sometimes."

Gabriel (Gabe). At 6'3 Gabriel (Gabe) was the lighthouse of the Center Ridge group. Self-labeling as gender non-conforming, Gabe's outward gender expression was the only indicator of his inward feelings and gender identity. As a student, Gabe's skill may not immediately be found in the "real work" as he would say, of the humanities and social sciences, but the arts. After all, as Gabe frequently reminded me, he is enrolled in the arts-track of the "arts" school in KSD. Gabe's skills in Photoshop, Adobe, and InDesign lend themselves nicely to the various bake sales and community organizing events the Center Ridge GSA held in the larger city of Kilgore. Wearing a 3XL t-shirt (two sizes too big for his tall stature), Gabe is a palimpsest of my own high school queerdom.

Jack. A youth poet who I first met at a midwestern LGBTQQIA conference, Jack, a once rising senior is now a college-going 19-year-old. As a student and queer activist at City Town, Jack is a transmasculine student who rallied the administration to transform half of the bathrooms of his suburban high school to gender-neutral spaces. As a playwright, poet, and writer, Jack, when first introduced to the project, was eager to participate and quickly invited me

to share in the space of City Town's GSA. As a participant, Jack's "presence" in pages is felt as he saw the space of research as a way to voice his own frustration with literacy education and the lack of including gender and sexuality as focal topics in City Town HS curriculum.

Zeke. The rising junior and president of Center Ridge's GSA, Zeke, was the cornerstone of the participant community. Zeke and I first met over email, as Janice wanted Zeke to be informed of the work I wanted to do with Center Ridge GSA and gain his perspective on the idea. After being welcomed by Zeke and his peers to the GSA space, Zeke stayed after with me the first day asking if he could schedule a meeting to discuss how to get into the local state University. From that day forward, Zeke would always ask, "Is it a good school for Science? I mean, I'm a singer, but I want to do something in the medical field in the long run." During summers I often met with Zeke as he attends the on-campus Upward Bound early college program. Known as a "good kid" by Center Ridge administrators, Zeke's story saturates the bulk of the work I previously did at Center Ridge as his own conflicting identities of African American male often collided with his construction and outward expression of masculinity. Zeke, like the countless other youth whom I work with and met at Center Ridge and City Town, reside and traverse across these liminal spaces of composing, creating, and curating selves.

. While the larger dissertation focuses on Andrea/Andi (she/her), Ben (he/his), Camille (she/her), Gabriel/Gabe (he/his), Jack (he/his), and Zeke (he/his), I want to pause here and recognize that countless others have impacted the work I am able to continue. I acknowledge those youth who are not "out" and those who knew that the signing of an IRB form with parental consent was too risky. For others, despite their visibility and acknowledgment of holding an LGBT and/or queer identity, the sharing of writing (deeply personal and shared with online and offline affinity groups), was not a venture they felt comfortable pursuing. While these countless

other City Town and Center Ridge young people will not spotlight the youth composing I examine, their voices and lives are forever echoed by the focal youth and thicken the dissertation.

Locating LGBTQ Youth in a Larger Conversation: Identity and Digital Literacies

Identity making, both as a text and a discursive phenomenon is not a new theme in language and literacy research. Moje and Luke (2009), for example, highlight identity's role in literacies research by speaking to its important implications for learning. "Learning, from a social and cultural perspective, involves people in participation, interaction, relationships, and contexts, all of which have implications for how people make sense of themselves and others, identify, and are identified" (p. 416). Unfortunately, the texts we read as "identities" are sometimes restrictive, discounting the affective feelings and more non-representational frequencies of experience.

Working across dualisms and binaries of space/place (in-school/out-of-school, online/offline), research has marked geographic place as the distinct unit of analysis. This, however, offers fragmented understandings of identity and learning. A number of scholars, for example, have charted how young people use digital tools outside of schools to (re)author selves and stances (Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith, 2006; Vasudevan, 2006; Vasudevan, Schultz, and Bateman, 2010). Similarly, research has highlighted how the social practices of language learning and identity are always already enmeshed in conversations concerning the global and local (Barton and Lee, 2012; Black, 2006; Hull, Stornaiuolo, and Priya, 2007; Lam, 2009) or in embodied, corporeal, and technologically mediated understandings of difference (Hull, Stornaiuolo, & Shani, 2010; Lewis-Ellison, 2014; Moje, 2000; Saul, 2014; Vasudevan, 2010). Although this brief survey of literature and nod to existing scholarship does not review all of the incredible research language and literacy educators are doing to understand how technology

(broadly conceived) is mediating the writing and composing of identity, it does highlight common tensions in youth literacy studies concerning how identities are often seen as fragmented rather than connective. When considering LGBT youth, in particular, this tension still remains quite apparent.

Although a number of authors have studied the schooling experiences of LGBT and queer youth in English classrooms (Blackburn, 2003, 2009; Blackburn & Buckley, 2005, Vetter, 2010), while others have addressed these students' social lives in digital environments (Addison & Comstock, 1998; Alexander, 2002, 2005; Gray, 2009) or their more intersectional identities across place (Blackburn & McCready, 2009; Blackburn & Smith; 2010; McCready, 2010), few have explored the connective literacy lives LGBT and queer youth lead. Moreover, few scholars have tackled the question of *how* literacy is informed by sexuality. Moje and MuQuaribu (2003) assert, for example, that "there is a dearth of research or models of practice that address the question of how sexual identity and literacy are intertwined" (p. 207). Gender inequality, alongside of the real and perceived homophobia for these young people, exists not only in school-sanctioned spaces and at-home contexts, but is abundant in virtual and digital environments (GLSEN, 2013). Given the lack of research related to the connective composing practices of LGBT youth, and their effects (both pedagogical and personal) on students, this empirical project illuminates how LGBT and queer youth employ elastic literacies and queer rhetorics as social tactics in navigating (in)equality, transforming online/offline geographies of writing into LGBT-oriented spaces, and (re)authoring selves. At first interested in the literacy practices that saturated GSA spaces and LGBT youth lives, Andi, Ben, Camille, Gabe, Jack, and Zeke welcomed me into their home, work, and school lives. For these youth, and I would argue for LGBT and queer youth in particular, the "distinct logics" and "different affordances" of

literacy work are a part of our everyday life, always wary of reading and being read in specific ways.

The dissertation resists such an unquestioning and conflation of composing and writing and instead examines how youth use these "distinct logics" and "different affordances" to curate, create, and compose selves through a variety of modes and tools. I work to further the discussion by arguing that youth, and LGBT and queer youth in particular, are rhetorically savvy in navigating the online/offline divide and use a myriad of modes and genres to orchestrate convergent identities and experiences. In the next section I examine how elastic literacies and my invention through the heuristic attended to the flows and resonant traces of youth composing *in situ*. I then work to explain its importance to LGBT youth and desire, in particular.

Literacy Networks, Cultural Communities, & (Re)Mediated Me/s: Pathways into the Project

Elastic literacies, however stretched, have a history. To illuminate these traces of stretchy selves, I examine the act of mediation and how the process of composing with certain tools is always an unfolding of practice *in situ*. To combat the techno-inclusionism cited in the early pages of the dissertation, I focus, through one path, on multimodal (re)mediation between text, tool, and actor. I draw attention to the histories that are connected to, and informed by, systems of activity. Multimodality "has primarily been taken up as an issue of composition of artifacts rather than engagement in processes, of representation forms rather than situated sociocultural practices" (Prior & Hengst, 2010, p. 5). These situated sociocultural practices are important, for as Bakhtin (1981) argues, all dialogic activity is the site and ground of communication. So too, is it also the site "where people become who they are and where sociocultural formations (church, state, profession, class, social group) are constantly being made and remade" (Prior & Hengst, 2010, p. 3) If, as Wertsch (1995) contends, the primary task of utilizing a sociocultural approach

is to "explicate the relationship between human action and the cultural, institution, and historical contexts in which this action occurs" (p. 24), then a tracing of the multiple selves youth composers deploy is needed to attend to the embodied activity and practice of composing.

At the center of this (re)mediation; or, composing *in situ,* lay the sites and digital applications most cited by youth participants as facilitating the (re)authoring of selves and production of connective compositions. As I worked at first to understand semiotic (re)mediation and the process of composing through a larger sociocultural network as but one pathway into analysis, two presuppositions guided me: (1) (re)mediating action gives primacy to examining final products in relation to the processes involved in the production, and (2) analyzing individuals-acting-with-mediational means fosters a more nuanced view of literacy, attending to the stretches of mode and variety of technologies present. Hence, I avoided common tensions in literacy studies concerning digital/virtual geographies. I looked "at the technology as an addition to life" rather than "looking at life through that technology" (Bruce & Hogan, 1998, p. 270). I relate connective compositions to the complex processes that account for how bodies, minds, and institutions participate in the action, and subsequently, how they take shape and feel from activities in which they are recruited.

Although representationally comprehensive, understanding mediation *in situ* discounts the reverberations and phantoms of semiotic meaning making. It has trouble locating the queer. Although my way in, for the bulk of data analysis, was to consider the text, the activity, and the participant, as I listened, as I made, and as I invented with youth, I discovered that it only tells one side of a many-sided story. Thus, I perform two different sorts of analyses, from two different epistemological starting points. On the one end I performed empirical observation and description that looked at practices and activities (Chapter 4 and Chapter 6). On the other,

stretched to perform a non-representational post-qualitative read, I try to illuminate how writing is always already felt. Largely characterized by a shift in style, a non-representational performance highlights the *experience* of composing. I attend to these seemingly incommensurate stretches, breaks, and fractures in more detail in Chapter 2 as well as in Chapter 5.

But what does this have to do with elastic literacies, queer rhetorics, and understanding the online/offline politics of LGBT youth writing?

As I acknowledge in the dissertation, a critical sociocultural framework guided by conceptual perspectives on spatiality informed initial understandings of much of the writing youth participants composed across digital environments. My first year of fieldwork was refracted through this perspective. Finished products and completed compositions were those units of analysis that were shared with me. Through interviews, youth used these identity texts to unearth rich narratives of combatting (in)equality and (re)authoring selves across digital environments and embodied geographies. However, I, as a researcher felt as Brandt (1990) did when looking at static artifacts of writing. It was as if I was "coming upon the scene of a party after it is over and everybody has gone home, being left to imagine from the remnants what the party must have been like" (p.76). By attending to the mediational process of composing and accounting for the myriad of literacy sitings youth enact across a variety of geographies, I shared in the so-called party to better understand its ambience, to comment on the effects/affects of connective youth composing, and to consider how the literacy sitings shape, rhetorically, how youth were received and responded to, how they were felt by others, and what desires and intensities reoriented them.

Beyond Identity: A Note on Language

I find it worthwhile to pause here and provide a short glossary for much of the language lining the remaining pages of the dissertation. Just as others have argued (e.g. Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Moje and Luke, 2011; Street, 1984), when discussing literacy and the practices embedded within it, strong ties to knowledge and the construction(s) of identity emerge. Defining identity, however, is a difficult task. It is even more difficult when it is compounded by cultural relationships (i.e., claiming membership in the LGBT community) and/or intersects with other identity markers (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, gender, etc.). Identities are constantly being negotiated. When reflected and refracted through the digital, identities become even more opaque as they are material, representational, and affective performances articulated through distinct platforms and sites. For this reason, and given the role identity played for Andi, Jack, Zeke and the others in the everyday practice and interactions of school and schooling, I utilize a view of identity that is discursively constructed, but always "in difference" (Munoz, 2009). Borrowing from Bucholtz and Hall (2005), I argue for "a view of identity that is intersubjectively rather than individually produced and interactionally emergent rather than assigned in an a priori fashion" (p. 587). Thus, I contend that intersecting emergent identities and reflexive self-making processes (with a particular emphasis on participants' gender identities, race, and sexual orientations) shape the use and utility of writing, and the micro-political action and practices therein.

When I use the term *queer*, either to characterize the types of rhetorics deployed by youth across modes and/or to acknowledge the identity work youth take on, I use it as Warner (1999) does, "in a deliberately capacious way…in order to suggest how many ways people can find themselves at odds with straight culture" (p. 38). Similarly then, for Alexander and Rhodes

(2012), *queer rhetorics* are "a set of textual, visual, and auditory tools through which bodies and psyches are shaped and cast in particular identity formations and through which such bodies and psyches might potentially be recast and reformed" ("Introduction"). Whether describing their own identities or the types of practices deployed, queer is improvisational, fragmented, and ever changing. As you will see, I often separate queer from the more-standard LGBT umbrella that categorizes groups and communities more so than the individual. Queer is not only an indexical that youth may put on or take off, but a set of cultural practices that bring identities in difference together.

With almost uncanny consistency, the LGBT and queer youth I worked alongside of, when describing the actions and practices of writing with mobile media often collapsed the sophisticated writing work they partook in as "playing." Early on in fieldwork, when I interrogated if and how they considered their writing on Tumblr or archive on Instagram as a form of literacy, they would shake their head vigorously and often remark, "you think too much." For these purposes, when I discuss the writing and (re)authoring Andi, Jack, Zeke, Ben, Camille, and Gabe participated in I use the word compose, a more broad and holistic verb enabling an orientation and nexus of action and play often undercut by youth describing the writing process in K-12 schools. In line with Yancey (2004), I think of composition and composing as

> an expression of relationships – between parts and parts, between parts and whole, between the visual and verbal, between text and context, between reader and composer, but what is intended and what is unpacked, between home and realization. And ultimately, between human beings (p. 100).

Connective compositions, then, is a phrase that describes the composing work that threads online/offline writing for these youth and the identity texts they authored in both school

sanctioned spaces and less formal sites of learning. Through connective networks of embodied and virtual worlds, youth compose a myriad of selves to render facets of their identity intelligible.

I find it of worth, lastly, to meditate on the word community, a messy construct that is often difficult to define and a paradoxical signifier that classifies certain ways of doing, of knowing, and of being, as homogenous. For LGBT and queer people, more broadly, community is often cited as that which we select into. Echoing Michael from HBO's *Queer as Folk,* Gabe would often describe the afterschool GSA as a "chosen family," that place, space, and group whose affinity and allegiance *we* chose. These layers of kinship, however, are also political. Take for example Jack's trans*masculine gender identity or Andi, Camille, Gabe, and Zeke's racial identity as Latina or African American. These queer identities in difference, layered by gender expression and race, left youth feeling sometimes isolated. Choosing to opt-out of particular movements and moments of community work, youth navigated inequality and the politics of online/offline composing through competing subjectivities and affective frequencies. Community, therefore, much like the elastic literacies presented in the forthcoming chapters, will stretch in its definitions across findings. In some chapters it will help classify particular social processes and practices (i.e., community literacies) and in others it will describe the geographies young people traversed through. As with any work concerning youth and youth culture online, politics are always already on the scene as young people foster a hybridity and hypertextuality of the local, transnational, and global.

Writer-ly Stretches: Chapter-by-Chapter Overview

In each chapter, I stretch across a number of literacy sitings to consider how Andi, Ben, Camille, Jack, and others negotiated the politics and backdrop of connective composing and queer culture. I should be clear here that this project is not a linear ethnography, nor is it an

analysis of how the out-of-school literacy practices and spaces I observed and participated in can be co-opted for or translated into school sanctioned learning. Instead, I meditate on larger rhetorical tropes, modes, and themes to contextualize my study of the connective compositions and literacy sitings seen. I present a cartography of performative practices that describe how the six LGBT writers here are builders, architects designing futures of justice and equity with a simple click, aim, swipe, shuffle, snap, and send.

The chapters presented here cohere, and yet they don't. Stretching and borrowing voices from other conversations, I start small and build up, highlighting how focal practices and individual "sites" are always already amassed in the larger network of youth literacies, working to render selected selves intelligible. In these ways, I hope the dissertation's structure models the types of connective composing and writing that I saw, wrote about, and invented through. The dissertation opens where the introduction leaves off, charting how the so-called "rise of writing" has shifted our own understandings of representation and literacies. By drawing on theories of semiotics, multimodality, sociocultural studies, and contemporary rhetorics, I outline how the emergent perspective and heuristic of elastic literacies, helped trace how young people acted as techtual flâneurs. To nuance these theoretical insights, I use one youth participant's longitudinal writing and emerging elastic literacies as a window into three keywords, concepts in motion that will help guide our investigation in later chapters of the dissertation. By examining Camille's writing across a variety of what Kress (2011) calls "paths of complementarity," we begin to see how technology shifts our understandings of literacy sponsorscapes and how experience has come to mean more than representation.

Traveling with theory, Chapter 3 works to locate the mobile queer and build the ethnographic imaginary of Kilgore and San Miguels County. This chapter lays the blueprint for

the experience of traversing the field/site while simultaneously deconstructing them as mere fantasy. Methodological considerations are given and the longitudinal empirical process will be demystified. Rather than a traditional methods chapter, however, paths of analysis into particular pieces of data are embedded in each of the findings that follow the chapter as my ways-in were quite divergent.

Shifting from a focus on theory and method, the remainder of the dissertation charts how elastic literacies and the social processes of connective composing are brought to fruition in everyday practice. In Chapter 4, for example, I zero in on three youth who self-identify as #socialjusticewarriors, a social category and #hashtag counterpublic for Tumblr users whose practice of "collecting" on the microblog are made in an effort to collect social justice. Rather than focusing solely on how these youth indexed their Tumblr experience through the practice of "collecting" social justice and the paradigm of #donttagyourhate, I highlight a counter-story of one youth user who used the social practice and genre of participation of curating to author himself as more cosmopolitan. By toggling between the local and the global, I highlight the critical literacy work Zeke, Jack, Camille, Andi, and Ben engaged in to brainstorm what we can learn from the social processes of collecting and curating. I contend that LGBT youth may not #tag their hate, but survey difference, interrogate dominant discourses of privilege, and reflect on their own multiple identities and selves as youth minors.

Having firmly established some of the elastic literacies practices and stretches employed to garner visibility, Chapter 5 moves to critically examine the literacy traces of youth mobile composing *in situ*. Starting with stories of space, I account for the rhetorical and embodied affordances youth employ to stitch together convergent narratives, producing and embodying their visions, voices, and personal experiences. Accounting for the rich opportunities and

nuanced processes of composing across literacy sitings and digital applications such as Snapchat, Instagram, and StoryMapJS, I advocate for a continued critical engagement with a composition that encourages expressive possibilities and potentials for meaning making with place. By charting how personal histories, affective registers, and felt experiences take shape as we write our way into space, this chapter highlights how the LGBT and queer youth I worked alongside of attended to, as Massey (2005) suggested, the felt experiences of coping with, and telling the "ongoing stories" of the everyday. By becoming narrative cartographers, LGBT youth, I argue, tell spatial stories to document the nomadic narratives and temporal tales of their everyday. For these youth, stories of *felt* history and rememory provide a window not into the micro-politics of writing, but a glimpse into the emergence of embodied practices of youth composing and remediating memory with mobile media. These rhyzomatic narratives make us *feel*, and stretch us towards composing and designing a better tomorrow.

Chapter 6 brings together the particulars of the preceding chapters and examines how these semiotic and non-representational resources provide a dual lens into what I call youth lifestreaming. Through plugging into digital youth practices and elastic literacies, this chapter examines how LGBT youth use visuality and materiality to write and stream multiple identities and social relationships across connective contexts. Through participant '"storying" and visual and textual analysis, this chapter illuminates how queer rhetorics, connective identity texts, and new media landscapes are employed and constructed by youth to navigate larger systems of inequality. In particular I focus on how Jack, Andi, Camille, Gabe, and Zeke use the stretches of lifestreaming to reconstitute and transform popular discourses concerning who and what it means to be queer. In abstracting away from the cases presented, I work to nuance and provide a lens into the social practice of lifestreaming and consider its rhetorical utility for LGBT youth. I

attend to the relationship between the visual and material, and explore what kinds of thinking emerge at that digital intersection for youth writers. Reading youth lifestreaming as a rhetorical and elastic literacies practice reimagines youth writing as a way of being. By highlighting how connective identity texts and compositions are used as tools to surpass and navigate these social fault lines created by difference, I illustrate how LGBT and queer youth reorient us towards the celebration of youth visually *being* different.

In the concluding chapter, I synthesize the larger dissertation's arguments and consider how collecting and curating particular versions of self, be(com)ing narrative cartographers of felt experience, and charting writing resonances through youth lifestreaming helped produce and sustain queer-youth identities and communities. Bearing wit(h)ness to youth connective compositions, this dissertation traces the vibrancy and movement of LGBT youth composing. In this chapter, I question how the false logics of in-school/out-of-school and online/offline reify certain notions of writing and technological invention, while contending that by examining the literacy traces of LGBT youth composing *in situ* (across representational and non-representational planes), educators and researchers alike may account for the rhetorical affordances of electracy. I also build off of resource-based pedagogies (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014), to inquire if alternative forms of pedagogical praxis are needed. I consider how a [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogical approach, one that centers desire and the corporeal gendered and sexed body for LGBT and queer youth of color, may have wider implications for cultural justice and equity for *all* learners.

The dissertation's Coda returns readers to certain sitings and explores how desire functioned as an intermediary in the imaginary that I call, between a safe space and an iPhone. As a queer identifying researcher, I deconstruct how participants' own strategies for reading and

writing me, as a gay cis-masculine researcher, influenced the positionality I held and the spaces I was allowed into. From my own institutional worries concerning working with LGBT youth, to personal stories of being marked as a sexed body by young people, I story my way through cleavages of fieldwork to mark how issues of gender, sexuality, and desire always texture the work of ethnography.

I have no illusion here that this dissertation provides exhaustive answers to the aforementioned research questions. Rather, it serves as modest proposal and starting place to help rethink the changing meaning of writing for LGBT youth. It helps locate the queer in all acts of (non)representational forms of composing. In the following chapters, I provide a better understanding of how writing with mobile media and digital technologies for LGBT and queer youth is used to navigate inequality. Analytically, I work across modes, practices, and sitings to highlight how the rhetorics surrounding these seemingly low skill digital practices (e.g., reblogging, snapping a selfie, geo-pinning, etc.), when examined *in situ*, shed light on intersecting issues of epistemology and ontology in writing and literacy studies. Ultimately, this pursuit results in my emerging heuristic perspective of elastic literacies, a tool that helps analyze youth writing resonance and composing across contexts.

CHAPTER 2: STRETCHING PERSPECTIVES IN WRITING (RE)PRESENTATION: TOWARDS A THEORY OF ELASTIC LITERACIES

What is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a geography of thens and theres); and a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman.

Doreen Massey, *For Space*

Practices are productive concatenations that have been constructed out of all manner of resources and which provide the basic intelligibility of the world: they are not therefore the properties of actors but of the practices themselves. Actions presuppose practices and not vice versa.

Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*

...students are helping to invent the future of writing. This attitude and relationship to learning has to be made explicit and encouraged, since students are unaccustomed to working in an experimental way.

Greg Ulmer, *Internet Invention*

Introduction and Overview

During a mid-semester break in 2014, Ben (a then seventeen-year-old senior at City Town high school) and I sat down at a neighboring Starbucks to discuss his "sponsors" of language and literacy. During the interview, I invited him to draw a "sponsorscapes map." I asked Ben to detail the institutions, tools, people, and other sponsors that influenced his own understanding and identity as a reader and writer. Quite aware that the writing and composing Ben shared with me was just one facet of a much larger rhetorical ecology, I was interested in him visually detailing his sponsors to then read the network of literacy he was a part. Borrowing from Brandt (1998), I view sponsors as,

> any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy – and gain advantage by it in some

way…sponsors nevertheless set the terms for access to literacy and wield powerful incentives for compliance and loyalty. (p. 118)

I shared this quote with youth to help explain, that sponsors are not just people, but could be larger institutions, tools, etc. *Sponsorscapes*, in the spirit of both Appadurai's (1996) *–scapes* suffix and Brandt's sponsorship construct, was a way to account for the various literacy sitings participants accounted for in interviews (*see Figure 1*). Not only documenting those sponsors rendered visible by participants, the sponsorscapes map became interesting for me as a researcher as it captured the in-between or "white space" that accounted for histories of participation, affective resonances, temporality etc.[1]

Figure 1: Ben's Sponsorscapes Map

At first, the sponsorscapes map became a diagram for representing the so-called cultural capital Ben acquired through his encounters and histories with literacies. As he detailed his home state heritage, adoration with the KPop (Korean Pop) fandom, and shared memories of his

[1] The bulk of this writing first appeared as part of a graduate course surveying humanities-oriented approaches to research.

mother reading to him when he was younger as primary sponsors of his literacy identity, Jack, an onlooker who had also come to Starbucks that day to participate in an interview, became inquisitive to the drawing Ben was completing. "Do you want to see it?" Ben asked. "Well," Jack asked, "what do *you* want to know about?[2]" The question was directed at me. I restated some of my initial inklings to what are now the larger research questions in the dissertation. I then offered a follow-up, "What does writing and composing look like for youth today?" What follows is an excerpt from our conversation as captured by field notes (March 7, 2014).

> **Wargo:** So, can you explain in your own words, what is youth writing? What should teachers and adults know about the writing young people are doing?
>
> **Jack:** Writing is different…it's (like) from the snap of skin to the walls we tag. There are some things you just can't *see*.[3] That's youth writ- (*pause*), no, that's just writing these days.

What Jack cites, and Ben documents in his sponsorscapes map, is a chasm between what students and teachers document in their own conceptions of contemporary writing and literacy learning. It echoes the tensions of literacy in an era of techno-inclusionism cited in the introductory chapter of the dissertation. I would caution you, however, to assume that LGBT and queer youth solely think about their practices, sponsors, and histories as a form of self-presentation. For many, this type of writing and composing work is a form of personal affective "feeling."

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[2] The more time I spent alongside of participants in the field, the more aware they became of their own 'presence' in the larger study and ethnography. Jack's inquiry into what *I* wanted to know was not only something I wrote about in analytic memos, but *felt*, as it textured relationships.

[3] My interview with Jack and Ben was one of first moments where the simultaneous project of investigating that which we cannot see, but can feel, in writing research emerged.

Jack and Ben's responses follow the numerous paths scholars have taken to both re-envision the local practice paradigm of literacy to a "literacy-in-action" object of Latourian analysis (Brandt & Clinton, 2002) as well as follow the "what is emergent" (Leander & Boldt, 2013) Deleuzian line of inquiry across various sitings. Despite these advances, as a field we still have difficulty in grappling with questions that interrogate the relationships between and among remediating (con)texts, the inhabitance and carrying forward of others' materials and texts, the affective collaging and finding of new sources, and the stylistic choices of our own research. How do we (re)invent ourselves as researchers of writing in examining other's composing? This, among others, is a central query in this chapter and peaks time and time again as we maneuver across the lives and pages of Ben, Jack, Camille, Andi, Zeke, and Gabe.[4]

As an admirer of both the "situative" and "local practice" advances in literacy studies, I believe that we can read texts and the processes of composing as a means to understand issues of identity and culture. As recent U.S. race-based tragedies and phenomena illuminate, we are not beyond rights-based discourses.[5] I am, however, also cognizant that our contemporary era (marked by its posthuman tendencies), must attend to the forms of literacies not previously taken up and/or rendered visible/possible. We need to move beyond depth of description and begin detailing the height and topographies of the work we do. Hence, I want to pursue the possibility of a seemingly "post-qualitative" (Clough, 2009; Hird, 2009) orientation into writing and literacies research.

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[4] Sections of this paper were first presented at the #IDRS15 conference. Thanks to reviewers for their generous feedback and comments on earliest iterations and drafts of both the elastic literacies and literacy sponsorscapes heuristic and framework.

[5] One of my largest concerns with NRT is its inability to locate/see race and racial injustice *a priori*. As Nakamura (2008) reminds us, "New media" and here I would argue electracy, "appeals to us so powerfully partly because it satisfies our needs in postindustrial society to construct our own custom lifestyle (but not infinite) number of choices…If identity construction and performance in digital space is a process of selection and recombination much like shopping, another privileged activity of the nineties, what types of objects are on offer, what price is paid, who pays, who labors, and who profits" (p. 1674)?

Young people still *do* make meaning through the composition of their texts. And while I think it necessary to move beyond the modernist frame of logical empiricism and so-called "truth", I also think it important to recognize and validate the small moments of agency youth *feel* when composing a diary-like blog post or re-tweeting a follower from the #blacklivesmatter movement. What happens, however, when we look beyond representation? How might a non-representational path inform our own understandings of elastic practice and action, of composition in a time of electracy?

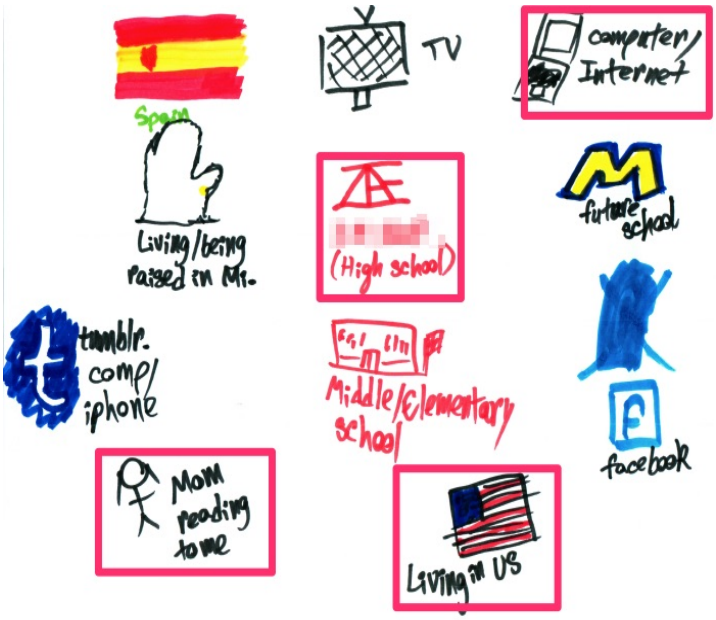
This chapter, what some would call the theory-building portion of the dissertation, is an attempt to put forth a "yes-and" theory of contemporary everyday literacy "sitings." namely, those that I introduced in the network that comprised the backdrop of the larger connective ethnography. First, I highlight a tension of turns in the field of language and literacy. Reading against contemporary understandings of literacy practice, I illuminate how, despite our attempts at "designing a more just social future" (NLG, 1996), we privilege certain modes, tools, and semiotic resources more than others. As such, cleavages of contemporary practices are left unexamined, leaving certain aspects of literacies (particularly those that may be classified as more improvisational and non-representational) under-theorized. In the second section, I expand upon the heuristic perspective, elastic literacies, I previewed in the introduction. A quasi-scavenger theory; or, as Halberstam (1998) would contend a "queer" methodology, elastic literacies operates from seemingly incommensurate vantage points to nuance and understand text, context, spatiality, and (re)presentation. By charting three distinct, yet overlapping, "paths of complementarity" (Kress, 2013), I articulate a vision for attending to the stretches of composing practice and topographies of writing practices elastic literacies invents through. In the third section, I gloss on empirical rich points from my own research to render how elastic

literacies, in comparison to other heuristic perspectives and theories, operates both by backslides of mediation and contextual meaning-making, but also by stretching towards affect and the politics of spatiality against the backdrop of electracy. Finally, I articulate a vision for operationalizing elastic literacies, paying particular attention to aesthetics and style. I work to rehabilitate some of the affective dimensions of literacies in a time of networked technologies. Despite being locally manifest and affectively textured, I argue that we must attune to the stretches, breaks, and fractures of literacies, recognizing that these dichotomies and binaries are easily dissolved when we privilege the action over the practice/performance and the agent over the actant.

A Focus on Activity *in situ*: Exploring Connective Compositions through (Con)Textual Mediation

Documenting and accounting for the connective traces, flows, and networked imaginaries of multimodal youth composing is a fraught task. As youth work to continuously (re)author selves, the activities (re)mediating personal histories, creations and compositions, and trajectories of material embodiment are at once enabled but also constrained by the "cultural tools" employed (Shipka, 2011; Wertsch, 1995). Thus, composing *in situ* becomes the larger unit for immediate analysis. Take for example the diagram below. In it we see how Ben, the individual youth actor, is on the same plane as the text composed, an affordance that I give when I read the artifact/product or "text" as an actant. At a secondary level we see how the connective act of mediation is often framed by the work of a tool, in this instance, a digital technology such as an iPhone or computer. While those are the mediating cultural tools in this frame, they are not exhaustive of the writing resonances and rhythms at play.

Figure 2: Ben's Sponsorscapes Map – Focus on Situative Agents



I am cognizant of the limited approaches taking such a stance of representation entails. Queer dimensions of affect, desire, and temporal frequency cannot be captured by these methodological traditions of qualitative inquiry. After months in the "field," seeking out and locating moments of youth identity work, I realized that reading these sign systems and practices solely as signifiers discounted the frequencies of felt experience encountered. The desire and yearning for queer melded into practice. Hence, a parallel project to the larger ethnography became detailing what an alternative perspective, one that stretches across writing resonances, may feel like. In the next section, I take this parallel project up and deconstruct the logics of representation to better account for the nuanced intensities of literacies. I question what happens when we examine

actions and practices on the same plane of immanence and interrogate how electracy yearns for alternative explanations of play, invention, and experience?[6]

The Politics of Affect Amidst a Network of Technoliteracies; Or, Writing in the Age of Electracy?

From Emig's (1971) groundbreaking investigation into the writing processes of individuals composing, to Dyson's (1990) and Brandt's (1990) perspective on writing development that fosters a more nuanced understanding into the process that looks beyond individuals and/or texts, the field of writing has intensely conceptualized the activity as a "transaction among individual learners, their many contexts, and the sign and symbol system" employed (Schultz & Fecho, 2000, p. 55). Writing in the age of electracy, however, desires for alternative understandings into practice, process, and theory. Originally cited as a paradigmatic shift that emerged in response to the choric invention of the Internet, electracy has emerged more recently as a perspective to shed light on nonrepresentational understandings of delivery and everyday practice (Morey, 2016). Electracy, in its simplest form, signals a shift in the ways we experience literacy practice. As Ulmer (2007) points us to in the opening epigraph, students and young people are inventing the future of writing. Consequently, and as a result of our hyper-mediated contemporary condition, experience is taking precedence over ekphrasis.

Electracy emphasizes multiplicity. As Arroyo (2013) calling from Ulmer (2007) maintains, electracy "encourages creativity and invention: all of which are traditionally not valued…[or] built upon the analytics" of contemporary schooling (p.7). Although Arroyo later details how electracy is different from literacy in terms of apparatus (*see Table 1*), I want to argue here that electracy signals a call for stretched perspectives.

[6] Yes, I believe paradigmatic shifts have epistemological desires too.

Table 1: Arroyo's Paradigmatic Shifts

Apparatus			
	Orality	**Literacy**	**Electracy**
Practice	Religion	Science	Entertainment
Procedure	Ritual	Method	Style
Institution	Church	School	Internet
Behavior	Worship	Experiment	Play
Philosophy	Mythology	Epistemology	Aesthetics
Ontology	Totem	Category	Chora
Mode	Narrative	Argument	Figure

A method and heuristic that reads the act of writing and text/symbol systems as hieroglyphs, elastic literacies simultaneously acknowledges feeling and the more affective registers discounted by traditional ethnographic representation. In an age of mobile media and locative literacies, as composing shifts from the page and towards the network, electracy and writing research demands a key change. Taking heed of electracy's procedural, behavioral, philosophical, and ontological values (e.g., *style, play, aesthetics, chora*), utilizing a non-representational lens captures the desire, the sensation, and the rhythms of LGBT and queer youth composing.

Non-representational theory (NRT) lodges itself between the cleavages of the sign and signifier to capture the "onflow" of everyday life. Differing from "sense-perception or observation-based empiricism" (Thrift, 2008, p.5), non-representational theory privileges play and improvisation. It seeks to accomplish the project that is the antithesis of representation. As Fendler (2013) reminds us,

> Representationalism is founded on the structuralist dualism of signifier and signified in which the signified becomes the proper objects of research (while the signifier is relegated to mere epiphenomenon). (n.p)

NRT, in comparison, operates from a stance that is pre-individual, meaning that the materiality of the lived world and all of the flows and affective intensities that elide, collide, and break

through the practice of encounter are equally as interesting as that which may be qualified as biographical, or seemingly connected to identity.

> Theoretically, nonrepresentational theory stands as a synthesizing effort to amalgamate diverse but interrelated theoretical perspectives such as actor-network theory, biological philosophy, neomaterialism, process philosophy, speculative realism, social ecology, performance theory, post-structuralist feminism, critical theory, post-phenomenology, and pragmatism (Vannini, 2015, n.p).

Experimental in form, non-representational theory comes with it a certain type of style. Its tenets stress the importance of materiality, embodiment, and the affective while its practices trace, privilege, and focus on the unfolding and enfolding of action.

Table 2: Non-Representational Tenets and Methodological Practices

Tenets (What is NRT?)	**Practices (What can I do with NRT?)**
· Captures "the 'onflow'…of everyday life" (Thrift, 2008, p.5) · Pre-individual and anti-biographical · Focused on practice, action, and performance · Built on principle of relational materialism · Is experimental · Stresses importance on bodies · Follows an ethics of aliveness	· Focus on events (happening, occurrences, unfoldings) · Privilege the study of relations · Focus on the doings of practices and performances · Trace and analyze affective resonances · Examine backgrounds and backdrops (of practices, relations, etc.)

Non-representational ways of understanding come with the presupposition that all observational and empirical representations are accompanied by their phantoms.[7] Non-representational theories, then, become merely a "collage" and "topography," a "re-arrangement of items in such a way that the process and resulting product becomes educational, elucidating,

[7] This is one of the few sentences in this section that has not been rewritten and revised numerous times.

pleasing, inspirational, and/or enlightening" (Fendler, 2013, n.p). NRT suggests that a certain style must run parallel with the project under review. Electracy, as an apparatus for the non-representational, creates networks that resist being contained in one platform, in one mode, and/or in one style.

Employing NRT and its insights from electracy and critical geography (Lefebvre, 1993; Soja, 1996) shed light on my argument in two ways. First, it explains why both the product/process paradigms of writing, as the social practice perspectives of "multi" and "New" literacies define them, come across as singular and unitary. Situated under this empirical gaze and theoretical framework, practices remain static and lifeless. Studying events and practices in isolation, while refusing to attend to the background/cacophony of affective resonances enmeshed within them fails to consider moves beyond dyad interactions. Facilitated by digital technologies, writing in the age of the Internet has shifted from the personal to the pervasive. Hence, we cannot consider actors solely as humans. A Latourian lens and lineage in non-representational theory helps here as the foci looks to both human and non-human actants and the imbuing, sampling, and re-crafting of active mediators. Another major contribution of non-representational ways of thinking is its focus on stylistic practices. "Non-representational styles of work," according to Thrift (2008), "provide a very different means of 'theorizing' and 'witnessing', which can produce a sense of engagement with the world by emphasizing the push" (p. 147) and/or stretch, in our case[8]. NRT suggests that we take heed of the background; or, to use Ben's sponsorscapes map as our familiar example, that we make mention of the in-between, the affective, and the "glows" (MacLure, 2013) enmeshed within our work.

[8] Thrift's invitation to 'witness,' rather than 'read,' is similar to how I hope readers of this manuscript navigate through the lives, practices, processes, and stretches of of Andi, Ben, Camille, Jack, Gabe, and Zeke.

Figure 3: Ben's Sponsorscapes Map – Focus on the Affective

Investigating NRT as a possible "path of complementarity" (Kress, 2011) alongside of more empirical ways of coming to understand the world invites qualitative researchers in language and literacy research to stop looking for depth and hope for height.[9] As Rickert (2013) contends, "representation can describe methods, or paths, by which invention can occur, but the impossible emerges when we try to equate this with invention itself" (p. 72). Thus, a parallel project to investigating LGBT youth composing across connective topographies of place and space emerged. With and through participants, I engaged with the material realia and affective frequencies of electracy. I challenged the autopilot workings of representation.[10]

Towards a Theory/ing of Elastic Literacies

In an effort to not discount these energetic, affective, and phantasmal moments of seeing solely through a representational lens, I use *elastic literacies* to invent through the larger

[9] "Tracing" the white space between these structural actors was first done to locate the affective thinking-spaces of the non-representational.

[10] I want to recognize here that the creativity, innovation, and stylistics of a NRT inspired webtext and composition are stunted by the guidelines for submitting a dissertation to ProQuest.

dissertation. Drawing from Wang's (2013) theory of the "elastic self," elastic literacies take into account the types of practices that emerge from relational practices and interactions with human and non-human actors. Rhizomatic in nature, elastic literacies, in comparison to more situative notions of literacies, are more malleable and creatively charged. They are less design-focused and more experimental. Elastic literacies rejects textual turns towards logocentric dominance.

Stretched, elastic literacies is the growing together activated through the improvisation of the relational, not merely the coming together of two subjectivities. It highlights the novelty of experience and expression. Elastic literacies takes into account the way contemporary youth use, feel, and experience specific types of composing practice to stretch between selves while also taking heed of the researcher's dismantling of the "I" in post-qualitative research. Elastic literacies is not only a pedagogical intervention and invitation, but an aesthetic one. "Tracing resonance" (Stornaiuolo & Hall, 2014) across affective and experiential registers, elastic literacies understands the digital and technological not as merely instrumental but generative. It illuminates the sensorial rhythm and affective potentiality in text.

Conceptually, elastic literacies is a heuristic perspective that accounts for how the emerging landscapes and digital geographies of new media technologies and available communicative practices shape identity and its relationship to new imaginings of literacy practice(s). I describe it as a heuristic insofar as it serves not only an explanatory function but also traces the tensions and resonances between systems of representation and real time (inter)actions among and between social actors. Elastic literacies asks us to consider movement and navigation across practice as a fluid assemblage, operating always in between the constraints and limits of composing but taking heed of experiential improvisation.

By focusing on particular rich points of empirical data in the remainder of this chapter, I stretch across two seemingly incommensurable epistemological starting points to highlight how an elastic literacies lens refracts writing resonances.[11] I first adopt a situative stance to explore how writing and composing is a process traced across multiple ecosocial scales (Lemke, 2000). Cognizant of the affective experiences youth encounter as they compose, however, I underscore (through the stylistics of writing) the intensities not detailed or indexed solely by analyzing the action through a local practices perspective. Thus, my analysis will be attentive to the complex processes that account for how bodies, minds, and institutions participate *in* the action, and subsequently, how they take shape from activities and experiences in which they are recruited. My writing moves away from a linear indexical approach to a form that is networked associational. It is concerned less with logic and more with experience. As a reader, I ask you to be attentive to the stylistic choices illuminated in the latter half of this chapter as these echo the types of performative moves taking on an elastic literacies stance may include.

