PORTRAITS OF PARTICIPATION: EXPLORING SECONDARY ENGLISH TEACHERS' PROFESSIONALLY ORIENTED PARTICIPATION ONLINE

By

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To my family

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Finally, I thank my family. I believe my current interest in literacy and learning stems from my upbringing in Reading, Michigan. Newspapers, trade books, comic books, magazines, and encyclopedias littered my childhood home. Visits to local libraries were routine, and a trip to Hillsdale was never complete without a stop at our favorite comic shop, Volume I. As a first-generation college student, I'm convinced I wouldn't have had the foundation necessary for continued academic success without the literacy-rich experiences my parents provided. Furthermore, my mother, Sara, has modeled an exceptional work ethic throughout my lifetime, and I strive to live up to that model on a daily basis. In a similar fashion, the value my father, James, placed on education shaped my disposition toward teaching and learning, and I'm grateful for that. I'd be remiss if I didn't also recognize my brothers. Jason, Scott, and James have always encouraged me to dream big, and I appreciate the lifelong support they've offered. Above all, I thank Carrie Ann for tackling this adventure with me. From start to finish, she demonstrated an unwavering belief in me and provided the support I needed to see my program through to completion.

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With the emergence of new media technologies, participatory cultures in which teachers are encouraged to take part in the generation and distribution of new content have taken shape. Accordingly, this study, framed by sociocultural theories of literacy and learning, featured an investigation of five secondary English teachers' participation online in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy. The following questions guided this study: (a) What are the features of the online contexts that selected secondary English teachers weave in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy? (b) What is the nature of selected secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online in terms of the practices they carry out and the topics they address? (c) How do selected secondary English teachers experience professionally oriented participation online?

This qualitative study was conducted in two concurrent phases. The first phase, aimed at exploring the first two research questions, featured the collection of archived online artifacts (e.g., blog posts, microblog posts, posts within social network sites) and a subsequent ethnographic content analysis of those artifacts. The second phase, intended primarily to investigate the third research question, included a series of face-

to-face semi-structured interviews and the subsequent thematic and structural analyses of narratives that emerged from the transcribed interview data.

Across the five cases, findings indicated that teachers leveraged the multimodal affordances and a/synchronous flexibility of particular new media technologies and drew upon their classroom teaching experiences and relationships with others online, among other features, to weave the contexts of their participation. Anchored primarily by topics related to young adult literature, reading instruction, and writing instruction, teachers supported other teachers, sought support for their own practice, promoted online contributions, curated ideas and information, and provided status updates on their classroom practices and literate lives. Teachers reported that their professionally oriented participation online contributed to a reduced sense of isolation, helped them establish a network of support, informed their thinking and shaped their practice, positioned them as writers, generated new professional opportunities, and enhanced their capacity to support students.

The findings of this study hold implications for English teacher education, particularly in terms of preparing prospective and practicing English teachers for career-long learning, and they offer directions for future research.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Before beginning my pursuit of a doctoral degree in 2008, I worked as a high-school English teacher in the Midwestern United States. Logging long hours, I am sure I was not much different than most English teachers across the country. I arrived at the school more than an hour early each day to begin my preparations, locating resources, making copies, arranging desks, reviewing the content we covered in the days prior, and re-thinking the material with which students were struggling. Once the bell rang and students filed in for first period, I spent each day teaching five classes of 20-30 students each, covering three preps and working tirelessly each period to support students as developing writers while engaging them in the big ideas we identified at the heart of literary works such as *The Crucible* (Miller, 1977), *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 1962), and *The Things They Carried* (O'Brien, 1990).

During my preparation period I spent time preparing materials for students who were absent and completing district-required forms, such as the paperwork required for permission to use supplementary media that fell outside of the standard curriculum. To conserve time I checked my email between classes, and I responded to the most pressing matters during my lunch break after relocating to the classroom I would be using in the afternoon.

Once the school day ended and students filed out, my work continued. I spent my time reading and re-reading the literature we studied, developing lesson plans and assessments, and grading student work. Of course, if we had a staff meeting, the work of reading, lesson planning, and grading would have to wait until I got home that

evening before I fell asleep and started the cycle over again the very next day. In these ways, too, I am sure I was not much different than most English teachers.

As I reflect on those days I worked as a secondary English teacher, I see a lot of time spent with students in the classroom, and I see an even greater amount of time spent reading, lesson-planning, and grading well beyond the hours of the school day. I see a teacher who, given the demands on his time, often worked in isolation from his colleagues. That is, as I look back, I do not see much time in the school day for meeting and collaborating with more experienced colleagues or with my early career peers. My colleagues in the English department and I did not share a common preparation period, so any conversations about pedagogical matters were usually in passing or completely non-existent. Unfortunately, the din of the copy room and the clamor in the hallway during passing time are not particularly conducive to thoughtful pedagogical exchanges. Even department meetings, which seem like reasonable settings for discussing practical matters related to teaching, learning, and literacy, were often booked with an agenda passed down from administrators, and it seemed as though there was rarely time in the agenda for sharing and discussing the actual work taking place in our classrooms. Yet, I could have benefitted greatly from increased opportunities to hold such discussions with colleagues who had more experience than I and with early career teachers to whom I could relate. In that regard, I am sure I was not much different than most English teachers.