Stretches in Stylistics: Improvising (Re)Presentation in Youth Writing Research

As I sit here writing this piece, wandering/wondering aimlessly about the varying metaphors and imagery that the concept "elastic" allows, I am sitting, slumped shoulders, at a high top table in a university art museum.[12] It is relatively nice weather for the midwestern April afternoon. A light jacket now sits on the back of my chair. I had difficulty shuffling my way out of it. My body perspires from the 20-minute walk I went on to clear my head. Just above my line of sight are three children working alongside an art curator in what I am reading as a "children's space" of the museum. The curator asks the young girl "what can you hear?" The child's eyes focus intently on the speaker's lips. The more I study the exhibit, the more that I learn that it

[11] I also do this through mode and genre, as these are common lingua franca of tracing writing resonances.
[12] This sentence was written on April 8, 2015

invites participants to whisper to one another from far distances.[13] I am reminded of the game telephone. The upside down bowls with straws connecting to different parts of the room (the language the girl's seemingly younger brother uses to describe the exhibit) plays with elements of sound, space, and time. The echoes of their laughter bounce off the walls.

I provide this brief introduction as what I will present in the following paragraphs is but one stretch of my own imagination, a (re)presentation of representations per se. It may, much like the exhibit I detailed in the above scene lose meaning as it travels through the networks of sitings, or straws if you will. I would caution you, however, to remember that all (re)presentations are our own spectres of imagination. I do not ask you to commit to my version of the story and its particulars that follow. In fact, I encourage you to see where my own stylistic choices of (re)presenting these empirical pieces of data may stretch, break, and/or bend. They will.

> *The tops of my arms are now sunburnt. I press my thumb to my skin to see how quickly the white fades to red. $8.74 later and I have an audio recording that deleted itself and a plethora of jottings that I am just now trying to decipher and write into narrative field notes. I sit in the bench's awkward dip with an empty Dairy Queen cup to my left. I see Camille round the corner, walking out of view, and I begin to write furiously. I can't help but think of 11th grade. When I arrive on the scene Camille is reading Edith Hamilton's (1942) Mythology. I have not seen that book since 2003. Wargo was etched on the inside just under Neylon. Camille looks up and argues that she is having difficulty getting through her summer reading list. She goes on though, marking that the story of Orpheus and Eurydice is the saddest. In my jottings I have two parallel lines connecting the words social media to Eurydice. I am impressed that Camille marks how the archive feature across sites of social networking, microblogging, and mobile media allow her to "look back" like Orpheus. I am also struck by how Camille argues that the story is ultimately defeating. That our own personal histories, that looking back, or as she highlights "our baggage" is that which we cannot get rid of. 'When you do,' I have written sideways on graph paper scraps, '…when we look back to begin to unpack, our freedom is tore away from us. Ultimately, Eurydice is the only one who gets out. Maybe she didn't even want to*

[13] The exhibit since then has changed.

come back out from the underworld.' I can't help but think how Camille, and Orpheus for that matter, leave me feeling backwards.[14]*"* (Fieldnote, July 16, 2014)

Here, I draw on an array of rich points that thread the narratives, (re)presentations, and stretches of identities one participant, Camille, shared with me over the thirty months of fieldwork.[15] These artifacts help suture my own meandering between classroom, work, social, online, virtual, and digital spaces. While a non-representational approach may look down at my focal analysis of just one youth writer, I focus on Camille to illuminate the in-between spaces of electracy and her mobile media composing (*see Figure 4*). As you will watch and read, voices from me, other focal participants and colleagues provide echoes across spacetime that leave affective textures to the stories told.

Figure 4: Camille's Stretches and Writing Resonances

[14] Love's (2009) work was one of the first that helped me think through "feeling-backwards" as an inherently queer phenomenon. As she contends, 'feeling backwards' is "consistent with an important aspect of contemporary queer politics, which has tended to define community not as constituted by a shared set of identity traits, but rather as an emergence from a shared experience of social violence" (p. 52).

[15] This larger field note presented here was stitched together from text-messages, emails, and other print-based mechanisms for communication. Original audio was erased by error of my own.

Rather than tell a linear narrative, tracing resonances across time, I use Camille's felt experiences of writing to highlight three preliminary analytical concepts, keywords in motion that crystalized across our stretched histories and time together.[16] Following post-qualitative turns in research, I use these keywords to restore the materiality of texts and the onset of flows and emergences that others have called for (Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Leander & Boldt, 2013). In later dissertation chapters these constructs crystalize through the social tactics of curating and collecting youth activism, the affective experiences of mapping memory, and the queer rhetorics work of spectacle and techne.[17]

Entangled (Techno)Embodiment

Embodiment in language and literacy studies has often fallen under the guise of how we both write ourselves (namely our physical and corporeal identity) into text and/or how our own ontologies and epistemologies are shaped by and refracted through our scholarship. Embodied understandings of research have shifted us to consider the reflexive turn inwards, where the corporeal practice of doing research is not only about the engagement with ideas of others, but the learnings and understandings from our physical and more sensorial experiences. On the flip side, recent discussions illuminate how, if at all, issues of embodiment crystalize in spaces known as the virtual and/or digital. As Kember and Zylinska (2012) remind us,

> It is not simply the case that "we" – that is, autonomously existing humans – live in a complex technological environment that we can manage, control, and use. Rather, we are

[16] Footnotes are featured throughout the chapter to attend to the style and aesthetic dynamics desired by writing in the age of electracy. Unfortunately, under the guidelines of ProQuest, limited shifts in modal (re)presentation/s are allowed.

[17] Play and improvisation are central locating mechanisms for queer, cultural, and embodied rhetorics. Many thanks to Trixie Smith for her encouragement to "bring the queer" and invent my way through invention.

> – physically and ontologically– part of the technological environment, and it makes no more sense to talk of us using it, than does of it using us (p. 13).

From drop-down menus asking users to input racial and ethnic identities to soft algorithmic power that "reads" our clicks, swipes, and searches as mechanisms to index preferences, and identities, embodiment in the age of the Internet has shifted. Entangled (techno)embodiment asks us to consider how technology has come to reconfigure and become enmeshed in both our corporeal and imagined bodies.

As Ahmed (2006) suggests in her book *Queer Phenomenology*, technology is not necessarily an additive appendage or tool to the corporeal state but rather an extension of, a turning towards, a re-orientation. Similarly, Richardson (2010) argues, technology, and mobile devices in particular, present "a significant shift in the relational ontology of both body and technology" (n.p.). She proposes that "What we need, then, are ways of thinking through new body-screen metaphors that more effectively capture the distracted, discontinuous, motile, peripatetic and tangible nature of mobile media engagement" (n.p.). Take for example, the profile picture Camille includes in her "bio" section of the microblogging networks of Twitter and Tumblr. Rather than assume a picture of a landscape and/or other visual that draws followers into her profile page, Camille is particular about including self-portraits, or "selfies" that disclose her IRL (in-real-life) corporeal self. In an early interview asking her about these images where she discloses her face, Camille argues, "my lips are my best feature. They also tell my story. My followers should see it." For Camille, techno-embodiment includes facets of her IRL physical identity. From selfies showcasing an array of faces and hairstyles to profile pictures that capture her lips and other facial features, Camille's sense of entangled (techno)embodiment includes her understandings of physical or "flesh" space.

If we trace the resonances of Camille's networked composing across the thirty months of fieldwork we also begin to see how she signals the interweaving of connective understandings of the digital and real self. From this empirical representation, echoed by the numerous interviews I had the opportunity to complete with Camille, nails and nail polish became a rich point for how she understood her connective identity across physical/real and digital/virtual spaces. After a moment of perceived homophobia in the hallway at school, harassed for being "the dude" in her inter-racial same-sex relationship, Camille photo-blogged a picture of her collection of nail polish. Adding meta-data descriptor text, "…girly-girl" Camille worked to index her cisgender markings as feminine to "speak back" (her words, not my own) to her peers. Nail polish as a material and embodied text reverberated through the data as she then tweets out a picture of her cheetah print nails some months later. When I asked Camille to make the connection for me she contended that nails were the only thing she felt she had control over.

> …When things were rough at home, when I just couldn't deal, I would just paint my nails. After, you can just wipe it [the polish] away. You can start over. It was the only real thing I could control. They became how I saw myself. (Camille, Participant Interview)

Her nails, much like her curation and composing across platforms such as Twitter and Tumblr, were places where she could start over. Suturing the digital with snapshots and vignettes of the "real" Camille's understandings of embodiment bleed across the technological/physical divide. Entangled (techno)embodiment, for Camille and other contemporary youth users, is not a skin they wear with Web 2.0 advances, but rather an orientation into the world.[18]

[18] Electracy, refracted through a NRT lens illuminates a heightened sensitivity to the corporeal realities of the body and how taking the body seriously introduced phenomenological, sensory, and affective registers that exceed representation (e.g., Anderson and Smith 2001; Harrison, 2000; Rodaway, 1994; Thrift and Dewsbury, 2000; Valentine, 1999)

Folk distinctions that silo the types of literacies work and practices presented here are becoming increasingly blurred. It would be a backslide on my part to classify types of research by place-based locales (in-school and out-of-school) or empirical observations of practice (writing in a classroom for example, as compared to writing on Reddit). Entangled (techno)embodiment surfaces as an important construct, as it asks us to follow the resonances of the corporeal and affective sensorium for composing experience.

Affective Resonances

Literacies in an era of networked communications and haptic digital projects involve the circulation of information, data, and various other flows of semiotic systems. However, they equally bring with them a panoply of affective attachments. From queer articulations of ephemeral erotica on Tumblr, to archives of memory curated by political investments, jolts of anger, and the seduction of community, the affective turn is an important one to consider as we stretch our own imagination for tracing resonance in and across networked sitings of literacies and writing. Affect, for all intents and purposes has no stable definition. In the tradition of Deleuze (1978) and Ahmed (2005), affect, is that which is pre-cognitive, the push-and-pull of orientations, the elision and collision of corporeal bodies, sensations, and intensities. Whether the passing on of experiential intensity from one state to the other, or the taking on and passage between bodies (here I am thinking user and avatar), affect induces a sensorial jolt. Affective resonances, with nods both towards the call for "tracing resonance" (Stornaiuolo and Hall, 2014) and the " reverb" metaphor (Cho, 2015) in studies concerning networked affect, charts the interplay between temporal traversals of felt experience that structure flows of intensities across locative literacies and sitings.

In the weeks after national news coverage surrounding police brutality and the dehumanizing killing of Michael Brown, Camille and the larger Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) group at Center Ridge decided to discuss intersectionality, a concept that came up in their sociology class but one that they did not readily read or see in their own lives. Jolted by the lack of care and empathy for the larger #blacklivesmatter movement in Kilgore, the group decided that they wanted to use the after school space to begin reading texts that were often pushed to the periphery in their arts-magnet high school. As an English teacher I was excited, I could easily obtain copies of whatever texts they wanted to pursue as a group and if I could not find them at libraries, I would buy them. Female authors.[19] The group was surprised that over the course of the last two years of high school English they had only read and completed two texts by a female author. From Zora Neal Hurston to Audre Lorde we transformed the classroom space into an environment rich with queer Black feminism. I brought in texts that were familiar to the canonical high school curriculum while also shuffling in books that may be silenced given their focus on identity politics.[20]

The tragedy of Mike Brown and the continued onslaught and criminalization of black bodies was felt by many of the youth at Center Ridge. "I don't know why, but things like this," Zeke remarked, "make me *feel* black." Janice, the English teacher and GSA leader called the group together. "Today," she said, "I want to mourn those we lost. I want to feel." I was wary about her intentions. Would she somehow try to know what "feeling black" was like when her own white privilege made her exempt from that possibility? What did it mean to feel black, as

[19] Janice's classroom library, in contrast to the school's explicit curriculum, was lined with female authors. Many teachers and administrators scolded her for including 'perverse' authors and texts (e.g., Danielle Steele novels and self-help books).

[20] Affective ambience was of great importance to Janice. Much of the writing completed during GSA or in her English courses was backdropped by music and ambient noise.

Zeke argued? Janice brought in copies of several pages taken out of some of the texts we read. She described that the objective was to take words that we respected, words we honored, and words we had recently celebrated from author's whose works were not present in our lives before and make them our own. Camille immediately went to Plath's (1963) *The Bell Jar* and began blacking out the page.

A girl with your sense!
I imagined myself
to know
terrible gossips.[21]

Janice lit candles and turned on music. The rush of wind was audible as it peaked its head in through slightly ajar windows. She cocked her head, laughed, and whispered "I'm not supposed to light candles in my classroom! Shh. Don't' tell anyone."

Black, my white face.
People begun to look at me in a
funny way, like
I was pretty sure,
only she wasn't sure.
The voice was saying something.
I thought it off.

I couldn't take my eyes off the group. Camille slowed down as her page became increasingly blacked out. In the larger disarray of permanent marker erasure spots of white signaled moments of kept text-. I increased my tempo, as my page of Baldwin's (1955) *Giovanni's Room* still remained unmarked. As we continued, our sharpies now in staccato-like syncopation, I couldn't help but think about Bakhtin's (1981) heteroglossia and the recent work and analysis I had completed in examining retweets and reblogs on Twitter and Tumblr. Through new and hybrid

[21] An elastic literacies approach to writing 'attunes' us to place, action, and rhythmic resonances of the non-representational.

forms of communicative possibilities, I pondered, are youth voices heard, and perhaps heard loudest, when recycled through others' narratives and writing? These static products of composing were merely artifacts of now phantasmal meaning and histories.

My father had. My mother hadn't.

Feeling race was an affective resonance that reverberated through my work with Camille and one I later explore in chapter 4. Although her techno-embodied presence on digital networks allowed her followers to visibly see her mixed race identity, her archives and composing across various literacy sitings also illuminated the presence of her blackness in a society tarnished by white supremacy, both rendered by the virtual but also by the ethnographically local city of Kilgore.

Because he had died
death had always seemed
so unreal to me.

In an exit interview with Camille, I was propelled to ask about feeling race. As we talked she scrolled, tagged, and clicked on various posts. Reblogging, adding meta-data in forms of #tags and descriptor text, and commenting were the push and pull of affect on her snapping, tumbling, tweeting, and blogging. As her index and middle finger swiped up she stopped. An audible gasp followed by a click signaling her reblog drew my attention to a photo-post of a public lynching.

I had a great yearning to
neglect.
And it seemed fitting I should take
on my mother.
I thought that perhaps I would be a bitter atheist.

To argue that Camille's larger composing process and life was not as affect-laden as the writing she completed in more formal learning spaces would be a disservice to her as an author. In the spring of 2013 she shared a Googledoc with me, previewing a draft of a paper she was

writing for American Literature. As I read her explication of Emerson's (1836) "Nature" I was mesmerized by her voice and the deep reflection she displayed in her meditation on transcendentalism.

> To be one with nature is to be an all-knowing soul. When connected with nature, self-awareness, and enlightenment, godliness will follow. Everything ties back to tying yourself to that divine spirit. A deep connection and understanding of nature is essential to connecting yourself to the inner light, it's necessary to being a part of the divine spark, even if you cannot name it. Sorry romanticists, according to Ralph Emerson, transcendentalism is the way to go. (*Camille's ENG 10 Paper*)

As I trace the resonances of writing work accomplished and consider how affect emerges, I think about that which cannot be named. Threads of affective reverberations emerge and create new topographies across chains of composing. Affective resonances splice, break, and bend the stretches of electracy.

At the outskirts of
A rubbish dump
I could smell
Salt
In the distance

Affective resonances did not only crystalize through interactions concerning what some would call "data" but also in the collision of bodies, ideas, and understandings. Taking an elastic literacies approach, asks us to consider how affect emerges as a participant in our own understandings of writing practice. How might we bend, break, slingshot, and stretch back across histories, stories, and time? In the exit interview I mentioned previously, I also asked Camille to reflect on a peer's response to one of my questions in a group-interview. Gabe, Camille's closest friend and a fellow participant who shared her multiracial black/white identity, became a focal

topic for Camille and I as we explored feeling race online. I encouraged Camille to speak on recent events that led me to consider Gabe as speaking from a "color-blind" position, as he remarked how he did not see race online. Through playbacks of video taped interview you can almost sense her apprehension to speak for someone as she arches her shoulders and lifts her hand to show me the nail polish on her right hand. She shifts the genre and form of the interview. I sensed her uneasiness during the interview and meandered a bit. I stumbled, I shuffled paper, I got up to reframe the video. Now, some months after the interview, I am considering that maybe Gabe did not explicitly see race online but felt it, as I felt the line I crossed with Camille that day. The affective resonances of feeling writing are those we should work to illuminate. Rather than read youth texts as hieroglyphs, desiring to uncover meaning and representational "truth," we should listen to the sonic experiences of feeling and our own affective bodies' responses to it.

Spacetime Mobilities

Just as embodiment and affect have surfaced as possible paths worth exploring in contemporary connective literacy research, so too do the geographies and interstices of space, mobility, and temporality. Spacetime, in line with Massey (2005), considers how space is ultimately flattened out, a flattening occupied by place and time. "If" as Massey (2005) proposes, "space is…a simultaneity of stories-so-far [rather than a 'surface'], then places are collections of those stories, articulations of the wider power-geometries of space" (p. 130). Place becomes an event. Massey invites literacy researchers, and connective ethnographers in particular, to consider how the particulars of place can only be understood through the mutually contingent locales of space and time as she defines it.

Spacetime mobilities, in my own work, has been leveraged to explore youth writing with mobile media. For instance, in "Spatial Stories with Nomadic Narrators: Affect, Snapchat, and

Feeling Embodiment in Youth Mobile Composing" (Wargo, 2015), I examined how Ben used the mobile application Snapchat to compose "spatial stories" across a variety of temporal traversals. Using Ben's story, I argued that mobile media, and in particular digital applications, serve as new semiotic technologies that traverse activity, affect, and spacetime. With the advent of these new technologies, new lines of inquiry emerge. This call for varying paths into representation and non-representational inquiry is not new. Thrift (2004), for example, has speculated about how "new kinds of sensorium" (p. 582) might develop in the emergent contexts of "qualculative" space, where constructs such as spacetime would develop and only heighten by sensorial modes of touch and direction. Hence, the haptic project of writing with mobile media is not only affective and embodied, but also temporally constrained. An elastic literacies perspective, through its focus on the sensorial and stretched duties of presenting the emerging (non)representational practices of electracy, configures these representations as but one site of ethnographic place.[22]

Charting Camille's writing resonances provided reverberations of how spacetime mobilities crystalized across threaded "events" of place making in composition. Take, for instance, the "safe space" map I asked her to make in the first weeks of the much larger study. Quite literally, Camille worked as a cartographer to diagram how she "felt" occupying the varying spaces of Center Ridge high school. Originally interested in exploring how LGBT youth navigated inequality across formal and informal learning spaces, I had students mark these spaces on a map with red, yellow, and green stickers. Red stickers represented students' feeling unsafe in these environs whereas green dots signaled a so-called "safe" space. Looking back,

[22] Although the literacies and practices mediated by digital technologies are not 'new,' our relationships, with them are. StoryMap, for example, is an application that you do not locate but locates you.

these artifacts provide a temporal timestamp to the construction of place making. Meant to represent spaces in which I could later detail during interviews, I look back on this artifact now to consider the role spacetime had across the larger connective ethnography.

Representing spacetime mobilities through print-based language and/or speech would do a disservice to the types of practices elastic literacies stretches towards. Instead, we should take heed of the breaks and bends of more ephemeral phenomena. Spacetime in literacy studies recognizes the simultaneous multiplicity in order for the full range of performances and practices to become more mutually visible and rendered possible. The resonances, poorly represented in the aforementioned figure (*see Figure 4*) as circular/sonar flows, collapse across mode. Hence, spacetime mobilities through an elastic literacies perspective interrogates the intermediary stories so far as they thread into the narratives of later.[23]

Conclusion

As I cycled back months later and re-visited the sponsorscapes map and emergent data from the thirty months I spent with Ben, Camille, Gabe, and their classmates, I was reminded of Durst's (2015) recent blog essay, "Inventing the Digital Humanities through Freirian Praxis." In it, Durst used the metaphor of origami and the particulars of folding and unfolding, to nuance the rhetorical practices of building and deconstructing in the classroom. For Durst, this recursive practice was a bright spot in the advancement and ongoing invention of what is being called digital pedagogy. Durst's metaphor of foldings performs the same rhetorical moves I tried to take up in this chapter. I first meditated on the particulars of elastic literacies to deconstruct the logics of representation as the sole means to understand literacy sitings. Then, I examined the foldings

[23] Nowhere in this dissertation do I contend that elastic literacies helps illuminate school based functions of literacy in new or important ways. I do, however, argue that elastic literacies is a pedagogical intervention, attuning us towards feeling, affect, and embodiment in more dynamic ways.

and unfoldings of theory and presented a possible reimagining for tracing writing resonances through the heuristic of elastic literacies. After, I glossed on key examples from my own work with Camille to illustrate possibilities and conundrums for tracing these resonances across varying topographies of immanence.

Together, I offer the heuristic elastic literacies and these conceptual constructs – entangled (techno)embodiment, affective resonances, and spacetime mobilities – as a preliminary presentation for expanding the analytical possibilities for reading and feeling electracy through elastic paths of complementarity. Critical to this view, is that we move beyond understanding the ethnographic site solely as situative and/or local. Instead, we must consider the nonrepresentational resources of "feeling" writing that render performance, ambience, and atmosphere visible. Deleuzian and Latourian perspectives in literacy and composition studies do not contest these types of analytical constructs. In my opinion, however, they have not been fully developed and nuanced in meaningful ways.

The heuristic of elastic literacies and the analytical concepts presented here are particularly amenable for connective ethnographic study. They remind us how technology is, as Hine (2015) declares, always already embodied, embedded, and part of our everyday. Elastic literacies, in essence, helps us to consider how certain "representational" domains and perspectives may help us feel affective non-representational counter-narratives. With technology increasingly mediating our cultures of writing and literacies, more attention must be paid to the material dimensions of composing. I believe, as I later document in chapters 4, 5, and 6, that one way to do this work is through understanding its bends, stretches, breaks, and intersecting paths of analysis. Perhaps research fails to do this across frequencies as we, ourselves as researchers, are afraid to fail and play. In the next chapter I detail the landscapes of play as I work to locate

the mobile queer. Operating as a methods/methodology chapter it simultaneously builds the ethnographic field while simultaneously dismissing it solely as a signifier and phantom of experience.

CHAPTER 3: LOCATING THE MOBILE QUEER: ON METHOD/OLOGY

"A queer methodology...is a scavenger methodology that uses different methods to collect and produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies of human behavior. The queer methodology attempts to combine methods that are often cast as being at odds with each other, and it refuses the academic compulsion toward disciplinary coherence."

Judith "Jack" Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*

On the thirty-minute drive from Center Ridge to City Town HS historical figureheads decorate road signs that trace the geographies from suburban town to neighboring urban city: Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Malcolm X Drive, and Chief Choctaw Road. It is interesting, yet ironic, to trace the influence each of these men had on the large midwestern state given how little has changed to the increasing gentrification of the state's inward counties. For ethnographers, and for those of us who do work in connective ethnography in particular, our work and lives are nomadic. We look for traces of silenced stories, moments of deep meaning, and make the cacophony of the familiar, strange. Working with youth traditionally classified as historically marginalized and/or disenfranchised, connective ethnography could be considered, as Halberstam (1998) contends, a queer methodology, insofar as it works towards garnering the methods, resources, and types of data generation that humanize the voices that speak through the alphabetic print and varying modes we type, we make, and we print.

In following the flows, connecting the traces, and illuminating the stretched segments that build the network of this study, this chapter provides an overview of the methods for locating the mobile queer. I begin with an introduction to connective ethnography, the method/ology I invoke to follow the traces of mediated action and felt experiences of youth composing. Then, I provide an overview of the school-sanctioned contexts of the study, the entry points into what has evolved into a multi-year critical qualitative study. Center Ridge and City Town will become

synonymous with schools you are familiar with, ones you have read about, or perhaps even ones your child attends. By describing City Town and Center Ridge high school, I hope to provide readers of the dissertation with a blueprint and backdrop of the lives and compositions that later line the sophisticated writing work. Although at first glance, readers may wonder why so much space is given to describe the offline (the flesh space that the Andi, Zeke, Gabe, Ben, Camille, and Jack traversed), I take the time to compose the material world here as it threads and textures the connective composition, the moments of inequality, and the youth activist work later.

The chapter then moves to the study's design, describing the three phases of data collection that occurred over 30 months of fieldwork. This section also includes a detailed data analysis section describing the methods for the discourse and interaction analysis I employed in search of findings for my research questions. I highlight the limits of adopting a purely empirical approach, and preview how locating the affective frequencies of queer became a parallel project on its own. I conclude the section with a short consideration of my own researcher positionality as "insider" and question how such an "I-witnessing positionality" (Breuer & Roth, 2003), while offering me invaluable insight to youth digital composing, has its own limitations and tints my perspective.

This Isn't Trackton and Roadville: Connecting Center Ridge and City Town as a Networked Imaginary

"Sites" are paradoxical constructs used to unpack the ethnographic imaginary. At one level, they represent a hologram image of an environment and ecology that the ethnographer hopes to construct in the reader's mind. At a secondary level, they are a mirage of the field, temporally constructed as something we wish to go back to, yet are experientially forever branded in our memory. How do theses geographies then come to speak beyond the pseudonym deployed? In language and literacy education, we have a map of foundational places and sites

that line the numerous ethnographies or ethnographic case studies we read through coursework or come to know through independent research. We traverse linguistic diversity through Heath's (1983) Trackton and Roadville, read embodied and scriptural literacy practices of the everyday through Cintron's (1997) *Angels' Town*, and explore language across difference at Paris's (2011) South Vista. However, as the section title foreshadows, Center Ridge and City Town are not Trackton and Roadville, nor are they Angels' Town or South Vista. These "sites" are not isolated geographies that will be examined to compare and contrast the work done solely by demographic, linguistic, and cultural differences. I break down these institutional walls and connect these sites to braid the story of connective literacy practice. For they, just as the youth whom I worked with and learned from, are merely actants in a much larger network.

Utilizing a networked approach collapses the construct of ethnographic fieldwork as an object that happens in/across one field or "site." Some would classify the work I have done as "multi-site" (Green, 1999; Marcus, 1995), insofar as I analyze and study mediated interactions, practices, and affective phenomena across domains. However, multi-site ethnography still holds at its core the belief that sites are discrete spaces. Multi-site ethnography is unable to account for the blended traces youth employ to stitch together experience and the enactment of identity work and composing. Still, others may argue that I did not need to go into the community, schools, and everyday lives of these youth in "real" space, as virtual ethnography and its methods (Boelstorff, Nordi, Pearce, & Taylor, 2012; Kozinets, 2010) would provide me a read of the local and possible responses to the aforementioned research questions. However, I, like fellow internet scholars whose own reticence of reading these "virtual" and "second-life" histories as truth (boyd, in press), desire the need to understand both the so-called real spaces of everyday interaction alongside those happening in digital environments. For this purpose, and in contrast

to multi-site ethnography, I use a "connective" ethnographic approach (Hine, 2015; 2000; Leander, 2008) to both data collection and analysis. Connective ethnography, allows ethnographers to account methodologically for the co-extensive relationship between online/offline practices and lives. It, as Leander and McKim (2003) contend, "traces the flows of objects, texts, and bodies" (p. 211). Disregarding the possibility to solely live "inside" the virtual, connective ethnography allows for a read of the duality of all experiences in the Web 2.0 mediated world.

Prior to building the backdrop of the structural sites and spaces I traversed and navigated in the project, I want to signal the understanding of online/offline and real/virtual that this study purports. While I do not contend that these dualities are fully isolated from one another, my participants often cited them as divided spaces. They were never wholly liberatory nor were they wholly oppressive. I keep them as isolated geographies insofar as they allow me to see the reflections of selves participants composed across these distinctions. When considering the "virtual," I, like Marcus (1998) draw from Schieffelin's (1976) descriptions of shamanistic dream worlds of the Australian aboriginals to help make sense of the way connective research, namely projects meandering into online worlds, illustrate connective selves.

> In talking about the people of the other world, the Kaluli use the term *mama*, which means shadow or reflection. When asked what the people of the unseen look like, Kaluli will point to a reflection in a pool or a mirror and say, "They are not like you or me. They are like that." In the same way, our human appearance stands as a reflection to them. This is not a "supernatural" world, for to the Kaluli, it is perfectly natural. Neither is it a "sacred world," for it is virtually coextensive with and exactly like the world the Kaluli inhabit, subject to the same forces of mortality….In the unseen world, every man has a

> reflection in the form of a wild pig…that roams invisible on the slopes of Mt. Bosavi. The man and his wild pig reflection live separate existences, but if something should happen to the wild pig, the man is also affected. If it is caught in a trap, he is disabled, if it is killed by hunters of the unseen, he dies. (pp. 96-97)

The connective compositions and the traces across geographies (virtual or other) that I set to describe are like the shadows and reflections of those lives and young people, refracted but not encased by institutions I call Center Ridge and City Town HS and cities named Kilgore and San Miguel's County.

Center Ridge HS

As I walked the halls of Center Ridge in my first semester of field work there, I only saw a dovetail of students leaving as my work was focused on the after school GSA space. Meandering my way up to Room 104, I noticed some teachers busily working on tomorrow's plans, others meeting as a professional learning community (PLC), and some mentoring and tutoring students after hours. The closer I got to participants, their teachers, and their families, I inquired into why this demographic shift and flight away from Center Ridge spotted the school's reputation. Several teachers accounted for Center Ridge's transient population as a cause. Others, parents included, maintained that with the larger city's new school-choice innovation, families had simply opted in for the "bright and shiny," moving to larger more developed schools outside of the district. Ironically, the last people I asked, and as always my best informants, were the youth who attended Center Ridge. At the conclusion of "circle time," a ritualistic act of catharsis that marks the end of the meeting for GSA youth, I asked the larger group about the greater KSD student body and why Kilgore City families would opt for schools outside of their local neighborhoods. In packing up hir backpack, Deonte a trans-masculine African American youth

remarked, “We’re a priority school. We don’t take tests real well” (Field notes, April 11, 2013). Deonte’s indexing of Center Ridge as a “priority school” was matched by KSD’s larger rhetoric of failure.

Center Ridge is an arts-magnet urban high school located in the larger city of Kilgore. Similar to other midwestern cities, Kilgore’s roots and city-lineage are tied to, and founded on, indigenous peoples’ land. Having a diversified population of more than 500,000 residents today, Kilgore suffered from a deep economic blister during the 2008 recession. Its larger demographic and population shifted considerably. Even still, the city of Kilgore’s recent 2013 census illuminates that the city’s population maintains a white majority with 72% of Kilgore’s residents self-identifying as white whereas 28% of the city’s residents self-identify as belonging to one of the historically marginalized group categories presented on the survey (Indigenous, Asian, Black, Hispanic, other, etc.). These demographics, in comparison, are opposite to the student body that lines the hallways of schools in the Kilgore School District (KSD). Center Ridge HS, part of the larger KSD, serves around 1,400 students in grades 9 through 12. Holding a “diverse student population,” Center Ridge’s demographics echo the larger demographics of KSD (*see Table 3*). Hence, many students who are residents of Kilgore City opt out of going to a KSD school.

Table 3: 2013 Center Ridge Student Body Demographics

Demographic	**Indigenous**	**Asian**	**Black**	**White**	**Hispanic**	**SPED**	**ELL**	**Free & Reduced Lunch**	**Mobility**
% of CR student body	1 %	12%	45%	27%	15%	20%	20%	72%	50%

According to the state’s 2013 school report card data, statistics compiled by the state to prioritize those schools whose students are “failing,” Center Ridge did not meet annual yearly progress (AYP). In fact, the school received an F for both English Language Arts and

Mathematics. One of the primary reasons families were hesitant to send their child to Center Ridge, I later found out, was due to the rhetoric of failure surrounding its status. According to the state's 11th grade assessment, the majority of students were failing across four focal domains: English language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies (*see Table 4*).

Table 4: Percentage of Center Ridge 11th Graders Failing State Assessment

Domain / Academic Discipline	**ELA**	**Math**	**Science**	**Social Studies**
% of Center Ridge 11th graders failing	70%	94%	91%	80%

My reason for including these descriptive statistics is not to paint an archetype image of an "urban school" or priority district. As I noted earlier, the qualitative feel of Center Ridge was built on respect and collaboration. Rather, I include this information to paint the walls and build the hinges that texture the "field" during my tenure at Center Ridge. In the same year I first walked through Center Ridge's door, the administration were composing a reform redesign report, a strategic plan that would document systematic and sustained instructional and administrative change (with technology being a key-lever to that change) to improve its failing status. Center Ridge, for all intensive purposes, was a school in-transition.

City Town HS

The school ritual of "visitor check-in" can be read as a metaphor to illuminate the most visible differences between Center Ridge and City Town HS, a secondary space of field work as only two of my six participants attended the more affluent suburban high school. In the early months of my time at Center Ridge, the school secretary would greet me with an informal, "How are you today?" As my presence on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons became more constant, the secretary, (who now insisted I call her Doretta) would tell me to "Oh, just go on up baby!" The process of checking in at City Town was much different.

If an adult wants to enter the City Town campus after hours you are first directed, by the vast amount of signage, to park in the "visitor" lot. During school hours this also operates as the student parking area. Most recently from Colorado, my 2009 black Jeep Patriot was one of the more undervalued vehicles in the lot. Lined with foreign-made luxury sedans, City Town's parking lot could be read as a text illuminating the student body's economically privileged position. Once parked, guests make their way to the visitor's door where the front desk administration buzzes you in. Upon entering City Town after school, one finds the hallways surprisingly silent. After school activities and academic teams are meeting in rooms with doors closed. As I entered the front office no one greeted me. The crowded office kept abuzz with fingernails on keyboards, continued conversation, and the persistent ringing of telephones. In fact, the first day I attended City Town's GSA I stood in the office for ten minutes before an older woman, who still remains nameless to me, inquired, "Do you need something?" When I told her I was there to participate in the after school GSA, she asked what the letters meant. I don't blame her, there were over 30 after schools clubs, each with it's own unique acronym. Ms. Oakley, City Town GSA advisor and sophomore school counselor for students with last names J-M, heard my voice and came bustling out of her office to welcome me. Not asking if I wanted the tour before we headed over to the GSA space, Ms. Oakley gave me a detailed history of City Town's success as a "Grade A" high school. What follows is my memory of that tour, as well as the various statistics that document why City Town is known as the "premier" high school to attend in the local environs of this midwestern state.

City Town is the only high school in the San Michael's county school district (SMSD). As such, students in SMSD are streamlined from elementary to high school under the same premise and mission statement, "Together…educating with excellence, inspiring learners for life."

As a nationally ranked high school, City Town appears in Newsweek as one of the top fifty secondary schools in the U.S each year. At the state level it is in the top five. While Center Ridge HS and its inhabitants succumbed to the rhetoric of failure, City Town thrived by the community's unanimous vote of confidence and success measured by standardized assessments and academic achievement. During the tour of the school, Ms. O cited statistics such as "…over ¾ of all students at City Town are enrolled in and/or took Advanced Placement (AP) courses. We get a lot of 4 and 5's." Similarly, if we compare the reported percentages of 11th graders failing the state assessment, the so-called "gap" between Center Ridge and City Town becomes even starker (*see Table 5*).

Table 5: Percentage of City Town 11th Graders Failing State Assessment

Domain / Academic Discipline	**ELA**	**Math**	**Science**	**Social Studies**
% of City Town 11th graders failing	8.2%	13.6%	21.5%	Not Reported

While these statistics are beginning to err on the side of pathologizing Center Ridge HS as a failing school, I want to continue down this descriptive path to highlight City Town's demographics and illuminate how they, in contrast to Center Ridge HS and Kilgore, align with the larger San Michael's County demographic.

San Michael's county was founded in 1839. Originally a small farming community in the late 19th century, San Michael's county was later absorbed to be known as "the neighboring city" to Kilgore's capital city status. Fast forward almost two decades and what was once a farming community is now known, according to CNN Money Magazine, as one of the top 20 places to live for "the rich and single." In terms of demographics, San Michael's 2010 census reports that the 21,000+ people are neither racially nor economically diverse. These demographics align almost identically on top of the 2013 City Town student body demographics (*see Table 6*).

Table 6: 2013 City Town Student Body Demographics

Demographic	Indigenous	Asian	Black	White	Hispanic	SPED	ELL	Free & Reduced Lunch	Mobility
% of City Town student body	<1 %	13%	8%	74%	3%	10%	Not Reported	13%	Not Reported

With a median family income of $88,000, San Michael's county, according to many of the youth at Center Ridge HS has come to be classified as "that rich White people school." (Field notes, March 6, 2013) Center Ridge youth were quick to index City Town according to its racial and class-based privileges. Ben and Jack, two queer students I worked alongside of at City Town (and the focal participants representing this otherwise privileged school) were also aware of this racial and economic disparity. In the fall of 2013, Jack, the president of City Town's GSA, was selected to be a member of the City Town diversity task force, a group of City Town students and administrators who worked together to address issues of diversity, or the lack thereof, in the school and larger district. Despite their vast differences, both socio-economically and racially, there is a method to why Center Ridge and City Town are chosen as focal institutional sites and why I choose to avoid what could otherwise be an intrinsic case study of a singular school phenomenon. The students under study are, in the very simplest of terms, already connected. Although their embodied lives are quite separate, their virtual ones overlapped quite frequently.

A Networked Rather Than Comparative Approach

In the early months of fieldwork, when participants discussed digital environments as those sites wherein they wrote the most, I sat down with focal participants at each school to ask questions about online followers and friends. I was interested in the concept of "audience" and asking *for whom* youth were composing. When the microblog Tumblr, a so-called "queer" space, came up, I spotted a very familiar face on a Center Ridge student's blog. With one hand holding a sucker in his mouth, and the other snapping the selfie which now decorates his Tumblr

biography, there stood Jack, a City Town student who I also worked with. When I asked this student if they knew Jack "in-real life," they quickly dismissed me, responding, "no, but he always posts the best Orphan Black memes." As I, alongside of other youth began to document who particular users were following, I soon realized that these two groups of young people, who at first glance live in quite disparate worlds, are actively connected across virtual geographies. Thus, City Town and Center Ridge are not two independent "sites" from which I worked but rather only actants, part of the larger ethnographic ecology. Thus, as my interpretative scheme illuminates, these students whose racial and economic differences tint and shade the everyday schooling experience as different, are remarkably unified.

Research Design

I completed fieldwork in three phases. During the onset of my work at City Town and Center Ridge HS (January 2013 – October 2013) I became interested in understanding how LGBT and queer youth navigated (in)equality through their encounters with literacies. As documented by the aforementioned research surveying out-of-school spaces and queer identity development (Blackburn, 2003; Blackburn & Buckley, 2005; Blackburn, Clark, Kenny, & Smith, 2009; Blackburn & Clark, 2011; Vetter, 2010), I was fascinated in how these spaces of LGBT and queer tolerance (namely GSA spaces) manifested and allowed for liberatory identity work that had gone uncharted in formal and more traditional classroom spaces. Tumblr and the digital environs of social media and social networking were first mentioned as spaces which youth were composing in most and where their own literacy work had gone unaccounted for. During Phase 1, I collected data alongside of all six participants. Participant observation across sites (in-school, on Tumblr, etc.) was the primary mode of data collection. During the 2013 year, I conducted and audiotaped three semi-structured active interviews (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002), collected

multimodal work, wrote field notes, and textually analyzed student's writing on Tumblr. Interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes. Divided into topical categories, interviews elicited responses related to the larger research questions as well as the features of their writing about difference across contexts (*see Figure 5, Figure 6, and Figure 7*).

Figure 5: Zine Cover

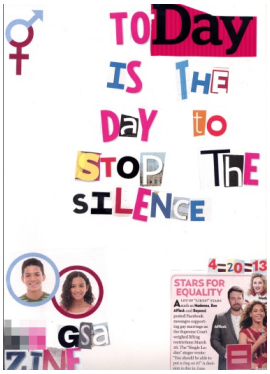


Figure 6: Ben's Artifacts

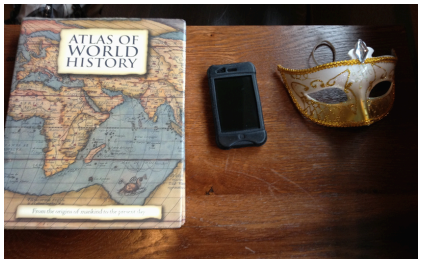


Figure 7: Zeke's Map

Apart from informal exchanges (via text message, email, etc.) and semi-structured interviews, I met with participants one-on-one to document how each user was using Tumblr as a queer writing space. I transcribed and coded all interview and think-aloud sessions as well as text-based Tumblr posts. Audio from GSA meetings was topically transcribed with the consent of all attending members. Using QuickTime screencast, I recorded audio/video posts. Visual reblogs, text-based conversations and/or alphabetic print were captured using the screenshot feature on my computer. Rather than copying and pasting dialogue into a word processing application, I used the screenshot feature to capture the multimodal processes at play in digital youth writing.

I analyzed Phase I data with a particular focus on understanding how LGBT and queer youth engaged with community language(s), literacies, and digital mediation across contexts. I began with open coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) after a close reading of the first set of interviews. After multiple iterative re-readings of interview transcripts, I analyzed how these

LGBT and queer youth shifted their discourse identities (Gee, 2001) and ways of operating in navigating (in)equality across space and place (from home to school, from in-school to out-of-school, from real to virtual). Using "sensitizing" concepts (Charmaz, 2003) of (in)equality, identities, and types of literacy that emerged in open coding, I moved to axial coding, collapsing how types of literacy work were enacted across focal themes. This crystalized and brought to fruition the types of practice(s) employed by all youth participants across sites and contexts. For example, practices of #tagging, reblogging, and text-based personal posts, emerged as digital writing themes that many of the youth engaged with in authoring the selves across Tumblr.

Focusing on the conceived space and mediated imaginaries of writing in digital environments, I began analyzing the types of literacies youth were engaging with and practicing online, specifically. So great in magnitude, I refined my focus prior to examining specific events of what were early iterations of what I conceived of as elastic literacy work (*see Table 7*).