The avenues for making one's practice public and connecting with other teachers, particularly those at a distance, have grown tremendously since I left the secondary classroom in 2008 to pursue a doctoral degree and to teach practicing and

prospective teachers. For example, in 2008-09, Twitter (https://twitter.com), a microblogging platform, saw incredible mainstream growth. The Nielsen Company (2009) reported that the number of unique visitors to Twitter.com rocketed from 1.2 million in May 2008 to 18.2 million in May 2009. Since the emergence of Twitter, many educators have touted its potential as a tool for supporting teachers' professional learning (e.g., Demski, 2010; Ferriter, 2010; Trinkle, 2009; Warlick, 2009). Likewise, the ubiquity of blogs has continued to surge with over 200 million blogs online (Richardson & Mancabelli, 2011), and more and more teachers are writing about their practice via blogs as Richardson (2006) described. Additionally, online services that allow users to create their own social network sites (e.g., Ning) have enabled teachers to engage one another in niche online networks in recent years. Examples include Making Curriculum Pop (http://mcpopmb.ning.com), a social network site created by educator Ryan Goble in 2009 for teachers across content areas who share an interest in teaching with texts from popular culture, and English Companion Ning (http://englishcompanion.ning.com), a social network site established by English teacher Jim Burke in 2008 for teachers of the English language arts (Rich, 2009). Literally thousands of practicing and prospective teachers, teacher educators, curriculum specialists, and consultants have flocked to such sites, presumably in search of others who share an affinity for teaching, learning, and literacy.

The growth and development of new media technologies have presented new opportunities online for teachers who seek to engage other professionals in the exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy, as I once did as a secondary English teacher. Many teachers, novice and veteran, have begun taking advantage of those

opportunities, blogging, microblogging, and engaging others in social network sites, but there is still much to learn about how teachers experience professionally oriented participation online. With this study, I aim to begin building an understanding of secondary English teachers' experiences participating online as they explore issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy.

Statement of the Problem

Economic and professional support for teachers has eroded over the last decade. Budgets have tightened at the same time that the demands placed on teachers have accelerated. These changes and the emergence of new media technologies have prompted many educators to seek resources and professional support in teacher-generated online environments. For example, at the time of this writing, the English Companion Ning has nearly 40,000 members. Many of the site's members take part in routine online book clubs, maintain blogs, and contribute to discussion forums within the site (Faulkner, 2009). Such activities are freely available 24 hours a day to those with the time, interest, and Internet connection needed to participate, and each activity provides opportunities for teachers to engage other professionals in exploration of topics that are salient to the work of an English teacher.

The potential value of teacher-generated online environments such as the English Companion Ning is magnified by the intensification of teacher work (Apple, 1988). Intensification is characterized by the greater scrutiny and increasing demands placed upon teachers, and it often results in a reduction of time available for maintaining professional learning, an inhibiting and persistent work overload, and a general reduction in the quality of work (Easthope & Easthope, 2010; Hargreaves, 1994). The intensification of teacher work seems especially acute for English teachers, for, as

Burns (2007) asserted, “as literacy achievement is a central agent for testing in current accountability mandates, literacy teachers and English teachers are particular targets for scrutiny” (p. 123).

As indicated in the introduction of this chapter, the work of an English teacher is incredibly demanding—and that’s before considering the broadened expectations placed upon them. In a time when teacher evaluations are driven by the results of high-stakes standardized tests (Ravitch, 2010), English teachers are in need of continued support if they are to meet the growing challenges they face. Such challenges include addressing the needs of English Language Learners (National Council of Teachers of English, 2006) and managing the conflation of reading instruction and the teaching of English (Nelms, 2004; Pace, 2011). Additionally, with broadened expectations such as accounting for emerging multimodal texts (Albers & Harste, 2007; Kist, 2005; National Council of Teachers of English, 2005) and integrating technologies in the English classroom (Swenson, Rozema, Young, McGrail, & Whitin, 2005), professional learning opportunities that may support teachers “at the point of need” (Swenson, 2003, p. 299) are growing increasingly attractive.

Like the intensification of teacher work, teacher isolation has been recognized as a challenge with which English teachers must contend (McCann, Johannessen, & Ricca, 2005). Feelings of isolation may stem from geographical, cultural, social, or psychological differences between teachers’ respective teaching contexts and that of their teacher preparation (Herrington, Herrington, Kervin, & Ferry, 2006). The connections that form between teachers in online environments have the potential to provide the support and collegiality that so many teachers need but never receive. The

support that comes from participation in online communities has been found to result in "decreased feelings of isolation, increased confidence as teachers, more enthusiasm for work, increased reflection, ability to adopt a more critical perspective, and improved problem-solving skills" (DeWert, Babinski, & Jones, 2003, p. 317). Cognitively and affectively, participating in professionally oriented online activities may help teachers find the support they need to best serve students.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to begin building an understanding of secondary English teachers' experiences participating online in exploration of issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy. To that end, three questions guided my research:

- What are the features of the online contexts that selected secondary English teachers weave in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy?
- What is the nature of selected secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online in terms of the practices they carry out and the topics they address?
- How do selected secondary English teachers experience professionally oriented participation online?

Significance of the Study

As the intensification of teacher work escalates and a sense of isolation continues to weigh upon teachers, many are turning to participation in online environments as a means of supplementing their professional growth. By building an understanding of English teachers' professionally oriented participation online and examining the experiences they share, this study informs the work of English teacher educators, as well as that of experienced and prospective teachers. It also provides directions for future research.

Ultimately, this study holds significance for a number of constituents: (a) teacher educators, who are charged with preparing prospective teachers to be reflective, career-long learners with a desire for professional growth; (b) experienced teachers, who are charged with taking up career-long learning that will advance their knowledge of content, pedagogy, and technology; (c) prospective teachers, who must take the initiative to extend their learning beyond the limited hours available in a teacher education program and who must also be prepared to engage in career-long learning; and (d) secondary students, who are reliant upon teachers being prepared and knowledgeable professionals who examine their own and others' teaching practices. Given a thick description of the study's participants, methods, and findings, readers of this study may determine for themselves the transferability of the findings and the study's application to their respective contexts and experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Definition of Terms

Some terms that appear throughout the study are defined below. When encountered in this dissertation these terms should be read with an understanding of the definitions provided.

Participation

As indicated in Chapter 2, Jenkins's (2006a) work informed this study. He defined participation as "forms of audience engagement that are shaped by cultural and social protocols" (p. 331). Given the data available for this study (i.e., teacher-generated online artifacts), the selected teachers' engagement or participation online is witnessed in their blog posts and comments, tweets, and discussion forum entries in social network sites. Based on the sociocultural theories that informed this study, particularly Bakhtin's (1986) notion of the dialogic chain, the idea that all utterances are rejoinders

in dialogue and that “any speaker is himself a respondent” (p. 69), one can infer that the selected teachers in this study also participated by taking in utterances generated by others in the online environment.

Participatory Culture

This term refers to a culture in which people are encouraged to take part in the generation and distribution of new content (Jenkins, 2006a). Flourishing in response to the emergence of new media technologies, participatory cultures are characterized as having the following features: (a) relatively low barriers to expression and engagement, (b) support for creating and sharing one’s work, (c) informal mentorship, (d) a belief among members that contributions are meaningful, and (e) a sense of social connection among members (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 7).

Blog

Derived from the term “Web log,” a blog is an online compilation of reflections, observations, and commentaries. Posts within a blog are often unified by the thread of a common topic (Huber, 2010), and they are typically organized in reverse chronological order. Blog posts may include embedded videos and images, and they often provide interactive comment features that allow the author and his or her readers to respond to one another.

Microblog

Like a blog, a microblog is an online collection of a user’s reflections, observations, and commentaries that is organized in reverse chronological order. However, microblogs are distinguished from blogs by their brevity, for each post is limited by the number of characters available. For example, Twitter, a popular microblogging platform, caps each post or “tweet” at 140 characters. Despite limitations

on the length of a tweet, users may share resources by including hyperlinks to websites, images, videos, and other online content.

Hashtag

Individuals microblogging via Twitter place a hashtag, a keyword or phrase prefixed with the # symbol, in a tweet to categorize messages sharing a common topic (e.g., #CCSS). Clicking on a hashtag in a tweet displays all other messages marked with that same keyword or phrase; thus, hashtags are especially useful during synchronous, organized Twitter chat sessions (e.g., #engchat) and at professional conferences (e.g., #NCTE12).

Social Network Site

Social network sites online allow users to craft profiles within a bounded system, to acknowledge other site users with whom they are connected, and to view their own and others' connections within the system (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Users are typically afforded opportunities to interact with one another in various ways. Such interaction may include engaging others in discussion forums, forming groups around topics of interest, sharing media files, instant messaging, and blogging within the site. The English Companion Ning, currently a popular social network site among English teachers, is referenced multiple times in this document.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into seven chapters, a list of references, and appendices. The first chapter established the significance of this study in relation to problems faced by secondary English teachers in the current climate of public education. Chapter 2 features a review of relevant literature that addresses the social nature of literacy and learning; language and learning in context; communities of practice, both online and off;

and participatory cultures, including the new media technologies that mediated teachers' participation online in this study. The purpose of the third chapter is to detail the research design, methodology, and methods of the study, including the theoretical perspective I embraced for the purposes of the study and the methods of data collection and analysis I employed. In Chapter 4 I present an overview of the selected teachers' professionally oriented participation online as documented during the data collection period. In Chapters 5 and 6 I cut across cases to provide the findings that resulted from analysis of the data collected. In Chapter 7 I offer a summary of the study, present thematic connections, and draw conclusions, including implications for English teacher education and future research possibilities. Finally, I close the study with a series of appendices and a list of references.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is framed by theories and research related to the social nature of literacy and learning. Framing the study this way provided a lens for viewing participants' interactions online and supported my considerations of context. It also helped me conceptualize the interactions among teachers online amid the participatory cultures that have emerged in response to the proliferation of new media technologies. I begin this chapter by examining theories that situate literacy and learning as social acts before exploring literacy and learning in context, online and offline communities of practice, and participatory cultures.