Table 7: Participant Tumblr Statistics

Participant	*# of total Posts*	*Average Posts / Day*	*Regular Text Based Posts*	*Links*	*Quotes*	*Photo Posts*	*Convo w/ others*	*Audio/ Visual Posts*
Andrea	*15080*	*26*	*2330*	*37*	*15*	*12202*	*369*	*56*
Ben	*1851*	*3.28*	*338*	*35*	*16*	*1335*	*49*	*66*
Camille	*1533*	*3.12*	*169*	*12*	*3*	*1288*	*13*	*21*
Gabriel	*1779*	*8.53*	*30*	*4*	*0*	*1737*	*7*	*1*
Jack	*23541*	*23.43*	*4539*	*399*	*608*	*16425*	*333*	*939*
Zeke	*3311*	*7.13*	*672*	*15*	*5*	*2363*	*137*	*59*

I re-read the interview transcripts and asked more detailed questions to participants concerning the meta-processes they were using when writing on Tumblr. As a researcher, I was curious to

see the users think-aloud when posting and when mining their Tumblr archive for examples of the types of practices they cited earlier. This procedure, otherwise known as protocol analysis (Haas & Flower, 1988), provided me with a more nuanced understanding of the ideological processes undergirding Tumbling. In developing the protocol analysis, I met with each participant one-on-one and inquired about the general practices I saw youth employ when tumbling. This more focused selective coding procedure (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) produced distinctions within each category and allowed me to frame my initial findings thematically. Triangulating across transcribed interviews, one-on-one protocol think aloud sessions, analytic memos and field notes, and posts participants excavated (alongside of researcher) from their personal Tumblr archive (n=120 posts), these procedures led to my emergent understanding of elastic literacies as youth "social tactics" and coalition building (*see Chapter 4*).

While Phase I documents the stretchy practices of elastic literacies work and youth composing on Tumblr, it does not account for the various "sitings" of literacy work I saw youth use alongside of the microblog. As I wrote up findings from the rather large data set of Phase I, I knew I would have to expand my horizon of what I had documented as the "field" and excavate the alternative literacy practices youth were using to create, curate, and compose connective selves. In fact, when I presented findings and analyses to Center Ridge and City Town participants the response was "yes, and…" as they too had wanted me to look at their work across the larger network. Phase II, largely comprised by continued participant observation to deepen relationships with youth, was where my own phone became an object of inquiry and where Andi, Ben, Camille, Jack, Gabe, and Zeke began stitching me, quite literally, into their everyday lives of digital composing and connective identity work.

Phase II operationalized the various "sitings" needing study in exploring my research questions. Participant observation across schools, social media and networking spaces, and community sites was still the largest method of data generation. Like countless other qualitative researchers, I, too, value the "notebook" as that tool which follows me from the GSA classroom, to surveying Tumblr pages, and to sitting with the Center Ridge group as they work the Elder Town Community Market. My field notes captured these observations as well as documented, the hundreds of informal exchanges via text, Twitter, Snap, etc. In Phase II I worked to innovate and extend the methods I employed Phase I. Taking the lead from Berkman Center's Tricia Wang, and in line with what she has called "open ethnography," I captured "live field notes," notes that document (through an artifact, a space/place, the self) the work done that day (*see Figure 8 and Figure 9*).

Figure 8: Testing Day at Center Ridge

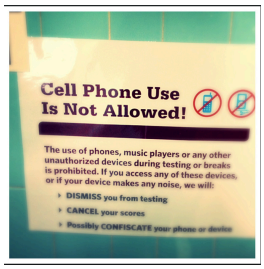
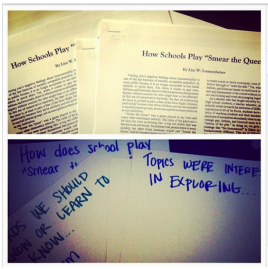


Figure 9: GSA Read-In at City Town



These field notes have been valuable to me as an ethnographer as participants often "like" and/or comment on the field note, citing it in conversation or interrogating particular meaning of the picture during the next meeting. In addition to participant observation and field notes, I began conversing with all Center Ridge and City Town youth across the myriad of sites and mobile applications they used in their everyday literacy work. While I did not formally document these exchanges, they were helpful in organizing analytic tools and potential frames for Phase III and the larger interpretive scheme.

Phase II had several tensions and rifts, conflicts that emerged as I name and discuss later as the "problem of community." In the penultimate months of Phase I, youth at Center Ridge were becoming transient to the once flourishing GSA space of room 104. While Camille, Gabe, and Zeke were "two-a-weekers" (their words not my own), Andi, it had turned out, had not been enrolled at Center Ridge for the 2013-2014 year. As I asked about Andi, Camille and Zeke both noted that she was going to "online school." In tweeting and communicating with Andi across social networking spaces, Andi confirmed the move to the virtual classroom. "It's just too distracting," she said, "my mom thinks I'll do better if I can go at my own pace. I got into too much trouble with my friends" (Field notes, August 9, 2013).

City Town and its GSA membership were less stable than that of Center Ridge. Ben and Jack continued on as focal participants in the larger study with Ms. Oakley stepping down from faculty advisor, admitting "leading GSA for another year was just too much." The City Town GSA became a place I did not frequent as much during the 2013-2014 school year. Besides Ben and Jack, straight females lined the chairs and desks of the space, eager to befriend and talk City Town gossip with Ben while abstracting Jack from the larger conversation. As the school year wrapped up at City Town, Jack, the once president and lifeline of the GSA had stopped attending.

Phase III started as the 2014-2015 school year amped up. Jack began his freshman year at a neighboring University double majoring in Screenwriting and Pre-Med and Ben spent seven weeks in Spain prior to returning for his senior year of high school. Phase III picked up with more disparate flesh-space sitings than before: an online high school, a university dorm room, and Center Ridge and City Town HS.

During the five-month tenure of data generation in Phase III, different methods for data collection were used and new data sources (both primary and secondary/contextual) were

collected. In addition to the three interviews I conducted with participants in Phase I of the study, I conducted two additional "active interviews" (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000) with each participant. While initial interviews provided me with demographic and contextual information, the two interviews occurring in Phase III further illuminated participant engagement with social media and social networking, mobile applications for composing, and the connective identity work youth created, curated, and composed. In addition to the group and 1:1 dialogue, I used tenets of Norris's (2011) "multimodal (inter)action analysis" to document the composing done by youth across a digital site, tool, or mobile application of their choice. This type of microanalysis not only attended to the physical domains of the composing process (i.e. touching the screen, scrolling the laptop with their forefingers, snapping a selfie with their thumb), but the digital product and process. Telescoping away and rounding out Phase III, I documented, through deep ethnographic observation of content and user activity across a defined unit of time. For four weeks, I archived work done by all focal youth across the mobile applications and digital sites bounding the network of study.

While I acknowledge that this type of analysis has limitations, insofar as users on applications such as Snapchat select particular followers to share their composing with, it helped generate larger themes and provided an archive of content that I could refer to and place particular products and pieces of composing shared with me in Phases I and 2 of the study.

On Criticality in Analysis

As I outlined in the introduction of this dissertation, I consider the larger qualitative project to be "critical," insofar as I examine how issues of power and subjectivity are inextricably linked across mediated action and the larger social world. Critical is not necessarily an approach to a methodology or problem, but a lens that tints the study's findings and

implications to be action oriented. As Thomas (1993) underscores in his *Doing Critical Ethnography*, "conventional ethnography describes what is; critical ethnography asks what could be" (p. 4). Thus, the findings that emerged in the larger qualitative study and extensive ethnographic fieldwork are *critical* insofar as they illuminate the social problems concerning the online/offline politics of queer youth visibility. They bridge disconnects between language and literacy studies and multimodal composition in an era of techno-inclusionism and inspect how youth *are* designing more just social futures for themselves. Critical, in this dissertation, invites us to ask: what can we learn from youth and their connective identity texts? How do youth composers employ elastic literacies to navigate broader social problems, engage civically, orchestrate social change, and combat (in)equality? By focusing on LGBT and queer youth composing as a rich site of analysis, this study critically examined how youth texts can contribute a more nuanced understanding of the queer rhetorics of the everyday. Working through networked sitings of selves, I suggest possible implications for more connective, networked, and equal lives. The connective compositions created, curated, and collaged by Andi, Ben, Zeke, Camille, Gabe, and Jack reveal salient narratives about knowing and making known differently on one's own terms. It is through them that we are asked to 'read' our world differently.

CHAPTER 4: BE(COM)ING A #SOCIALJUSTICEWARRIOR: READING YOUTH DIGITAL LITERACIES PRACTICE AS SOCIAL TACTIC

"It's like *Feed*…"

"It's like *Feed*." Huh? I inquired. "Your project, it's like the young adult book, *Feed*." Noticing the shift in temperature, I shuffled my way outside of the cold damp hallway and into Room 104. In the winter semester, Center Ridge high school has two temperatures, freezing and inconsolably hot. To the right side of the entrance, a group of students are re-taking an exam Janice gave earlier in the week. Wearing large bangles on her left arm, the steel of the circular jewels makes a syncopated tap-tap as she grades papers nearby. "Do you like the way this incense smells?" Janice's room was known for its ambience and aura at the arts magnet school. Described by most as "that hippie white teacher," Janice regularly had students engage in acts some would call "inappropriate." From meditating before reading Yeats, to using yoga as a mechanism to calm class conflict her instructional methods were unconventional to say the least.

Slowly making my way outside of the multiple layers donned for the Midwest winter, I looked back to the Southwest corner of the room to see a group of slouched shoulders sitting crisscross applesauce on the tops of desks. Some were doodling on paper, others were reading the school newspaper, and the remaining pairs watched Netflix on their iPhone or Android, listening through shared ear buds. I ushered my way to the group, noticing that the regular community of 15+ students was now barely at 10. "I can't stay long," Zeke quickly added, "I have choir rehearsal and then work. But can you still drive me at 4:15? It's snowing." The diverse group of 10 quickly circled up. A routine that now, in my second year at Center Ridge, I was accustomed to. "Give me a minute?" I asked Camille. "What's like *Feed*?" I said walking back to Janice. "Your project. It's a dystopian novel where revolt only happens when students tap out of the 'feed' that they're plugged into. I think the book serves a larger purpose. It

critiques this generation's inability to see capitalism and the neoliberal market. I saw it in passing at Lowry's Used Books and it just made me think of you." Janice took a folded copy of the book out of her hemp bag and handed me the novel. "Keep it. Let me know what you think." Like most young adult novels, I was quick to devour the book. While not directly like my project, as I was aware of the more liberatory dimensions of networked life, I saw its connections to how many of the teachers at Center Ridge and City Town high school saw technology, and mobile media in particular. It was a distraction, a space so out of touch from reality that students conceivably had a hard time focusing on the here and now. Little did the teachers, parents, and other adults working to govern these youth know, however, that the so-called feed and connection with and through technology was that which allowed these youth to architect and design more just social futures. It allowed them a space to engage in a civic imaginary and self that was written on one's own terms. It fostered a belonging that more embodied forms of flesh space did not always nurture.

Interested in the semiotic stretches LGBT and queer youth employ to navigate (in)equality online, this chapter explores the seemingly mundane practices of youth writing with new media. I focus on curating and collecting as two forms of remediated communicative practice to interrogate the taking on of what youth called a #socialjusticewarrior stance on Tumblr. Zeroing in and tracing the connective lives Andi, Ben, Camille, Jack, and Zeke led across their networked connections of writing, I illuminate how issues of racialized identity, gender expression, and self-harm identities converged to collect a social justice orientation into the larger Kilgore and San Miguels community. Comparatively, I provide a counter-narrative; a counter-story if you will of a young person whose curated work of self-presentation was argued to foster a more cosmopolitan version of self. Minimizing the effects of the local, I detail how

Ben curated through the acts of digital literacies to far extend his reach of what cultural justice looked like. Nonetheless, for Ben, Andi, Jack, Camille, and Zeke, the network and composing practices of Tumblr provided them with an anonymity and agency for action (Gabe opted out of these two microblogs as his network was far more 'mobile' and his mode of choice was video). Acting as a space to build community and create coalition, the Tumblr networks of pervasive computing and mobile media offered itself as a space to write the social and activist self. Exploring the ethos of online activism, I work to stretch your imagination to consider what a tap, swipe, and click may do for architecting and building equity for youth and youth communities.

Being a #socialjusticewarrior and Coming to Queer Online

Like most queers, I first came to Tumblr through porn. Ok, let me back up a bit. Tumblr is notoriously known for its #NSFW (not safe for work) environs, so it is one of the few spaces where sex and body positivity flourish. The more my research centered on cultural rhetorics, connective composition, and queer digital literacies, the more I perused the space to find a scholarly queer community of my own. That, and I was hella interested in seeing what new videos dropped from Black Spark and the Cloud. If Livejournal was my gay safe space in high school, Tumblr is its contemporary, only "on fleek" (yes, I did indeed use youth language to augment Tumblr as a youth-centric space).

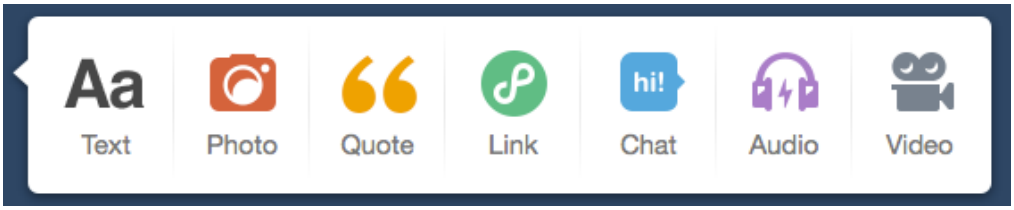
As I tucked *Feed* into my backpack and walked back to the group, Andi inquired if I was going to ask more about Tumblr. Dropping out of high school to attend Alternative Pathways Prep (APP), a charter school ran by the local community college, Andi's attendance at GSA was spotty as she split her time between APP's queer space and Center Ridge's GSA. "You know I come," Andi continued, "because I think your work is really interesting. I still want to work on it

with you." The longer I spent with the young people of Center Ridge and City Town high school, the more I became interested in the utility of Tumblr. What was it? How did it work?

On Tumblr

Founded in 2007, Tumblr has become one of the most popular microblogging platforms for youth in the 21st century. Microblogging allows authors to create content, categorize and/or tag it, and then share it with other users. As Devoe (2009) states, "freedom and brevity are the current appeal of microblogging over traditional blogging, which often focuses on established topics using stylized and sometimes lengthy prose" (p. 3). This freedom allows users to "create a blog that is more akin to a stream of consciousness than a series of carefully written statements" (Matteson, 2011, p. 54). Tumblr users compose through seven modes of creation (*see Figure 10*).

Figure 10: Modes for Composing on Tumblr



Similar to Facebook and Twitter, Tumblr users have the ability to like and/or share posts. In contrast to other microblogging sites and social networking platforms, however, Tumblr requires almost no personal information. As such, every user's primary tumblelog is public. This perceived anonymity, yet public visibility, is one of the main appeals of the ever-growing microblogging site. With its relative ease to "find yourself a suitable digital community" (Marquart, 2010, p. 74), Tumblr is a perfect platform to investigate youth writing, participatory community building, and the do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos of online activism.

Getting the young people I worked with to unplug and tap-in to IRL (in-real-life) conversation was difficult. "So," I asked, "who wants to go first?" Deonte started the circle time

ritual by indicating hir name, personal pronoun, orientation, and reason for coming. “Deonte, hir, trans, and uhh, I like you gay bitches and I want free granola bars.” The pattern continued until all attending members spoke. Directly in front of me I saw Camille, donning black winter boots gray sweat pants, and an oversized Winnie the Pooh sweatshirt, etching some letters into the margins of a school newspaper. Colleen, Camille’s girlfriend caught my eyes, looked down to the margins, and asked, “what’s a social justice warrior?” The group erupted. “What? You don’t know what that is?” “Wargo,” Colleem demanded, “get with it.”

As I became interested in interrogating the rhetorical affordances of Tumblr, an indexical identity surfaced as a primary trope that youth users leveraged to gain voice. #socialjusticewarrior was a tag used by many to draw attention to issues of inequity that surface on Tumblr. It leaked its way into the environs of online life. I first heard of the #socialjusticewarrior identity long before circle-time at Center Ridge that day. Jack, a now 18-year old trans-masculine student at City Town indexed himself as a social justice warrior in our first interview. As Jack contended there, *“you can’t just BE a #socialjusticewarrior, you have to DO #socialjusticewarrior.”* Enacting a #socialjusticewarrior stance fell under a user paradigm of #donttagyourhate, a tag used in partner with #socialjusticewarrior to discourage users from posting dehumanizing and/or disparaging text. Being a #socialjusticewarrior, however, was a category that many Tumblr users employed as a pejorative term to illuminate youth who reified a shallow multiculturalism across the site. Upon hearing several of the youth whom I worked with in the larger study self-identify as a #socialjusticewarrior, I became intrigued to explore how they were using the term and the types of identities and practices it allowed them to take on across the digital platform.

Reading #socialjusticewarrior Identities through Stretches of Practice

Although attending different schools, Jack, Andi, Camille, Ben and Zeke were networked "followers" (of one another) on the Tumblr platform. Gabe, when speaking of the larger microblog, remarked that he "just posted pictures" and did "nothing important" when tumbling. He did not understand its appeal. When detailing *their* experience as Tumblr users, however, Jack, Andi, Camille, Zeke, and Ben each documented the #donttagyourhate theme as one which guided their composing on the site. This hashtag indexed their identity as a #socialjusticewarrior. Queer-centric, I later found that having and holding the #socialjusticewarrior stance was taken up by youth in a number of ways. For some, deploying the #blacklivesmatter tag was a radical movement signifying not only racial justice but queer love. As the founders of the larger movement both identify as queer, it was (for Zeke and Camille), a type of action that allowed them to see a "black AND queer activist 'thing.'" Prior to plugging into the larger #socialjusticewarrior work, I want to pause here and be transparent about the allowances and constraints of much of the "tech-tual" listening I completed across the site.

As a queer researcher and English educator, I gained access to Center Ridge and City Town high school in ways an outsider would not. While my peripheral status on Tumblr, and limited proficiency on social networking spaces offered me the opportunity to ask questions related to the meta-processes of youth composing, my insider position as queer person offered me valuable insight. Residing in this liminal space, and considering my relationship to the site, I was aware of the competing subjectivities and their potential impact on how I approached and analyzed the data. Like a good qualitative researcher, I worked to keep biases at bay and increase reliability by employing member-checking strategies. Across the larger ethnography, I invited participants to review transcripts, preliminary findings, and all multimodal artifacts. These one-

off posts, even through dialogical selection seemed scattered. I wasn't able to hear ALL of the writing that was zooming past as participants tumbled on the floors of work, tweeted in the hallways of school, and snapped selfies on the benches of Kilgore city garden. Thus, In order to practice a more connective form of ethnographic practice, I put my ear to the network and slowed down the resonances to listen to larger sitings and themes across the #socialjusticewarrior theme.

Tech-tual Listening and Plugging Into the Networked of Queer Youth Activism on Tumblr

The longer I spent working with Andi, Ben, Camille, Jack, Gabe, and Zeke, the more aware I became about the following (both online and in their everyday) I had to do in order to understand the logics of collecting and curating, two of the social practices and genres of participation that sutured definitions of what it meant to be a #socialjusticewarrior for youth across the contexts of Tumblr. As I engaged youth to help me slow down and listen, two primary research questions guided our collaborative inquiry and line this chapter: a) *How do LGBTQ youth enact and construct their identities as #socialjusticewarriors across, on, and through the digital environment of Tumblr, and b) How do LGBTQ youth navigate (in)equality and garner visibility through the practices of #tagging, reblogging, remixing, etc.?*

In addition to sustained participant observation, 1:1 active interviews, collecting multimodal work, and textually analyzing student's writing on Tumblr. Abstracting away from the surface of the field, I did a deep-dive into a collecting process of my own. To triangulate the emergent activist themes of practice I saw at the broad 30-month level, I focused on how these broader themes emerged as rich points in a more focused month-long content analysis. Although I performed large-scale network analytics that highlighted themes and tags holistically across

participant tumblelogs, the counting and small-scale work allowed me to nuance the particulars of collecting and curating.

I analyzed data with a particular focus on understanding how LGBTQ youth engaged with community languages, literacies, and digital mediation across the particular social practices of collecting and curating. I began, first, with open coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) after a close reading of the first set of interviews. After multiple iterative re-readings of interview transcripts, I analyzed how these LGBTQ youth shifted their discourse identities (Gee, 2001) and ways of operating in navigating (in)equality across space and place (from home to school, from in-school to out-of-school, from real to virtual) to enact a #socialjusticewarrior stance. Using "sensitizing" concepts (Charmaz, 2003) of inequality, identity/subjectivity, and types of practice that emerged in open coding, I moved to axial coding, collapsing how types of literacy work were enacted across focal themes (*see Table 8*). This crystalized and brought to fruition the types of practice(s) employed by all youth participants across sites and contexts. For example, practices of #tagging, reblogging, and text-based personal posts, emerged as digital writing themes that many of the youth engaged with in authoring selves on Tumblr. Practices and their function, however, differed across the actions of collecting and curating.

Table 8: Techtual Listening Themes & Avg. Posts by Participant

Participant	Avg. # of Tumblr posts / day	Emergent Themes
Andi	11	• Personal diary-like posts with #to_____ tag • Selfies and Personal Photo posts • Body Positivity • #whyImanAlly posts concerning issues of justice & #selfcare
Ben	47	• K*Pop and Fandom Memes/GIFs • Translanguaging across Personal Posts • #JeSuisCharlie and religious intolerance • Trans* Awareness

Table 8 :(cont'd)

Camille	27	• Selfies and Personal Photo posts • Trans* and Intersex Awareness • #blacklivesmatter and racial injustice • Body Positivity • Pop culture and Fandom Memes/GIFs
Jack	39	• Trans* Awareness • Selfies and Personal Photo Posts • Pop culture and Fandom Memes/GIFs
Zeke	42	• Gay Erotica • Trans* and Intersex Awareness • #blacklivesmatter and racial injustice • Pop culture and Fandom Memes/GIFs

Focusing on the conceived space and mediated imaginaries of writing on Tumblr, I began analyzing the types of literacy work youth were engaging with and practicing online, specifically. The numbers of posts were so great in magnitude that I refined my focus prior to examining specific events of collecting and curating. I re-read the interview transcripts and asked more detailed questions to Jack, Camille, Andi, Ben, and Zeke about the meta-processes they were using when curating and collecting on Tumblr. As a researcher, I was curious to see the users think-aloud when posting and when mining their Tumblr archive for examples of the types of practices they cited earlier. This procedure, otherwise known as protocol analysis (Haas & Flower, 1988), provided me with a more nuanced understanding of the ideological processes undergirding their composing. In developing the protocol analysis, I met with participants one-on-one and inquired about the general practices I saw them use when tumbling. This more focused selective coding procedure (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) produced thematic distinctions within each category and allowed me to frame the larger chapter. I spend time here in the chapter to elaborate on method because collecting and curatorship illuminated identity issues and the specific relationship that emerged between researcher and participant as we talked about issues

related to participation. In my presentation of findings I provide exemplars from the data that illustrate the multiple ways youth used collecting and curating as social tactics and index how the enactment and construction of a #socialjusticewarrior identity and stance designed the digital space and colored user experience.

Collecting Social Justice and Curating Cosmopolitanism: Stretched Practices for Connective Composing

Emerging first as materialist practices, collecting and curating operated as embodied practices in memorializing people, events, and/or locations for youth.

> **Andi:** I'm a hoarder in life. I'm like "Oh, I like this object. It's mine now." And I just put it in my room. I collect it. I have this bookshelf in my room and in front of all my books, its just all of the things I have collected. I have a panda and a whale, our group picture from GSA. The same thing happens on Tumblr. I reblog to collect it. I tag it to make it mine (Participant Interview).

As I put my ear to the screen, listening for the resonances of writing that stretched across the social environs of Tumblr, collecting and curating crystalized as two of the larger social processes that Andi, Zeke, Camille, Jack, and Ben used to navigate larger systemic inequality. The diverse practices of curating and collecting, I argue, allowed them to have a #socialjusticewarrior voice in the cacophony and heteroglossia of Tumblr echoes. Below I operationalize what I mean by collecting and curating and then speak across the diverse youth tactics of collecting and curating to illuminate how these practices brought to fruition a "multimodal cosmopolitanism" (Vasudevan, 2014). Collecting and curated manifested a sense of collective community and sense of belonging across the queer (counter)publics of Tumblr.

On Collecting

Collecting is an introspective personal act. It is a process of distinct social practices that materially situate humans in particular cultures (Rohan, 2010). These cultures, as I document in the intricacies and findings below, invariably intertwine public and more private, and I would argue online as well as offline, lives. Hence, collecting is a project that traces how lives intersect temporally with particular movements and ideas. According to Rohan (2010), collecting is a "lifetime, identity-forming process that leads to collections through annotation" (p. 54). As she argues, collecting is a practice that resonates across more standard publics of school, home, and the professional workplace. For the youth I worked alongside, collecting was a process of internalization. The piles of reblogs and photo-based favorites youth marked were, in essence, facets of how they saw themselves. Collecting made deeper pathologies and more affective based moments manifest.

On Curating

In contrast to collecting, curating was a more productive rather than consumptive enterprise. When I first started this project "curation" was all the rage. From Op-Eds in *The New York Times* to more underground web-blogs like *Sprinklr*, everyone was giving; or, pinning, their two cents to the movement and practice. Curating was also quite popular in literacy studies, as newer scholarship worked to nuance how digital media production heightened the composing process (Potter, 2012; Potter & Gilje, 2015). In sum, the social practices of curating online artifacts (e.g., reblogs, tweets, photos, audio-recordings) comes down to arranging items so that a narrative of self is (re)presented. If collecting is a nexus that begs to be read in multiple ways, curating is a larger social practice and genre of action that demands precision of language, relationships, affiliations, and makers of identity. It, in comparison to collecting, rests upon a

single and sometimes fixed story. According to Milhailidis and Cohen (2013), curation is a story-ed "act of problem solving" (p. 4). It creates a sense of responsibility for the curator. Curating is an aesthetic reverie for that which may not necessarily be. As Chocano (2012), perhaps satirically demonstrates, the trouble with the practice [curation] is the trouble of the "feeling." She argues, "…products are no longer the point…And now we can create that feeling, then pass it around like a photo album of the life we think we were meant to have but don't, the people we think we should be but aren't" (Chocano, 2012). Curating, arguably demonstrated by all youth I worked with, was highlighted by one participant as a way to "save-face." For Ben, curating became a way to simultaneously both acknowledge privilege while provisionally disavow more local movements he felt excluded from.

Table 9: Social Practice Explained by Function and Purpose

Social Practice	Networked Function / Tactic	Purpose	Example
Collecting	**Text-based Post**	Alphabetic print used to describe and highlight a "diary-like" moment for the author. Aims to be "spreadable."	"The way white people used to treat black people is such a hard concept to grasp. How can you fail to see a persons value based off color ☹" *(Camille, January 10, 2014)*
	AV/Photo Post	Utilized mode outside of text to visually interject and collect. AV/Photo posts are traditionally used for heightened or sensitive topics/issues within the community	
	Mention/Citation	Engaged with user (specific to their community/follower group) to dialogue and/or reject ideology of writing/post	@wargojon…(followed by text that either asks a question and/or engages me in a topic I need to be a part of. Continued response is necessary for function)

Table 9: (cont'd)

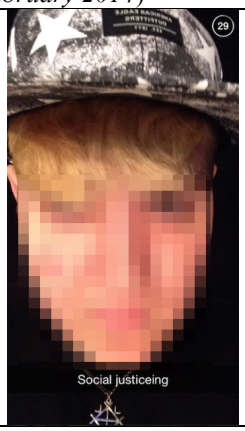
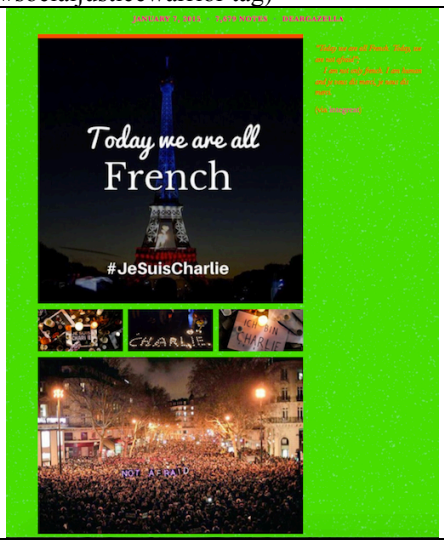
	Like/Favorite	Illuminates affinity and allegiance to/or towards the user or topic of post	Users "heart" these posts and often reblog across Tumblr
	#tag	Indexes the post to show affiliation and/or position the reader in dialogue with the writer. #tag functions as a rally for/or critique against	A haiku about the American flag American flag Is red with blood, blue with tears And white with privilege MISSLES LAUNCHES #fuckprivilege #knowAmericanhistory (*Zeke reblogged print-based text from dewchan7865 and added the above #tags*)
	Reblog/Retweet	Used to echo larger dialogue and voice of the movement/group. Reblogging as a form of collecting circulates repeated discourse to strengthen presence across dashboard.	"tumblr has educated me on so many things and I can't go on for a whole 5 minutes in real life without wanting to start a fight with someone" (*Camille reblogging from caramelfringe*)
Curating	**Text-based Post**	Alphabetic print used to describe and highlight a "diary-like" moment for the author as it pertains directly to one of their online groups. Across this corpora translanguaging was used to show affiliation with non-U.S. groups/themes	I have my first therapy appointment on Wednesday. Maybe ill be ok soon. I just want my baby to come hold me, to tell me everything is gonna be ok, but shes 892 miles away from me and my GSA family is now no longer downstairs. :'c & I just UGH…I'm gonna go try to forget everything and shove my face into a book now…I feel it too @CamilleXXXX @GabeXXXXXXX @MegXXXX. Bye babes <3 #selfcare #dontharm #sometimesImakemistakes (*Andi, February 2014*)
	AV/Photo Post	Often selfies and/or digital photography of local environs to exhibit affiliation and shared camaraderie and commitments to something (e.g., social justice, larger social movements, etc.)	
	Mention/Citation	Engages with user (specific to their community/follower group) to show affiliation and empathize with	"@wargojon, thought of you…" (used to interject and/or curate across the other's dashboard – usually no response is necessary)

Table 9: (cont'd)

	Like/Favorite	Indexes shared affinity for a theme or topic (often is joined by the parallel practice of reblogging)	Users "heart" these posts and often reblog across Tumblr
	#tag	Indexes the post to show affiliation and/or identify and position the reader with (not in dialogue with) the writer	Curated tagging often suggests that users demand a singular read of a post/theme (often used in conjunction with the #socialjusticewarrior tag)
	Reblog/Retweet	Creates an archive of homophily. Reblogging as a form of curating presents a repeated discourse to strengthen affinity of topic/theme.	

Reading Collecting and Curating as Genres of Participation and DIY Youth Activism

The collectors and curators of Center Ridge and City Town brought with them their own personal digital literacy inventories. As social processes and practices, collecting and curating are the particulars of a much larger enterprise of branding or lifestreaming fragmented identities so as to be read in a variety of ways (*see Table 9 above).* Youth leveraged Tumblr and the queer environs of digital youth culture, I argue, to participate in what participants identified as "soft" or do-it-yourself (DIY) activism. Collecting and curating designed spaces that allowed users to control, select, and publish distributed selves. Through the act, participants performed provisional and contingent involvement to cultural justice without having to directly risk opportunity.

Collecting and curating complicated competing discourses about what it meant to be both queer *and* an activist. In the remainder of this chapter, I unplug from the theory of collecting and curating to present analyses of the types of social tactics and elastic literacy practices youth employed on Tumblr to enact a #socialjusticewarrior identity. I present their importance as I lay out the subsections of findings: *#donttagyourhate: Being a #SocialJusticeWarrior and Collecting Community* and *Curating Cosmopolitanism*. As I highlight in my findings, for Andi, Zeke, Camille, Ben, and Andi, purposeful digital writing gave them membership and acceptance into communities they could not find elsewhere, membership and acceptance to worlds where the resources and practices employed were working to design more equitable and just social worlds for some while maintaining a periphery of "other."

#donttagyourhate: Being a #socialjusticewarrior and Collecting Community

Swiping, tapping, or clicking, youth were constantly participating in the haptic project of collecting and curating. Behind cashier stations, sitting cross-legged on lab tables in school, or while prepping a Little Caesar's "Fresh and Ready," youth actively asserted their identities as #socialjusticewarriors through particular actions on Tumblr. One of these actions, reblogging, was deemed a novice Tumblr competency. Reblogging was one of the many literacy practices Jack, Camille, Andi, and Zeke used in writing the #socialjusticewarrior self. Reblogging, and the remixing participants created by transforming, evaluating, and re-designing reblogged posts, are two of the focal practices participants used as minor acts of resistance. Beyond the practice of using audio/visual and textual languages across platforms, Jack, Zeke, Andi, and Camille used reblogging and remixing in complex ways in order to not only collect a #socialjusticewarrior visibility but to also critique, interrogate, and resist dominant cultural logics.

Utilizing the Tumblr dashboard to reblog posts, or reblogging from the blog itself, are the two ways users can share a post. Reblogging is an *a priori* discourse, one wherein participants are not contributing to, but, rather, recirculating images and texts that are already a part of the digital environment. Reblogging was not an act of writing the #socialjusticewarrior self, but ultimately a way of collecting the #socialjusticewarrior self, one whose own status on Tumblr raised attention to issues of personal importance as well as critiqued those who deem youth an ill-informed group. My time with the youth group, however, suggested that reblogging might also be seen as an act and practice that users, especially those who are historically marginalized, use as a means to gain visibility in a world wherein their youth minority status only further pushes them to the periphery. Collecting allowed youth participants to read, re-circulate, and write on one's own terms.

Participants reblogged visual images to first critique and combat homophobia. Being read as a member of the LGBTQ youth community was an identity of primacy for these #SocialJusticeWarriors. Zeke, for instance, reblogging a rainbow sign that read "Hate is not a family value" from the blog gaymarriageusa, indicated that this type of practice not only contributed to the visibility he gained as a queer youth member on Tumblr, but also depicted the type of #socialjusticewarrior self he was trying to render intelligible. This type of reblogging, according to Zeke, served as a 'type of educating' and 'activism' his closeted status at home silenced in the public sphere. Camille and Andi also saw this type of reblogging as a way to increase LGBTQ visibility on their blogs. Reblogging an image of two white male youth holding the letter 's' to remix the New Hope Church's message of "God says homosexuality is sin" to "God says homosexuality is in," Camille combatted the real and perceived homophobia felt at school [*for reblog images see (Figures 11 & 12*].

Figure 11: Zeke's Reblog

Figure 12: Camille's Reblog

As an out participant, Camille often felt "…school was the space that was most homophobic, on Tumblr I can write back." She argued that the digital platform acted as a mediator to speak back to fellow classmates and peers. Tumblr, for Camille, was a space where her #socialjusticewarrior self felt "most like me."

Apart from reblogging to combat homophobia, participants also used Tumblr to compose the gendered and sexual self. In our one-on-one meetings to look at participant writing, Zeke, Jack, Andi, and Camille shared hundreds of sexually explicit images that lined their tumblelog. As we surveyed their Tumblr archive, a perspective allowing users to see posts categorized by month, I asked participants about the type of visibility these collected images elicited from followers. Zeke and Jack argued that the plethora of half-clothed male models and celebrities featured on their blogs were their "type." Comparatively, Camille was more assertive, asking me if I was uncomfortable seeing scenes of erotica and intimacy. When I asked her why there were so many reblogs of images that could be considered sexual, Camille was quick to name that she, too, "…had a sexuality" and that just because she is a minor, did not mean she should censor it.

This type of sexual literacy (Alexander, 2008) work and practice is not new. At a more abstract level, writing in digital environments as a practice to collect and elicit community membership in affinity spaces is a well-documented phenomena for digital literacy scholars interested in affinity networks and communities of practice. A number write about this navigation extensively (Black, 2009; Lam, 2009; Lewis & Fabos, 2005). Reblogging brings to light a myriad of stylistic choices that render youth-driven creation and collecting not only as a product of identities, but also a social critique and call to action. One's personal differences (e.g., race, ableism, etc.) color their collecting experiences quite differently. In next sections, I read across Andi, Zeke, Jack, and Camille's collecting to decode the varying hues of being and becoming a #SocialJusticeWarrior. By doing so I hope to present how the seemingly mundane new media practices of #tagging, reblogging, etc. warrant greater attention into the distinct logics and rhetorical affordances embedded in collecting as a remixed genre of participation and social tactic.

Remixing to 'feel' community; or, being black online and where's the t in queer politics. Apart from reblogging, participants also remixed as a way to educate those who follow them on Tumblr. As I discussed the practices of reblogging with participants, many would comment how they would add-on to the reblog of someone else's post. This additive function is central to how remixing is figured as a digital literacy practice. Remixing, "…involves taking cultural artifacts and combining and manipulating them into new kinds of creative blends and products" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, p. 95). While wearing the guise of education, remixing was not always what it seemed. For example, Jack, someone whose own reblogging was often tied to this type of 'education' and 'activism,' was interested in critiquing those both in and

outside of the LGBTQ community. In a post he tagged #urwelcome and #socialjusticewarrior, Jack reblogged from yourmatespirit the following (*see Figure 13*).

Figure 13: Jack's Reblog

When I asked Jack why the tags were added to index the reblog of yourmatespirit's post, Jack consistently went back to "educating" as a means of DIY activism. As a trans-man, Jack recounted to me several stories of how the GSA at City Town, and the conception of the LGBTQ community it proliferated, dismissed the T in this acronym of sexual identity politics. Jack felt as if he was speaking back to those allies who quickly "friend-ed" the gays and lesbians at school but secluded and silenced him and other transgender peers.

For others, like Zeke, remixing as a mode for educating/shaming took on more political tones. Someone who considered himself civically limited, but nonetheless engaged, Zeke reblogged images of President Obama, adding wordart on top of the image to reiterate statements President Obama made concerning LGBTQ rights. When asked about a reblog from March 2013 that he offered in July 2013 as an example of remixing, Zeke argued that by adding President Obama's narrative, "I believe that gay couples deserve the same legal rights as every other couple in this country!" he was bringing attention to the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which was struck down in March 2013 and discussed in Center Ridge's GSA. Zeke,

like Jack, felt like he was educating a Tumblr public, a networked group of users who followed him. Educating was a core value for the #socialjusticewarrior as practiced by Zeke and Jack. For other's, however, collecting as a form of remixing reblogged images was *felt* differently.

Unlike Zeke and Jack, Camille's collecting across the larger study created an archive of racial and cultural justice work. If we stretch back to the blacked out poem from Chapter 2, Camille was quite aware of the power of utilizing other people's words to describe, with a certain intensity, her own narratives of self and community. On Tumblr, in particular, her collecting was not only spliced by remixed satire, but through reblogged images and hyperlinked stories documenting the hostility towards black and brown bodies. In a post she reblogged from Zeke, originating from the user softcore-fuckery, Camille detailed a timestamp of hate from July 17th (the execution of Eric Garner) to an unarmed black teen being shot ten times by Ferguson police as he returned from a convenience store (August 9th, 2014). She reblogged the post, foregrounded by an image of Eric Garner, and added the text "Things you should know: this happened in the past 23 days." For Camille, Tumblr was a space she traversed while "feeling black," a geography whose own siloed identity practices (e.g., drop-down menus indicating race/ethnicity, online applications asking for checked genders) fostered a commitment to community that was felt in being and collecting a #socialjusticewarrior self.

This register of "feeling" black for Camille was illustrative as repeated discourses of #blacklivesmatter circulated on her dashboard. Her posts acted as small interjections on my own Tumblr, an otherwise queer and institutionalized space used to document the project and capture live field notes. One morning in early September, as I scrolled through my own dashboard prior to getting out of bed, Camille's reblogged image of a public lynching caught me off guard. Reblogged from buttsqueezin-season, the image was a collage of two photos, a public lynching

photograph taken from an open-access archive and a digital photo of a "license" in which owners would have the right to "hunt" African Americans. This image, reblogged by more than 2000 users, included descriptor text that read, "Don't ever tell me to get over it." Camille added her own comment to the mix. She wrote, "Shit they don't teach you about in school. Fucking Christ." Similar to the lack of black authors featured in Center Ridge's more formal school curriculum, I listened to Camille's text describing the "shit they don't teach you in school" to consider how she felt in Center Ridge and the larger Kilgore community. As I argued elsewhere these "techtual counter-economies" of youth writing allowed youth to "purchase" voice through the media and monetized accounting systems of digital literacy practice (Wargo, 2016). As Nakamura (2002) so aptly reminds us, being Black or a person of color online is a doubly disorienting position. For Camille, Zeke, and other African American youth I learned from, digital disidentification, the "disavowal of the recognition of race in local contexts in favor of comfortably distant global ones" (Nakamura, 2002, p. 22), was a position impressed upon them. Even through the semiotic processes of collecting, race was an affective register that was *felt* across users.

As reblogging and remixing became a theme in participants' shared writing and composing, the twin practices of collecting a community/visibility and "educating" individuals was central to understanding how Tumbling could be seen as a social tactic. As a socially situated practice, reblogging as a form of collecting is reminiscent to Bakhtin's (1981) "ideological becoming." Rather than focusing on the "process of selectively assimilating the words of others" (p. 341), and instead illuminating the act of reblogging and remixing as a means of achieving a polyvocality in the curation of the #socialjusticewarrior self across Tumblr, we begin to see how one's own construction is designed and allowed only because it is echoed to and through others. Through this quasi-heteroglossia we can attend to how youth engaged in this

collecting practice of reblogging/remixing as a mode of resistance. Remixing and reblogging reflect and recycle multiple voices, collected voices that are realized to and through different modalities and ones who address multiple audiences in these networked spaces. Tumblr, with its ease in sharing and remixing media, provided youth with a product and invitation for community participation.