Literacy and Learning as Social Acts

A sociocultural view of literacy is distinct from conceptions that present literacy as an autonomous set of skills or universal acts that are independent of social context and carried out solely by individuals (Kucer, 2005; Street, 1993/2001). A sociocultural view highlights the social nature of literacy, as Barton and Hamilton (1998) explained:

> Literacy does not just reside in people's heads as a set of skills to be learned, and it does not just reside on paper, captured as texts to be analyzed. Like all human activity, literacy is essentially social, and it is located in the interaction between people. (p. 3)

This vision of literacy draws heavily upon the work of scholars who attended to the social aspects of literacy, such as Scribner and Cole (1981), and developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky, whose work advanced contemporary understandings of thought and language.

A prime influence on the generation of sociocultural views of literacy, Vygotsky concerned himself with the social origins of thought and higher mental functioning (Barton, 2007; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1988, 2008). He

posited that, rather than constructing knowledge solely as individuals, learners do so through social interactions (Mercer, 2000; Penuel & Wertsch, 1995; Wells, 1999; Wertsch, 1988, 2008). When learning something new, for example, children often look for guidance from adults or more knowledgeable others, who may then offer support in some form of language. Children then use that guidance to make meaning, organize information, solve problems, or inquire further (Bruner, 1990; Mercer, 2000). Vygotsky (1981) stressed this point: “Social relations or relations among people genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships” (p. 163). Vygotsky (1978) further illustrated the social nature of learning with the concept of the zone of proximal development. He identified the zone of proximal development as the range between what an individual is actually capable of independently and his or her potential developmental level in collaboration with more capable others. By recognizing the potential developmental level that results from collaboration with others as the ceiling of an individual’s zone of proximal development, Vygotsky reinforced the notion that learning and teaching are dependent upon social interaction and, specifically, that higher functions are developed through such interactions.

Vygotsky’s work is also significant for its recognition that human action is mediated by tools and signs (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Through mediation, Vygotsky (1978) asserted, tools—both material and psychological, such as language, writing, and diagrams (Vygotsky, 1997)—allow for the extension of human capability. Joinson (2003) echoed this point as he noted, “tools are more than just something to make a task easier. They change your way of thinking, of approaching a task (and indeed the nature of the task itself), and can reap unimagined wider social changes” (p. 2).

The mediation of human activity through the use of tools and signs is recognized as a central tenet of Vygotsky's work (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). It is especially noteworthy in a study such as this one, where participants use various interactive online technologies. Each technology provides a medium by which psychological tools may operate (Allen, 2005) to promote and extend learning in online environments. In this study, technological tools such as blogs, Twitter, and social network sites "serve as the conductor[s] of human influence on the object of activity" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 55), shaping how participants communicate with, teach, and learn from one another.

For the purposes of this study, an understanding of the ideas posed by Vygotsky, namely the social nature of learning and the mediation of human action by tools and signs, is significant. The concept of participation in online environments reflects these ideas. Whether taking the form of posts in chat sessions, book clubs, or interactive real-time webinars, a teacher's participation online is rooted in the interactions between people and the learning that may result. Participation in such activities is mediated by the various technologies required for participation, whether they are character-restricting microblogs used for online chats, hypertext-capable discussion forums housing online book clubs, or voice- and video-enhanced environments in which webinars are offered. In each case, the technological tools, as well as the sign systems transmitted by these tools, mediate each participant's encounters with others online.

Literary philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's work has also influenced sociocultural views of literacy and learning. Though Vygotsky stopped short of addressing how "specific historical, cultural, and institutional settings are tied to various forms of mediated action" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 46), Bakhtin's ideas related to utterances and

dialogicality began to extend Vygotsky's work, advancing the notion that meaning is situated in sociocultural contexts.

Bakhtin (1986) described the realization of language as happening through "utterances" (p. 60). An utterance is a speech unit, either written or spoken. It may range from a word or brief phrase to an extended text (Lindfors, 1999; Postholm, 2005). Furthermore, Bakhtin noted, "Any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances" (p. 69). That is, all utterances are dialogic in nature and exist as rejoinders in dialogue (Bonetskaia, 2004). The speaker or writer looks to address his or her audience, and the audience members subsequently respond to the utterance as they perceive it (Bakhtin, 1986). Though the degree of activity may vary, as Bakhtin suggested, respondents may agree or disagree with the utterance in whole or in part, they may apply it, or they may attempt to complement it. The nature of utterances as rejoinders arises because "[a]ny understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 68). In this way, meaning and understanding are products of a dialogic interaction, not the sole creation of the individual (Postholm, 2005).