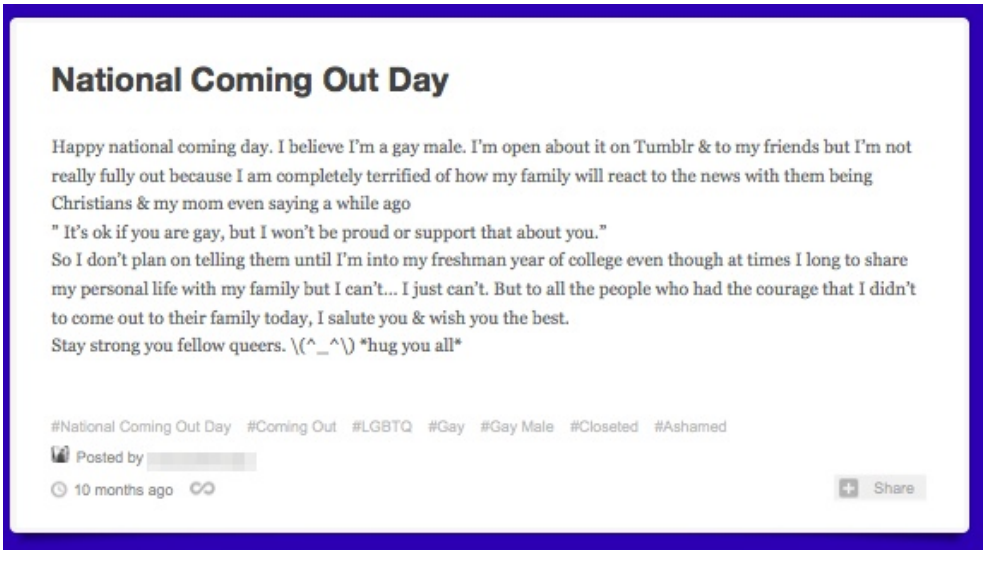
#Hashtagpublics and collecting community literacies. As a practice and orienting device that is often entwined with, and set apart from, reblogging and remixing, I found Camille, Andi, Ben, Zeke, and Jack evoking hashtags in a number of utilitarian ways. The hashtag functions in the space between the contextual and the chronological. A hashtag is a node of continued context across media, conversations, and locales. Illustrated through participant interviews and writing, it emerged temporally; pointing to itself as it pointed to other texts it marks within its ambit. Hashtags are hybrids in taxonomy and types of information. They are information and tag, pragmatic and metapragmatic speech. Hashtags are deictic and indexical--yet what they point to is themselves, their own dual role in ongoing discourse. In this section, I explore the multiple ways youth used the hashtag function as a means to collect followers (a necessary action for successful Tumbling) and LGBTQ visibility. I detail the continued "educating" #socialjusticewarriors engaged in as a form of youth activism. Finally, I describe how the hashtag functioned as a mechanism to delineate and create siloed categories of identity, namely the #socialjusticewarrior self. As an orienting device, the hashtag was a meta-communicative tactic that highlighted difference across the genres and practices of collecting and curating.

Participants talked about Tumblr's search function as being the primary mechanism to collect followers who had similar interests in LGBTQ issues and activism. Zeke, someone whose

primary focus was finding LGBTQ followers on Tumblr, told me in an interview, "…if you type in #marriageequality in the search bar you'll find posts that show people who are in support of it. Those are the people I would follow. You collect them." Through these participatory networks, wherein tags acted as a source of discourse and identity, youth created counterpublics. Be they fan-based or queer-oriented, the young people I interviewed used the hashtag function to imagine a space where they could write, collect, and compose multiple identities. While anonymous, insofar as an individual would need a Tumblog ID to gain access to an individual's information, Tumblr was not as invisible as participants thought. Their own conceptions of digital spaces were clouded and the networks they were a part of and wrote about were becoming more visible.

As an outsider whose own limited knowledge blurred my vision of the function participants deployed to tag and garner attention, I became fascinated in how youth who were not out at school and at home were quite visible on the Tumblr platform. In a post Zeke mined for me in a one-on-one meeting at school, he showed me how his own identities on Tumblr were in tension with his presentation of self. In "National Coming Out Day," Zeke writes (*see Figure 14*):

Figure 14: Zeke's Post "National Coming Out Day"



Zeke tagged the post with #NationalComingOutDay #ComingOut #LGBT #Gay #GayMale #Closeted #Ashamed. Zeke's post had multiple likes and was reblogged across several follower's blogs. The "closeted self" Zeke invokes in his post is at first debilitating. The post portrayed Zeke as helpless in his quest for parental and self-acceptance. However, the uptake and status of his post provided Zeke with an emergent visibility. His blog, and in particular this post with tags that are widely used across the Tumblr platform (#LGBT, #Gay, #Ashamed), provided a currency for Zeke and his gay visibility. On a space where the constellation of visibility is the blueprint to one's own individual experience, youth used the practice of tagging to architect identities that are at times multiple and oftentimes elastic, shape shifting interests to match an identity they did not always write, but was sometimes written for them.

"Tagging social justice is not a one size fits all thing…"."If you want to ask me questions about my identity," Andi remarked, "just read my bio on Tumblr."

basics;
I'm **16**. o.0
I am **in love** with my bestfriend. <3
& **shes my girlfriend**. C:
but she lives *892 miles away* from me…we met online
I am a **L E S B I A N** [;
I love **faces,** if you haven't already noticed. xD
I live in Kilgore. -.-
My birthday day is February 18th.
My **self esteem** is basically nonexistent…
I only love my **boobs, ass, and eyes**..everything else, I would change..
I was diagnosed with depression.
I also have the slightest bit of anxiety. ._.
& I wouldn't change my fucked up life or difference for anything :'D c: <3

Slouched in a small booth at a local diner, Andi retrieved her phone and read aloud her biography. Looking behind her, in the booth just adjacent, Andi checked on her mom who would often come to our interviews and GSA meetings to provide support, as she herself was a lesbian

and worked with Janice to offer help and guidance. Andi's mom, Patricia, had recently gone back to school at Kilgore community college to become an early childhood educator. "My mom hates when I cuss out loud" Andi laughed, "do they teach teachers that in college?" As one of the few white students who attended Center Ridge's GSA, I was curious to hear how she defined her role as a #socialjusticewarrior and how collecting emerged as a practice for her. In particular, I was curious to hear the communities she responded to and partook in as my field notes were filled with moments when Zeke, Camille, Gabe, and other Black youth at Center Ridge acknowledged Andi as an ally, as someone who "got that she was white and recognized it." She was one of the few members of the group who meandered her way into other's interviews.

My own naïveté and online echo chamber of the Tumblr dashboard first prompted me to ask about the ways youth users who take on the identity and stance operationalized #socialjusticewarrior. "It not a one size fits all thing," Andi responded, "being a #socialjusticewarrior is about feeling for others, being with your people. Taking some kind of action." I was curious for Andi to continue, to build on this dynamism that she saw in her own work and activism of being a #socialjusticewarrior.

> **Andi:** When you go on their Tumblr, you learn their emotions. You learn what they're going through. Being a #socialjusticewarrior is being with those people. Hearing their stories and sharing your own.
>
> **Wargo:** Describe your Tumblr community
>
> **Andi:** I follow a lot of like "self harm" people and suicidal people. If their posts say something that worries me, I'll go to their tumblr and I'll be like, "Hey are you ok, do you need to talk about something?" They will do the same for me.

Across the three years Andi and I worked together, circle time stories at GSA (whether held in a classroom or at a high-top in Queen Pizza) were often a cathartic release for her. The girlfriend who she marks in the opening biography transitioned in 2014. The pair now was navigating what it meant for a cisgender femme to date a trans*masculine boy.

Andi's larger corpus of text on Tumblr was indexed by tags that took on the form and genre of a personal letter. Using the #for_____ tag, Andi would write personal posts, sometimes to herself and sometimes to others.

Andi: A lot of my writing is in the form of letters

Wargo: What do you mean letters?

Andi: Like letters to a certain person. Like I have a lot of letters to Becky, my stepmom

Wargo: On your tumblr?

Andi: No, well yes, I guess it depends. Like, every once in awhile I will write one to her on Tumblr. But it could be in a notebook that's in my room or a text that I share on Tumblr.

In a letter tagged with #forME, Andi writes,

> What sucks about being me is that I want kids, I want them so bad and I want to be the best mother for them and I want to love then unconditionally and I want them to know that I will do everything for them…I need to fix me. I don't want them to have a mother that disappears into their room for days at a time and doesn't eat and doesn't do anything. I want to be their superhero. I want to be a mom and I want to be a (*sic*) pregnant and I want to love my babies. I don't want them to have a mom like me. I can't change how I am and how I am living. #forME (Tumblr post, Retrieved on January 27th 2015)

In this text-based post, Andi is no longer the 16 year-old she was when the project first commenced. Instead of her lengthy biography that marked her by common characteristics such as her birthday, outward appearance, and reflective commentary, her opening biography now read “queer / living / mending.” The post shared above was “favorited” by 32 followers and was shared/reblogged twice. When I asked Andi about her audience, she detailed how her depression and anxiety often led her to Tumblr, to speak and write to others who were a part of her affinity group. She bookended her personal post with a reblogged image of a wide-ruled piece of paper taped onto a photograph of tree branches in the night. The only text on the photo was written on the sliver of paper and it read, “sometimes we’re broken and we don’t know why.” The closer I listened to Andi’s writing on Tumblr the more apparent it was that being a #socialjusticewarrior was not a one-size fits all approach. Rather, like Andi so aptly reminds us, “sometimes being a #socialjusticewarrior means that you advocate for yourself. That you speak so loud they have to listen.”

On #hashtag activism and the limits of community. Apart from the introspective nature tagging took on for youth, participants also used tagging, like reblogging, as a means to “educate” people. Invoking the tag as a type of tool for indexing knowledge followers and other Tumblr users should know, participants used the practice of tagging as an apparatus to promote equality and combat discrimination and homophobia. The function of this type of activism had a distinct name and genealogy across Tumblr participants. This function, #donttagyourhate, according to Jack, Camille, and Zeke was a “golden rule for Tumblr use.” First introduced to me by Jack, a participant who often times tagged posts with #lifewiththejack and #tproblems (“t” standing for transgender), #donttagyourhate was a cautionary message for users to not tag their dislike or bias for/or and against something or someone. Participants noted how hashtags had the

ability to mark the discursive boundaries of an event. Hashtags were events themselves, straddling the dual role of text and metatext.

Although Jack, Zeke, and Camille noted how #donttagyourhate promoted a certain type of activism and education for users and followers, Jack used it, primarily, as a means of writing to a particular subgroup of the LGBTQ community, the trans-community, a group whose own visibility often seemed secondary to larger gay and lesbian issues on the microblogging site. In "Testosterone TMI," Jack wrote (*see Figure 15*),

Figure 15: Jack's Post "Testosterone TMI"

The post, tagged with #pubertythesecondtimearound and #lifewiththejack was a piece of personal writing, written to document an experience. It, however, also had a secondary purpose. According to Jack, he was "educating" individuals through his own transitioning experience. Tagging the post with #pubertythesecondtimearound before the tag #lifewiththejack gave operative power to the bodily transformation he was undertaking and the déjà vu of puberty he had experienced just a few years previous. Jack was making the "t" discourse a primary one, one

wherein his own posts operated to promote a dialogue often times silenced in LGBTQ youth discourses.

Although the tagging feature youth employed created a public and counterpublic of increased LGBTQ visibility (and sometimes homogeneity), participants were quite aware of the fringes of this so-called public. Their actions were purposeful in de-centering the straight white man, a privileged population each participant discussed as a majoritarian group that often silenced their construction of selves across contexts, and in particular school. This de-centering created what Fraser (1990) calls a "subaltern counterpublic" or a "discursive arena where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs" (p. 123). While a "community" or "community literacy" could be rendered through these hypertext tags and Fraserian criterion, tagging was quite delimiting, and not very queer in its purpose or style with its sometimes-static labels and identitarian taxonomy of classifications. In fact, Jack remarked about the lack of visibility for the straight white male on Tumblr.

> **Wargo:** What about Tumblr makes it a safe space?
>
> **Jack:** For the most part it is minorities. And we [minorities] have come to the consensus that sometimes people don't like us because we're different…There is also this idea on Tumblr that if you are not different, then you're bad. There is a lot of prejudice against white religious people on Tumblr. I constantly feel like I should say, "No, everyone's equal, settle down."
>
> **Wargo:** Do you?
>
> **Jack:** (...) No

In many ways Jack's narrative, and one of the functions of participant tagging, operated as a mechanism and practice in creating and collecting what Gee (2001) would call an affinity group. "An affinity group," according to Gee, "is made up of people who may be dispersed across a large space" (p. 24). What constitutes an affinity group, nonetheless, is the "allegiance to, access to, and participation in specific practices that provide each of the group's members the requisite experiences" (Gee, 2001, p. 24). Like the collecting practices invoked on Tumblr, the process through which these affinity groups gained power was through participation and sharing, central features to youth digital culture and the counterpublic visibility created by the #socialjusticewarrior hashtag.

Tagging, reblogging, and remixing, understood here as the digital literacy practices enfolded within the larger social process of collecting, are useful in examining how youth are writing the self and creating private and public spaces online. They nuance how equality was not only an ideological stance these young people took on by indexing themselves as a #socialjusticewarrior, but nuance the intricacies of collecting as a genre of participating in social justice work. On a short timescale, events and studies such as the examination of the #socialjusticewarrior, illuminate how the hashtag worked as a uniting thread of discourse, allowing those who use it to feed into and collect an ongoing and evolving conversation. However, as I illuminate above, it also is a practice wherein youth designed and wrote the self in relation to the public/private sphere of flesh space.

Curating Cosmopolitanism

Despite the rhetoric surrounding the ease in which one "collected" on Tumblr, and the relatively shallow definition of multiculturalism that being a #socialjusticewarrior may purport, its counter-part, curating, was far more fragile. "So," I declared, shifting in my seat "we're going

to start the same way we started." Ben took out a large yellow scarf. Intricate stitching marked it as a pashmina. "My parents bought me this when they were in Europe last week. Can we take a picture? We have known each other for so long. I want to remember this." At the start of my work with City Town and Center Ridge youth, I engaged them with a process known as artifactual interviewing. A procedure I engaged with as a project team leader with LiteracyCorps-Michigan, artifactual interviewing allowed participants to story through an object. It allowed me, as a researcher, to see how youth used material texts to narrate particular versions and iterations of past, present, and future selves. "It's worldly. I want this to represent how I see my future. I want to be all over the place. I want to travel." As I lifted up my iPhone, arching my best long-arm to take the selfie, Ben demanded, "Filter it!" "What?" I asked. In less than a second, Ben took the phone, swiped to the left twice and filtered the photo. "The lighting in here is bad for me." Ben, visibly marked by his bleach blonde coiffe, over-sized cardigan, and skinnies finished his thought, "Make sure we look good, right?"

Looking good for Ben, however, was more than a materialist obsession. Here, I want to zoom in on the concept of filtering and illuminate how it illustrates the composing practice and social tactic of curating. In comparison to Andi, Zeke, Camille, and Jack, Ben curated his participation across networked literacies to present a certain version of activist self. He used the functions of curating to at once stretch across local and global communities and demand that others bridge their more local senses of activism for more global concerns of pluralism while simultaneously disavowing more local concerns for community and agency. For Ben, curating was a form of "imagined cosmopolitanism" (Zuckerman, 2013), a genre of action that others outside of his small friend network were seemingly incapable of achieving.

Theorized as a "political philosophy, a moral theory, and a cultural disposition" (Rizvi, 2009, p. 253), cosmopolitanism allowed me a way into conceptualizing and addressing the hybrid possibilities for communicating across transnational global spaces, hyper-mediated texts, and diverse social practices. I, like Stevenson (2003), define cosmopolitanism as a "way of viewing the world that…is concerned with the transgression of boundaries and markers" consonant with an information age (p. 332). Curating cosmopolitanism, in contrast to collecting social justice, embodies a conceptual orientation into "belonging" in our current "cosmopolitan moment" (Beck & Sznaider, 2006). While not directly cited by participants as rationale for why and how they were collecting and curating, cosmopolitanism was theoretically and epistemologically embedded within the practices of online/offline #socialjusticewarrior work. Rather than solely consider cosmopolitanism as the navigation and movement between local and global contexts (Abu El-Haj, 2009; Luke & Carrington, 2002), I want to consider it as a rhetorical act that repositions our understanding of belonging and difference through observable online practice (i.e. collecting and curating) that is both nourished and deconstructed in IRL. Hence, like collecting, curating is a social practice wherein youth actors act as cultural intermediaries; they recognize their common humanity and sense of solidarity with others. They serve as a bridge between content and reception. Through this creative labor, I want to argue, enacting a #socialjusticewarrior stance is less about personal investment but rather about the framing and circulation of content that effects outside reception and orientation.

Curating cosmopolitanism and "listening" to the local to voice the global. As with any ethnography, the stories told were spliced and collaged by current events and tragedies. In the latter stages of fieldwork with Center Ridge and City Town youth, larger social movements born out of the untimely death of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, and Sandra Bland backdropped

much of the youth activism collected by youth, and African American participants in particular. As I glossed earlier, these movements and moments of resistance elicited a sense of "feeling black" that was new for Zeke and Camille. For Jack and Andi themes of #blacklivesmatter were signposts for them to understand that ally work was not a name you take on, but rather actions and a disposition that you embody by acknowledging your own privilege and commitment to racial and queer justice. While Ben did not outwardly disagree with the actions and practices of the larger movement, as I regularly saw him during GSA and interviews reblogging visual posts highlighting recent race-based U.S tragedies, he was wary of the young people whose allegiance was newly fostered by the revolution.

Ben: Everyone these days is a sheeple. Well, person, I guess. You know sheeple right?

Wargo: No

Ben: Those who just follow, who just go along with it because it's trending. They want to follow trends. I don't care as much. I think its funny otherwise. Sometimes I sheeple just to save face. It's just another mode of communication. You have to curate yourself.

Much like the picture that Ben quickly transformed through the tactic of filtering, so too was he aware of the precision needed to save-face, to curate, a particular version of online self that allowed him to traverse the particulars of the local and more global.

Despite his tactical response in showing affinity for the #blacklivesmatter movement however, Ben's larger interests were, as he argued, "more global." When I sat down with Jack and Ben at City Town, articulating my own commitments to stopping police brutality and my apprehension in being read a particular way by sharing or re-posting recent news articles on Facebook by my more conservative Indiana family, Ben shook his head.

Ben: It's probably really different here at City Town than it is at Center Ridge.

Wargo: Why? Is it because of the study body? The difference in communities you have at City Town?

Ben: It is because we have a very very large Islamic community. And, you see that as soon as anything happens. We all go on defense mode. It's like the #JeSuisCharlie thing. Those people who were just retweeting or reblogging the #JeSuisCharlie movement were idiots.

Wargo: Why?

Ben: They [*Center Ridge youth*] aren't surrounded by worldly people. I am. I interact with diverse communities. Me and my friends talk about this a lot. We talk about stupid people and things like the limits of only considering U.S. racism.

Wargo: Uh huh. What do you mean by stupid?

Ben: I am the only white kid in the group. I'm also the only boy in the group. We [City Town youth] share in that. We're different. We saw what was first a movement of free-speech and we said, "That's not free speech, that's hate."

I quickly inquired about the #JeSuisCharlie movement that transpired online. It was picked up by Snapchat and streamed through all users' feeds. Another thread that sutured these now networked commons for participants. In fact, Zeke and Camille inquired why U.S. based current events never made the dashboard while others, such as the Je Suis Charlie movement did. I didn't ask this larger question, concerned by what Ben would say, but instead interrogated his own knowledge and relative apprehension with the movement.

Ben: I think it is disrespectful to draw the profit

Wargo: Ok…

Ben: It is very disrespectful. One of my friends made her icon on Tumblr the Je Suis Charlie template and I just was like "Ah, god, no!" So I blocked her.

Quietly finishing his tea, Jack looked down and did not respond to Ben's larger rationale for blocking and removing his "friend" on Tumblr. In fact, like Jack, I am cautious to detail these particulars here as in some ways they may demonize a young person for not acknowledging his own privilege. They detail what Jenkins (2006) would call a "pop cosmopolitan," a user "whose embrace of global popular media represents an escape route of the parochialism of her local community" (p. 152). This is not my intention. To gain a larger perspective on why his focus is so "global," if you will, we need to work backwards and suture his curating practices online to his more everyday activist work.

In early Spring 2013, far before any of these events intersected with my work with youth in the larger study, Ben detailed his job at City Town's GSA.

Ben: I feel like I'm not going to GSA for myself. I'm going to educate people, educate people about community. Yeah, we're educating the community of City Town. And I feel like that's my job. We're creating community through educating.

For Ben, similar to Jack's work in educating his larger networked audience on Tumblr about trans* issues and Center Ridge's more material zining for National Day of Silence, he saw his job to build community through educating. Ben was quite aware of his limits, however. Translanguaging his way through a blog post written in June 2013, he writes "Cambiando de tema, este dia, Pablo y yo fuimos a la casa del otro Pablo. Era muy interesante alli. Un otro chico, Gero, estaba alli. 'Te gustara Gero' mi madre me dijo. Estaba falsa. Very false." As his post progresses, readers work their way through the Spanish/English text to find out that Gero was against gay couples having the right to adopt children. "Gero, el idioto, me dijo, 'si un nino tiene

dos padres o dos madres, la educacion del nino es incompleta.'" Ben later translates his post arguing that, "Unfortunately my grasp of Spanish wasn't quite good enough to refute his homophobic ideas with science at that time. I hate Gero for his ideas, just a lot." Ben's navigation between two languages was a lot like his navigation between identities. For Spanish, however, he knew his limits. In terms of being a #socialjusticewarrior, a stance he took on when necessary, he often came up short, trippingly working to elide others to a periphery to maintain his centered privilege.

Heightened by his linguistic dexterity, Ben's curated cosmopolitan identity was only augmented by the four languages he had under his belt. The closer I "listened" to Ben, the more I started noticing these bright spots of worldly interests. From highlighting the aesthetic of K*POP with Korean characters, to a post entitled "7 lies the US Needs to Stop Telling About Women Who Wear Hijabs," his curated archive transpired into what he coined as "soft activism."

> **Ben:** With the internet we have a more expansive view of worldly news. Without it, all we would care about is ourselves. We're doing what people once did in the streets. We [residents of City Town] aren't in the cities. Have you seen City Town? There's nowhere that it's happening to join in. The Internet helps spread the word.
>
> **Wargo:** Yeah
>
> **Ben:** We utilize resources that didn't exist when you were in high school. It's like soft. It's soft activism. Same principles of holding a sign and yelling, less dangerous though. I prefer it.

This "soft activism" for Ben, however, was curated. Streamed through a reblog, retweet, favorite, like, or original post of his own, Ben gave face, sometimes quite literally as he frequently took

selfies with descriptor text captioning the photo with "social justice-ing" to bookend the work he did on Tumblr (*see Figure 16*).

Figure 16: Ben's Social Justiceing Selfie

When I asked him directly about the curating I was seeing he was quick to help build my working definition.

> **Ben:** You look for the best content. You choose how to present it. It's about communicating using what you have, thinking about how you use your resources…You get a voice through others. It works through reblogging, you have to think about organizing other people's content. You can't do it haphazard like.
>
> **Wargo:** So what is important for this type of practice?
>
> **Ben:** The comments, always read the comments.
>
> **Wargo:** You read the comment before you reblog?
>
> **Ben:** Always. You need to make sure THOSE are in agreement with you.

Although taking on a quite different function than collecting, curating was just as rigorous as a composing practice for exploring the range of identities presented as a #socialjusticewarrior. Unfortunately, for Ben, and for many of us whose own echo chambers of Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat produce a homophily of in-group advantage, we are blind-sided by the other, thinking we are working to enact a #socialjusticewarrior stance without ever acknowledging that disagreement, disruption, and conflict are the tropes that we must mediate through in order to better understand and acknowledge one another. Without this acknowledgment, we uphold the common neologism of cyber-utopianism, the grandiose and wholly liberatory idea of technology being the particular logic that surpasses difference. Sometimes, however, recognizing that difference is what makes us human.

Enacting a cosmopolitan stance and curating #socialjusticewarrior: shared affinity and allegiance. In the same manner that I cautioned us from thinking less of curating as a social practice for enacting a #socialjusticewarrior stance, so too do I want to caution us from thinking less of Ben as an agent of change. As a researcher whose own preaching from the pulpit mentality often cast a shadow over the diverse opinions and constraints held and felt by teachers at Center Ridge and City Town, I share with Ben the struggle of acknowledging my own privilege. I was able to develop a "one of us" rapport with City Town and Center Ridge youth while not recognizing that my chances of getting pink-slipped for moving outside of the mandated scope and sequence were zero. Janice was quick to draw me to this conclusion as I worked with her to think about ways we could take issues cited by the larger #socialjusticewarrior community and envelope them in the larger grade 10 scope and sequence. "Sure," she laughed, "I'll do this when I get 45 extra minutes a period and an actual prep." Similarly, Ben was able to navigate these larger (g)local issues surrounding his friends'

community without ever having to feel the backlash of xenophobia or racial injustice. We both, in so many ways, were able to opt out of particular tensions when we needed to. In contrast to thinking of curating solely as a mechanism to fashion a surface level self, here I want to discuss curation as a mechanism for citation and networked love, a practice that acts as an affordance for empathy. For many of the young people I encountered, curating was a form of citational practice that harkened back to other youth communities they traversed online. Curating become a form of community activism, a cosmopolitan practice that led user to connections of the unfamiliar.

In the same way that Ben often used the print-based text and diary like posts to curate a particular version of self across his Tumblr dashboard, so too did Andi. Halfway into the project, Andi dropped out of Center Ridge high school to attend the Alternative Pathways Prep (APP) program. "I just can't focus," Andi wrote in an email exchange, "my mom thinks it might be best for me." Despite the observational intensity that now was missing as part of the larger ethnographic fieldwork I completed at Center Ridge, I was steadfast in my own techtual listening of Andi's networked writing. Shortly after the semester started at APP, I read a text-based post entitled "I'm getting really bad again…" in the post Andi wrote:

> i have my first therapy appointment on Wednesday. Maybe ill be ok soon. I just want my baby to come hold me, to tell me everything is gonna be ok, but shes 892 miles away from me and my GSA family is now no longer downstairs. :'c & I just UGH…I'm gonna go try to forget everything and shove my face into a book now…I feel it too @CamilleXXXX @GabeXXXXXXX @MegXXXX. Bye babes <3 #selfcare #dontharm #sometimesImakemistakes

Closing her post with citing Camille, Gabe, and her girlfriend at the time (Meg), Andi's text was received as an interjection to their own individual work on Tumblr. Quickly following Andi's

post, Camille responded with #withyouinspirit and #missyou. Here, the practice of citation became a form of curating a thread of dialogue, a shared sense of community. The response that Camille elicits, I want to argue, is a form of enacted cosmopolitanism. She takes an interest in the practices of others (here the self-harm community), strives to understand if not accept the community's larger state of being, and takes seriously her obligation to respond. For Andi and Camille, being a #socialjusticewarrior is about empathy, acknowledging the feeling while maintaining distance and acknowledging that you do not know what it feels like so don't try to.

These curated forms of community continued as I explored how cosmopolitanism intersected with the ideational position of being a #socialjusticewarrior. As I shared parts of this chapter with youth in earlier stages of writing, I kept coming back to the question, "Ok, so how does being queer or being LGBT impact being a #socialjusticewarrior?" Camille quickly responded with, "Sure it's there, but it isn't just that. I'm not *just* gay. I'm black. I'm vegetarian, a reader of books, a lover of nursing, a wannabe writer, I am all of those things, so my #socialjusticewarrior identity is all of those things." Refracted identities, in all their forms, were liked, supported, celebrated, and maintained through curation.

In a pic-stitch thread that Camille reblogged from Instagram to Tumblr, two parallel photographs emerged with a long line of participant response. The first photo was a group shot, five African American men huddled together with arms draped around one another. Just adjacent to this picture was a second, a group of African American women standing shoulder to shoulder with one another. Across the photos, funny faces with tongues sticking out and middle fingers raised to what is seemingly the camera's lens foregrounded the images. The descriptor texts of the reblog read, "You think you know us? One doctor. Two firemen, four lawyers, an engineer, a dentist, a teacher, one finishing pharmacy school – and those are just the day jobs." Attached to

this post, linked as a response to Camille's photo reblog, Andi reblogged a comment. A pic-stitch collage of Javon Johnson performing his poem "cuz he's black," while adding the #blacklivesmatter tag. Closing this chain, Ben then commented through a reblog from user alesia. The reblog print-based post read "I want teeth as straight and white as the US government." This chain, illustrative of the shared commitment to equity and cultural justice a #socialjusticewarrior stands on, is a curated form of cosmopolitanism, strengthened through the shared commitment to racial justice and understanding of difference. I use it here to highlight how what we know online is whom we know. Our strength in voice is through the chain of reverberation and resonance of meaning. Even still, while at first glance we may take this linked chain as a form of "soft" camaraderie (borrowing from Ben's term of "soft activism"), or "soft" cosmopolitanism, it expresses a willingness to show alliance and allegiance with, and a response of bearing witness to. Curating and collecting, two social processes indicative of the emerging and hybrid genres of writing in the age of electracy, were used as sophisticated mechanisms to architect experience and navigate inequality. Understanding the rhetorical affordances of collecting and curating amidst today's changing hypermedia landscape tells us much about how youth use digital literacy practice as social tactics in navigating identities in difference.

Making Sense of the Cracks: Youth Digital Literacies Practice as Social Tactic

The modes and social tactics Zeke, Andi, Jack, Ben, and Camille employed in their engagement with Tumblr tells us much about how the LGBTQ social subject, and #socialjusticewarrior in particular, is constructed across IRL and virtual worlds. Through collecting and curating, youth are navigating (in)equality through their everyday encounters with digital literacies. These adaptations, both in terms of identities and in practice, have implications for the ways we think about the social purposes of writing as well as for how researchers

interested in literacies that are more malleable engage in, trace, and follow research across contexts.

Scrolling through Andi's Tumblr dash at the conclusion of the deep techtual listening weeks, I stumbled upon a photo-post that captured the question, "Why do we just accept things?" I took a screenshot on my iPhone and archived it to later ask where she was when she captured the tagged wall and to inquire why she posted it (*see Figure 17*). We had an interview coming up in a couple of days to close the content analysis protocol.

Figure 17: Kilgore Community Bridge Tagging

"You know that is in Kilgore, right?" Andi whispered to me when I asked her about the wall's location. Sharing a vegan muffin at KCC café, Andi barricaded our space with textbooks, and an ipad. "Can you show me where?" I asked. Quickly she scuffled out of the booth and led the way. When we got to the wall it had already been repainted, resurfaced to get rid of the red text and adjacent imagery etched onto it with graffiti. Standing inches away from where the text had once surfaced, Andi touched the wall. "You can see cracks in where the paint chipped." With her fingernails she began to loosen some of the dead paint off the cement. As I touched the cracks in the cement, joining Andi in the exploration of the wall, I couldn't help but think of the irony and explicit connection to digital practice that this wall provided. Like the Tumblr dash, individuals tagged it with larger discourses, pushing back against institutional tensions. They interrogated

reactions to local governance, reblogged and recycled discourses with stenciled pop-culture references (do you see the Dr. Who tardis?) and scribed their names timestamp when and where they were on a specific date and time. In closing this chapter, I want to meditate on the wall and interrogate how collecting and curating operated as social tactics, findings cracks in online/offline surveillance to combat macro-level inequality. For Andi, Ben, Zeke, Camille, and Jack, collecting social justice and curating more cosmopolitan understandings of belonging rendered facets of humanity more visible. Despite their centered interests on being a #socialjusticewarrior, youth curated and collected to make their humanity recognizable. They nurtured and realized their humanity through others' ways of being.

Collecting, Curating, and the (Re)Presentation of Selves

In order for us to understand how Jack, Camille, Andi, Ben, and Zeke collected and curate multiple social identities on Tumblr to navigate (in)equality, we must return to the distinction made by considering these so-called digital literacies not as solely practices, but as social tactics. If we classify literacy work solely through conceptions of event and practice, we miss the utility in thinking about how literacies function to not only compose the selves, but also engage and manifest a type of agentic action. In terms of social tactic, I must note that youth did not *only* use Tumblr to write and work against (in)equality and homophobia. Participants deeply cared about working against (in)equality in school and the larger Kilgore and San Miguels' County community, engaging in forms of activism employed as part of school sanctioned GSA spaces (e.g., zining, petitioning school events that promoted heterosexism, etc.) and outside local events. While seemingly autonomous and separate from the digital environment of Tumblr, these events are not conceived as separate or unitary actions by participants. They are imagined and enmeshed within larger narratives and enactments of being a #socialjusticewarrior. These so-

called real worlds of school and society, often connected with the work done by youth on Tumblr, provided a fluid stream for youth composing.

Understanding collecting and curating as social tactics also operationalizes the various modes Zeke, Andi, Camille, Ben, and Jack created in circumventing issues of difference and conflict. Collecting and curating allowed them to create community, maintain queer-kin relations, and create social norms for interaction. However, as I illustrate above, Tumblr as a locus and site was neither wholly liberatory nor wholly oppressive. Although there were moments where youth critically engaged in analyzing and critiquing public issues of concern, social tactics also functioned to isolate and deprive individuals' voice, namely those whose identities in difference did not align with acceptable forms of difference. Participants demonstrated a degree of pleasure from their ability to choose tactics that allowed them to gain power in peer relationships. For Jack, Ben, Andi, Camille, and Zeke entering the virtual worlds of Tumblr meant entering worlds constituted around the lives and values of LGBTQ peoples. Tumblr became an echo chamber wherein youth who were interested in creating a version of reality and an identity of difference that conformed to dominant ideologies of uniformity and tolerance were celebrated. Ironic, since most of their effort and work dealt directly with understanding facets of identity as difference and cultural justice as a mechanism to combat rhetoric of tolerance and inclusion.

Youth collected and curated to stretch across broader social and cultural contexts of discomfort. Participants did not only use these genres of participation as a means to create isolated geographies of self-expression but also to combat and directly speak back to the (in)equality they encountered in school and at home. The multi-voiced experience of writing on Tumblr is not only deictic, but also performative in its composition, as users ritualistically composed varying vignettes of subjectivity "instituted through the stylized repetition of acts"

(Butler, 1988, p. 519) that materialized the gendered body and #socialjusticewarrior subjectivity of participants. I argue, howwever that we stretch these texts and social practices even further. Using Camille, Ben, Andi, Jack, and Zeke's writing as an invitation, we have the opportunity to explore and examine the digital dexterity youth are practicing as a means to compose more just futures. To harken back to the opening vignette, youth are not connected to "the feed," isolated from the "real world," but are critical consumers of action, acting as intermediaries of cultural and global justice work. As Camille, Zeke, Andi, Ben, and Jack illuminate, these literacies are often worn, practiced, collected, and curated as identity texts, texts that are ideologically grounded in critical conversations about power and are engaging with public discourse surrounding equity and justice.

Conclusion

Collecting, curating, and the emergent technologies and social practices for LGBTQ youth composing hold great promise for rethinking research and practice in both digital media production and the teaching of writing. Amid the hype of utilizing Web 2.0 technologies to rethink the classroom, Andi, Jack, Ben, Camille, and Zeke ask us to resist the act of co-opting youth spaces, technologies, and the materializations of their digital cultures. Instead, they invite us to learn from them and "commit to this digital rhetorical perspective on writing…to help [our] students engage effectively in the ICT [Information and Communication Technology] revolution taking place right now" (Grabill & Hicks, 2005, p. 307). This chapter suggests that there is potential to capitalize on the sophisticated work youth are already a part of, drawing attention to the connective actions, social tactics, and genres of participation they are employing in their digital ontologies of selves. Focusing on a common, but potentially rich situation of LGBTQ youth on Tumblr, this chapter described how five #socialjusticewarriors navigated (in)equality

and homophobia through tactics of collecting and curating. Tumblr, for Jack, Andi, Camille, Ben, and Zeke acted as a digital environment wherein cosmopolitanism and social justice work, conceptually, sat. In centered spaces of racism, xenophobia, heterosexism and homophobia, youth were writing from the virtual world to combat and disavow embodied conflict. Tumblr, however, and the social processes of collecting and curating are but one of the many literacy sitings I engaged in with youth. Rather than focusing solely on how these youth indexed their Tumblr experience through the paradigm of #socialjusticewarrior, I want to close with highlighting the critical literacy work Camille, Zeke, and Jack engaged in and brainstorm how we can learn from them and their practices. They may have not tagged their hate, but they surveyed difference, interrogated dominant discourses of privilege, and reflected on their own multiple identities and selves as youth minors. Therefore, this chapter's provocations lie not in the refusal of tagging hate, but rather understanding, navigating combatting, and writing against it.

If we return to the chapter's title, collecting social justice and curating cosmopolitanism were practices used by Andi, Jack, Camille, Ben and Zeke to order the virtual world according to a certain set of values. These values, both socially and culturally situated, governed the virtual world of Tumblr as welcoming to LGBTQ youth. It allowed them the elasticity and the space to experiment, to create, and as Camille notes "…to just *be*." This chapter, however, presents but one stretch and/or path of elastic literacies. In the following chapters, I broaden the network and move past logical systems of representation to chart how LGBTQ youth wrote *with* place and were affectively charged by writing with mobile media. I highlight how queer rhetorics, techne, and lifestreaming operated as distinct rhetorical practices and logics for rendering desire visible.

CHAPTER 5: "YOU FEEL ME?" LOCATIVE LITERACIES, NARRATIVE CARTOGRAPHY AND THE AFFECTIVE ATMOSPHERES OF LGBT YOUTH COMPOSING

Wargo: So what did you bring for the future artifact?

Gabe: I have a big old map.

Wargo: A map? Interesting.

Gabe: Yes, a map. It covers my entire bedroom wall. It has pins on it. It's a huge map. Like 2 x 4 feet – its pretty big, see… (*rolls it out*).

Wargo: What do the pins represent?

Gabe: Places I want to go. I mean, I know I wanted to go to places, but I just put the pins on the map and now…places, I put pins on it because I knew where I wanted to go and I have this map and I put down pins on where I want to go. I'm repeating myself now. Haha.

Two years later, I returned to the scene of artifactual interviewing with Gabe. I sat with my back on the bedroom wall that held the large world map while I watched Gabe scroll through internet web pages and posters designed with Adobe Photoshop. K97.5 Beatz FM played in the background.

Gabe: I don't know why you're so interested in Tumblr, it is stupid (*scrolls through his dash*).

Wargo: Will you show me your archive?

Gabe: Yeah, but it's nothing but reblogged images of pretty pictures and GIFs of guys taking their shirts off. Haha.

Wargo: The bulk of your pictures are places, landscapes like.

Gabe: Yeah, it's like the map behind you, I guess.

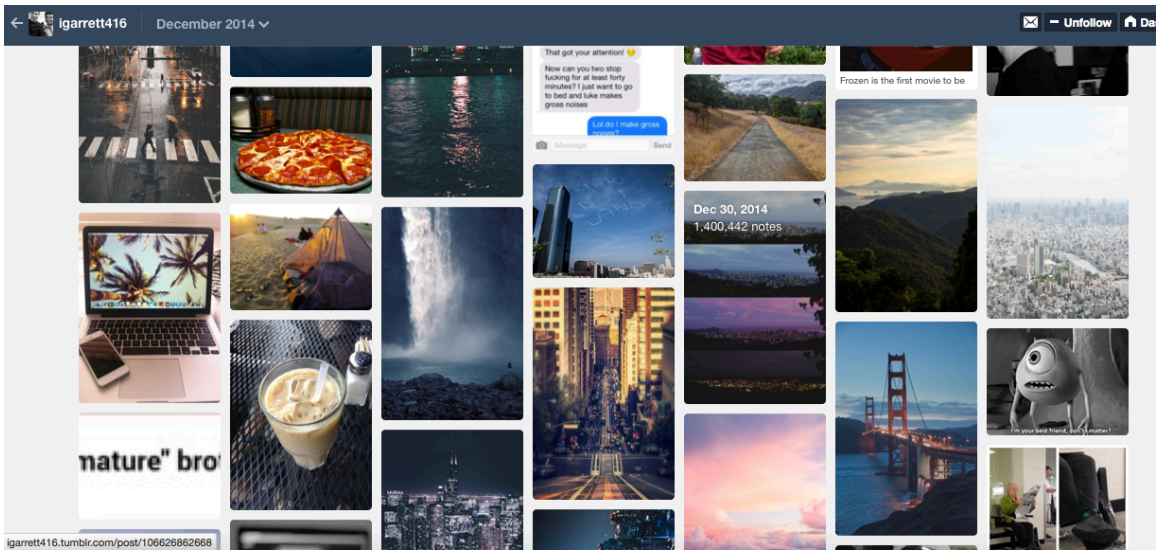
Wargo: What do you mean?

Gabe: I use it to reblog places I want to go, pretty pictures of big cities, that's it.

Wargo: Why do you want to leave so bad?

Gabe: Why would I stay?

Figure 18: Gabe's Tumblr Archive

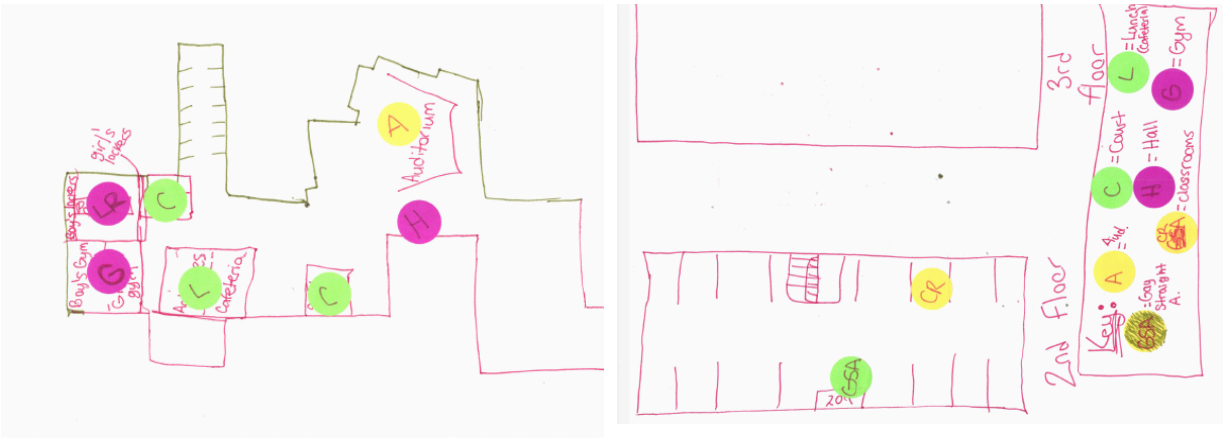


Gabe was right. His Tumblr archive (*see Figure 18*) was like the map that lined the southeast corner of his room. Spotted only with picturesque landscapes, the average Tumblr user may consider Gabe's lackluster utility of the microblog as a portrait of limited competency in navigating between creative modes. Recycled images were the artifacts that textured his Tumblr dashboard, not heightened stances on issues of racial justice or religious pluralism like those presented in Chapter 4. When I asked Gabe if he would consider himself a #socialjusticewarrior like the others, he laughed and shook his head. "What, no, I told you, I only use it to reblog places I want to go. Big cities. You feel me?"