Given Bakhtin's emphasis on dialogic interactions, it is important to attend to the dialogic nature of utterances that is apparent in three features: boundaries, completion, and expressiveness (Bakhtin, 1986; Lindfors, 1999). An utterance's boundaries are identified by the changing of speakers. In written communication, such as posts in a chat session, discussion forum, or blog, the bounded nature of utterances is easily identified as one writer's turn ends and another's begins. By posting a blog entry, for example, a writer turns to another, who may then take his or her turn in the form of a

comment posted in response to the original entry, opening opportunities for others to respond and continue the dialogic chain to which Bakhtin referred.

The completion of an utterance is not so clear cut, for it is determined by whether or not the speaker or writer has carried out his or her purpose in the interaction (Lindfors, 1999). According to Bakhtin (1986), the completeness of an utterance is dictated by "the possibility of responding to it…of assuming a responsive attitude toward it" (p. 76). For example, in discussion forums within social network sites, many teachers take the opportunity to seek input from their peers on challenges they face in the classroom. In such a case, if an input-seeking teacher's post has provided enough material to invite responses from others, to elicit support regarding the issue at hand, the speaker may deem it complete. Though a speaker's purposes may change, whether or not the purpose has been served is the determining factor in an utterance's completeness.

The expressive aspects of an utterance, including the evaluative accents or value judgments suggested in written communication, also reflect its dialogic nature (Lindfors, 1999). Expressiveness, according to Bakhtin (1986), is the feature of an utterance that suggests feeling. It is the "speaker's evaluative attitude" (p. 90) toward the subject of his or her speech. Expressiveness is evident, for, in online environments as in face-to-face settings, participants in a dialogue may voice inquiry, clarification, protest, despair, and encouragement, among many other possibilities. Expressiveness in written communication is indicative of the writer's awareness of an audience, of the others in the dialogic event. Each feature of an utterance—boundaries, completion, and expressiveness—reflects its dialogic nature, the turning of one speaker to another.

The work of the speaker in Bakhtin's theory is noteworthy. Not only is an utterance linked to preceding utterances, but it is also tied to subsequent utterances. Though subsequent utterances are still forthcoming at the time the speaker or writer constructs an utterance, he or she envisions the possible responses and actions the utterance may evoke in the addressee (Bakhtin, 1986). Each utterance is marked by being directed to someone or having "addressivity" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 95). The speaker or writer's utterance is actively shaped by the addressee. That is, as the speaker or writer tries to actively determine the response of the addressee, he or she also tries to "act in accordance with the response [he or she] anticipate[s]" (p. 95). Bakhtin (1986) posited that such consideration also informs the writer's selection of tools that mediate the utterance. This contention is especially significant when considering the tools teachers may use to address their peers online, be it a blog, Twitter, a discussion forum, or other new media technology described in this study, for each one offers unique affordances that shape the mediation of utterances.

Bakhtin's work—particularly his emphasis on the dialogic nature of utterances and his insistence that meaning results from two or more voices coming into contact—is significant to this study. Teachers engaged in blogging, microblogging, or contributing to social network sites—whether synchronously or asynchronously—may facilitate dialogic interaction, which, as Bakhtin's ideas suggest, may promote understanding. That is, both real-time and asynchronous online activities may involve participants communicating in response to one another. Synchronous activities such as live webinars and real-time online chat sessions via Twitter foster multi-voiced interactions as participants engage others in an exploratory exchange around topics relevant to their

classroom practice. In such synchronous events, participants have the opportunity to consider the answerability of their utterances, to anticipate responses to what they might share, and to respond accordingly. Undoubtedly, the utterances in such dialogic exchanges are marked by boundaries, completeness, and a range of expressive aspects as one participant turns to another.

Even asynchronous online activities, such as reading discussion forum posts, reviewing archived transcripts of chat sessions, or watching archived webinars, may be seen as having a dialogic quality, for responses need not be immediate in dialogic interactions (Bakhtin, 1986). As Bakhtin (1986) explained, “Sooner or later what is heard and actively understood will find its response in the subsequent speech or behavior of the listener” (p. 69).

When participating in asynchronous online activities individuals still have the opportunity to offer a response, albeit a delayed one, and to consider the answerability of their utterances. For example, participants wishing to respond in a discussion forum may still contribute to the thread weeks, months, or even years after the initial post launched the discussion. Likewise, those missing out on a real-time Twitter chat session may still use the hashtag tying the chat together (e.g., #engchat) to share a response at a later date or time. Such examples, as well as studies conducted to explore asynchronous dialogues (e.g., Amhag & Jakobson, 2009; Dennen, 2005), reflect Bakhtin’s (1986) assertion that immediacy is not central to dialogic interaction. Additionally, following Bakhtin’s theory, including his contention that responses may be found not only in the words of the listener but also in his or her behavior, even if an individual encounters an archived discussion thread online and never responds to a

post in writing, yet his or her future actions are influenced by the thread or a specific post, it may be said that his or her activity is dialogic in nature and that his or her understanding has been shaped by the interaction. In these ways, the literature pertaining to the social nature of literacy and learning suggests that participating online and engaging in online activities have the potential to promote new understandings among those seeking to extend their professional growth and development as English teachers.

Language and Learning in Context

As the complementary work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin outlined above illustrates, context has long been a concept central to studies of language and learning. For example, Vygotsky (1986) focused on the social context of language and recognized that a word's meaning remains stable, but its sense comes "from the context in which it appears; in different contexts, it changes its sense" (p. 245). Likewise, Bakhtin's notion of voice, "the speaking consciousness" (Holquist, 1981, p. 434), reflected his attention to context. "Bakhtin stressed the idea that voices always exist in a social milieu; there is no such thing as a voice that exists in total isolation from other voices" (Wertsch, 1991, pp. 51-52). It follows, then, that utterances are spoken or written from points of view that are colored by the contexts in which they are expressed. Despite the emphasis placed on context by forebearers of sociocultural theory like Vygotsky and Bakhtin, pinning down a precise, technical definition of the term is seemingly impossible (Goodwin & Duranti, 1992; Lindfors, 1999). The complex and indeterminate nature of context requires continued exploration of the concept (Goodwin & Duranti, 1992; Lindfors, 1999).

Cole (1996) presented two notable views of context: (a) the surround view and (b) the weaving view. Metaphorically, the surround view refers to context as the environment in which an interaction is located, situated, or embedded (Lindfors, 1999). For example, the context surrounding interactions in a formal educational setting may be a book club facilitated within a classroom situated in a public school that is located in a diverse neighborhood in an urban city. In this nested view, as Lindfors (1999) cautions, the boundaries of the immediate environment may seem rigid, yet each individual brings into the environment prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences that help "to contextualize utterances and interaction events" (p. 218). Moreover, sticking with the classroom example, individuals in the classroom build new knowledge and experiences together, ensuring that the context is ever changing (Lindfors, 1999).

The weaving view of context suggests that individuals "draw on the surround *context* to *contextualize* (weave) each interaction" (Lindfors, 1999, p. 232). From this view, context may be considered "a relational property" (Dourish, 2004, p. 22) as people draw upon the available resources relevant to their interactions with others. Focused on what people do, the weaving metaphor "see[s] the surround context as the total set of available threads" (Lindfors, 1999, p. 232), the affordances and constraints, people may draw upon in interaction with others. The weaving view, then, sees context as something created as individuals engage others.

The weaving view of context evokes Bakhtin's assertion that utterances combine the repeatable and the unrepeatable (Lindfors, 1999). According to Bakhtin (1986), utterances draw upon the inevitable and repeatable linguistic elements of language employed when speaking or writing (e.g., syntactic and phonological elements), yet

people make those linguistic elements their own as they craft unique utterances that serve particular communicative purposes. Likewise, from a weaving view of context, the surround context's available threads may be used in various interactions; they are repeatable. However, people also uniquely select those threads and weave them in unique, unrepeatable ways (Lindfors, 1999).

Communities of Practice, Online and Off

The contributions Vygotsky and Bakhtin made regarding the social nature of learning and literacy have been advanced by Wenger's (1998) concept of a community of practice. A practice account builds on the work of Scribner and Cole (1981), who, when a cognitive framework was deemed inadequate, offered the notion of practices as a way to account for Vai literacy (Barton & Tusting, 2005). Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) defined communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 7). Like Vygotsky and Bakhtin, Wenger recognized interaction with others in social communities as integral to learning. That position is furthered by the concept of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Citing stories of apprenticeship (e.g., Vai and Gola tailors, U.S. Navy quartermasters), Lave and Wenger posited that people learn from the periphery when they first join a community. Then, as they develop competence, people move closer to the center of the community. This sequence suggests that learning is not so much about acquiring knowledge as it is a process of increasing social participation, a contention in line with Vygotsky's work.

Gee (2004) recognized a community of practice as a type of affinity group. An affinity group "is a group wherein people form affiliations with each other, often at a

distance…primarily through shared practices or a common endeavor" (Gee, 2004, p. 285). Gee asserted that knowledge in a community of practice is intensive and extensive, for each person has specialized knowledge and shares some knowledge with others. He suggested that knowledge is distributed, for it is not confined to one person; it is distributed across people and tools. Gee also contended that knowledge in a community of practice is dispersed, for people in the community can draw upon knowledge from outside the community, and that knowledge in a community of practice is often tacit. That is, it is know-how that is the product of daily practice and, therefore, is not easily explicated.

Extending Wenger's concept, and in line with Gee's vision of groups consisting of people at a distance, virtual communities have taken hold as sites of learning for practicing and prospective teachers in recent years. In virtual communities, individuals have common goals, share understandings, and adhere to a common set of social protocols (Daniel, Schwier, & McCalla, 2003). As Leask and Younie (2001) described them, professional online communities have two primary characteristics: individuals having "some commitment and professional involvement over a period of time" (p. 225) and the use of "electronic communication which provides for the opportunity for on-line synchronous/asynchronous two-way communication between an individual and their [sic] peers" (p. 225).