Maps etched their way into the Center Ridge school story from the start. At the beginning of term, Janice had students complete gender-expression inventories, locating and naming spaces

where they felt safe or unsafe given their gender identity, expression, and/or sexual orientation. "It's not about the teacher, per se" Janice directed, "but how does the space, the physical environment make you *feel*?" When I showed up on the scene in 2012, I asked if we could have GSA youth "map" these spaces, physically locating rooms, environs, and places that we then could target our activist work (*see Figure 19*) as I too had less-than amazing interactions at the school.

Figure 19: Zeke's Map of "Feeling Safe" in School



As a gay cisgender male researcher, Center Ridge was not necessarily a very hospitable place to be in the early stages of fieldwork. My body as it occupied City Town high school, in comparison, was rarely visible. Blending in with the many other adults whose scurried pace meandered back and forth between classrooms afterschool, I was just another body, an afterthought to a school that felt like a factory. Going from the school's main office to the GSA classroom was a direct path, one where my person did not intersect or collide with others, including students. At Center Ridge, however, I was quite visible. Waiting by the Northeast doors for afterschool rides, some Center Ridge students would shout over me as I walked upstairs to Janice's classroom, "He's going to that faggot club upstairs." Coming with snacks,

students would look inside my cloth bag and ask, "Do you have to be gay to get a granola bar?" I invited students to the club, encouraging them to attend the GSA meetings, reassuring them that identifying as LGBT was not a prerequisite. They would shuffle back quickly holding their hands up in a defensive position with a "No, I'm not gay, that's not for me." I highlight these moments because they too, like Gabe's archived Tumblr wall of landscapes and physical environments ask us to be cognizant of place and feeling. The more I worked with Center Ridge and City Town youth and explored their mobile media practice *in situ*, the more aware I became of how youth were not the sole authors of their texts. Rather, in partner with their technology, youth were composing *with* place, mediating memories and experiences through the landscapes and environs they traversed.

This chapter, in contrast to the one that precedes it and the one that quickly follows after, is less concerned with reading and decoding material and digital texts as hieroglyphs. In comparison to Chapter 4, I invoke the "yes-and" stance of elastic literacies to stretch across registers that are less representational than semiotic systems of sign, signifier, and signified. Through three microanalyses of composing *in situ*, each refracted through varying "paths of complementarity" (critical geography, mediated memory, networked affect) I interrogate what writing with mobile media *feels* like as LGBT youth compose with and navigate place. Taking heed of Gabe and Janice's invitation to "feel," this chapter works to locate the frequencies of the affective, of queer desire, and of techno-embodiment in the practice of narrative cartography.

Locative Literacies and (Non)Representational Resources for "Feeling" Networked Affect

Outside of our interactions at GSA, Janice and I maintained a very steady working relationship. Interested in increasing her own effectiveness as an English educator, Janice was always curious about what conferences I was attending, or what articles I was reading with my

students in methods seminar. She wanted to stay abreast of any shifts in the field. In the first year of the project, I asked Janice to come with me to an English teachers conference in Boston. Walking off the plane, disheveled from an early 6 a.m. flight, Janice buoyantly threw her backpack over her shoulders and swiped open her iPhone. "Do you know how we get downtown?" she asked, as I too had never been to Boston. Navigating the Apple app store we decided that we should download the application HopStop, an application that used your iPhone's global positioning system (GPS) to detail a route from point A to point B using public transportation. With the clicks of our thumbs an addresses was typed and we were on our way. Shuffling from one line to the next, Janice did not look up. Deciding against utilizing the cartographic representations plastered on the walls of the train, here eyes were fixed on the screen watching the glowing blue dot traverse the digital space that our bodies were being pushed through underground. "Don't worry Jon," she would remind me, "we're almost there." It was in this moment that the false logics of the real and virtual dissipated for me. I watched Janice, much like I watched young people composing with mobile media. She was experiencing the movement and sensation with the train through her technology, as I watched the landscapes of Boston speed past in eye-level windows. Her body was displaced until the blinking blue dot lined up with the place, the final destination she keyed at the commencement of our journey. Janice's interaction with HopStop only echoes Eco's (1990) argument, once there is a 1:1 relationship between a representation and the actual thing it represents, the former destroys the latter. The two were unable to exist on the same plane of immanence.

Janice's interaction with HopStop and the urban landscape of Boston's T is an exaggerated form of the ways I saw Camille, Zeke, Gabe, Ben, Jack, and Andi use mobile media to write with place. If the previous chapter detailed practices, this one charts the experiential

construction of bodies and desire. I became interested in understanding how LGBT youth composing with mobile media that traces geocoded data (what I call locative literacies) across place understand mobility and the meaning of physical space. How did they write the landscapes of electracy? Simultaneously, I was also curious in the performance of place and considering how affect, desire, and embodiment intersect with their paths of navigating as queer bodies in-difference. Focusing on three micro-stories of composing with mobile media, I explore the affective experience of collaborative writing with material and digital technologies. Prior to reading these descriptive events as interpretative rich points of the ethnographic imaginary, however, I want to chart the varying "paths-of complementarity" (Kress, 2011) that we will stretch across as I present the scenes of electracy Zeke, Gabe, and Ben traversed, created, and experienced.

On Networked Affect and "Feeling" Space

Mobile applications and digital tools for composing new media narratives stretch across affective planes of scale (Farman, 2012; Lemke, 2000). Whether residing in the mundane, or memorializing an event, youth use the affordances of multimodality to "feel" space and polysemic place. For a chapter interested in examining how youth architect experience, rememory, and design more just social futures through their composing with mobile media, it is worth spending some time here understanding how I use space and place in the larger work. Like Massey (2005), I describe the "throwntogetherness" of place only through negotiation and navigation. Conceptualizing place as an entanglement, the "situative" nature for writing and literacy studies becomes blurred when observing composing *in situ* across mobile planes. Just as Leander and Boldt (2013) argue, literacies are not bounded a priori. Youth are not solely working as multimodal designers, documenting and designing the physical space and

geographies they traverse and compose through (a tenet often cited in the multiliteracies framework by the New London Group, 1996), but rather are following "the emergence of activity" (Leander & Boldt, 2013, p. 34) where their bodies are pushed, pulled, and stretched by the affective intensities of the relations they are a part of. For youth users, people and objects become contexts for one another. Ever feeling, ever fleeting, youth stretch themselves across these affective intensities to (re)author selves.

Affect, here is the drag individuals *feel*, the push-and-pull of narrative cartography, as they compose across techno-writing assemblages. Drawing from Lemke (2013), I describe affect as "how feelings interact with meanings as we live our lives across places and times, being and becoming the persons we are moment to moment across longer timescales" (p. 64). Similarly, affect and the selves we convey through spatial storytelling have much to do with our own senses of selves and identities. Taking a post-structuralist stance, I contend that the forces, or affective intensities between bodies, contract and collide to make emergent instantiations of identity/ies work. "Our identity-in-the moment" as Lemke (2013) argues, "need not coherently cumulate into a single longer term identity" (p. 64). "Identities can be multiplex, strategic, logically inconsistent or incommensurable, and call for quite different conceptualizations when considered at different timescales" (Lemke, 2013, p. 64). Hence, it is through the activity of multimodal composing that youth stretch themselves across spatio-temporal dimensions to (re)author selves.

Space, like affect and place in particular, takes on a perspective of orientation. Drawing from Ahmed's (2006) *Queer Phenomenology…*, space becomes a "question of 'turning' of directions taken, which not only allow things to appear but also enable us to find our way through the world by situating ourselves in relation to such things" (p. 6); or, as Lefebvre (1991) would argue, "Each living thing is space and has space: it produces itself in space and it also

produces the space" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 170). Space, hence, is not a thing but rather a self of relations. It is "neither a 'subject' nor an 'object' but rather a social reality – that is to say, a set of relations and forms" (p. 116). Space, here, is something that is produced and designed. Youth users become spatial architects of experience. The meandering across the throwntogetherness of narrative place is affectively propelled to take on new (re)orientations. It falls within the entanglements of time and takes-on new stories, ones that may not have crystalized in the original "plan."

Entangled (Techno)Embodiment and Remediating Memory in Youth Composing with Mobile Media

Although space, place, and affect are theoretical constructs that ground the navigation of youth users as they compose with mobile applications like Snapchat, temporality cuts across to chart a constellation of embodied composing across time. I find it useful to demarcate and splice these spatial stories by what Lemke defines as traversals; or, the "trajectory through space and time, real and virtual or both, that crosses boundaries of place, setting, activity, genre, and the like" (p. 65). In taking a phenomenological orientation to users feeling affective intensities as they compose, technology does not solely become a tool, but rather an extension of self. Entangled (techno)embodiment, I want to argue here is a spatial practice; bodies come to be rendered visible through their navigation, their movement, and their interactions. Technology, echoing Ahmed (2006), "does not simply refer to objects that we use to extend capacities for action" (p. 45) but instead becomes "the process of 'bringing forth' or…to make something appear, within what is present" (p. 46). Thus, the entangled (techno)embodiment of youth mobile composing takes on a queer orientation as it navigates both space and place. Techno-embodiment

makes opaque the binary of real/virtual. An experience of the virtual is always already an experience that highlights the potency of the "actual," its natural counterpart.

Users across Snapchat, StoryMap, Instagram, FinalCut and other mobile media applications and digital tools "touch" time to tell stories. Both physically, by tapping and clicking buttons on screens with fingers to chart how long a particular frame will last on an ephemeral mobile application, and affectively, by being propelled across spacetime to compose frames for representation, simulation, and perception. Mediating memory and experience is a techno-embodied practice. A queer written imaginary, digitally mediated memory falls across spatial and temporal domains. Memory, here, functions as a personal creative commons of sorts. As van Dijck (2007) argues, personal cultural memory are "the acts and products of remembering in which individuals engage to make sense of their lives in relation to the lives of others and to their surroundings" (p. 6). Memory is temporal and often a place-specific construct and archive. However an individual's own history is only threaded as memory by its distinct cultural manifestations. With the advent of digital media and mobile interfaces, memory is becoming a transparent archive streamed across cultural networks. "Our memories" van Dijck continues, "organize themselves according to our actual or perceived participation in a (temporal) collectivity" (p. 9). From Facebook's "Your Memories" and "On this day…", mediated memory filtered through the prism of digital culture acknowledges that individual expressions and subjectivities online are articulated as part of, as much in spite of, larger collectivities and experiences in the offline. From charting a rememory of a first kiss, detailing the sonic soundscapes of ambient noise as you walk the city, or using photographs to visually "picture" a life imagined, memory – in pasts and presents – are always a digital remediation and response to previous representations and experiences. Mobile media, embodied as it may be,

does not function solely as an opening of vision, memory, and storytelling. Through its mobile screen perspective it also serves as a shield or blinder, limiting our views within more novel modes of techno-composing.

Examining LGBT Youth Composing with Place

Originally, the invitation to engage in a composing protocol that examined the construction and process of writing an "identity text" was difficult for Andi, Camille, Gabe, Jack, Ben, and Zeke. For some, like Jack, he felt the process was inauthentic. He wanted me to video record him using his computer and "tumbling" on his phone. For others, like Andi, her identity text was a static piece of writing, an artifact that she did not feel comfortable sharing in the process. "I just write late at night," she would argue, "it would be weird to video that." In comparison to Jack's rhetorical argument that he was always already creating identity, and/or Andi's personal feelings about the space and the process, other youth - Ben, Zeke, and Gabe in particular - were quite excited to stage the protocol. Each of them when asked quickly picked up their iPhone or Android and said, "I want to write it with this."

As I began examining the iPhone as a digital tool and non-human actor that would surface during this stretch of action, I realized that it is inherently a cartographic interface. Users select, download, and navigate across a number of mobile applications and tools on the device. The hybrid interface of the iPhone not only calls for navigation within the machine and across the screen, but it is also used to navigate the physical space surrounding the device. "Checking-in," and highlighting their actions and paths of navigation, youth users used the locative interface of the smart phone to say something about their identity in embodied IRL space. Although there are a plethora of iOS / Android applications and mobile media tools used to chart cartographies

of space, for the purposes of this chapter I focus on the applications of Snapchat, StoryMap JS, and YouTube as they were some of the most popular for focal youth participants.

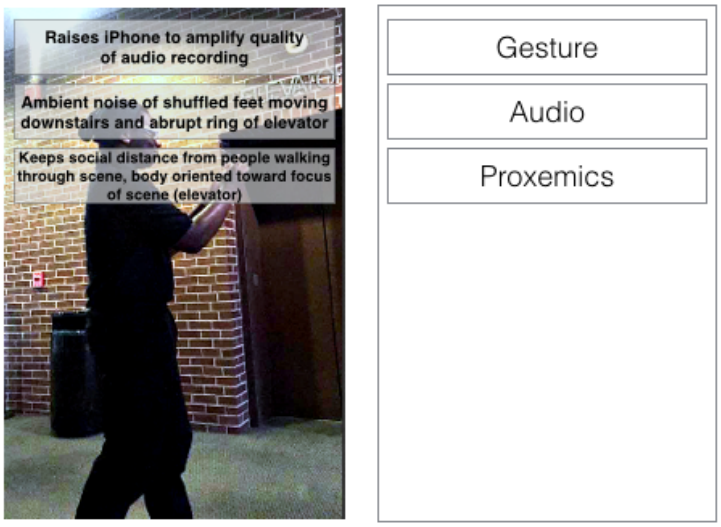
Reading across the individual snapshots of LGBT writing, these spatial stories and narrative sequences took on different forms. Gabe's video, done in the the style of YouTube genre "Draw My Life" for example, took on a form quite distinct than Ben's snapstory. Despite the interview and time we spent brainstorming, the final product and process of the first video was composed in a style similar to school-based digital video essay. It was about polishing an artifact and not taking heed of any of the stylistic elements and choices of what composing and writing in the age of electracy may come to mean. In comparison, Zeke's StoryMapJS narrative was co-constructed with place. Rhyzomatic, he, like Ben and his snapstory, was taken by the affective intensities of composing. Zeke, Ben, and Gabe wrote with place and time. They privileged the experience of writing with mobile media over merely understanding these texts as descriptive hieroglyphs.

As a connective ethnographer I used the qualitative web-based tool of Chronoviz to help navigate larger chunks of this time-coded data. Allowing me to break down and segment the larger video-recorded protocols across Ben, Zeke, and Gabe, I split the video, map, and snapstory into larger frames (spatial stories) for analysis. Frames were then triangulated with the actual segments of narrative. These think-aloud sessions and interviews were classified as "maker moments" (Ben's word, not my own), as youth and I worked collaboratively to retrace and stitch together the movement and stretches of narrative.

As a secondary phase of analysis, I returned to the video-based protocol of composing *in situ* to create a multimodal transcript that included not only speech, but also descriptions of changes in gesture, proxemics, and movement. For the latter, I noted the sequence, timing, and

position of each spatial story on Ben, Gabe, and Zeke's larger text and embodied composition. I referenced these changes in modal density in the multimodal transcript (*see Figure 20*).

Figure 20: Excerpt from Multimodal Interaction Transcript



Videos and texts in the second phase of analysis were reformatted without audio so that the focus was on embodied modes of interaction. I was curious to see how these individual youth authors wrote with place, space, and how the interface of embodied mobile media amplified and remediated memories and experiences. Theorizing how these narratives of memory served as a conceptual tool and prism for understanding the activity of writing with mobile media, I examined larger transformations concerning digital culture and queer identity. Throughout the course of these analyses, I noticed Zeke, Ben, and Gabe's referent to the landscape, to time, to the touching of the screen, and to the positioning of the figured audience as frequent modes of communication for techno-embodied composing. Gestural pointing and placing moves marked important shifts in activity. These shifts illuminate the traversals and broader themes across the remaining pages of the chapter.

Narrative Cartography Across Three Chords: Desire, Race, and Time

Rather than articulating how these youth invoke understandings of the "spatial self" (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2014), I describe the fluid practice of narrative cartography and the phenomena of remediating memory through locative literacies across an array of youth produced experiences. "Emotions we experience," according to Thrift (2004) "are merely the names given to different assembled euphoric or dysphoric relationships, akin to chords" (Thrift, 2004, p. 62). Hence, findings for this chapter are spliced into three chords of activity. Whereas the spatial self is a text that is often written for "others," narrative cartography is a practice that documents and annotates the experience. Narrative cartography refers to the process and aesthetic practice of architecting, documenting, and displaying experiences with mobility across mode. Although moments of my analyses will be descriptive, insofar as I set the stage for how and when youth wrote with place, I leave the experience to be the text that is foregrounded as brief interludes mark the findings.

Narrative cartography takes Farman (2010) seriously when he questions representations of cartographic texts. If we ignore the experiential subjectivity and construction of visualizations across mode, we may, as Farman argues, eschew the cultural experiences they design. Memory and experience is the cultural nexus from which these chords emerge and are mediated through. Mediated experience, as Elsaesser (2003) contends, is a cultural condition.

> In our mobility, we are 'tour'ists of life; we use the camcorder in our hand or often merely in our head, to reassure ourselves that this is 'me, now, here.' Our experience of the present is always already (media) memory, and this memory represents the recaptured attempts at self-presence: possessing the experience in order to possess the memory, in order to possess the self. (p. 122)

Mediated memories, refracted through the apparatus of electracy, do not represent a fixed and singular moment for youth. Rather, they serve as intermediaries, stretched between past, present, and future selves. For queer youth, in particular, I would argue these mediated memories and cultural conditions are opportunities to (re)author selves and histories in ways that work to disavow moments and pasts of hate, injustice and inequality. Working across three chords: *Narrative Cartography and Writing with Histories of Queer Experience*, *Locative Literacies and Feeling Space Impressed Upon the Body*, and *Using Electracy to Touch Time; Or, What Mediated Memory and Video can Teach us About Youth Participatory Composition across Sitings*, I collage layered narratives of LGBT youth writing to consider how affect emerges as a locating mechanism for answering how youth navigate and negotiate online/offline geographies through the emergent performances of electracy.

Chord 1: Narrative Cartography and Writing with Histories of Queer Experience

My interest in understanding how affect emerged on the scene through LGBT youth composing with mobile media first originated in my interactions with Ben and other City Town youth. As he and I would chatter before City Town's GSA meetings, I would often be met with "Oh, you have to check out what we did in 4th hour!" Or, "Look at my sister just being an adult in Boston." Jack would often shake his head and discount Ben's enthusiasm for the mobile media archive. "I'm too old for Snapchat!" Jack would shout across the science desks of Oakley's GSA room. Ben's navigation and interest in Snapchat and other ephemeral mobile media instigated a heightened awareness about how youth were using these applications and tools to mediate moments of memory and experience. Through a collage of audio, video, and photo, youth were becoming techtual flâneurs, composing narratives and architecting experiences for a group of followers to share in the moment.

Seeing over 350 million photos shared every day, Snapchat, Ben's primary tool for composing on his iPhone, is primarily a photo-based mobile application. Created by Evan Spiegel and Bobby Murphy, Snapchat, launched in 2011 under its original name "Picaboo." It is an application whose appeal lies in its "ephemeral status." As Gurley (2013) writes, "For kids the Internet is increasingly becoming a place that you can't share, that you can't have fun, that you can't socialize in the way you want to. I think that's really the essence of Snapchat. It's a platform where you can communicate and have fun without the anxiety about the permanence" (n.p.). Whether recording a piece of video or snapping a photo, Snapchat, allows users to share their digital stories for a limited amount of time (with users allocating their snaps presence from one to ten seconds). In its evolution, however, Snapchat users (as of October 2013) had the ability to create Snapchat Stories. Linking photos and videos into a temporal "stream" of images, where each snap lasts for 24 hours, users create documented streams of selves. According to the company, "Your Story never ends and it's always changing. The end of your Story today is the beginning of your Story tomorrow. Each Snap in your Story includes a list of everyone who views it" (Misener, 2014). Snapchat's hype among youth rests on its ephemerality and ease of multimodal composing. As a researcher, Snapchat allowed me to examine the so-called "party" that Brandt mentioned as I both investigated the narrative shared with me and the experience of Ben creating it.

Ben's "identity text" on Snapchat did not originate through a 1:1 meeting that was planned. As I mention elsewhere (Wargo, 2015), Ben's snapstory and labor as a narrative cartographer happened quite serendipitously. Ben's story was what Mitchell (1985) calls a "telling case" one that while not generalizable, taught me much about the push-and-pull of affective intensities that emerge on the scene of youth writing with technology. In that larger

piece I chart Ben's composing through three traversals. The first traversal described Ben's haptic practice and touching of time on the Snapchat application. Having the ability to contain parts of narrative into 1-10 seconds, Ben informed me about the ways youth users constructed and architected experiences that are bounded, temporally, by the interface. Although Ben's complete narrative lasted more than three minutes, its life for others was quite short. In fact, the curated rememory that Ben performed for me was originally a composition that was a pastiche of what he constructed on a previous day. It was only when Lizette, his older sister, came upon the scene that I was fully aware of the way place and space acted as co-authors to his archive and memory of his "first kiss."

The second traversal I discussed in my work with Ben was his work with mapping spatial stories. Unlike most youth I worked with, Ben was incessant on tracking the landscape through which he composed. Turning on simultaneous applications like Map My Walk or Google Maps, Ben would trace his movement so as to understand the paths he was taken down. Working alongside one another, my own interests in representing these more nonrepresentational moments took over as we dropped pins and stitched line segments on digital cartographic interfaces. These convergent experiences and layered literacies of narrative cartography became even more pronounced as Ben illustrated how and why place was important with Snapchat.

Lizette, Ben's older sister who joined us on our day of spatial storytelling was the character, however, who took over the third traversal. Instigating shared histories of childhood; Ben was taken over by the affective intensities of experience to re-chart his composition. Rather than continuing on with the "first kiss" narrative, Ben quickly looked back at me to gain approval to "follow" (his words, not my own) the composition and snapstory. Bobbing and weaving in between monkey bars and working to avoid the playground floor of "hot lava," I

became wholly aware of how Ben was writing with place and memory. Transfixed, his narrative was writing him through the affective intensities and frequencies of his memory, an archive and creative commons we always returned back to.

While Ben sparked an interest in examining how youth were writing with place with mobile media, I want to highlight here how a secondary pass through the data garnered new findings and noticings concerning the role of affect. Ben embodied what Cvetkovich (2003) conceptualized as an "archive of feelings" through the practice of narrative cartography. For Cvetkovich, an archive of feelings is "an exploration of cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of the text themselves, but in the practices that surround their production and reception" (Cvetkovich, 2003, p. 7). Ben's snapstory and the queer orientations elicited through his sister's presence on the scene that day was an emotional memory. Affectively felt, Ben was pushed and reoriented through memory to construct an experience that was not previously configured. His ephemeral archive was not only hosted on Snapchat but also embodied. Ben and the collaborative authoring of his varying "first kiss" spatial stories instigated me to further examine how other queer youth wrote with locative literacies.

Chord 2: Locative Literacies and Feeling Race and Space Impressed Upon the Body

When I first entered the GSA space at Center Ridge, Zeke was 15 and President of the small hodgepodge group. Prior to "entering" the field, Zeke, Janice, and I exchanged numerous emails. Dialoguing about the space, its inhabitants, and my prospective role and purpose, Zeke was eager to discuss the type of work I wanted to do, my background working with GSAs, and, most importantly, if I was gay. "Janice is great," Zeke would add later on in our exchange, "but we need an insider."

At just 15, Zeke knew from the moment of my arrival that being gay and Black was different than being "just gay." According to Z, you don't have to say white as it is a given if you say gay in Kilgore. "I mean, it's a pretty diverse space…" Zeke detailed in an email to me. I remember meeting with Janice and Zeke when he commented on the diversity of the club. "Ok," I replied, "I would expect nothing less, it's a Gay Straight Alliance." Janice, I later found out reassured Zeke to send the following response. "I mean," Zeke went on to write, "it's mostly Black kids." I pause here to center race, as it became an affective register that was felt for many of the LGBT and queer youth I worked with at Center Ridge and City Town. It was always already refracted through the mobile media compositions I interrogated, just as much as it was felt navigating the city of Kilgore and larger San Miguels County.

Race in the GSA space at Center Ridge was indexed through gender queer Gabe and gay cisgender Zeke. Both identifying as masculine and using he/his as preferred pronouns, the group talked about Blackness and its intersection with masculinity on a continuum. "It's like" Andi contended in a group interview, "you're gay like Gabe or you're gay like Zeke." Gabe flashed his hands up over his head and said. "Oh Jesus!" he went on. It's not even like that." Andi looked at Zeke. "No," Zeke would add defensively, "it is like that!" In some of our earliest interviews, Zeke described how he was able to "pass" at Center Ridge and in the larger Kilgore community.

Wargo: What do you mean, "pass?"

Zeke: Well, I mean, I'm Black. I can just wear a hoodie, put my head down, and I blend in. I'm not like that one (pointing to Gabe). I don't draw attention to myself.

Gabe: What?

Wargo: But the gym teacher lets you go over to the girl's side of the gym and not Gabe?

Zeke: Yeah, because he thinks I want to fuck one, not be one (*laughs*).

As the years progressed, Zeke's own understanding of feeling race emerged through his social justice stance online as well as through his leadership in the GSA, a predominantly African American and Latin@ space in later years of fieldwork. As he became more comfortable being "out" (his word, not my own), the more he felt the affective registers of race and the repercussions for being gay *and* Black in Kilgore.

Whether in the community garden, at Magnolia Hospital volunteering for EMT hours, or riding KATA (the Kilgore public transit sustems) Zeke's eyes would be transfixed on the screen. Ear buds in his ears. "Do you see life with your own eyes," Tisha, Zeke's mom would ask, "or is it always with that thing?" Zeke was an avid Instagrammer and snapper of selfies. A mixmaster of mobile media, Zeke toggled between apps, playlists, and docs. Zeke saw life with the screen rather than through it.

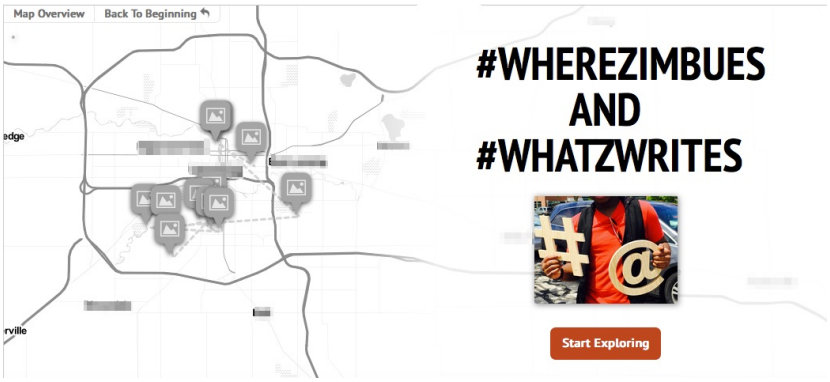
Now one of the most dominant social media spaces for youth (with 90% of its users under the age of 35), Instagram is the largest photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking site in history. Founded by Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom, Instagram, Zeke's tool of choice, is a photo-based mobile application and site that lets users upload and share photos to a community and public of 150 million active users (Costill, 2014). Moving from a digital photograph repository to a mediated tool for branding, Instagram was Zeke's space for curating a particular image of self. Users snap a selfie or choose a photograph to add to their "feed" (the stream of photographs and video that archive a users use of the application), "filter it," adjusting the hue and tint much like professional photographers do in the studio, and then #tag it, indexing people or objects featured in the photo or with words and phrases that describe the imagery or symbolism present. Although Instagram could be utilized as an application and site independent

from other digital platforms such as Twitter and Tumblr, Zeke often left his trace on alternative spaces, choosing to "share" his photo skills across networked domains of practice.

Like other mobile media applications and tech-tools, Instagram emerged on the scene as a co-participant. It fostered writing and composing that Zeke could not have accomplished alone. When I sat down with Zeke in the closing months of fieldwork, desperate to have him engage in the multimodal writing protocol, we sat the entire first session brainstorming. He knew right away that he wanted to snap pictures and use Instagram as it "tagged where you been." I offered suggestions quickly after. "Ok, well we can use your tagged locations and you can chart what you 'write.'" Working against my idea, Zeke quickly rewound to a scene in his English 11 class. Ms. McPherson, Janice's best friend in the English language arts department, paced up and down the aisles of chairs. Lecturing out of a vocabulary book she asked, "So, can someone give me an example of what this would look like? Can you use it in a sentence?" Back tucked with his hands over his eyes, Zeke sat in the interview scene voicing "Ugh, what is that damn word?" I was there that day, observing to better understand the texture of the formal classroom space with Ms. McPherson, but I too was unable to locate what word he was looking for. "It's like when dye gets on a flower petal, it like, it spreads. That's the example she gave for how it moves. That's what I want to talk about." Zeke went on, "I want to talk about me being around the community and how like, I…" he trailed off. Sitting puzzled, I quickly started thinking of synonyms for words that could align with this working definition, "spread, uhh, give back?" "No," Zeke replied, "imbue!" We quickly googled the word and it's definition. Imbue, in its simplest form, means to inspire. "Yeah," Zeke added, "but with feeling." The process, hence, did not start with the act of composing. Our emergent activity did not just happen. Zeke brainstormed a title.

#WhereZImbues and #WhatZwrites. “I gave that last part,” Zeke added before we began the creation part of the process, “for you.”

Figure 21: #WHEREZIMBUES and #WHATZWRITES StoryMapJS



#WhereZImbues emerged through the web-based application StoryMapJS (*see Figure 21*). Working with Instagram, StoryMapJS is an open source tool that has the possibility of connecting to Google Mail to highlight a linear narrative, or time-based series of events, through location-based geocode data. Many think of StoryMapJS as a friendly web-authoring tool that allows stories to resonate across their locative backdrop. SnapMap is a branch of StoryMapJS, a tool that crawls through your personal Instagram to grab the last twenty geo-tagged Instagram photos to create a time-based layout. Using the affordances of his Android geotagged Instagram account, Zeke’s narrative of #WhereZImbues and #WhatZWrities was hosted by StoryMapJS, a tool that he argues allowed us to “experience” the story rather than just read it.

Zeke, like Ben, was eager to capture the lived histories and the networked affect of traveling around the larger Kilgore community. This time however, the focus was on illustrating the soundscapes of navigating the city while being Black and gay. #WhereZImbues was an 11 frame StoryMap that used audio to capture the experience of navigation. Zeke’s larger process in composing the identity text was indicative of the paradigmatic shift that LGBT youth composing

with mobile media charts. Moving towards electracy, Zeke, like Ben and others, were more interested in creating an experience rather than a descriptive text. Moving between sites such as Center Ridge High School, home, work, Camille's house, his grandfather's home, the Kilgore community garden, Zeke used his iPhone's "Voice Memos" application to capture distinct sounds of the locations he traversed. Traveling across a 12-mile radius of public transit, Zeke's calm demeanor was telling as he often laid the phone down in a distinct place to "listen" to the space (*see Figure 22*). Afterwards, working with Zeke to stitch together these

Figure 22: Zeke Recording a Soundscape

instagrammed locations with the soundscapes he recorded and stored on SoundCloud, Zeke reflected on the purpose and intent of his piece. "I mean," Zeke contended, "I guess I wanted people to hear these places, hear what it sounds like when I am in them. Hear what it sounds like to be a gay Black guy in Kilgore. What it feels like."

Feeling race for Zeke, like the re-lived histories of participation for Ben, is an affective intensity, one that is charted through the networked affect of writing with sound and mobile media. The practice is extended through technology. In reading his text as a descriptive and interpretative piece, Zeke charted what it meant to hold an identity-in-difference, how the

position of gay cisgender Black adolescent was heard, or not heard, through and with others and the screen. Take for example, Zeke's description text for "Touchstone LGBT Resource Center," a community based LGBT space for youth near San Miguels county. In categorizing this pin on his StoryMap Zeke writes,

> **#whatZimbues:** Not only am I inspired by the judgment free environment of the meetings, but the thing that inspires me the most is the view points that I learn from other students who are outside of my orientation or race. I don't feel Black here, just gay.
>
> **#whatzwrities**: stories, photos, videos, dance, art, quilts, & vocal expression

Not "feeling" Black in this space, Zeke highlighted how he indexed his identity as gay and not Black and gay. I found Zeke's reflection interesting in part because he is the only African American who attended the group. How could you not feel race in a predominantly white and queer space? As a multi-ethnic educator who regularly helped out at Touchstone, I visibly felt like an outsider. Zeke's audio for the Touchstone pin was ambient noise. Feet shuffling and books whose pages are being flipped is overlaid with a myriad of voices and chatter about school, Netflix series, and what remains in the candy bowl after an uneventful Halloween at group. When I ask Zeke if we could hear this latter reflection he writes on the StoryMap, that he doesn't "feel Black, just gay," he interrogated my own inquiry with a question. "Well, are you me?"

The acoustic ecologies of Zeke's larger cartographic project detailed an impossibility for readers, listeners, and viewers. Through these sonic experiences, Zeke reflected how he used sound to deliver a more varied and nuanced understanding of the environs and cultural ecology he is a part of. Viewers, yes, can read the StoryMap text as an artifact that details personal histories and shared experience with each of these places. We can read Zeke's identity in the most simplistic of ways. There is, however, an impossibility that Zeke highlighed through his

work with audio. We are never Zeke. I am not Black. I am not an emerging adult whose interest in Sens8 is only fostered by the group talk and desire of the series' orgy episode. I was not in the Touchstone space that day. These constraints as a researcher, both affectively and temporally felt, sparked my own simultaneous project and interest in representing the nonrepresentational as they came to be marked through modal references such as audio. Even here, through this descriptive work with marks of video and sound, is but one stretch of reality and representation. For Zeke, however, the text was never about reality (outside of his own), but rather the form, content, and experience that structured its uptake.

Sound and visuality, for Zeke, move beyond representation. Not only do these modes illuminate meaning, but the aural landscape and visual backdrop designed affect. As others have argued, sound prepares individuals to become more sensitive and reflective participants across the synesthetic convergence of modes (Ceraso, 2014; Comstock & Hocks, 2006; Halbritter, 2012). As I reflect on the composing experience I witnessed, I am struck by the way Zeke reeducated my senses and understandings of the communities and cultures he was a part. Ambient sounds of "feeling" black and gay as a cisgender man traversing the environs of Kilgore were used to situate a listener's emotional and affective frame according to the parameters Zeke constructed. As listeners, we heard the environment as it emerged, immersed in the unfolding and stretch of place. Fascinated in following Zeke and exploring these more sonic encounters to enhance understandings of remediated memory and experience, I discovered how *hearing* difference through and with mobile media, as an experience, is different than *seeing* and/or merely *reading* about it. Zeke's aural focus, imbued through the nexus of sound and electracy asks us to attune towards inhabited space, pushing at the walls that constrain our own isolated understandings of self and place. Zeke's map, quite literal in its form, used the act of narrative

cartography to architect an experience. An experience that stretched across representation and functioned through the creative commons of mediated memory. Like Ben, Zeke asks us to be moved by the networked affect and rhythms of mode.

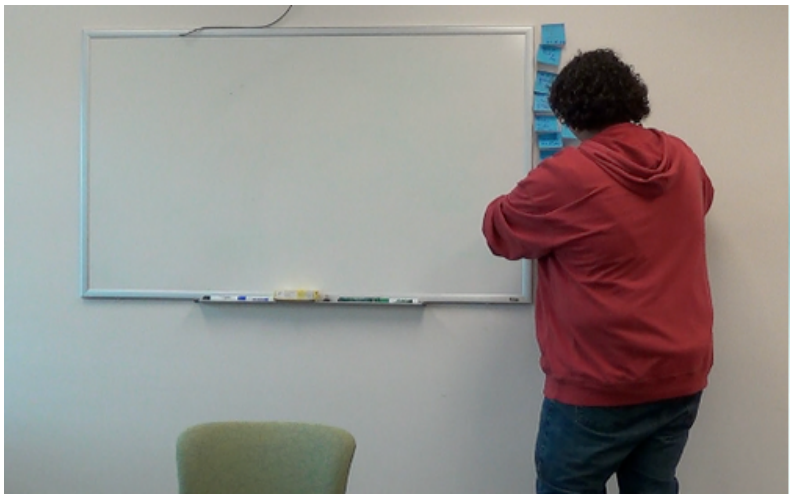
Chord 3: Using Electracy to Touch Time; Or, What Mediated Memory and Video can Teach us About Youth Participatory Composition across Sitings

"I want to make a movie!" These were the first words to shuffle out of Gabe's mouth as we made our way to a conference room at Kilgore community library. Unpacking his bag, two large photo albums were taken out. These mementos became centered artifacts in our conversation. Later acting as the archive into our investigation of composing, the scrapbooks operated as "identity texts." "Have you ever seen "Draw My Life?"" Gabe asked. Rather than describe the genre of the YouTube video phenomenon, Gabe quickly googled "Ariana Grande Draw My Life" on his phone. A video streamed playing the pop star's story. Draw My Life, is a genre of participatory video composition wherein users "draw," quite literally, their life using dry-erase markers on a whiteboard. They, or a tech-team of sorts, then speed up the video to capture the process and narrative arc of key moments. The video is given an audio backdrop and clean-cut transitions marked fragments of story together. There is always a central "message." For micro-celebrities on YouTube, the message usually is "follow me" and/or "buy my stuff." The participatory video sensation of Draw My Life, however, spread like wildfire when popular artists like Justin Bieber and Tyler Oakley started "drawing" and telling their more personal stories too. "Okay," I inquired, "well how should we start?"

Participatory composition and video making is a collaborative space. For Gabe, it is a project that he invites you into. Yearning to leverage the resources and technology I had with me, Gabe wanted to *build* (his words) alongside of me. "Let's do the hard part here," he added, "and I'll edit at home." At first, I was worried. Part of my work was to understand how LGBT and

queer youth were (re)authoring selves with mobile media. I knew I would not be able to follow him into his bedroom studio as he regularly took pictures of his Photoshop and Final Cut Pro work happening at all hours of the night. In fact, in his sophomore and junior years of schooling, this insomnia for video making left him facing accusations of truancy. Unable to work with Gabe in his office of sorts, I felt the limit of the ethnographic field. I wanted to detail and experience the process *in situ* next to him. Weary to say no, however, I agreed and we began (*see Figure 23*).

Figure 23: Gabe's Draw My Life Brainstorm



Drawing on his previous experiences of writing with video, Gabe brainstormed the flow and organization of his work. Gabe's larger video narrative in our preliminary work together was linear. As he began laying out the storyboard (again, his words) of the video, he charted two rich points: living with his grandmother and his parents' separation. These served as miniature narrative arcs. If we pay attention to his process we see him literally lay out, with post-its, the caricatures and drawings he would need to perform. These detailed notes were used to align his video with those goals of the larger Draw My Life genre. It was less about an introspective turn in and delivering an autobiographical story like Ben and Zeke, and more about a focused narrative of self-presentation. A streamed version of identity and practice of lifestreaming that

we will pick up in the next chapter. He, however, like Zeke and Ben I want to contend, was choosing the story he wanted to tell. Audience was of the utmost importance for Gabe.

Splitting his larger initial video into three events, Gabe detailed life moments of becoming "Fabulous," (his code word for gay) to his networked audience on YouTube. Bookended by title and closing slides, spinning clocks marked Gabe's intermediary stamps of temporal shift in his narrative. (*see Figure 24*). The first event, marked his birth and entrance

Figure 24: Gabes Draw My Life Narrative Timeline

onto the scene, as well as a brief overview of the key characters in the film: his grandmother, his father, his mother, and his sister. The second major event detailed Gabe's first days of school. Gabe marked Kindergarten as the grade he felt most successful. He meandered his way into detailing how middle school was a time where he was bullied. He playfully marked this by having current close friends act as "the bullies" in a scene that he set up and recorded outside of our meeting. However, the secondary story that Gabe presented to his audience in Event 2 is his parent's divorce. This moment marked Gabe's most mediated memories of identity.

Illustrated by a red heart being erased by Gabe, the spinning clocks marked the transition into the final event of Gabe's Draw My Life story. Largely about being "Fabulous," Event 3 detailed his current friend group. He highlighted the shift in owning his "Fabulous" identity by using a stylized font. Gabe shared his photo stream from Instagram to close. Scrapbook pictures

that acted as an archive of loss (losing his father, his grandmother) were transformed into a collage of the current cast of characters that framed his life. The original Draw My Life title screen returned to close the video and the audio backdrop stopped. Although the narrative meets expectations and stylistic requirements of the Draw My Life genre, I want to pause here and consider how the material archive, the scrapbook that centered our interview at Kilgore community library, entered onto the scene.

Gabe's earliest memories of learning to read and write, practices that he cited as tactics to his own understanding and coming to queer, were those nourished by his grandmother. The scrapbooks were a permanent material archive for Gabe. It is one of the last artifacts his grandmother bestowed to him prior to her death in 2014. Despite this centered Draw My Life autobiography and its intersection with literacy sponsorship, it felt unlike Gabe to me. It was not his aesthetic. Lacking the critical composing skills of Adobe Suite, I regularly would send Gabe jpegs of pictures I needed photo shopped. "Can you whiten my teeth for this headshot?" "Will you stitch my face on Serena William's body?" Gabe and I collaboratively made videos and YouTube remixes together. Over the years, I felt I knew his writer-ly voice. There was, nonetheless, something distinct about this video. For a video about "Gabe," where identity and memory was a mediated activity, Gabe was missing.

I met with Gabe again. This time, rather than asking him to chart his process and create something; I asked him if we could watch the video together. Shrugging, Gabe said, "Sure." When I toggled to his YouTube page, an open-access repository he originally placed the Draw My Life video on, he reminded me that he had taken it down. "My mom made me get rid of it." When I inquired why, Gabe simply responded, "She said she didn't like the way she was represented." He went on to mark that she described it as "…one sided." As we watched the

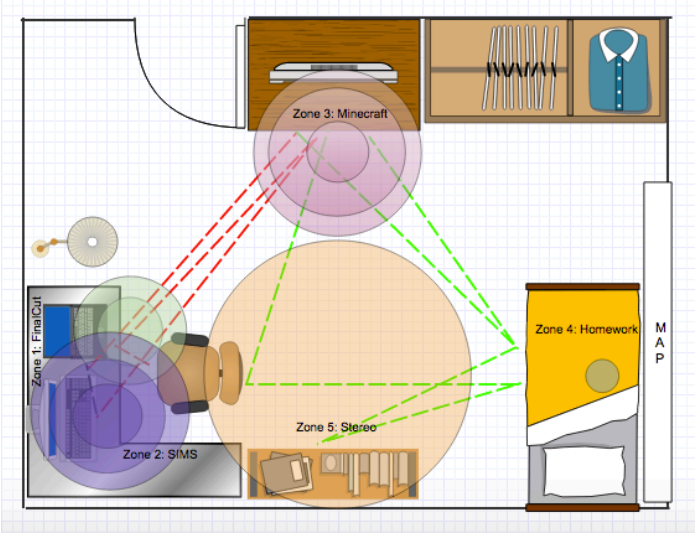
video, I asked him about the rhetorical decision making strategies he employed when composing and editing using Final Cut. "Why?" "What was your purpose?" "Can you describe how you did this?" These questions were among the many I spit at Gabe during our 140-minute think aloud. Leaning back in his office chair, Gabe laughed out loud and said "Damn!? Are we done yet?" I felt defeated. I walked away from a text that seemingly marked Gabe's coming to "fabulous" but I did not feel as if I understood the way affect pushed and mediated his composition of self. How, if at all, did he understand queer through his composing? Desire? Time? This mediated memory did not function in the way Ben's temporal time traveling or Zeke's narrative cartography ushered itself onto the scene of activity. "Who did you make this for?" I asked in desperation. "You. Well," Gabe went on, "you and YouTube. So, about 300 million people." Laughing, I asked, "For me? But this is supposed to be an identity text, a text that shows us who you are, what it feels like to be Gabe." "I can't do that for you boss," Gabe marked. "You want to know me, you gotta be me." In this moment I was taken back to Gabe's initial response to my query about Tumblr. His response of "…you feel me?" echoes here to mark that video was used as a delivery method, not as a stylistic or artistic process and choice. Puzzled, I sat there, shuffling papers and field notes into my backpack. "Were there things you didn't include?" I asked. "What would the b-roll look like?" Feeling the tension of putting a task onto a participant, I tried to back out of the potential misstep. "Well, yeah, there are a lot of things I could have included. But you don't get it," he went on, "this is the way I want to picture my life. Fabulous ever after."

Picturing life is quite different than depicting life through pictures. Working from the archive of material and digital photographs, Gabe's practices for composing the Draw My Life video were rhetorical choices. Ones, that for Gabe, were about presenting an imagined self, a self-presented version that was not up for grabs but was cut and dry. He *was* fabulous. I asked

Gabe if I could return to the scene of his bedroom/composing studio to write with him. What would the story be if we only made with those texts left on the cutting room floor? What are the affective frequencies of writing about the self in a space that is deeply personal and one's own? How would I contaminate, rather than co-construct the scene? In an email, I asked Gabe to detail a list of b-roll items that didn't make it into final production. Rather than a list of items, images, or video clips, Gabe presented me with a playlist. "Let's just listen," Gabe wrote, "and see what we make." During the 90-minutes of video making with Gabe, we listened to a 21-song soundtrack that ranged from Stevie Nicks to Two Door Cinema Club. Instead of reading the b-roll film collage like I read his Draw My Life video previously, I want to describe the flows and affective registers that permeated the space that day.

Gabe's room, however small, was zoned by electronic technologies. For a student who had a difficult time buying bus fare, Gabe had the newest i-version of every mobile media application and techno-tool available. "My aunt," as Gabe described to me, "buys me them so I stay home and out of trouble." As the beats shuffled to Adele's "Rolling in the Deep," I saw Gabe's process unfold across the varying layers and registers of mediated action (*see Figure 25*).

Figure 25: Gabe's Zoned Practices and Affective Registers



Throwing his backpack on his bed, Gabe sat in his director's chair and double-clicked open the Final Cut b-roll. Photoshop cut outs with his head on female bodies were those artifacts he wanted to splice into the original Draw My Life video. Simultaneously, Gabe swiveled to the left to click on his desktop. He opened up *The Sims*. As it turned out, with the latest version of *The Sims* you were allowed to have a same-sex partner, a feature the original never allowed. Trust me, I played it. Gabe's husband on *The Sims* was named Ethan. They had 16 children. He snapped a screenshot of a picture of "Wargo," the simulated me that he populated on the computer. Apparently, I was much older, late into my seventies in the game. Some minutes later, my "ghost" appeared, *The Sims* way of permitting death on the screen. "You had a great life!" Gabe chuckled through the screen, "You wrote six books!" He tweeted the image so others could see it (*see Figure 26*).

Figure 26: Wargo's SIM Character Died

After a swipe, tap, and a couple clicks of the keyboard, Gabe wheeled himself in front of his TV to continue his game of Minecraft on PlayStation 3. As someone whose limited Minecraft capacity only allowed them to swipe blocks and shovel on an iPad, Gabe described how the PS3 version was different. He looked back at the screen where I had now resided and took the tour of his bedroom to his backpack which rested on his bed. Unpacking Geometry homework and several other folders full of assignments to be completed for following day, he shouted across the room to the computer. "I have to give a survey out to people for Sociology. I think I may do it on gay marriage. What do you think?" Unable to hear him, he meandered his way to the stereo and lowered the volume. "Is that better?"

The so-called "identity text" I was curious to excavate through examining his multimodal writing was not present in the Draw My Life video. It unfolded through the multiple selves that emerged across worlds. With a tap of his foot, a swivel of his hips, and a head bob that at times dislocated the attached microphone; affect had emerged on the scene. This event of electracy was not about showcasing to an audience of one, but rather participating with others.

For Gabe, rhythmic convergences of affect circulated as selves. Operating *as* the "identity text," Gabe's process was interesting to trace. He shifted between doing homework, living a fantasy life as an out and proud Sim character, navigating the Nether as "player" in Minecraft, all the while simultaneously remixing his Draw My Life and working as a mix-tape artist. These multiple literacy sitings, however, cannot be understood in isolation from one another. I tried to decode Gabe's Draw My Life video rather than experience it. Navigating across the topographies of memory and histories of participation like Ben and Zeke, Gabe invited me into the co-construction of place and composing space. This place was much different than those he inhabited in flesh space. He was out, he had a partner, and his friend group was flourishing in

their imagined careers as SIM adults. For Gabe, he did not need to index himself as "fabulous," but just *be* and *feel* fabulous in the moment.

"Experiencing" Queer Youth Writing in a Different Key

Stretched across the geographies of writing with place, listening to difference through the soundscapes of the city, and reimagining a "fabulous" life across the virtual contexts of elastic literacies, I worked in this chapter to strike chords of youth writing with mobile media in an age of electracy. Distinctively not the types of maps we may be most familiar with, I illuminated how LGBT and queer youth used the practice of narrative cartography as a writing genre that operated across mode and stretches across experience. Like Gabe's opening interview suggests, the places we inhabit and the spaces we help shape are not only concrete but imagined, working to texture our everyday. Farman echoes this call as he argues, "Maps are not simply representations of ontological reality; instead, they signify space in a very particular way that is designed to be read to fit with current cultural hegemony" (Farman, 2012, p. 52). As queer youth, Ben, Zeke, and Gabe were cognizant of their audience and the larger writer-ly expectations of experience. Before closing this chapter, I want to speak across these emerging genres of mobile media writing and consider how these spatial stories ask us to listen to that which we cannot hear in literacy teaching and learning.

As an onlooker, I had the distinct pleasure to examine how Ben, Zeke, Gabe and the others literally took up space. From zipped hoodies and bodies lying on the ground of a childhood playground to the swiveling of a chair as it rolls from computer desk to backpack, the paths of navigation that these young men traversed were designed to remediate a memory. Each with their own unique "voice," highlighted through a tool or a mode, they engaged their audience in a quasi-collective witnessing. These fictional archives of experience were those they wanted to

share and not simply compose and remember. If echo chambers of homophily were created through the social tactics of curating and composing in chapter 4, then these remediated memories were constructed as counterpublics, experiences that were only created through the co-creation of space. Ben, Zeke, and Gabe's spatial and temporal visualizations and compositions are still quite solitary, only fully realized when used and viewed by community for a collective re-imagining of lived place and time.

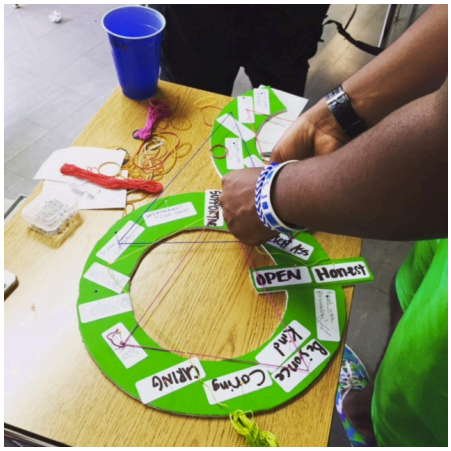
As a researcher, I took the opportunity to feel and be with youth in the field. I sacrificed what some may detail as analytical precision; or, the critical distance away from the object, participant, and unit of analysis. I had difficulty in making the familiar strange, as the strange was seemingly always familiar. How could you locate affect? Where does desire emerge? What are the writing resonances and frequencies of experience? What does this have to do with literacy? These are but some of the questions that emerged as I discussed with the task of composing in the age of electracy with outsiders. My rebuttal, quite simply, was to listen, to experience, and to witness the narratives and tales young people composed with mobile media. These stories were extensions of themselves and their communities. As de Certeau (1984) argues, "Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice" (p. 115). My job was to witness these stories and practice, to understand my own reaction to them and to co-construct my own. Through spending time with Ben, Gabe, and Zeke (or as Camille would call us, the "bros,") I learned to listen.

As celebrated American novelist Welty (1995) wrote, "Long before I wrote stories, I listened for stories. Listening for them is something more acute than listening to them." My fieldwork and composing protocols begged me to not only listen to, but for the stories that emerged and resonated in building identities. Attuning towards difference and "hearing"

identities and communities helped me remediate my own learning in new ways. Like Gabe, Zeke, and Ben, I too was a traveler navigating the online/offline politics of holding an identity-in-difference. I was a researcher working to tell a spatial story, a narrative remembering of the fictional remembering of the ethnographic past.

"I'm Feeling Myself...": Writing, Feeling, and Remembering Queer Across Online/Offline Contexts

Figure 27: Threading Our Thoughts



In the closing months of the school year, Janice and I came together with both the GSA at Center Ridge and City Town to reflect on our shared work together. We meditated on the connections we made and the communities we formed. The letter "Q" was cut out and joined to the letter "C" to signify "queer community." Janice wanted something to hang above her desk to remember the time we spent together. "It will serve as a reminder," she said "a memory for me." Using a pedagogical technique and activity I often use in my undergraduate courses, Janice and I asked students to write keywords on mailing labels and attach them to the letters. These keywords would act as single-word catch-all's for describing the "queer community." After, we gave students the opportunity to stand back and reflect on what their peers documented. With a piece of thread, we then had students "thread their thoughts," connecting the three phrases and keywords that were most salient for their own understanding of the group. Points with the

greatest intersection would be those topics that we would discuss in the closing circle. Stepping back, I examined the 39 labels and saw that "open," "Beyoncé," and "love/desire" were those that most of the group members chose. With an awkward stare between Janice and I, we looked up quixotically and declared, "Beyoncé!?" "Yeah," Leonte danced hir way towards us, "you know, cuz we be feelin' ourselves!" The group roared and started clapping. "OK, That works." Janice commented (*see Figure 27*).

"Feeling," echoed through Gabe's opening remarks and life size map artifact and threaded in Zeke and Ben's remediated writings with mobile media, came to be but one of the major themes investigated in how youth navigated space and place with elastic literacies. They stretched and wrote with it. Highlighted through three chords of LGBT youth writing with mobile media, this chapter illustrated the uneven topologies of lived experiences as mediated through digital technologies. Whether mapped with the ephemeral snapstory, heard through the ambient noise of architecting an experience, or played and rewound through the sophisticated work of video, affect emerged on the scene as a locating mechanism for memory and desire. Ben, Zeke, and Gabe authored transmediated tales of knowing on one's own terms. Stretched to highlight the limits of representation, this chapter worked at a granular level to detail the specifics of writing *in situ*. Chapter 6, in contrast, stretches out and reads across the elastic literacies and the affective frequencies of designing experience to decode how LGBT and queer youth use the practice of digital lifestreaming and rhetorical art of techne to engage with queer rhetorics and develop a sexual literacy all of their own.

CHAPTER 6: BEARING WIT(H)NESS TO LGBT YOUTH LIFESTREAMING; OR, "WHY BEING GAY ONLINE IS BETTER THAN BEING GAY IN REAL LIFE…"

"…[o]nce queer subjects begin to speak, this discourse is immediately conditioned by the rhetorical secret and its performative contradictions. Queer resistance must rework the discursive conditions from which we speak…Invention is our most effective political and cultural resource."

- David Allen Grindstaff, *Rhetorical Secrets: Mapping Gay Identity and Queer Resistance in Contemporary America*

In the lazy heat of Kilgore and San Miguel's county summers, residents and community members slow down their scurried pace to pause and flock to the downtown farmer's market and community garden. The marketplace on the weekend is a hodgepodge group, typically ran or attended by those who are retired and/or looking for an avenue of community. With connections to several downtown groups, Janice asked Ms. Oakley if the Center Ridge and City Town GSAs would be willing to come together and share a space to fundraise for the following year's events and activities. I spent many hours sitting on the stoop of the local organic Kilgore grocery store talking to youth. Another "siting" amidst a networked ethnographic imaginary, the community garden and market was a space where I was invited to listen, to witness the mundane happenings of their everyday, and to glance at the glimpses that were sutured by streamed online narratives.

"Ha! Zeke exclaimed. Yes!" He quickly scrolled his phone with his forefinger "What?" I inquired, "What are you looking at?" Zeke used his pointer finger and thumb to magnify the reblog. "Oh my god! Yes!" Andi declared after examining Zeke's phone. The three of us were the "tried and true" according to Janice. Those members of the larger GSA collective who would come to the Kilgore market and sit, rain or shine. Zeke would bring a Hot and Ready from work to feed us, Andi would buy gas-station donuts to sell for triple the price, and I would often bring

with me cupcakes, cookies, and any other baked-goods close friends mqe3 for my kids to sell for the after school group. “Here,” Zeke said, handing me the phone, “you should capture this for your project.” I looked down at the screen to see Zeke’s reblog. It read, “unfortunately being gay in real life is not as fun as it is on the Internet” (*see Figure 28*). I laughed, shrugged and

Figure 28: Zeke’s Text Reblog “Unfortunately being gay in real life…”

told Zeke, “It has some truth to it.” The researcher in me, however, saw this as an opportune time to ask, “Why?” Zeke turned toward Andi again, and asked underneath his breath, “Is he for real?”

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“So,” Jack explained, “you first unlock your phone and you choose an app. I usually pick Instagram or PicStitch,” he added. “Then, the fun begins.” In an interview just before Jack packed up his life to move down the road to a large midwestern research-intensive university, I inquired about all things selfie. “Some people,” Jack went on, “use their cell phones. I think that’s a true selfie. But, I sometimes use my digital camera. Better pixels. You know and I’m an artist.” My investigation into selfies and the digital dexterity youth employ in visual creation were already a part of my larger investigation into the literacy practices that stretched across online/offline environs. As I argue elsewhere (Wargo, 2015), LGBT youth lifestreaming and the

connective compositions queer young people create are invoked to counter inequality and represent visually *being* different across contexts. For Jack, like Camille and the others, selfies and the artifactual literacies of the everyday were streamed to present counter-narratives to dominant discourses concerning what it means to have and hold a queer identity in difference.

Otherwise known as self-portraits digitally constructed with a mobile tablet or digital camera phone, selfies became anchors that time-stamped larger events in the lives of the youth at Center Ridge and City Town. For Jack, selfies and photo manipulation were used rhetorically to push back against normative understandings of gender and sexual difference as well as temporally stream his transition. "I want people to know," Jack would lament, "that there's an identity beyond the body." For Camille, selfies were also an archive, but one that was personal and revealed ontological choices that she made to better understand herself rather than to index a particular version of a curated self for a larger connective identity. Whether utilized to augment streams of poetry on a dual Tumblelog or used as a locating mechanism for desire, selfies and digital photography were the visual vernaculars for queer youth culture.

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Across the room a "beep!" sounded as a red button stopped the scene of my "Teaching Children's Literature to Diverse Learners" course. "Get off Facebook Wargo!" my undergrads shouted as I quickly shuffled to the desktop to mute the computer's audio. At break, I toggled away from our PowerPoint to investigate the invite that was sent some 90 minutes previous. "You're invited to 'Gabe's Designing Fun!' page," it read. I clicked accept and saw an outline of what looked to be the title screen of a mobile application for Algebra. After class, I texted Gabe to ask him about the "Wutz got you stuck in Algebra?" mobile application. "They think I am

dumb" he typed back. "Who?" I responded. "The teachers. So, I just use their time creating what I need rather than what they want to give. I'm over it." Through InDesign and Adobe Photoshop suite, Gabe architected worlds that were more inviting than the embodied reality he navigated in the day to day. He also used them, however, for pleasure, subversion and play.

Some months later, as I was transcribing participant interviews at a local café, my phone dinged with another text from Gabe. Swiping the screen open, Gabe's face now appeared as the Netflix original "Orange Is The New Black" character "crazy eyes." "Apparently they think I'm THAT black" he texted. Gabe quickly dismissed the application's photo color-matching feature. In reality, he *was* that black. "It's alright though," he added, "I'm thirsty for those white bitches too." Techne, read here as art, skill, and craftsmanship was Gabe's rhetorical trope of primacy. Through spectacle, Gabe designed overlays that forced his presence onto scenes that would have otherwise been abject.

******

These three snapshots shuffled through my head as I ran on a treadmill in late October 2015. I was listening to 88.9 FM and the local university radio station was doing a story on social media use among teenagers and youth communities. "You have to stay relevant!" a young 16-something details. The interviewer spoke over the interview to add his two cents about the time and digital labor that these types of "practices" discount. Afterwards, he joined the already innocuous amount of rhetoric circulating asking youth to "disconnect" or "tap-into" the real world. These declarations were very reminiscent of what I detailed earlier in setting the scene for this story. I remember growing annoyed that the interviewer/radio announcer failed to discern how gender intersected with his own shallow analysis. His emergent understanding of identity in

relation to technologically mediated visualizations of self-presentation is not new. What is new, however, is the visibility and magnitude through which these discourses circulate. In the age of the Internet, where youth are, as Dave the radio host so-aptly reminded us, monetizing their digital presence with likes, favorites, etc. what you know is who know you. Unfortunately, these online echo chambers are just as claustrophobic as the high school hallways that collapse onto youth identity making.

Rather than work to nuance how the practices of digital youth lifestreaming that Gabe, Camille, Jack, Andi, Zeke, and Ben are similar to those that research on youth and digital culture have already discussed, I want to argue that the rhetorical work and strategies of LGBT youth lifestreaming are quite different. As these three opening vignettes highlight, one of the many rhetorical affordances for youth writing with new media is the participation in and across converging public spheres. For LGBT youth, and for Gabe, Andi, Zeke, and Camille (participants who I focus on here), the confines and imaginary of who and what youth should be do not withhold or close off opportunities of desire, sexuality, and participation. Rather, they are invented through practice.

This chapter does not focus on the distinct practices and genres of networked lifestreaming, nor does it examine the experiential and affective intensities of multimodal writing *in situ*. Instead, it focuses on the aesthetic and rhetorical capacities of composing queer desire in the age of electracy. I use desire here, similar to Rhodes and Alexander (2015), who in their digital installation *Techne,* chart how bodies and objects mediate and make desire. As Rhodes and Alexander argue,

> Bodies and objects come into being and perception as desires, as desirable, as desiring. Many of them demand to be desired. Tracing out the ways they and we create

> and orient trajectories of desire—caressing attention into being, cajoling feeling into belief and action—continues the work of ideological critique while also opening up potential for disrupting flow, disorienting attentions, and redirecting desires in more pleasurable and sustaining ways (n.p.).

Stretching across modes, I highlight how the youth I worked with employed queer rhetorics to create possibilities that not only questioned heteronormative narratives of desire but also disidentifed static possibilities of identity and ontology. LGBT youth created a constellation of writing oneself on one's own terms. Transforming them into an embodied ethos of everyday, a pathos of possibility, and an illogical logos, Zeke, Andi, Camille, and Jack pushed back against narratives that contained possibilities of sex, of identity, and of community.

Queer Rhetorics, Techne, and the Spectacle of LGBT Youth Lifestreaming

When I sat down with young people in the earliest months of fieldwork, they would often talk of the stream of consciousness of composing across literacy sitings.

> **Wargo:** So, when you create these texts on Snapchat or reblog for hours on end on Tumblr, are they purposeful, like are you selective about what you tap reblog to or what you remix later?
>
> **Zeke:** I guess you could say that. We're putting up things that are representative of our life experiences on social media, even if it's not "real." I mean, I even take pictures of my homework or art stuff in school.
>
> **Wargo:** What do you mean real?
>
> **Zeke:** Like, I'll probably never go to L.A., but I'll reblog an image of a landscape of the beach in California.
>
> **Wargo:** And what about selfies, or that picture you took at the Neon Trees concert?

Zeke: When something interesting like that happens it's important to post it. Because, on the internet, things are there forever and it's saved and so if you ever forget or you like, want to re-live that moment, seeing those pictures will bring back all the emotions and everything you had of that time.

Zeke's distinction between real/unreal is important as it only amplifies what "connective" ethnography helped examine across young peoples lives. For many youth, and LGBT youth in particular, the Internet is repurposed as a thread that sutures personal experience with the possible. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, LGBT youth used the rhetorical affordances of composing with mobile media *in situ* to architect experiences and design purposeful "feelings" for their audience. Their lifestreaming, however, was also deeply personal. Digital youth lifestreaming was used to bear wit(h)ness to experiences of inequality, injustice, and outright homophobia. Lifestreaming crystalized through the layerings of texts, technologies, and the practices of queer rhetorics. The practice was not necessarily about affirming an identity, but rather disrupting norms of thinking. In fact, I do not situate it as a practice of composing but rather of a de-composing and a re-composing of self. Youth worked across the techne of spectacle to transform their identities into a politics for tomorrow.

Understanding LGBT Lifestreaming as Disidentification

Lifestreaming, as Marwick (2013) suggests, is the "ongoing sharing of personal information to a networked audience" (p. 208). Seen often as the "creation of a digital portrait of one's actions and thoughts" (p. 208) lifestreaming is used by LGBT youth, in opposition to users, brands, and organizations differently. From fandoms to Reddit threads, lifestreaming charts time-sequenced linear frames for understanding histories of participation, experience, and personal interest. Fractured identities through lifestreamed texts positioned youth across an array of

communities. Stacked together, these laminations of self, anchored by individual reblogs, snaps, tweets, or texts, were streamed to contribute to a larger multimodal ecology of digital rhetorics. Through my earliest explorations of LGBT youth digital lifestreaming and connective compositions, I saw how youth flexed their digital muscles to speak back to larger socio-political contexts of education, gender expression, and the policing of bodies in school spaces. Here, however, I want to take heed of the particular aesthetic elements of these so-called "artifactual literacies" (Pahl and Rowsell, 2010; Vasquez, 2014) and explore how youth deployed queer rhetorics to work against the constraints of heteronormativity, patriarchy, and disidentify from cultural injustice writ large.

LGBT youth lifestreaming is inherently a project of queer rhetorics. Queer rhetorics "is a self-conscious and critical engagement with normative discourses of sexuality in the public sphere that exposes their naturalization and torques them to create different or counter-discourses, giving voice and agency to multiple and complex sexual experiences" (Alexander & Rhodes, 2012, p. 1). Materializing as those rich points in LGBT youth lifestreaming that are repurposed, queer rhetorics is a constellation of discursive practices, that "emerge at different times for different groups in order to articulate resistance to regimes of sexualized normalization" (Alexander and Rhodes). With the current DIY movement of digital literacies and popular trends in mobile technology, Alexander and Rhodes argue that we "have created a rhetorical moment – paradoxically, within and through the spectacle itself – in which to battle alienation" (Alexander and Rhodes, 2014, p. 112). I agree. I would also add that youth use spectacle and techne "as a sort of praxis middle ground, more than the 'clever, bold strokes' of phronesis or the knowledge-making systematicity of episteme" (Alexander & Rhodes, 2014, p. 116). I gloss on in the following glimpses of lifestreaming work, LGBT youth often used the spectacle of remix, for

example, as a question of techne. Filtered through the trans-semiotic stretches of mode, youth used lifestreaming to shed light on the connections between bodies, desire, and technologies. They highlighted how spectacle charted the bidirectional relationship of orienting and reorienting. Queer rhetorics played with (re)presentation as a productive space for resistance and critique. It highlighted lived experience as a temporal stream of rhetorical choice, one that foregrounds the body and desire. As Grindstaff reminds us in the opening epigraph, invention is the cultural and political resource for queer resistance.

The queer rhetorics work LGBT youth practiced in digital lifestreaming was a project of what Munoz would call disidentification. The practices of disidentification were deployed by young LGBT and queer people to "negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship" (Munoz, 1999, p. 4). Digital lifestreaming highlighted how, for LGBT and queer youth, identities are always already always a fiction, meant to be played with, reworked, and reinvented. These performances of disidentification require, however, an imaginary of possibility, of a life that is free of injustice and inequity. A possibility that expands and problematizes identities that are put upon and interpolated through the subject. Whether through the spectacle of camp or the parody of pop culture as we've seen in Gabe's opening snapshot of becoming "crazy eyes," digital youth lifestreaming is aesthetically playful. Refracted through purposeful placement in LGBT youth lifestreaming, queer rhetorics was a tool not to deliver a particular message as it was deployed in the emerging and malleable genres of collecting and curating as seen in Chapter 4, but rather repurposed to provide a queer read of a normative one that preceded it. Disidentification operated as a form of techne. Digital

lifestreaming turns the queer on ourselves, on our experiences, our memories, and against ways we thought we knew ourselves.

Bearing Wit(h)ness to LGBT Youth Digital Story-ing

Gabe, Andi, Camille, Zeke, Jack, and Ben were cognizant of the realities of "flesh" space in their online composing practices. From snippets of homework and pictures of family members to geocoded visuals describing landscape, images were streamed to thread the politics of being LGBT. Imagery was the heteroglossic ecology across Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Tumblr and the like. As an insider, whose own gay cisgendered body was centered in the identity work these young people partook in, often finding my Facebook profile picture interjected in group photos of the larger collective, the visual was the dominant currency. Photo and video, however, provided a bearing wit(h)ness to that other modes and text forms did not. By bearing wit(h)ness to, I mean that the image, and the practice of digital photography more broadly, was orchestrated as an anchor, grounding the audience with snapshots of the "there" that was inherently apart of the online "here." Lifestreaming was a sophisticated act of bricolage, one that crossed technical, conceptual, and aesthetic boundaries.

In analyzing the larger lifestreaming corpus, and in particular the visual images you will see here, I worked with youth to mine posts (via their literacies network) through a variety of think aloud sessions. Like Rose (2012) acknowledges, the content analysis we performed when excavating their Tumblr blogs was at times random, stratified, and/or systematic. Much of the conversation we had after interviews were those which elicited a lifestream to be pulled. The visual images and lifestreams youth used to curate a particular image of self were first analyzed using codes such as visual artifact, photo-based remix, and/or text-based descriptor. As you may have noticed in earlier examples, the material mattered in the digital. Codes were then broken

down into axial themes that emerged through participant 'storying' (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014). Sitting alongside of Jack, Camille, Gabe, and Zeke, the focal youth for this chapter, I adapted Jocson's (2013) matrix analytic tool to understand the complexity of the visual and material texts they presented (*see Table 10*). At the more abstract level, I interrogated how LGBT and queer

Table 10: Matrix Analytic for Lifestreaming Visual Compositions

	Technical	Conceptual	Aesthetic
Alphabetic Print	What types of alphabetic print is present (#tags, emoticons, etc.) Is the print remixed/reblogged?	The use of alphabetic print conveys what message? Is the purpose of the alphabetic print / text clear? How, if at all, is time conceived?	What are the stylistic choices in voice? What language(s) are represented? What types of aesthetic choices does this illuminate for the reader?
Imagery	What images are included? Where are the images from? Are images remixed/reblogged?	Who/what is (not) represented? Why? What's the logic & purpose behind the inclusion of the imagery?	What stylistic choices are present? What mood do these images create for the audience?
Audio/Video	What audio/video is included? Does the use of audio/video aid in message delivery? Does the composer create the audio/video material or is it remixed and reblogged?	How does the use of audio/video material relate to the overarching purpose of the composition? Who/what does it represent? Temporally, what story does this tell?	What stylistic choices are depicted through the audio/video being used? Who mood does the use of audio/video create for the reader?

youth enacted and streamed identities of difference through these "connective" encounters and worked to understand how they navigated and negotiated the online/offline geographies of inequity through their emergent social practices of spectacle. I triangulated this work with an "talking heads" protocol, asking youth to write on post-it notes and attach them to open person profiles. I needed to know the meta-commentary that ran through user minds as they streamed across these sitings. The matrix and talking heads protocol took into account the technical,

conceptual, and aesthetic elements of visual production and the various modes youth used to create digital media texts and larger lifestreams. These works of spectacle, disidentification, and techne reverberate through the remainder of the chapter.

Thirst, Fandoms, and the Queer Confessional: The Logics of LGBT Youth Lifestreaming and Following the Flows of Desire

As participants and I would look at hundreds of streams, small snippets of days and sometimes weeks of digital literacies work, they would continuously come back to me arguing that it just had to be "balanced." This balance was one that I often tried to strike in my own writing and rhetorical practice. Working through the Western (and might I add very heteronormative) rhetorical triangle, I segment findings concerning the queer rhetorics of digital youth lifestreaming according to pathos, ethos, and logos. Logos elicited questions concerning the structure, form, and rationale for lifestreaming. Pathos underscored the aesthetics of experience and emotions. Ethos highlighted the personal branding moves, the reorienting of identities, and the credibility for narratives deployed. I must provide a provision, however, before I start to qualify the storying I embark on. The sheer number of queer rhetorical practices and digital lifestreaming that are occurring as you read this chapter mitigates any comprehensive understanding or documentation of the distinct logics and affordances we as LGBT people are asked to utilize to combat any micro-aggression or scene of inequity that surfaces. A holistic content analysis and description of function is not my purpose. Rather, like the practices in Chapter 4 and the experiences of Chapter 5, these strategies and tactics are but another stretch of the imagination. Therefore, findings are detailed as glimpses, small snippets of storying that youth lifestreamed as they worked through invention with making with new media and designing more just social futures.

Glimpse 1: Pathos as Queer Possibility

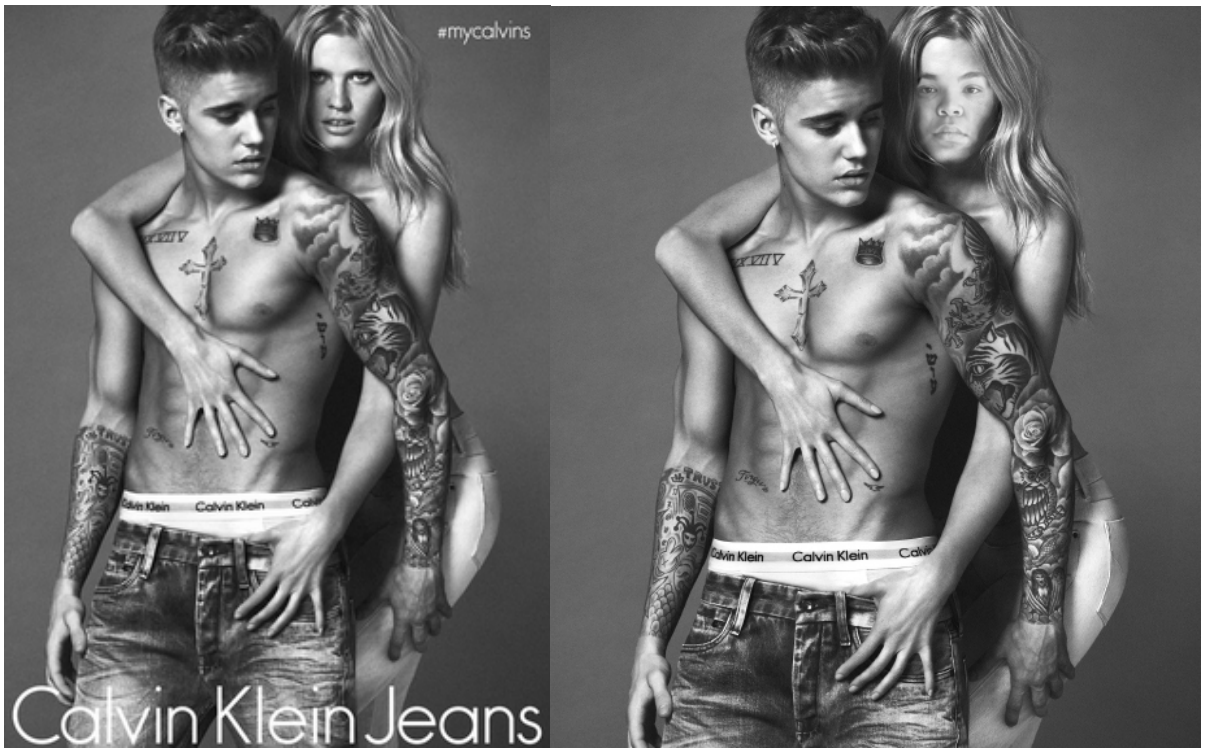
Throughout my time with youth at Center Ridge, City Town, and the networked environs of mobile media, emotion was an artifice that built the digital landscape. Pathos bled through the digital constellations we examined and appealed to the networked audiences of the sitings youth composed. In an effort to queer pathos, I use it here to examine desire; an affective yearning that is made available through queer rhetorics and the re/composition of bodies. In this glimpse specifically, I take up snapshots of youth digital lifestreaming to discuss how the spectacle and techne embedded in remix and photo mashup were rhetorically used to invoke a pathos of queer possibility, aesthetic spaces that youth inserted themselves into where otherwise rejected from.

Promising photo manipulations and the insertion of self. As queer people we talk about sex. A lot. "Oh, you thirsty Wargo!" This was a common statement, as the larger group would talk about sex, dating, and desire at Center Ridge and City Town GSA quite frequently. "Shit," Gabe interjected, "I'm thirsty. Put my face on this body!" Leonte, snapped hir fingers and say "Hashtag Yaas!" Gabe lifted his iPhone screen and zoomed in to highlight a recent Calvin Klein ad of Justin Bieber. A female model was featured wrapping her arms around Bieber's tight body and abdomen. At the time, I thought nothing of this interjection as it happened quite frequently. Throughout interviews, youth would constantly take out their phones and/or stream experiences concerning the erotic. After group lunches at Pizza Queen or conversations closing our GSA time together, pictures of my own person would greet me on my phone. "Look at Jon!" they would text one another in a group chat, "He was so shocked!" Joined to their message were usually pictures. My mouth would be gaping open or they would catch the tail end of me visibly shaking my head. To their credit, I *was* shocked. Surprised to see how

issues of gender and sexuality intersected with the work they were doing online. I would often find myself embarrassed to talk about the quite erotic threads that made themselves visible. "Its' ok," Andi would joke to me, "you can be thirsty too."

Later that week, a streamed image surfaced on Gabe's Designing Page on Facebook (*see Figure 29*). In the photo, Gabe manipulated the female model's face with his own. I later

Figure 29: Remixing Bieber



asked him about the photo mashup he orchestrated.

Wargo: So, why always your face. You always play with your face. You either put it on another person's or you put a fictional character's on yours.

Gabe: It's just funny.

Wargo: I think it's purposeful. Like, why do it? What reaction do you want?

Gabe: I want to show people my sexuality. This is the only way I can. I'm young. It's not like I'm actually fucking Justin Bieber, just showing people I want to.

Gabe's photo-remix mashup also reoriented conceptions of Black masculinity. Using airbrush features to lighten his skin to match the model's original photographic phenotype, Gabe's artifact enacts a simultaneous identification with the femininity represented in the original CK ad and yet uses masculinity for homoerotic ends. Streamed across his literacy sitings, Gabe's image ran counter to the heterosexist discourses of school and society he was used to. As you may remember from earlier iterations of what "Black" meant for Gabe, this more passive position disidentifed him from peers, family members, and colleagues who would harass him. Through the spectacle of mashup he shifts public conceptions of both pop culture while attuning towards the complexities of queer desire and disidentification in the larger Kilgore community.

Gabe's interest in queer desire did not just crystalize in forms of parodying celebrity lives and gossip. He was also quite invested in illuminating the queer tendencies and spaces that others deemed not queer at all. For example, the Harry Potter fan fiction community. Gabe used the same rhetorical strategies of examining queer possibility by mashing a popular face photo of Lord Voldemort from the Harry Potter movie franchise onto his own person (*see Figure 30*). "I left my hair, because I want them to know it's me" Gabe replied when I inquired about the photo.

Figure 30: Gabe's Queer Lord Voldemort

This remix worked to "queer" a space that in his opinion was largely null and void of queer desire. "Just think about it," Gabe went on in describing Lord Voldemort's personality characteristics, "his thing is snakes, he's a bit evil, and he totally queens out when he's mad." Shifting the gendered code for popular textual icons was not a new phenomenon for me. This type of queer spectacle, of smashing selfies onto texts and bodies to resistant dominant logics of who and what could be named queer was something that many youth advanced across their writing.

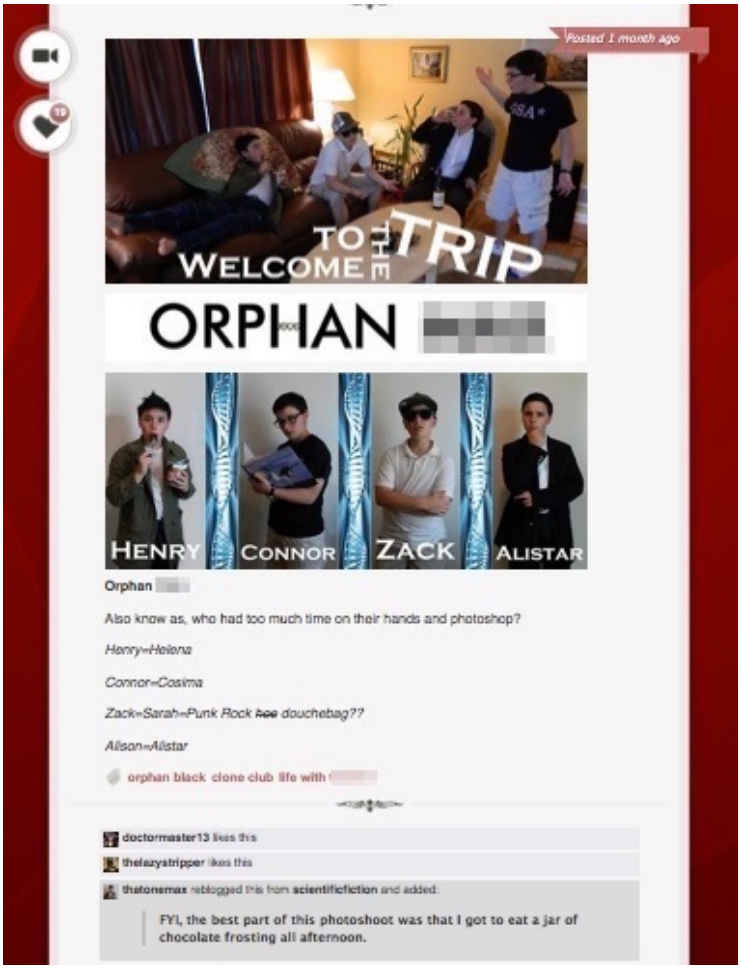
Finding a space of one's own: fandom and the limits of gender. When Gabe's images streamed across social media, it caused uproar among the other youth. They applauded his artistic craft and technical know-how in subverting normative understandings of desire. Digital lifestreaming, however, also served a more urgent purpose for some youth. Jack, for example, used his lifestreamed archive to document his gender transition. Through streamed photos, poetry, and selfies he used lifestreaming to point to the contestations of the embodied past, an archive where many trans*folks locate their experiences of oppression, but also of community and coalition building. Like the more experiential moments of writing in situ in Chapter 5, digital youth lifestreaming and the user design of certain mobile apparatuses like Tumblr provided you with an archive of history and ontological urgency. Jack was writing, remixing, and collaging himself as a way of knowing identities.

When I detailed Jack's larger lifestream, I segmented it across days, each pointing to the more embodied and explicit reference to transitioning (a topless picture showing his reconstructed chest, a selfie pointing to his resurgence of acne from testosterone, a gender variant version of popular BBC series Orphan Black, and his face on an Iron Man 2 poster to nuance the particulars of machine/human and the metaphors of modern medicine). I want to pause here,

however, and take up Jack's still frame photo remix "Welcome to the Trip: Orphan Jack" to partner it with some of the more campy aesthetics of Gabe's CK and Lord Voldemort photo mashups. Together, these repurposed images exemplify a type of rhetorical possibility that Ben and Gabe are unable to write for themselves in school and society. Through spectacle, techne, and the queer rhetorics of disidentification, the logics and surveillance of gendered bodies is played with to deliver a counter-narrative of imagined possibility.

Jack's "Welcome to the Trip Orphan Jack" post was created across a 4-hour window of still photography. He used Adobe Photoshop to create the work (*see Figure 31*). Riffing off of

Figure 31: Welcome to the Trip Orphan Jack



the BBC series' primary protagonists Helena, Cosima, Sarah, and Alison, Jack transformed himself into Henry, Connor, Zack, and Alistar. What is interesting to explicate here is Jack's focus on delivering cisgender realness amidst a popular TV series that is quite queer in terms of its original protagonists gender expression and sexuality. *Orphan Black* is a now three-series drama that follows unique clones and their intersecting narratives and pathways. It delivers science fiction in all its forms. Following Jack's five picture collage he included the following descriptor text, "Also known as who had too much time on their hands and Photoshop." Users, particular those following the *Orphan Black* fandom, liked this still-frame remix. As the group gathered on a Sunday afternoon in Kilgore's larger community market, Jack's phone kept buzzing, alerting him of the likes, hearts, and reblogs that the picture garnered. "Damn," Camille said turning to Jack, "turn that mess off." I was curious to follow up with Jack, as I knew his transition had surfaced as a tension across other fan fiction and fandom communities he was a part.