Research indicates that engagement in online learning communities holds promise for supporting the development of both prospective and practicing teachers. The asynchronous communication within many online communities affords teachers the time to review ideas, concepts, and materials shared before responding to their peers

(Galland, 2002). The asynchronous nature also allows teachers to reflect thoughtfully on their own queries or strategies shared by others and to gather additional support as needed before trying new approaches in their own classrooms (Galland, 2002). Studies of prospective teachers communicating via discussion forum indicate that students may find psychological and emotional support through discourse in the online community (Paulus & Scherff, 2008; Scherff & Paulus, 2006). As a source of professional learning, contributing to online learning communities has also been recognized as a meaningful professional development activity that promotes active learning and authentic experiences among in-service teachers (Duncan-Howell, 2010).

Increasingly, scholars recognize the value of teachers sharing their practice within virtual communities in order to grow as professionals. Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2010) asserted that all teachers can benefit from publicly sharing their practices with one another, for making one's practice public promotes better teaching. From a Bakhtinian perspective, teachers opening their practice and inviting response from others evokes the notion of dialogicality. This is key, for, as Wertsch (1991) noted, "meaning can come into existence only when two or more voices come into contact: when the voice of a listener responds to the voice of a speaker" (p. 52). By making their practice public, teachers open up avenues for discussion about their craft, inviting others to comment, critique, and offer alternative perspectives on the work. Such conversations are vital for, as Breuleux, Laferrière, and Bracewell (1998) explained, "knowledge cultivation is best achieved through a process of conversations and reflection" (p. 4). Swenson (2003) captured the power of online professional learning when describing her experience working with teachers in the "Write for Your Life"

network. According to Swenson, the information shared and ideas exchanged within online communities become transformative in terms of improved teacher practice and empowerment when the knowledge is gained “at the point of need” (p. 299). Given the vast needs of teachers and the growing opportunities to engage others online, either formally or informally, at any time and from nearly any location, the potential for transformative learning online has never been greater.

Participatory Cultures

It may be argued that the potential for transformative learning online is at an all-time high due to the proliferation of participatory cultures. Jenkins (2006b) conceptualized participatory cultures as cultures in which people are encouraged to take part in the generation and distribution of new content. Contrasting sharply with commercial cultures that emerge from industrialized production and commercial circulation (Jenkins, 2006a), participatory cultures account for “the transformation of former audiences into active participants and agents of cultural production” (Schäfer, 2011, p. 10). Participatory cultures are recognized as having several distinguishing features: (a) relatively low barriers to expression and engagement, (b) support for creating and sharing one’s work, (c) informal mentorship, (d) a belief among members that contributions are meaningful, and (e) a sense of social connection among members (Jenkins, 2006b, p. 7). Such features enable people to generate new content and distribute it widely online.

Participatory cultures may serve various purposes and take varied forms, including affiliations, expressions, collaborative problem-solving, and circulations (Jenkins, 2006b). Affiliations are memberships in online communities that take shape through social network sites, online games, message boards, or other online

environments (p. 3). Expressions are the new creative forms one produces, including mash-ups, fan fiction, and video productions (p. 3). Collaborative problem-solving, which refers to individuals working together, formally or informally, to complete tasks and generate new knowledge, is often witnessed as individuals come together in online games, social network sites, and other online environments (e.g., Wikipedia) (p. 3). Finally, Jenkins conceptualized circulations as shaping the flow of media, as one might when blogging or producing podcasts (p. 3).

Though Jenkins (2006b) conceptualized participatory cultures through the lens of media studies and focused on helping youths develop the new media literacy skills needed to participate fully in contemporary culture (e.g., play, networking, collective intelligence, judgment), participatory cultures are not resigned to youths or to fans of popular media. Many teachers blog actively, engage in collaborative problem-solving with their peers, and hold voluntary affiliations in online communities based on their interests in teaching, learning, and literacy, as this study demonstrates. Such activities open avenues through which two or more voices may come into contact, promoting meaning-making in the ways Bakhtin described.

Jenkins (2006b) asserted that participatory cultures have taken shape in response "to the explosion of new media technologies that make it possible for average consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content in powerful new ways" (p. 8). Like the tools to which Vygotsky (1978, 1997) referred, new media technologies are changing the way people think about and approach online content. Blogs, microblogs, and social network sites mediate participation online for the teachers featured in this study, allowing them to extend their capabilities as teachers and

learners and fostering the opportunities for dialogic interaction Bakhtin (1986) described. An overview of popular new media technologies that mediate participation online and that are used by participants in this study is offered below.