> **Wargo:** So you have to explain this picture to me. Why'd you spend four hours of your day making an *Orphan Black* poster?
>
> **Jack:** It's not *Orphan Black,* it's Orphan Jack … I don't know. When I transitioned and started streaming that (images of his transition and personal text-based photos), people in the OUAT (*Once Upon a Time*) fandom started trolling my writing, calling me a misogynist for critiquing the ship of Rumbelle (Rumpelstiltskin and Belle). Like, I get it, I'm a white *dude* now. That doesn't mean I'm not a feminist. I guess I just wanted to create a space for myself that was more open.

Like Gabe, Jack invoked the pathos of possibility in his queer rhetorical work to, as he explains, "create a space…that was more open." Booth (2010) highlights the expanded possibilities for

identity work in fandoms when he writes, "since there is no limit to the number of personas allotted to an individual, a fan can also create myriad personas, each one corresponding to a different set of identity markers they want to highlight" (p. 162). Through the unique and individual out-fitted clones, Jack used the affordances of imagery to contribute to a visual ecology of youth being and living in difference. For Jack and Gabe, the work was not about indexing a particular subject position of gay or trans, but rather working against and towards a re-composition of self and shared affinity.

Glimpse 2: Embodying Ethos in the Everyday

Digital lifestreaming was but one approach and way in for an increased queer visibility across literacy sitings. Youth eschewed the singular identities that were put upon them. As Jack reminded us, there is an identity beyond the body. This glimpse unravels the fiber of digital lifestreaming to unpack where and how the body operates as a rhetorical trope of queer ethos across in-school and out-of-school identities. A queer ethos, as Alexander and Rhodes contend, "emerges…from resistance to others defining our reality for us. This queerness says you might as well just get used to it" (p. 8). In embodying an ethos of everyday resistance, this section spotlights how Jack, Andi and Camille use the visual fabric of the flesh and the word to stream IRL (in-real-life) resistance to particular indexical identities.

Poetics of resistance. Outside of fan-art, Jack made his more public literacy work also visible. In the larger Kilgore and San Miguels County environs, Jack was known as an award winning slam poet. During the second year of the study, when Jack was finishing up his senior year at City Town, he would often ride the KATA 41 to campus to take a creative writing course at night. We would share meals either before or after his class and I would read some of his own jottings while he would read transcripts of our interviews. His poetry was stellar. In informal

conversations he would cite "a girl," who still remains nameless to me, as someone he wrote for. With his head down, Jack would pencil beautiful lyrics that named his desire and admiration.

> When I am around you,
> I often forget how to talk.
> My boomerang thoughts
> often come back
> to be stuck in my throat.
> What I am trying to say is,
> I've always talked with my mouth
> and not my heart. (Untitled, Jack's Poem, 7.20.2013)

I have to be honest. Jack's poetry made me yearn for an angsty teen romance of my own. After reading I would add small statements like, "Wow, I feel lucky for this person" or "I wish someone would write me poetry!" He would laugh and say, "Well, but I write it for everyone." Jack swiftly unzipped his North Face backpack and took out his tablet. "See," Jack pointed to a new URL, "I have a separate tumblelog for poetry. You can follow it. I am a poet here."

Jack's positioning as a poet signaled to me the diverse and often fragmented storylines that plague digital youth lifestreaming. Aware of the inability to access all of the narratives and threads that youth were streaming, I tried to pick up on central stories, ones that I shared in and would actively come to know through following their everyday experience. Jack's secondary tumblelog, set aside solely for poetry was new. I did not consider multiple sitings on the same platform in the way that I looked across and traced multiple sitings across a constellation of networks. When I asked about his poetry microblog, Jack was quick to position his writer-ly identity as one that I "may not be interested in." When I inquired why, he shared the following poem.

> **An Open Letter to Self-Proclaimed Grammar Nazis**
> I write the way I talk
> and I talk the way I think
> and I, meaning what I say,
> as that's what I think.

So, no I do not mean, "My dog and I."
I mean, "My dog and me,
We went on a walk.
and on that walk we talked.
Of how some people say what they mean
and others mean to say
and how I mean neither but say both
as I will not let rhetoric of a broke knuckle ruler break my mind.
And yes, I would say,
"Me went for a walk."
because me is who I am,
So fuck who or whom – or whomever you want (I'm sex positive!).
I know that a three year old knows grammar more than me,
so, I listen when they talk,
because English is not a dead language,
it means more than just to survive. (Jack's Poem, 12.30.13)

"I'm not exactly your standard school writer" Jack declared. After reading "An Open Letter to Self-Proclaimed Grammar Nazis" I thought it was interesting to nuance the rhetorical moves Jack was making in the poem as it pertained to his ethos. I was curious about his decision in sharing the poem as rationale for his description rather than talking to me face to face. In the same way Jack subverted logics of what "normative" gender and sexuality could look like across online publics (e.g., fandoms, etc.), so too did he subvert and disidentify from standardized forms of school-based literacy. Although grammar here is pointed to by Jack to illuminate the resistance to standards-based values of what good writing looks like, I was interested to hear how the poem resonated his sex positive trans* identity. Jack did not use poetry solely as a way to solely say fuck the system, but rather made a rhetorical choice by highlighting how he was accepting of who, whom, and whomever you wanted to fuck as well. Poetry was an ethical object of resistance.

"It's the only thing I can control…" painting away a life less ordinary. School-based writing was an active participant across the ethnographic field. From the earliest stages of participant observation, I sat in classroom spaces at Center Ridge and City Town to discover how

the constraints of urban public education would paint the qualitative imaginary. Camille, like Jack, was an activist not only on Tumblr (as we've seen with her work and coalition building with the #blacklivesmatter movement) but also in the Center Ridge and City Town communities, more broadly. As the editor-in-chief of her school newspaper, Camille took on issues concerning gender policing of school dress code, the grading scale of "worthless A's" across Center Ridge's lackluster college prep program, and even rallied for more comprehensive sex education that was inclusive of queer issues and topics. The administration and teaching faculty loved her. "She's quirky." "Loud, but introverted." "She is going places." These are the phrases that quickly adhered to Camille when I asked about her to other adults who navigated the Center Ridge world. Camille's writing, unlike Jack's, however, was not made as public. She didn't share, like, or even tag to index her thoughts, but rather embodied the identity of a writer and constructed *herself* as a composition always in progress.

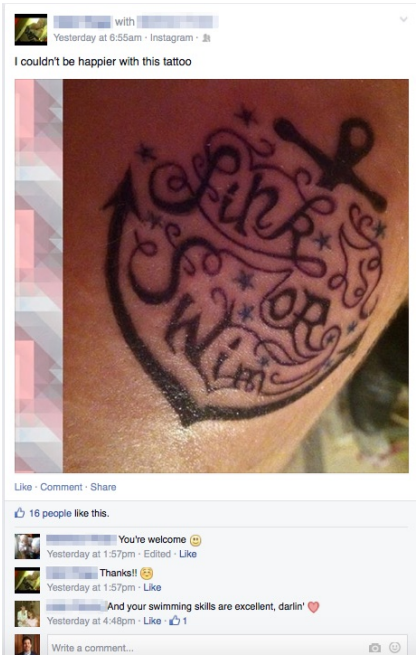
On a summer day in 2014, sitting side by side at a local Dairy Queen, Camille painted her nails. Detailing the recent arrest of her mother and the temporary custody her aunt had of her and her brother Watson, Camille began to cry. Exploring the queer rhetorical work of her writing would not surface as primary topics for discussion that day. Unfortunately, the only thing I could do in the moment was buy her a large banana milkshake and listen. Words cannot express or even capture what we talked about that day. Queer skin and tears were shed and shared. "Don't put this into one of your papers…" Camille stated as she laughed about the inability to stop crying. Stories were told in those moments that will forever be located in the creative commons of my memory. Those stories and line by line lyrics detailing the tempos of queer adolescence will not make the pages of this chapter or even this dissertation but will hopefully surface through Camille's embodied sense of home and queer possibility.

Towards the end of our time together that day, I couldn't help but notice the immaculate artistry that transpired on Camille's hands during our conversation. "Whoa!" I said, "Who knew nails could be cheetah-print." Camille flexed her fingers downward so that I could catch a quick glimpse across each of the digits. "I'll probably redo them," Camille began, "put on a different design tonight." I couldn't understand how or why she would erase something so beautiful, something that took well over the 90 minutes of storying we shared together to complete. "It's the only thing I can control" she replied. Camille's nails, mundane as they may seem here, were used across the longitudinal work to speak back to a number of injustices she felt. Camille embodied an ethos of resistance. Her nails were resistant to her peers' gender policing of "black butch bodies," and were always a "work in progress" (much like she detailed her school life and path towards college). She transformed the body as a canvas, as a space for writing catharsis. Camille's nails had the ability to transform into a blank slate. Her palette for transformation was not solely built on the page, but on her body, as she encapsulated an ethos of queer resistance and disidentification that fueled her for a radical tomorrow that she knew would come.

A mantra for a journey yet to be defined. In the latter months of fieldwork, Andi became a phantom in the Center Ridge GSA. She worked quietly towards her GED and diploma and maintained close connections to friends online. As a participant, Andi would quickly fall into silence. She was never easy to get ahold of and yet was always quite fast to make arrangements for an interview if "I really needed one." In our last interview, I noticed that a bandage covered the top of her arm. She took off her hoodie and quietly mouthed the words, "ouch, ouch, ouch" while putting lotion on her healing tattoo. "You didn't see this on Facebook?" she asked me. "No," I replied. I took out my iPhone to capture the image as its simple beauty and colloquial phrase truly did embody the young person I came to know in Andi. Stitched onto a 4 x 3 inch

space on Andi's upper arm, an anchor with adjacent text reading "Sink or Swim" was drawn (*see Figure 32*). When I asked her about the details, she was quick to hush me with the

Figure 32: Andi's Tattoo



the "please do not be my mom right now. I know it is permanent." She quickly added, "and yes I wanted it." I laughed at her and said she sounded like *my* mom. I rolled up the left sleeve of my long button down to show her my tattooed outline of Indiana, a place and home that I detailed first allowed me to see and come to queer on my own terms. "What!" she exclaimed, "but you're so straight laced." I didn't tell her the story of how Indiana came to be forever etched onto my body, acting as a symbol to speak back to my blue-collar ways of gay life, but I did make her tattoo a part of our interview.

Sink or swim was a euphemism and saying that Andi, and her now boyfriend Max, used to describe their relationship. A self-proclaimed lesbian, Andi began the journey of dating an in-transition young person. Megan, her former girlfriend had commented to Andi how she always felt like "a dude" (her words, not my own). Hence, Megan was Max. "The tattoo," according to

Andi, "was just an in-the-moment thing. You either see this person through it or you break up. That's my coping strategy with life. You either do it, or you don't." Emblazoned on her body, the sink or swim image reminded me of Kirkland's (2009) story and the exploration of texts and tattoos invoked by Black adolescents to revise and re-author dominant narratives of illiteracy. Andi, a Latina lesbian whose own competence in academic literacies caused her to be displaced from her peers at Center Ridge was quite literate. Much like Kirkland's (2009) Derrick, Andi invoked a tattoo to etch her place into a society that for all intensive purposes considered her a failure. Despite her lack of standardized academic success, I want to consider Andi's tattoo and the embodiment of a queer ethos as a tool to speak to the rhetorical possibilities of techne. Spectacle and digital youth lifestreaming are not solely seen through the screen but forever imprinted onto the body.

Andi's tattoo served as a public form of techne, a reorientation of an identity and relationship that was, in its quite literal form, in transition. Whether an anchor needled onto an arm or a collage of picturesque backdrops painted onto nails, the offline literacy lives of youth were threaded into the practices of digital youth lifestreaming to highlight the lived experiences and flesh of queer existence. Bodies and the ethos of queer embodiment matter. These textual artifacts, sedimented into digital streams through shared Facebook images or Instagram-ed photos, highlighted a deeper system of symbolic currency, one wherein human stories and human struggles are rendered visible and made possible online. The virtual was not an elsewhere, but a here that made its way into everyday discourses for LGBT youth. These small "sedimented identity texts" (Rowsell & Pahl, 2007), displaced as storied moments of possibility across youth lifestreaming were only amplified when read with and across other semiotic laminations of digital media use.

Glimpse 3: Illogical Logos; Or, Reading Erotic Realness for Queer Desire.

If we abstract away from the lifestreaming particulars highlighted, the data glimpses and identity texts of Andi, Camille, Jack, and Gabe, we begin to discover how the temporal streams of these sitings work in tandem with one another to make arguments concerning youth sexuality, conflicting reads of academic success, and racial disidentification. This final section focuses on logos, or the Aristotelian understanding of argument through logic. Through explicating a three-day glimpse of Zeke's lifestreaming work, I illustrate how he used the queer rhetorical practice of disidentification to provide disjointed understandings of what it means to be black, gay, and have the so-called "thirst" in Kilgore.

"Bitch, I ain't a bottom…": Locating desire through the 'realness' of queer techne. In the first years of Center Ridge and City Town high school's gay straight alliance, both groups worked towards what I would consider small-scale school reform. Polling LGBT and queer students about campus climate, creating activist zines for National Day of Silence, and selling baked goods in the community garden to attend safe space professional development sessions were some of the larger initiatives and successes. What is unique about the evolution of both groups is that as the youth grew older they were less teacher or social worker centered. They asked for the privacy to talk amongst one another about "real" issues. The two groups merged into one. "I don't want Ms. Angie (Center Ridge HS's social worker)," Camille pled to Janice, "telling me we can't talk about sex or that we can't curse. We're practically adults." Janice took Camille's request to Ms. Angie. With many of the group's members now 18, Ms. Angie agreed. Upon hearing Camille's reflection to Janice, the next time I saw the larger group I regained consent to participate in the group dialogue. Despite also yearning for the space to get more "real," I was unsure if sex and desire were topics everyone felt comfortable talking about in my

presence. Leonte quickly reassured me that my social group status was sustained. “Girl,” Leonte went on, “you just as thirsty as we are.” The group erupted in laugher and Janice shook her head in agreement, “I just got divorced. We’re all thirsty.”

Even with the renewed energy and space to discuss issues concerning sex and desire, certain group members maintained their privacy. As I listened more closely, I began to see how those who were less forthcoming were often students of color. Sam and Ashley, two white Freshmen at Center Ridge asked the more senior members of the group why the school district did not provide comprehensive sex education that was inclusive of LGBT issues.

Camille: Yeah, that’s a good question.

Wargo: So, what topics are talked about? It’s been awhile since health class. We didn’t talk about sex at all.

Gabe: Ok, Indiana.

Wargo: Hey, now!

Ashley: The girls are told not to have sex and I think the boys just put a condom on a banana. Then we both get bags with tampons, condoms, and deodorant.

Wargo: On a banana?

Gabe: Uh huh. That bottom over there (pointing to Zeke) would probably try to sit on it (the banana).

Zeke: Bitch, I’m not a bottom!

Gabe: Oh, right, we forgot. You’re black.

The group talk was interesting to watch as someone who saw the evolution and dissolve of friendships. The once playful dynamic and “shade” between Zeke and Gabe became more intense as the two grew into adulthood. In contrast to Zeke, Gabe was quite open with his sexual

likes and dislikes. As we saw in his earlier remixes and mashups, Gabe located queer possibility through a variety of art forms and composing practices. He used the possibilities of queer rhetorics to recompose desire. Gabe rewrote a narrative of gay Black possibility for himself. Zeke's refusal of being a bottom, however, seen through Gabe's simple retort, was directly related to taking on of a hyper-masculine persona in school, one that aligned with being "Black" and was maintained through cisgender realness.

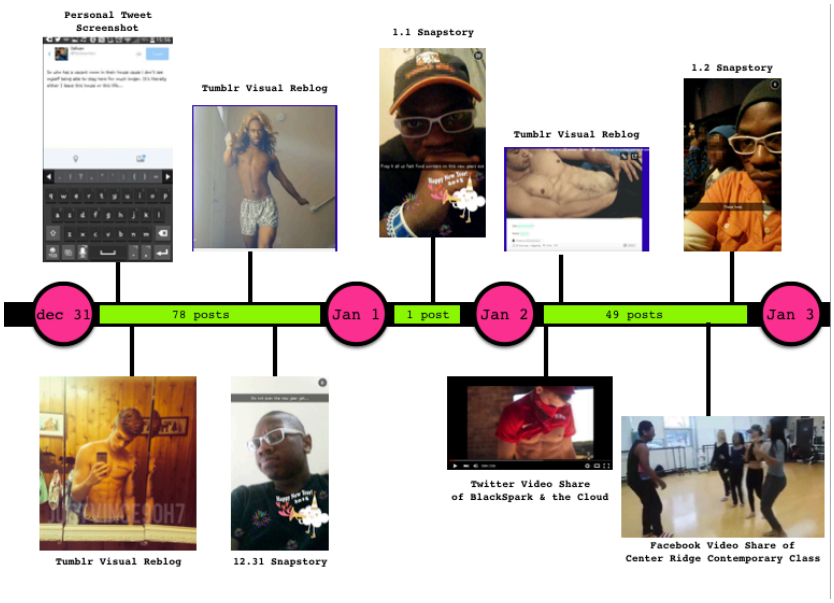
Zeke's digital lifestreaming, in comparison, was read quite differently. "Feeling Black" for Zeke was an inexperience that forcefully invited itself into every facet of his online life. Whether captured with his iPhone and digitally mediated through Instagram or affectively felt through his reblogs of the white male body, desire was located online and help captive on the body in flesh space. "It's like you throw up that hoodie," Zeke explained to me in an interview, "and you look like everyone else here. Last thing I want people to see me for is a fag." I visibly recoiled when Zeke said this in an interview. I remember walking the stairs at Center Ridge and being asked if I was going up into that "homo" space. "It's not like I'm homophobic." He continued. "I like dudes. It's just I can't show it. I go to church, I go to work, people know. It just isn't me. I'm not flashy like that." Curious, I asked him about the various sitings of queer literacies work done online, as I noticed sexually explicit images and video material lining his Twitter feed, Tumblr dash, and Snapstories throughout my techtual listening and our dialogic selection of posts. I was surprised by how he maintained a veil of heterosexuality at school amidst a geography of queer culture online. "Well yeah," he went on, "but you can really be yourself on there."

Zeke's lifestreaming presented a counter-narrative to the cisgender masculine performance he displayed in the larger Center Ridge and San Miguel's county community. For

Zeke, queer "realness" was performed across the online and offline geographies of writing. It, similar to his peers' practices, acted as a thread that sutured experiences of his everyday with the more erotic imaginary of youth sexuality. He located the elsewhere of desire in the more mundane here of performative masculinity. Zeke worked to present a false logic of identities. When I sat down with him to discuss the streams he felt comfortable sharing, he quickly shrugged his shoulders. "You know you think too much," he replied. "You can take whatever you want." I was cautious in detailing all of his streams, however, as I know many were spliced by spurts of Internet access and shifts in home life. Throughout the latter part of our work together Zeke spent the bulk of his time at his grandfather's house as his mother's apartment was "too much." We concluded that the purchase of his new iPhone and the start of a new year would be a nice starting point to discuss his lifestreaming work.

Across a three-day (Dec 31st - Jan 2nd) span of techtual listening, Zeke and I detailed and performed a content analysis of 128 mined posts (*see Figure 33*) together. The three days were chosen as focal units for Zeke and I as they included common patterns of literacy use.

Figure 33: Zeke's Lifestream 12.31.14-1.2.15



Each day, for example, included a full-length snapstory, a video narrative that Zeke told in "confessional" style. Through these 2-3 minute videos, he detailed the trials and tribulations of working at Little Caesar's during the holiday break. Similarly, the staccato patterns of text-based posts, photo reblogs, and personal shared histories marked this stream as one that was indicative of Zeke's larger practices across time. While at first glance the stream may seem contradictory to Zeke's refusal of queerness as outlined by the passive "bottom" position Gabe put on him, he reads this as one that highlighted the disidentification of black masculinity. I include the full exchange here to highlight the paradox of reading that is inherent in Zeke's queer rhetorical work of disidentification.

Wargo: Ok, so what's the story behind these posts? I recognize a couple of these from TV or my own Tumblr but walk me through these three days. What happened?

Zeke: Well, I worked over 20 hours. I was forced to take the night shifts because it was new years.

Wargo: Yeah, is that what the Snapstory is about?

Zeke: I basically call them out for breaking child-labor laws. I'm like "Um, I'm not even 18 yet." Then, the last one I am talking at the group about hanging out with those ratchet hoes like Leonte at the movies

Wargo: Yeah. Haha. You worked a lot…What about that first post?

Zeke: I ended up leaving my mom's apartment. I couldn't tweet all of that message so I took a screenshot of what I said.

Wargo: OK, and so what's with all the half-naked white guys?

Zeke: That's my type.

Wargo: What?

Zeke: My type. I mean, they're like models.

Wargo: But they're all white.

Zeke: Yeah, so?

Wargo: And then what's that dude in the wig?

Zeke: I don't know, I just reblogged it because I thought it was funny. He's flaming. He is like "Hey, I am gay and I am working."

Wargo: That's basically your Tumblr.

Zeke: What?

Wargo: "Hey, I'm gay, look at me."

Zeke: Yeah, that's the point. You can be flaming. I mean, I am pretty sure everyone knows now. I took contemporary as my elective this semester (*points to last image in stream*).

Wargo: Is that what that is?

Zeke: Yeah, I mean, that song. Oh my god. That dance. It gave me life.

Wargo: What do you mean?

Zeke: It was like, there I was the only dude in the class and I am gay and I am acting like some kind of pimp with those girls. The dance was basically them trying to get at me.

Wargo: But at the end (of the film)?

Zeke: I know, that's why I am laughing. I couldn't keep a straight face. Well, a straight anything.

Wargo: So why'd you share it on your Facebook, didn't you say your mom and auntie are on there?

Zeke: Uh huh. I don't care. I thought it was funny. My ma, she probably thought her prayers been answered. "Thank you god for giving my son a girlfriend." But really, she can keep praying. Haha. Everybody else be reading it the right way.

If we zoom in and unpack these more anchored texts, artifacts that Zeke points to in his interview, the rhetorical resistance he deploys online becomes quite apparent.

As Zeke mentioned in this extended transcript, the affordances of streamed video were used to orchestrate a direct connection to his Snapchat community of followers. Detailing the hours of labor leading up to the New Year, Zeke used the video function of Snapchat to highlight lived moments of working at Little Caesar's during the peak of the holiday season. He critiqued the space with add-on descriptor text, the paint function, and filter capabilities. The confessional operated as a tactic to break down the third wall between composer (Zeke) and audience (his Snap community). The third snapstory that streamed on January 2nd worked to describe his "New Year's" celebration. After working for two 10-hour days, Zeke created a narrative that included his friends, the larger GSA group, and a trip to the movies. The group received free tickets to see *Selma*. Rather than using the cinema outing as a reprieve from work, Zeke detailed to his followers that he was using the excursion as a reprieve from home, a sentiment that commenced his three-day stream. In the opening post across this three-day span, Zeke took a screen shot of a text-based post that read "So who has a vacant room in their house cause I don't see myself being able to stay here for much longer. It's literally either I leave this hour or this life." Emotionally vulnerable, Zeke used writing and this diary-like post to engage in a dialogue with others. He refused the 140-character constraint of Twitter by using a screenshot of text. Through detailing the emotional struggle he had with home, Zeke streamed a softer side, one that was not often in sync with his Center Ridge high school identity or position as son/grandson at home.

Zeke did not use lifestreaming solely as a process of catharsis but rather as a function to also stream desire.

Zeke's type, in lieu of his more hardened shell towards others, was twinks. Therefore, it came as no surprise to me that whenever we mined streamed images from Zeke's network, nude white men kept the tempo for other modes and practices of composing. These photo reblogs on Tumblr and Twitter made their way into the stream we took for this multimodal protocol and I include them here as a way to highlight what Zeke referred to as his "thirst." The "thirst" had appeared throughout my work with LGBT and queer youth. It served to locate and name sexual desire. Well, to locate sex without saying "sex" out loud. The twink image functioned for Zeke as a mechanism of disidentification. White, lithe, hyper-feminine while paradoxically hyper-masculine, the twink functioned to make the argument to Zeke's networked audience that he and his identity as a Black gay male was not fixed. When I asked Zeke if he would consider himself a "twink" he quickly shook his head and refused the naming. "No," he went on, "but that's my type." I quickly recounted with a question, "but they're all white?" He shook his head again. "No, some of them are Latino. I like the muscles." I went back to the stream we examined earlier and asked him about the visual reblog of a Black male topless in a blonde wig. "That's just funny. I reblogged that because I could hear Gabe in my head saying 'Yaas Queen!'" I laughed, I'll admit, I too could hear Gabe "queening" out to the visual reblog. It is the type of artifact he would show the GSA group on Janice's SMART board. Disidentification, however, was not solely a working against the prescribed logics of racial masculinity for Zeke. It was also about the aesthetic and making the argument that desire was something he had, he shared, and he yearned to make visible.

The two videos that conclude Zeke's mined lifestream are those that serve the greatest paradox for his archive. The first, is a still frame from a short video from anonymous male filmmaker Black Spark. Black Spark's films are most noted for hyper-sexualized scenes of man on man intimacy. In an interview with *Out* editor Philip Crook, Black Spark stated that the videos are largely about his own sex life and coming to queer in adolescence. Largely influenced by art pornography in the 1970s, the videos are always a mix of full frontal male nudity, intercourse, strange dance sequences, and black light paintings. It is spectacle in every sense of the word. Despite the prevalence of Black Spark, the anonymous film maker is known for doing "pop up" releases, showcasing his latest feature for a short span of time online and then immediately taking them down. Fans of his, however, are often quick to download the videos and recirculate them on Tumblr, the space that Zeke reblogged them from. Outside of the transcript I shared above, I did not prod Zeke to tell me the what and why of reblogging the Black Spark and the Cloud film but rather asked him about it in relation to the other video that closed his three day stream, a film highlighting his contemporary dance class final project. Dancing to Rihanna's "Hard", Zeke alongside of 5 of his female peers at Center Ridge performed a mixed ensemble that riffed on a hyper masculine man being "hard" and having his girls turn against him. "That video," in describing the dance final, "is like just the complete opposite of the Black Spark video. In one, people would be like, 'Oh, he is GAY (*emphasis added*), but then you see me dancing 'hard' (he uses air quotes) for those girls. We choreographed it like that." I inquired as to why they were streamed together. "Well, its like somewhere I fall between those two (films). I can wild out and be thirsty but I can also act like Rihanna said, 'hard,' and make it through the everyday." For Zeke, the logic in his queer rhetorics work was to present a dynamic sense of queer that was not necessarily made available

in his IRL environs. Zeke leveraged the resources of popular culture to resist. Williams (2011), highlights how popular culture texts in particular "provide representations of identity that individuals use both to reinforce and to resist their identification with dominant cultural models in a dynamic process of continually becoming, rather than of simply being" (p. 205). Like he makes mention to in the closing lines of the extended transcript, Zeke, like his lifestreaming work above, demanded to be decoded in different ways. Zeke camouflaged his queer and asked to be deciphered or "read" by a select few.

Tongues Untied and Phones Unplugged: Using Queer Rhetorics to Connect, Cope, and Comment

In 1989, Marlon Riggs released his semi-documentary film *Tongues Untied*. Through a blend of autobiography and fictional documentary work, Riggs worked to exploit the nation's unease concerning racial and sexual difference in the late twenty-first century. While not considered a work of disidentification by Riggs, Munoz, Alexander and Rhodes, among others use the film to highlight the work of queer rhetorics. If Riggs, through the spectacle of video asked a generation to untie their tongues, then I want to suggest here that Jack, Camille, Andi, Gabe, and Zeke, are asking us to unplug from common rhetoric concerning youth digital and queer culture. When I would ask youth about their connective compositions, they would often laugh me off and say, like Zeke did above, "you think too much!" The techne, spectacle, and queer rhetorics work of disidentification, however, cannot merely be reduced to "fun" or "play." Rather, at a theoretical level, it highlights how particular acts of resistance are made manifest in order to work against heteronormative structures of gender, sexuality, and desire. I would also go one step further to argue that these types of rhetorical practices and aesthetic capabilities worked to disrupt topics outside of gender and sexuality (e.g., the politics of schooling, academic achievement, what 'literacy' is, etc.). For Zeke, Gabe, Andi, Jack, and Camille the prospect of

queer rhetorics worked to shift and recompose one's perception of the world. Aesthetically, they created a backdrop for their more just social worlds and created a radical present that seemed more amenable than uncertain futures.

In the remainder of this chapter, I want to highlight the shared discourses of humanity that were crystalized and brought to fruition for youth as I decoded their various literacy sitings and spaces for composing queer desire. These texts were more than just mere glimpses of identity but rather strategies of disidentification, a mechanism that granted agentic action in the face of majoritarian subjugation. As Munoz articulates, "Disidentification as a mode of understanding the movements and circulations of identificatory force, would always foreground that lost object of identification; it would establish new possibilities while at the same time echoing the materially prescriptive cultural locus of any identification" (Munoz, 1999, p. 30). Written on the body, through the screen, or felt in rhythms of movement, pathos, ethos, and logos were constructed to build a self that felt more real than the designed imaginaries others were putting upon them. Youth recycled discourses to remix and remediate what it meant to be a "good" writer, a young person who yearns and has desire, an artist, and a poet. Digital youth lifestreaming was used to connect, to cope, and to comment.

Connecting to a Community on One's Own Terms

Design was a key facet component for all of the youth digital lifestreaming I examined during my time at Center Ridge and City Town. As I argued earlier, my earliest ways into this type of digital work were refracted through a multiliteracies lens and focus. Aesthetically, however, the multiliteracies lens did not take heed of the techne and spectacle, the pure craftsmanship and know-how needed to connect to both oneself and to a larger community. As Gabe highlighted through his photo mashups and visual remixes, the aesthetic was a referent for

larger issues concerning who has the right to participate and how variant versions remixed desire, fandoms, etc. For Gabe, the process of mashup and remix was a tactic of disidentification. "Disidentification," as Munoz (1999) suggests, "scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message's universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications" (p. 31). Camouflaged as "play" and/or seen as mere fun, Gabe's work was rhetorically quite sophisticated. Working to, as Munoz argues, reconstruct encoded meanings of cultural texts to work as an inclusive form of resistance, Gabe composed, stitched, and photoshopped his way into communities. He connected spaces that at first glance were not welcoming.

Whether anchored onto a visual reblog or sedimented through a selfie, lifestreaming is a rhetorical movement that binds youth to varying positions and identities. These positions and identities, however, are negotiated and reconstructed according to the group's larger discourses, histories of participation, and as Jack illuminates, how one self-presents online. Like Gabe's more playful form of spectacle, Jack too used the elements of design to architect more inclusive spaces for his trans*identity. For Jack, however, the still frame photography and the collaged artistry was an ontological act, one wherein he rewrote himself, quite literally, into the story. As we consider transmedia, digital storytelling, fandom publics, and the various other ethnographic imaginaries that we seek out and examine across online environs, more attention should be paid to the ways in which LGBT and queer young people connect to community on one's own terms and write themselves into stories that may not at first glance be welcoming. These spaces (virtual or otherwise), as others have documented (Curwood, Magnifico, & Lammers, 2013; Curwood, 2014; Lammers, 2016) are truly the "extracurriculum" (Gere, 1994) of youth literacy learning.

Coping through Composing the Body

Outside of using the art of disidentification to connect, youth also used queer rhetorics in their digital lifestreaming practices to cope. Unfortunately an aim, swipe, tap, and/or glide did not always elicit the type of rhetorical work necessary to make a particular argument; or, perhaps more realistically, some stories were not meant to be shared. As Camille illustrated with her nail artistry, youth are embodying stories and compositions that, while at first glance may seem quite mundane, are implicitly quite saturated with personal narratives of hurt and loss. These youth then take their more embodied forms and ways of knowing and digitally stream them, adding these sedimented frames and artifactual literacies as splices in their more temporal streams of experience. Camille highlighted how our first modes and mediums are always already our bodies, forever mutable and designed for (re)mediation.

Similarly to Camille, Andi too wore narratives of hope, possibility, and the unknown on her body. Like Kirkland's (2009) Derrick, Andi stitched and painted her narrative in the form of a tattoo, an anchor that holds ground on her upper arm. Through textual production, Andi's tattoo begged to be read as a hieroglyph, yearning for others to ask for its significance and used to memorialize moments and memories of hurt. What is important to consider here is how Andi and Camille used their bodies to risk spectacle. The body became a form of techne, an embodied archive of lived knowledge that was both simultaneously a blank slate but forever emblazoned. For some, the physical body itself is a mechanism for coping. When streamed through larger narratives and digital youth lifestreaming it not only rhetorically works to connect and cope, but to comment as well.

Commenting to Correct

Lifestreaming, much like the emerging genres of collecting and curating or the affect-laden experiences of remediating memories through writing with mobile media, functioned not only as an emergent form of composing but also of commenting. For Zeke, the once stifled queer sexualities and sensualities of desire were reignited through his queer rhetorics work on Tumblr, in school, and across the various other literacy sitings he traversed. Zeke invited readers to navigate across textual bodies while concurrently offering his own body as a text. As Alexander and Rhodes remind us, "the 'texts' that play with the spectacularity of representation and circulations of desire" are only available through the resources "that new and multimedia make possible" (p. 125). At once occupying the space of school and home through performative gestures of cisgender masculinity, Zeke's digital archive and lifestreaming repository were spattered with instances of queer spectacle. Through techne (here I use it to heighten the focus of craftsmanship and the logic that lifestreaming entails), Zeke reclaimed his desire.

Zeke's sophisticated lifestreaming work takes stock of the problematic construction of "community" that is often used as a catch-all for youth and/or youth communities when discussing a facet of contemporary culture (i.e. digital youth culture). When we talk about community, we often use it as a liberatory category, a shared construct to highlight affinity and membership. However, like Riggs' *Tongues Untied*, Zeke's digital lifestreaming and the three-day snippet we shared together calls to question the dogmatic contestation of what it means to be Black, gay, and masculine. Zeke, through his paradoxical reading of dancing "Hard" and his staccato reblogs of white twinks, presents a queer ontology and futurity for the young Black queer amidst a digital culture that largely sees queerness synonymous to whiteness. Zeke places these racial ambiguities against normative assumptions of what it means to be, to perform, and to

be read as gay. His infatuation with the white body, however, and his preference for those who are "muscled" or "hot" are referents to his own sexual imaginary. Unfortunately, for Zeke, Blackness has never translated into a sense of queer or gay. Whiteness, in terms of both those bodies he desires as well as the communities he opts into, pervade his configuration of what it means to be Black *and* gay. While successful at some levels, Zeke's queer rhetorics work falls short. Unlike the continuum of self-expression he deploys through lifestreaming, Black masculinity is still painted as "hard" (like him) or "soft" (like Gabe). There is no middle ground. The authoring affordances of youth lifestreaming were an aesthetic communicative power that revealed particularly salient narratives about knowing and making known differently on one's own terms. Youth were (re)claiming their right to write across nonverbal landscapes and outside predetermined narratives of race, gender, and sexuality. Through snapshots, visual-scapes of self, and curated artifactual literacies, Zeke helped reveal how navigating "new" digital terrain opened up access and recognition to new possible identities of masculinity. For youth, and LGBT youth in particular, gendered and sexual identities always influence the connective composition and multimodal creating of identities in difference.

Redesigning More Just Social Futures or Simply Remixing the Radical Present?

At the onset of the larger ethnography, my own presuppositions concerning mobile media use, social networking, and connecting learning clouded the granular level of analysis I was able to perform. I walked into Center Ridge and City Town thinking that the digital dexterity that youth employed were used to design more just social futures for a larger, perhaps utopic queer youth vision and collective. Upon deeper reflection and closer analysis, however, I realized that this was too large of a task for lives that were already in turmoil. For Zeke, Camille, Andi, Jack, and LGBT youth more broadly, digital lifestreaming and queer rhetorics functioned as but one

way to not design more just social futures for larger communities and collectives, but to make today less tumultuous. Digital lifestreaming remixed and repurposed the radical present. Whether focused on a fandom, a relationship, the introspective self, and/or working towards a transition, LGBT youth lifestreaming remained more isolated than communal, more introspective than networked, more organic than rehearsed. In flesh spaces that remained dangerous, lifestreaming stitched together hurt, angst, desire, and (in)equality. Perhaps, the virtual and visual was the aesthetic space in which collaborative work to counter heteronormativity seemed possible. Taken together, these queer rhetorics of possibility transformed into an archive of queer youth lives, stories that may have otherwise remained unintelligible.

Across our three years of working together, Zeke, Andi, Gabe, Ben, Jack, and Camille would always greet my presence and arrival onto the scene with summaries and synthesis of my own lifestreaming work. “You sure go to a lot of conferences for being a student!” they would instigate. “Do you ever do anything but take gym selfies?” they asked. They were also highly cognizant, moreover, of the ways in which my own desire entered onto the scene, something that my khaki and button-up design did not outwardly wear. Desire in digital lifestreaming, even for me, was a resurgence, a writing resonance who frequencies were about leaving those oppressive relics and cultural artifacts in past so that larger and more generative communities free of gender, injustice, and social policing. LGBT youth lifestreaming and queer rhetorics work were used to counter heteronormative harm. Hence, as Jack, Andi, Camille, and Zeke help illustrate, ‘the writing does not create us, but in the act of writing we are; by writing we affirm and proclaim our being in the here and now’ (Yagelski, 2009, p.17). Reading digital lifestreams as “connective identity texts” help us reimagine the social practices of LGBT youth writing as inherently a way of being. Connective identity texts and the tools of spectacle and techne were used to surpass and

navigate social fault lines created by differences and reorient ourselves towards the orchestration and celebration of visually *being* different.

CHAPTER 7: "I DON'T WRITE SO OTHER PEOPLE NOTICE ME, I WRITE SO THAT I CAN NOTICE MYSELF." ENGAGING WITH LGBT YOUTH WRITING, DESIRE, AND THE VIBRANCY AND MOVEMENT OF ELECTRACY

When qualitative researchers and critical ethnographers gloss on how they "leave" the field, the fictional imaginary they architect and bring to life dissipates. It breaks and fractures. Departure, as Figueroa (2014) reminds us, is a forgotten trope. Ethnography and educational anthropology often celebrate the "arrival" onto the scene without ever theorizing or nuancing the intricacies of leaving. Departure is suspended in a temporal moment of reading, of being, and of experiencing a story. Heightened rhetoric surrounding theoretical constructs like community and identity start to feel like a phantom limb. A hypothetical door closes. The scene turns to black. When you work online, however, the door remains open. You get to see the stage manager and dressing room dirt long after the curtain drops. There is no leaving, as you were always but a mutable guest, one that can be un-followed, un-friended, and silenced. "You don't exactly penetrate another culture [in ethnography]…" as Geertz (1995) reminds us, "you put yourself in its way and it bodies forth and enmeshes you" (p. 44). For online research, this embodied physicality is even more transparent. You scroll, you swipe, you click on identities, ideologies, and ideas. Arriving and departing are haptic acts.

Connective ethnography makes it difficult to bind a study. The digital work youth partake in starts long before your arrival onto the scene and almost seems limitless at the conclusion. Over three years of shared story-ing, I grew close to the young people in Kilgore and San Miguel's County. I saw letters of college acceptance arrive, breakups fragment friend groups, families shift and transform because of addiction, and early hopes and futures break, ferment, or come to fruition. Unfortunately, Zeke, Ben, Gabe, Andi, Camille, and Jack "left" our shared work together at a staccato tempo, each meandering their way to the next venture at different

times. The so-called Band-Aid kept ripping. My skin and heart hurt. For some, like Camille, Jack, and Ben, the trip was a short fifty-five minute drive to a neighboring research university. For others, like Andi, the path seemed less trodden on and, in perfect Andi form, was hailed as a "sink or swim moment Wargo."

At the conclusion of our much longer time together, I invited each young person to lunch. Desperate for the endless supply of cafeteria food at the university dining halls, we shared the final moments of interview talking across possible connections to school-based literacy. "What would teachers learn from your sophisticated work online?" "What have you learned through your own participation across communities and groups?" "What is writing?" These are some of the many questions I asked Andi, Jack, Camille, Gabe, Ben, and Zeke. Expecting direct connections to arguments concerning personal identity-work, or at least the "They should allow us to have our phones with us!" declaratives, I was shocked to hear many of their responses. "Don't come into my space." Gabe declared. "That is the only space I have where you're not." "I mean," Jack asked curiously, "is a selfie *really* writing?" The innovation, play, and invention that worked its way into the out-of-school and online practices and lives of young people were stamped out of more formal conceptions of writing and more traditional English language arts learning.

For many, the mundane practices of snapping, composing, Tumbling, tweeting, and texting do not necessarily amount into "literacy." This narrow view of what many consider "literate" activities has crystalized over their lived years and experiences of schooling (Gee & Hayes, 2011; Hull & Nelson, 2005). When I sat down with Camille at the close of the study, I invited her to speak about reception and audience. I wanted to know to whom she wrote for, as her writing was always deeply personal. Missing the bus, Camille FaceTimed me from the

Kilgore Public library. I asked for and gained her consent to audio record the conversation and we started. “You still owe me food!” she quickly cried. Minutes into the audio call, Camille responded to my inquiry concerning for whom and to whom she wrote. “Jon, I think you have it wrong.” Cautious to continue, Camille read my face through the phone to decipher if I would interject. I smiled. “I don’t write so other people notice me,” she went on, “I write so that I can notice myself.” Over our three years of work together I saw this young person “feel” racially other in a way that she did not before. I saw her and her brother be moved from their home and into a hotel for months on end because of her mother’s inability to beat addiction. I saw her hurt. More importantly, however, I saw her break free from the Center Ridge chrysalis and rhetoric of meritocracy to transform into an African American lesbian woman whose vision for success was an action that she manifested in all she did. She wrote as a way of being.

Camille’s closing reflection was one that has stuck with me throughout the writing of this manuscript. I should add that she amended her response quickly after we talked to illustrate how I, too, wrote so that I could notice myself. She drew on my gym selfies or Instagram-ed pictures of my dissertation as referents. “You do that,” she added, “so you notice the work you did, notice the movement you’re making towards a goal. You write to get through the hurt. You’re doing big things too Jon.” I laughed as Ben, Jack, Gabe, Andi, Zeke, and Camille would often scoff at the thought of writing a book length project detailing their literacy lives and the online/offline politics of writing as an LGBT or queer young person. “No one,” they would all add, “would be interested in that. Everyone does it.”

In the remainder of the chapter I want to take heed of the vibrancy and movement that electracy, queer rhetorics, and the online/offline politics of LGBT youth writing insists upon. Rather than exhaustive remarks, I’ll attend to how youth were redesigning more just social

futures, speculate what considering LGBT youth writing as a means to navigate inequality may teach us about our contemporary time, and begin to chart a constellation and vision for the implications this connective work may have for us as literacies researchers, educators, and more socially just and humane people. In the end, I will talk across how my longitudinal work with LGBT and queer youth encouraged me to envision what a [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy may entail. Detailing how desire, sexuality, and cultural justice intersect, I close with a focus on the experience of writing and composing *in situ*, meditating on what the converging stories, desires, and stylized self-expression of six LGBT youth of color teach us about this contemporary moment of reading and writing the word and the world.

Making Elastic Literacies Visible to Stretch Across Experiences

> *It is commonplace to say that school is the place which asks children to focus on the world through writing. One can also say that school is the place which insists slowly but inexorably, that the world cannot be known other than through the abstractions of written language.*
>
> Gunther Kress, *Before Writing: Rethinking the Paths to Literacy*

As "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" turns 20, the New London Group's paramount question still remains. How, if at all, *are* youth designing more just social futures? With the advent of new media and the seemingly ubiquitous place it has in our everyday, what role, if any, is it playing as we work to orchestrate identity, engage civically, and navigate inequality? As Camille's opening epigraph reminds us, perhaps the social futures that youth are designing are not for a networked audience of followers and friends per se, but rather operationalized to alleviate the hurt and personal pain of yesterday. For historically marginalized youth, and LGBT youth of color in particular, the social futures of possibility are secondary to the turmoil of today.

As I glossed on in Chapter 3, youth are engaging with digital literacies for increased participation across publics. Whether curating a version of "pop cosmopolitanism" (Jenkins, 2006) or building more just tomorrows through collecting justice with the #blacklivesmatter movement, Andi, Camille, Ben, Zeke, and Jack navigated online/offline inequality through traversing the counterpublics of social activism. Through diverse genres of participation, their voices were echoed, augmented, and given a place of primacy. In considering how LGBT and queer youth construct identities in difference through "connective" encounters, Chapter 4 illuminated how youth were using electracy and writing with mobile media to write *with* place. They felt the affective frequencies of composition and desire. Zeke, Gabe, and Ben were not interested in producing an "identity text" only for it to be read from afar, but were curious to architect an experience, one unique to the reception of onlookers while highlighting the impossibility of knowing or feeling the personal meaning behind it. Andi, Ben, Zeke, Jack, Gabe, and Camille, however, also illuminated the importance of desire and used the stretches of elastic literacies as locating mechanisms for it. The connective encounters of queer rhetorics were taken up in Chapter 5 to highlight how composing more just social futures were not solely about the serious, but about the techne, the spectacle, and the mashup. Refracted through a selfie, a streamed dance routine on YouTube, or a fandom, youth users were remixing inequality, using the acts of disidentification to resist the cultural logics of heteronormativity that govern youth sexuality. The LGBT and queer youth I learned from were not solely designing texts, but were rather experiencing them.

Perhaps, what their incredibly powerful work shows is that the New London Group's question, and its invitation to consider design, is out of date. Youth were not designing; they were collecting, curating, remixing, feeling, and stretching across literacies practices and selves.

If we consider the rhetorical features of a multiliteracies lens, ekphrasis is still the focus of primacy for youth composing. Experience, however, was the register from which Zeke, Andi, and their peers wrote. Our contemporary time, hence, asks us to shift keys, to move away from literacy and towards electracy. Rather than schools disconnecting from local knowledges as the opening vignette of the introduction highlights, they need to connect into the ways in which youth are writing themselves. This does not mean that we dismiss the school-based genres emeriti (e.g., the essay), as these forms of writing and making will never eclipse the less lucid experiences youth are writing from. Rather, as I make mention to in Kress's above epigraph, we must stretch our own understandings of students outside of school and explore how they work to be known through abstractions of writing outside written language and print.

Purchasing Voice through the Counter-Techtual Economies of Literacy

A secondary question and problem that I alluded to in the introduction still remains without answer. Despite the paradox and purchase of equity, techno-inclusionism in schooling saturates students' everyday. Following Camille, Zeke, Gabe, and Andi at Center Ridge I saw how the Kilgore school district tried to pay for the "education debt" (Ladson-Billings, 2006) by compensating with technological resources. IPads floated into classrooms and computer labs were set up in spaces that never opened their doors to the larger student body. Despite this so-called purchase, the dominant economies of whom and what was named as literate at Center Ridge and City Town remained static. Adults, teachers, and administrators read Ben, Camille, and Jack as young people who would "go somewhere." Young folks who would go and "do something" for their community. Indexed by their admittance into a large research University, these young people were able to navigate the system of meritocracy to gain and garner voice with a particular kind of cultural capital. It was given to them. For other youth I worked with and

observed from afar, I saw how they monetized digital literacy practice to purchase voice. The "techtual counter-economies" of literacy (Wargo, 2016) were those that allowed them visibility. Through online/offline social relations and engagements, Gabe, Zeke, and Andi, in contrast, to Camille, Ben, and Jack used the counterpublics of electracy to build the blueprint for a life they envisioned.

So what does this mean for language and literacy education, and for teaching and learning more broadly? First, it reminds us that interest-driven activity in digital media is connected to youth affinities, passions, and engagements. As Ito (2013) reminds us "Learning in this mode is generally knowledge and expertise-driven, and evaluated by the metrics internal to the specific interest group, which can often be subcultural or quite different from what is valued by local peers or teachers" (p. 64). To begin a pedagogical re-envisioning of youth literacies, we must acknowledge but resist the act of co-opting youth spaces. We need to consider and to commit fully to alter our praxis and pedagogical possibilities – to, as Shipka (2016) maintains "consider how concretely engaging with different modes, genres, materials, cultural practices, communicative technologies, and language varieties impacts our abilities to negotiate meaning" (p. 251); Or, perhaps more importantly how "it might provide us with still other options for knowing and being, and for being known" (p. 251). Throughout my years of fieldwork and use of mobile media with youth, the digital applications and tools that built the network of literacies we traversed together were foreign to me. The more I snapped, tweeted, and tumbled, however, the more I saw how back-end developers and user experience programmers *listened* to their audience. When voicing concerns over the privacy of a particular snapstory, or when Twitter questioned the 140-character limit, users transformed their experiences into a cacophony of

resistance. The tech companies listened. They refined their work to keep local knowledges present and the cultures of their microblogs and social networks steadfast.

As an educational researcher and ethnographer, I would be remiss to not also discuss the immediate implications for language and literacy research. Although I cannot answer the Monday morning question, as I just cautioned educators from co-opting youth spaces, technologies, and cultures, the rhetorical affordances of writing in the age of electracy is one that invites educators and learners into exploring how experience intersects with argument, how digital composing is always already an act of writing, and how understanding the situative nature of hacking is one worth yakking about and listening to. My work with LGBT youth in Kilgore and San Miguel's County reminds me of de Certeau's notion of readers as renters and texts as habitable spaces. Through this spatial metaphor, de Certeau highlights how reading and writing is always already an active, not passive act. These poaching practices are imbued with meaning when youth architect, design, and (re)author sites and selves of literacies. As important as scholars such as Kress, de Certeau, Selfe, the New London Group, Shipka, and Arroyo can be to envisioning the future of our work, there is just as much theoretical richness to be gleaned from Andi, Gabe, Camille, Jack, Zeke, Ben, and countless other youth who are reminded to "disconnect." For me, these youth were windows into the diverse practices of "writing our way into being" (Yagelski, 2009). They were the young people who were, in all sense of the words, doing the work. Thus, I would invite educators to consider how Gabe's photo mashup, the varying genres of participation of the #socialjustice warrior, and/or Zeke's StoryMapJS aligns with some of the larger purposes and contexts for writing. Writing is a dynamic, complex, and socially situated phenomenon. Together these exemplars of digital media participation remind us that technology is no longer an additive, but an extension of self, a mode that is used to realize

and mediate contexts of community, memory, desire, and identity. A new paradigm in educational research and digital literacies is needed, one that makes technology visible rather than merely integrative.

Shifting our attention towards visibility and away from integration asks us to remove the stigma of everyday technology (e.g., PSPs, iPhones, Androids, personal tablets) in classrooms. Taking the shoe organizer turned cell phone holder off the door comes with it a paralysis for teachers. "How can I control my classroom," one teacher asked me at Center Ridge, "if they have that access, that technology at their finger tips?" Classroom management is the immediate go to. And here, I am not arguing that the digital technologies embedded in a tablet, iPhone or Android are liberatory, as I have observed numerous youth use their digital media for purposes in oppressive and less than educational ways. I am, however, arguing that we leverage the local knowledges of youth technologies in our everyday. We must refuse the rhetoric of students "tuning-out" and instead consider how we can engage them to tune, quite literally, in. Integrative models of technology often focus on a product orientation. They ask questions of remediation, questions that at first glance may highlight shifts in learning outcomes but do not pay particular attention to the types of experimentation and innovation needed for the hyper-mediated futures of tomorrow. Making local technologies and experiences visible takes heed of what Jenkins and his authors (2009) argue for in *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture*, a step towards literacies that encompasses: play, performance, simulation, appropriation, multitasking, judgment, transmedia navigation, networking, and negotiation" (p. xiii). In a way, what I am arguing for, and what I saw through the elastic literacies heuristic, accounts for what Shipka (2016) labels a compositional fluency. A fluency that encourages a

> "consideration of texts, materials, and practices from the past, from other cultures and nations, as well as those associated with one's projected future, as these varied historical and cross-cultural contexts will likely involve the uptake of technologies, languages, varieties, genres, conventions, and modes markedly different from what one routinely experiences at present " (p. 255).

This fluency encompasses many of the moves Andi, Ben, Zeke, Gabe, Jack, and Camille stretched across to read, write, and compose the word and the world. These young people not only engaged in sophisticated semiotic practices across genre, language, and place but they utilized their writing resources to craft experiences, ones they were not privy to in school or more formal spaces of learning and living.

This call for scholarship, pedagogy, and compositional fluency that makes technology visible, however, far exceeds the K-12 classroom. As a researcher who dabbles in hacking, making, and doing in literacies research and scholarship, I am shocked by the lack of places and/or outlets to house my more multimodal work. Although I am quite cognizant that the paper gets the paycheck in academia and that journal articles are the monetized media that land, keep, and promote tenure track employment, we as educators need to insist that alternative forms of scholarship be valued in the academy. Remix your *Harvard Educational Review* article into a sonic podcast for teachers. Transform that book-length ethnography into a 15-minute documentary. Stretch your limits as a writer. I, alongside of the six young people I worked and composed with invite you to embrace electracy and explore how you as a writer are asked to consider compositional fluency through transmodal invention.

Ironically, as I write this text-based dissertation, I am upholding the limits of academic scholarship. At first eager to embrace the digital and embody that form of scholarship and

making in my own dissertation, I later recognized that the treadmill of an academic year sometimes gets the best of you. The platform rises and the once flat surface and expanse of nine months transforms into hilly intervals. Conferences. The job market. A cold. Teaching. Writing digitally asks you to go the distance. Unfortunately, as burgeoning academics, we are taught to type in sprints. Although there are spliced interruptions, moments in the dissertation that asked you to experience the connective ethnography in ways that made you move from the page to the network, the blueprint of the larger manuscript still conforms to standard conventions of academic publishing. I apologize. As I exited the field and the "here" of writing, I am branded with the practice what you preach mantra. If I learned anything about publishing from the young people at Center Ridge and City Town, it is to snap selfies, record video, remix writing, and relish in the ambient ecologies of found sound. Flex your multimodal muscles to layer a shorter text than write a lengthy manuscript. All of this said, I am quite excited for facets of this work and larger data corpus to appear in spaces like *Enculturation* and *Kairos*, academic journals that work to bring a more prominent place to more multimodal methods in writing research.

Method Matters: Following, Making, and Writing Your Way Into Online Lives

If pedagogically what I am asking for is an attunement towards and visibility of technology and the local knowledges of the digital, then at a micro (and methodological) level, this envisioning also highlights how experience matters. It provides what Latour (2005) would call a "backstage" view of production (p. 89), and I would add desire. The ethnographic imaginary has always been textured with desire (Altork, 1995; Kendall, 2009; Newton, 1993). When studying youth and their communities, however, desire is often cast aside, dismissed to protect childhood purity and the archetype of innocence we put on participants. As researchers, we abstain from the idea that adolescents and emerging adults have sexual wants, gendered

wishes, and desires. Qualitative research, more broadly, often eschews the fact that participants (whether young/adult or online/offline) have and hold bodies, gendered and sexed bodies, which texture the field and our construction of them. Throughout the dissertation, I took desire as a text that is (co)composed in writing and literacy ethnography, marking how our bodies are always already instruments of measurement. Drawing on a range of vignettes, glimpses, snapshots, and story-ed experiences, I explored how lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth used queer rhetorics and their connective compositions to navigate inequality and (re)author selves. I investigated how issues of gender and sexuality marked the ethnographic field. More specifically, I talked across three themes/tensions: places (online/offline), power (researcher/informant, teacher/student), and practices (writing), each relating and responding to the opening research questions.

I want to use this space to argue that method matters. Connective ethnography offers itself as the ideal lens into charting the dueling online/offline desires that participants and researchers have. Although I used it here to engage in a pseudo "I-witnessing" of youth sexuality and literacies practice online, it provides researchers the ability to trace resonance of the emerging deictic forms of communication used by *all* writers and composers. Far too often at academic conferences, in study groups, through collaborative meetings with mentors and colleagues, I see researchers "mining" data, taking and scraping information that provides no context to the who, when, and what of lived (and here I mean corporeal flesh space) experience. For me, connective ethnography as a method/ology allowed me to intervene into public discourses concerning gender and sexuality online *and* offline. It shed insight on the small stories of big data. Connective ethnography demands that you *know* your participants. It is, as I've argued through the larger manuscript, one of the more humanizing methods for engaging in

virtual research. Allowing researchers to, quite literally, rewrite and trace the construction of the selves, connective ethnography sutures techtual /textual lives to the everyday reality of flesh space.

Despite having and holding a so-called "insider position," (identifying as a gay male cis-gender researcher working with LGBT and queer youth), I was simultaneously being read as an outsider to the larger publics I traversed. Desire, nonetheless, was and always is an active participant. It worked to write itself on bodies and identities across sitings. Although not the project here, I conclude the dissertation with a coda. Re-surveying the larger dissertation. I use the space there to argue that detailing desire for writing ethnographies, and for qualitative research with LGBT youth more specifically, yields important insights into how we compose. Hopefully, by speaking across the writing resonances of desire (the activities) that stained the larger connective ethnography (method/ology), this dissertation, and the coda in particular, provides a more nuanced understanding into how queer comes to fruition in both our writing and on our bodies. Zeroing in on the particulars of a language and literacy educator working with LGBT and queer youth across online/offline contexts, that section will help shape new and emerging contexts for literacies research with LGBT youth and illustrate how intersecting identities are always refracted through desire, helping us to investigate what counts as a subject and participant.

Envisioning a [Q]ulturally Sustaining Pedagogy: Locating the Stretches of Desire in the Literacies Classroom and Research Field

Technologies, however, are not the only materializations of resource that we need to render visible. The affective intensities and identities of desire are. Issues of desire and sexuality still never intercede with the here-s and now-s of writing and literacies research. As I made mention to in the introduction, the distinct logics and affordances of multimodal composition

allow queer young people to articulate lived histories and possible futures beyond mere meaning and design. Hull and Nelson (2005) remind us of these rhetorical affordances when they argue that multimodality, as a practice, "transcends the collective contribution of its parts…multimodality…affords not just a new way to make meaning, but a different kind of meaning" (p. 225). Queer has been doing this for years. Pennycook (2007) too, draws connections to identities and these emerging multimodal semiotic systems fostered by technology when he argues, "new technologies and communications are enabling immense and complex flows of people, signs, sounds images across multiple borders in multiple directions" (p. 25). These stretches, however, are elements of design. They do not bring to fruition the yearning for encounter or the mediated memory of experience. Like the shift from literacy towards electracy, so too do we need a shift and more expansive understanding of K-12 youth culture/s, ones that are inclusive of the affective frequencies of the gendered and sexed body.

To begin this pedagogical re-envisioning of culture (one that is inclusive of desire) we must follow Paris and Alim's (2014) lead and engage in a loving critique forward. As teachers and educational researchers, we must work towards affirming and sustaining, not merely being response to cultures (and here I would add youth identities-in-difference). From tattooed arms to Grindr thumbnails of naked torsos, the LGBT youth I came to know explored their own gendered and sexed bodies in ways that far surpassed my own understandings of youth desire. Like Camille, many of the youth "felt" race and ethnicity, but they also felt desire. This affective frequency was on the same plane of immanence. Andi, Gabe, Ben, Jack, Zeke, and Camille were engaging in what Alexander (2008) would call sexual literacy, developing a fluency for the personal and political narrations through which so much of their cultural work of identities and identity-making accomplished. Achieved in school through Janice and Ms. Oakley's pedagogical

prowess and open learning atmosphere, the young people I worked with were exhibiting a form of teaching and learning I had not seen previously. They were helping to build what I am just now describing here as a [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy.

A [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy ([Q]SP) works against deficit based approaches to LGBT and queer youth to move beyond facets of inclusion. Like Paris's (2012) culturally sustaining pedagogy, a [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy (one wherein the q of "quare" [Johnson, 2001] and the African American vernacular tradition situates and gives queer a role of primacy in culture), "seeks to perpetuate and foster – to sustain – linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). However, and in contrast to Paris (2012), it centers the corporeality of the queer body for LGBT youth of color whose gender and sexual identity is enmeshed within larger markers such as language, ritual, desire, and cultural practice.

While resource and asset based pedagogies for young people, Paris's (2012) included, have sought to (re)humanize cultural pluralism in the democratic project of schooling, few have centered gender and sexual identity as a primary lens through which many of our youth experience the institution. As many of the teens detailed, the real and perceived inequality they felt for wearing the non-cis heteronormative body at Center Ridge and City Town queered their experience. Hence, what I offer here, and what I call for in the conclusion of this dissertation is a pedagogy aimed to sustain the [q]ulturally queer differences of LGBT youth. A [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy repositions the embodied experience of LGBT peoples. It recognizes the ethical potential of queer sexualities, the social communities they produce, enable, and legitimize, and the literary and cultural forms they create. Looking beyond the Western white heterosexist patriarchal capitalist gaze that stains lackluster attempts to celebrate difference and diversity, a

[q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy reinserts the political into pedagogy and praxis. [Q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy acknowledges and affirms how the LGBT body uses its corporeal materiality to transgress, how it in and of itself acts as a borderland and bridge to connect cultural and community alliances. A [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy acknowledges how fraught queer is as an identity category and personal marker, but how hopeful it is in helping to story the bodies of young queer people.

Several scholars have engaged and documented possible enactments of what I am offering here as [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogies. The actions are not new. Cruz (2013), for example, examined the lived realities for LGBTQ youth of color in her article, "*LGBTQ Youth of Color Video Making as Radical Curriculum: A Brother Mourning His Brother and a Theory in the Flesh*." In her article, Cruz (2013) examined a video poem that a youth participant composed to examine and memorialize his twin brother who had recently passed to complications from acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Through reading the video as text, Cruz argued that the process of "storying the self" (Goodson, 1998) was examined as a form of radical curriculum, one that surpassed the limited comprehensive sex education youth were receiving in a continuation school in Los Angeles, California. I draw on Cruz here as an exemplar of [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy as she re-centers the LGBT and queer body as a site for praxis. Her form of the radical curriculum echoes through this tome as well as through the stretches of literacies practice Zeke and the others engaged in. While not necessarily under the guise of a [Q]SP approach, Cruz helped illuminate for me how a theory in the flesh is the radical politic and pedagogy for LGBT youth.

A [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy, as I illuminate here in this chapter, is in its infancy. Defining a [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer

youth is part of a larger project for many of us who came out and sought school and education as a place of refuge, only to be denied access to and/or felt inadequate in sharing our bodies as it did not read like others' who more readily dominated these so-called "safe spaces" in school and society. In turn, we looked elsewhere. A [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy is a pedagogy that not only looks beyond the white gaze that has come to cloud projects of queer and queering, but one that also looks inward, past the "homonormative" (Duggan, 2003) and de-politicized assumptions of queer sexual domesticity and material consumption. A [Q]SP approach makes you do the work of naming desire as a central component to the lived experiences of teaching and learning.

A [q]ulturally sustaining perspective acknowledges that being certain kinds of people is work – work that relies on and is sustained through embodied forms of resistance, composition, and communication – the taking up, putting on, pushing back and against citational performances about what it means to be a particular kind of person, student, teacher, even as these nomadic selves vary across time, space, and culture. My goal then in putting forth a [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy, is to (re)humanize queer through the act of writing, through making, through re/composing, and through teaching. However, teaching certain kinds of people, I would add, *puts us to work*, reflexively asking: who and what comes to be recognized as intelligibly human, valuable, and worthy of protection as we ourselves have scars and stories. A [q]ulturally sustaining pedagogy traces its lines and movements within the cultural scars and traces of oppression. A [Q]SP approach works to (re)learn and restore the queer story-ed body of LGBT and queer people.

Doing the Work: "We Are Family…"

In one of the last afternoons at Center Ridge, I invited the youth from City Town to come back. The university semester had come to a close, so Jack and Ben were able to return to the school and reflect on their first year away, the in's and out's of queer college life, and even help Camille put the finishing touches on her to-do lists as she would join them and be a colleague at their school some months later. Janice lit incense. Her eyes began to water. "You all were my Freshmen," she quietly declared, "and you are all doing such amazing things." I couldn't help but notice myself grow uneasy, flushed, feeling tears emerge from the inroads of my midwestern crow's feet. "I want to close," I said to the larger group, "with a poem. Something I read in a grad class. It reminded me of you all." "You always having us do work!" Gabe exclaimed. The group laughed and quickly made their way off of sitting on top of the desks to a small circle of ten as the group in the remaining weeks of school always shrunk.

Sitting down with the group, I passed out photo-copied stacks of Qwo-Li Driskoll's poem "Pedagogy," a poem I read in an advanced cultural rhetorics course that reminded me so much of the everyday I felt as a queer educator. "Pedagogy is the act, the method and knowledge of teaching," I declared. "Its like the moves we make," Janice added, "the things we think when we have a conversation about a problem, a book, a video. The way we invite everyone to talk together." Camille started reading the piece and the group grew silent.

The Center Ridge GSA was known as a space where facets of the hidden curriculum of schooling were rendered visible. Driskill's (2011) poem, however, was one of the first that made our work together visible. Naming how our exploration of the so-called visual vernaculars of selfies and the textual tirades of activism on Twitter were ways in which we were able to index the work we collectively engaged in together. "And I know there are marks on your bones / you

can't or won't speak," Jack read, "scars whose names you resist / long wars fought on and over your bodies" (Driskill, 2011, p. 183). Tears dropped from my eyes that day just as they do in writing and rewriting this closing vignette today. I thought of Camille's closing lines in our interview, the same words that open this chapter and the epigraph here. "I don't write so others notice me…I write so that I can notice myself."

Silence sat on the group. "What does this make you think? Feel?" Janice asked, shifting the somber tone to one of discussion. "It makes me think of my husband," she continued, "the divorce and our kids. A story I can't tell to my third hour, but a story I can share here. Thank you for this space." Zeke then picked up on Janice's invitation, "It makes me think about work. How tired I am in first hour because I work midnights. How no one knows that." "I think of Kim," Jack said, readjusting his cross-legged stance in the chair, "A girl I met in my dorm. We met on Tinder." I did not speak that day. The end of fieldwork for me was a tough time, one that ended in the personal storming the professional in ways I did not see coming. The janitor came by Room 104, "Ok, you know the deal." he declared. "It's 6pm, time to leave folks." Ms. Oakley picked up her purse and asked Janice to play one last song. GSA typically ended with a dance party, or as Leonte would say, a "twerk" party. "I know just the song," Janice added. "My boys and I dance to this when we are together." The SMART board boomed Sister Sledge's "We Are Family." I laughed. I thought of my late Aunt Barbara. Two weeks before the close of fieldwork she passed. Her death was an interjection and trip to Indiana that took me out of the confines of Center Ridge, Kilgore, and San Miguel's county. A journey home, her death was a catalyst that thrust me into confronting the reality of mortality. I thought about cancer. Leaving four grandchildren, a son and daughter, three sisters, and a mother, my Aunt Barbara reminded me of the resilience that I saw transpire in the everyday of these young people. Leonte started twerking.

Gabe did the lawn mower. I moved my body awkwardly, trying to cry undercover, as my ENTJ demeanor did not like to be observed as a feeler. Andi and Camille grabbed my hands and moved with me. "We Are Family" was a song that played at all of my cousin's weddings. The "sisters" song as my mom called it. The moment in the reception when Barbara, Cathy, Mary, and Chris, the four Wargo girls, would start the dance processional, inviting both families to converge on the dance floor. In that moment, I selfishly thought how that would never happen for me. Ms. Oakley, the oldest of the group closed her eyes and smiled so big. "You know," she said opening her eyes to the group, "we *are* a family. A queer really messed up family." The entire group laughed.

An End or a Beginning?

I close with this vignette to underscore the importance of writing, of doing, and of knowing as a matter of experiencing and affectively be(com)ing. In the closing moments of a school year, Andi, Janice, Zeke, Ms. Oakley, Jack, Ben, Camille, Gabe, and I danced to feel, to know one another, and to bring to fruition a vibrancy and movement that collectively transpired in our shared friendship and network. That synergy happened, quite literally, through the connective literacies of youth and youth communities. As days, weeks, and even months passed, the tempo of our face-to-face encounters became more staccato. Spotted with a like, a retweet, a #tag, and/or a snap, the online/offline politics of navigating inequality together was shared across dashboards, walls, and vines. The urgency and collective action that took place in the Kilgore and San Miguel's county streets were now foregrounded by group chats, tweet-ups, and Google hangouts. We continued to hurt, to heal, and to engage as community activists working towards designing more just social futures but our genres of participation changed. Our local knowledges

became more (g)local. Our physical expanse transformed from a mere circumference of 23 miles to a platform that now stretched across states.

In the end, I hope that the conclusion of this text is not a finite stop, but a beginning. I hope that the work I shared engages you to think about how a snapped selfie transforms itself from a visual vernacular into a direct engagement with gender policing and the politics of schooling. How a retweet reverberates for youth who are hurting and/or "feeling" silenced. How a reblog of a naked torso works to disidentify from more static notions of what it means to be black and gay. Most importantly, I hope *Connective Compositions and Sitings of Selves…* helps you attune to the more affective elements of LGBT composing in the age of electracy. Experience matters. As we each strive to become more fluent in designing more just social futures, let us not forget that sometimes the turmoil of today (and our present yesterdays) must be the hurdle that is (re)designed for better tomorrows.

CODA

Between an iPhone and a Safe Space: Composing Desire in Connective Ethnography with LGBT Youth

My aim in this concluding coda is similar to my goal in the opening prologue. Through a succinct variation on themes that have already surfaced, I discuss the phenomenological experience and ethical fault lines that surface in doing connective ethnographic research with LGBT and queer youth. When individuals ask me what the process of exploring and describing what the myriad of literacy "sitings" for LGBT and queer youth looks like, I usually cite that my time, most days, is spent between an iPhone and a safe space. Hence, just as the subtitle foreshadows, what follows is an account of that liminal space and a documentation of the networked journey.

Growing Up and Out of Community

As a late thirty something gay-identifying cis-gender researcher, I was "aged-out" of many of the social circles and communities that contemporary LGBT and queer youth were a part. Spots for twenty and thirty year-old queer socialization in a small midwestern university town are limited. Despite the lack of queer sociality for adults, this midwestern geography, and in particular this central state, is known for sprouting hubs of regional queer youth centers. These spaces were local hot spots for social justice and activist oriented work that originated out of larger community needs for gender equity and justice. In the beginning iterations of design and early imaginings of the project, I called and researched all queer-oriented community centers within an 80-mile radius. However, just as you would imagine, these centers were hesitant to let a stranger in, and rightfully so, as research has at times been a dehumanizing venture only used to oppress, pathologize, and subordinate particular groups. Many of these young people, according to the centers, were labeled "at risk" given their youth minor status. I want to pause

here and draw your attention to that word, *risk* - one of the many r-words that document the tensions of conducting ethnographic research. Although I was interested in building *relationships*, my own r-word of primacy, organizing institutions immediately saw me as *research/er,* the r-word indexing my position of power and institutional affiliation. In a meeting with a managing director who oversaw youth programming at Q*Alliance Spectrum, a regional center on the eastern side of the state, he closed our conversation with an inquiry of his own, "…why don't you just try schools? You know that's where most of our kids spend 8 hours a day anyway?"

After school LGBT and queer oriented spaces, typically those known as "safe spaces," were much more readily available and willing to work with a researcher whose institutional home was in teacher education. "So how does this relate to the English language arts curriculum? What are you going to *teach* students?" These, among others, were common questions when first meeting with teachers and administrators at local schools, schools that invited me to participate in and observe their after-school gay-straight alliance (GSA) and/or queer-oriented clubs. As certain spaces and classrooms emerged as focal sites, namely those I have described as Center Ridge and City Town HS, and the visitor status switched to researcher, I began the arduous task of applying for research approval through my university's Institutional Human Research Review Board. I felt confident in my ability to navigate this process. As co-PI on several longitudinal projects in the beginning years of graduate school, the IRB in my mind was known for its speedy turn-around and quick approval. Months into the process, however, after rounds of edits and reviews were dialogued through text boxes and emails, I soon found that my numerous interview protocols and overarching project aims were not under scrutiny, but *I* was. Below is an excerpt from a field note I wrote after a rather disheartening telephone call with an IRB employee.

> You dial out. You have your application number ready. Just a simple call. It has been weeks. What the hell is taking so long? Your advisor directs you to make the call. After

> all, "…this is your project, these are your participants." A woman answers, "Human Research Protection program." The phone goes silent. You're connected. "Hi Jon, my name is Barbara and I am looking at your application now." "Ok," you respond, "so, well, I was just interested in seeing where my application is in the process." Without a pause she responds, "Well, I am actually submitting it for full review." You grimace your face, "What? For student interviews, some writing artifacts, and observations?" "Well," she went on, "you are working with minors and these minors could be considered at risk." "Yes, they're at risk because they are minors" you retort. "Well," she hesitates, "you know in the application you note that these students are also, possibly, lesbian or gay." She has difficulty articulating these identity markers. "Well, uh, yes," you respond, "I am interested in investigating how these in and out of school safe spaces produce discursive selves and how literacy…" "Well," she cuts you off, "you also requested a waiver of parental consent." You shake your head over the phone. "Yes, many of these students are not out at home. They come to these safe spaces to work through and feel..." Barbara replies, "Just FYI." You stop. FYI? What, where is this going? "Just FYI," Barbara continues on. "That may be difficult to obtain." "So, are you saying that I should only include out participants in my study?" "Well, sir, I cannot tell you how to do your research, but…" Barbara pauses again, "…well, are you a parent sir?" You stop. There is a silence that is now present in the conversation. You think of your parents. "If you were a parent sir, you would want to know where your child was, especially if they were going to a club or group like this." The conversation meanders and Barbara refers you to continue conversation by responding as PI in e-mail. You hang up the phone.
>
> *(Field note, January 13, 2013)*

I include this field note not to critique Barbara or the larger institutional process and purpose of the IRB, as I have no doubt that as an organizing board they have looked out for numerous participants who would have otherwise been at risk by shoddy research design and intrusive method. I include it, rather, as a snapshot illuminating some of the overarching tensions of conducting research with LGBT and queer youth. Even in a textual field note, issues of heterosexism, ableism, and status stain the page. It is also illustrative of the dimensions of power and authority at play in many of the dyad relationships research asks us to consider (e.g., institution and researcher, IRB and researcher, researcher and participant, etc.). As a graduate student I had limited power. Working with my advisor Dr. Django Paris, and outside faculty members Dr. Dorothea Anagnostopoulos and Dr. Mollie Blackburn, however, I ensured that youth whom were not out and who wanted to participate in the project could. Later granting the project an exemption of parental consent, the IRB allowed me to begin my study and allowed for

youth to assent for themselves. It is because of the assent process, I would argue, that voices often silenced by apprehension in speaking an identity into existence are heard here.

The ad-hoc Methods of Being and Belonging

As a queer researcher and language and literacy educator, I gained access to Center Ridge and City Town high school in ways an outsider would not have received. While my limited proficiency with technology and social networking spaces offered me the opportunity to ask questions related to the meta-processes of youth composing, my insider position as queer person also offered me invaluable insight. Although participants still viewed me as "researcher," asking me what I was writing or why I was "taking notes on them," their immediate interest was in my sexual orientation. In an interview months after my arrival to Center Ridge, I asked Camille about her initial query.

> **Wargo:** The first time I came to GSA, you asked, "Are you gay?"…was it easier for you to allow me in because I'm gay?
>
> **Camille**: Absolutely… I remember when Ms. Lawrence (GSA advisor) first asked us if you could come…and I was like, "I'll ask him if he's gay!" and they were like "No! You can't just ask him! You can't just ask someone if they're gay!" So I asked, "Why not? We're about to share with him."…Then you walked in…I remember turning around and saying, "Yeah, he's gay. He is one of us."

As Camille notes, participants were going to "share" vignettes of real and perceived homophobia, pieces of writing that were deeply personal, and affective moments they had not communicated to their own family and friends. Thus, not only did I need permission to follow, I needed permission (and I would argue gain respect) to friend.

At the commencement of the study, youth at both Center Ridge and City Town HS asked me to create a Tumblr of my own and "follow" them. As a follower, I found that avid participation in this digital community was necessary for my own understanding of writing the selves. Asking me to "follow" was crucial to the study as it signaled that a rapport between researcher and youth was formed, one wherein I became privy to the type of literacy work being done. While consenting to share and discuss their writing and composition in digital environments, many of the youth asked me not to share their tumblelog or Twitter IDs with their teachers. Being and "becoming a worthy witness" (Winn & Ubiles, 2011) to the types of writing and remixing these youth were doing was a privilege, one where I, as a researcher, was both an insider (self-identifying as a gay adult ally) and an outsider (with limited digital technological expertise). Residing in this liminal space, and considering my relationship to the site, I was aware of the competing subjectivities and their potential impact on how I approached and analyzed early findings and data. However their own construction of me as researcher went far beyond how I analyzed and shared data and preliminary findings from the project with them. For many of the youth whom I worked and learned alongside of at City Town and Center Ridge HS, they too were interested in how I created, curated, and composed the gendered and sometimes sexual selves through digital technologies, facets of identity that irrevocably texture the field of ethnography.

Issues of gender, sexuality, and desire, whether working with LGBT and queer youth or otherwise, constantly mark the field(s) of ethnographic research. However, as Markham (2005) notes, "researchers have the privilege of choosing whether or not their own embodiment is an issue in the research, even while critically observing the embodiment of participants" (p. 809). Trippingly, I found my way out of having this privilege and put into a situation where my own

sexuality and (virtual) embodiment was put on display. In late March of 2014, as I climbed the stairs up to room 104 at Center Ridge HS, I heard a cacophony of "Ooooooohhh!" coming from the room. When I entered the class, a group of 10+ youth were hovering over the screen of Gabe's iPhone. I inquired and asked what was going on, as sharing online material was common practice for the group. Paris declared, "Oh, Wargo got the thirst!" Unknowingly, I asked what the "thirst" meant. As it turned out, Zeke and Gabe, two youth minors, had recently downloaded Grindr, a gay social networking application that, according to many, was used to find individuals to "hook-up" or have sex with. Using the GPS in your iPhone and/or smart phone, Grindr brings up thumbnail pictures of the closest 30-40 users of the application. In essence, from the confines of your own home, you can see a plethora of men (as Grindr users are predominantly male-identifying), who live within a 5-10 mile radius and identify as having interest in networking with other men. Embarrassed, I quickly retorted, "Really? Well I don't know why Zeke and Gabe are on Grindr when the application asks users to confirm that they are at least 18 years old. They're not 18." The classroom fell silent. I, unintentionally, promoted a version of youth that my larger study and ideology was working against, that age and youth-status confined desire and sexuality. Janice, the Center Ridge GSA faculty leader and onlooker of the happenstance interaction quickly called the group to circle up. As she passed me, she laughed and quickly added, almost to affirm me in the situation "…it's ok, I'm on Match.com (an online dating site). It is hard to find someone to date in Kilgore." Growing more embarrassed, I took my notebook out of my bag and looked up to see Andi looking up at me. She quietly commented in an aside, "You know, it's ok that you're on it. You *do* have a sexuality."

Over the course of the remaining spring semester and summer months, desire and my own sexuality were never again the primary topic or presence during conversation as it came to

be marked that day. However, and as Markham (2005) perhaps too quickly dismisses, the above interaction illustrates how my privilege of being able to hide or avoid acknowledging my own sexuality and desire was taken away. Andi and the other youth at Center Ridge HS that day taught me a valuable lesson. As researchers we, *too*, have desire. "In the context of ethnographic research," as Kendall (2009) contends, "we make our bodies measurement instruments, and should be careful before considering some perceptions (such as erotic feelings) merely noise or error while privileging other perceptions (sight, sound) as more relevant" (p. 117). The hauntings of my own past and guilt surfaced to erase that knowledge that day. Whether based in familial shame of being an only child, a man/son who was shamed because he loved other men; or, grounded in years of being taught that desire and sexuality were "adult stuff" and that gay was a phase I would grow out of in maturation, my own desire and sexual orientation were put on trial. As a qualitative researcher, I felt trained as a good listener. However, this interaction, one that has been marked and taken up by other LGBT identifying individuals who do work with LGBT youth (*for example see Blackburn, 2014*), raised my own consciousness to not only listen, but to listen with humility.

Remixing Rapport and Be(com)ing: Assembling the Archive of Literacies

In late August of 2014, Gabe sent a mass Facebook group invitation. As I accepted the invitation to join "Gabe's De/Sign Community," I previewed the other users who were now a part of and "liked" Gabe's larger collective. Familiar faces began to pop up. As a community, Gabe constructed a constellation of both family, Center Ridge and City Town HS friends, and several of his adult peers and mentors both from school and at church. Remixed pictures of Oprah with Voldemort's face and stylized compositions surveying convergence culture were highlighted as literacy events that illuminated Gabe's competence and skill in Adobe Photoshop

and InDesign. You saw many of these remixed creations and mashup media displays in earlier chapters. Later that night, Gabe sent a message to select members of the group. As I saw the Facebook message, I was in shock. Gabe included a remixed photo of the larger GSA group (with both City Town and Center Ridge youth present) and used a myriad of my own Facebook pictures to stitch my profile onto group members' faces (*see Figure 34*).

Figure 34: Gabe's Remix of GSA Faces with Wargo Overlay

I include this remixed piece of composing not to only highlight Gabe's unique talent, skill, and ability in composing with digital technologies, but to comment on the humanizing and embodied work that is inherent in ethnographic research. Through a humanizing venture of partnership and collaboration, research with LGBT and queer youth while holding the I-witness positionality braids the "dialogic spiral" (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014) of story-ing to take place. However, like all ethnographic research, the lives documented in the dissertation and larger project, are lives that are refracted through *my* writing. Just as Gabe's remix captures, my eyes are those that outwardly entice the audience and draw them into the lives of Center Ridge and City Town youth.

These eyes, however, are a kaleidoscope, temporally changing as the landscapes of access and the archive (of digital media production) shift.

At a recent academic conference, after showing small glimpses of participant data to talk across felt experience in connective composing, audience members inquired about ethics. "How do you protect their [participant] anonymity? Can't you just search and trace their writing backwards online? Won't you know who they *really* are?" My response, much like other digital literacies researchers in the room, was "Yes, that is possible." I continued, however, with "but the archive that I draw from, built by the youth who I follow-ed and friend-ed has already collapsed. Temporally stamped, many of the youth take-down, remix, remediate, and/or close their profiles. They, like many of us, worry about surveillance." Hence, what I am trying to argue here, and what I was trying to allude to there, is that the archive of youth digital literacies is just as fleeting as their interests. For some, like Camille and Zeke, they closed, disconnected, and shut down their Twitter profiles just two months after my exit from the field. Reason? "Drama, too many ratchet hoes." They look at my screenshots and saved pictures highlighting the work done and remark, "You better keep it. It isn't anywhere else!"

Connective ethnography, much like other traditions in qualitative study, is reciprocal in nature. Memories of the "there-s" in research (self) are always mediated by participants' (others) "here-s". The online only recognizes itself by its opposition, the offline. At first glance, you may suspect that my archive of fieldwork is largely comprised of field notes, photographs, and streamed videos that lined the pages you just read. My response would be, "Yes, and…" Although there is a knowledgebase that builds the blueprint of *Connective Compositions and Sitings of Selves: Elastic Literacies, Queer Rhetorics, and the Online/Offline Politics of LGBT Youth Writing*, what I hope the larger project does, is to, as Paris rightfully asserts to "humanize

through the act of research" (Paris, 2011, p. 11). Across 30 months, I lurked, I learned, and most importantly I loved alongside of six young people as they worked to design more just social futures. As people, they have come to forever share a piece of my life and my community. They colored the experience of doctoral study at Michigan State University. Thus, research for me is not the remembrance of action or words we write as reality in our scholarship, but rather the prism through which we see ourselves engage in acts of care, kindness, and being and becoming lifelong learners. My final words to you, then as readers, are some that Andi, Ben, Zeke, Camille, Jack, and Ben left me with. Have we friends, followed, and fulfilled our responsibility to the youth communities that have welcomed us onto the scene? It is important that we continue to use educational research, connective or other, as a prism. Seeing lives through all possible angles and perspectives, while simultaneous committing to live through its complexity and beauty. "Don't think too much," as Zeke rightfully reminded me, "but tell a good story. Tell them the story of us."

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