Blogs

Often maintained individually and embedded with graphics or video, blogs typically feature commentaries, reflections, and resources related to a particular topic (Huber, 2010). Bloggers who write about education, often referred to as “edubloggers,” typically circulate reflections on classroom practice, links to educational materials, and samples of student work projects in their posts (Richardson, 2006). With commenting a prominent feature of the medium, the potential for each blog entry is enhanced by bloggers inviting responses from readers who can contribute to the discourse by challenging long-standing ideas, posing fresh perspectives, and pushing others’ thinking (Jakes, 2007). Based on his research, Luehmann (2008) asserted that, as a tool for professional learning, blogging offers teachers numerous opportunities, including engaging in meta-cognition and developing one’s thinking through discourse with other readers and writers. Furthermore, blogging can support a broad range of the professional work that teachers engage in, both cognitively and affectively (Davies & Merchant, 2007). With an aggregator or feed reader, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) makes engaging in blogging communities easier and more efficient as users subscribe to select blogs, thus controlling the input of information they receive and reducing the time they spend searching for content online (Educause Learning Initiative, 2007a; Jakes, 2007).

Microblogs

In addition to blogging, and perhaps as an alternative to it, many educators engage in microblogging, which entails posting small chunks of digital content online, including text, links, images, videos, or other content (Educause Learning Initiative, 2009). Twitter has emerged as a popular microblogging service that limits users to 140 characters with each post or tweet (Demski, 2010; Trinkle, 2009). When using Twitter, teachers may establish affiliations in customized learning communities as they network, gather their own following and follow select others, and ultimately forge bonds with other professionals through the exploration of common interests (Ferriter, 2010; Warlick, 2009). Users can circulate links to valuable resources and thoughts on education-related issues, pose inquiries, or engage in collaborative problem-solving by providing feedback in response to the queries of others (Educause Learning Initiative, 2007b), either synchronously or asynchronously, making Twitter a viable option for teachers to engage in real-time professional learning (Boss, 2008).

Synchronous chat sessions via Twitter further extend the platform's potential for supporting real-time professional development. A Twitter chat is organized by the use of a hashtag that helps to connect related ideas and posts by adding them to a category (e.g., #edchat). The popularity of hour-long (or longer) organized Twitter chats occurring regularly at set times on specific days, such as #engchat, a chat created specifically for English language arts teachers (Rami, 2011) and #ntchat, a chat geared toward new and prospective teachers (Ray, 2010), illustrates Twitter's potential for fostering connections between and among educators where they might not exist otherwise. Such routine and prolonged chat sessions with other professionals may allow teachers to partake in the sustained learning opportunities valued by Desimone (2009) and other

researchers as meaningful professional development experiences. With the use of hashtags, Twitter becomes more than an avenue for randomly sharing and locating resources; practicing and prospective teachers have the opportunity to engage in extensive dialogue about pressing educational issues on a routine basis (Rodesiler, 2011).

Social Network Sites

Social network sites online, as boyd and Ellison (2007) defined them, allow individuals to

> (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

Introduced in Chapter 1, the English Companion Ning is a social network site online that, as of this writing, hosts a diverse population of nearly 40,000 elementary, secondary, and post-secondary English teachers, pre-service English teachers, English teacher educators, curriculum specialists, and consultants who gather synchronously or asynchronously around a shared interest in the teaching of English language arts. The English Companion Ning provides a space where its members can exchange ideas and resources via discussion forums, blogs, and instant messages, and join and create groups that focus on specific topics of interest (e.g., “Teaching Writing,” “Teaching Social Justice,” “LGBT Literature”).

In addition to communicating with others in specialized groups, members also have the opportunity to maintain blogs, chat via instant message, and share multimedia projects (Rock, McCollum, & Hessee, 2009). Additional features, including an online book club, a regularly scheduled asynchronous exchange with a featured author in the

field of English language arts and other members of the site (Faulkner, 2009), and structured professional development opportunities such as the 2010 Summer English Companion Ning PD Webstitute: English 2.0: Teaching and Learning in a Digital Age, provide rich opportunities for teachers to engage in the active learning researchers (e.g., Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001) find to be characteristic of effective professional development. Such affordances make social network sites prime environments for teachers to engage with other professionals in the field of English education.

Summary

The theories and research that frame this study establish literacy and learning as the product of social interactions among people who may utilize tools, both material and psychological, to extend their capabilities as they engage one another in particular contexts. Furthermore, the theories and research framing this study establish communities of practice as affinity groups that bring people together around a common endeavor, and they suggest that online communities hold promise for practicing and prospective teachers. Finally, the theories and research framing this study identify participatory cultures as the products of emerging new media technologies, such as blogs, microblogs, and social network sites, and catalysts of teachers' participation online. In the next chapter, I detail the study's methodology and the research methods I used to conduct my research.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODS

In this study I examined five secondary English teachers' experiences participating online in exploration of issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy. By illuminating the nature and contexts of the teachers' participation online, as well as the ways they experience such participation, I aimed to build an understanding of participatory cultures (Jenkins, 2006a, 2006b) that may inform English teacher education. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research design, the methodology, and the methods used in completing this study. This includes a brief introduction of the study's participants, a thorough description of the methods of data collection and analysis I employed, and a delineation of my efforts to enhance the study's trustworthiness. I begin this chapter with an overview of constructivism, the theoretical perspective underpinning this study.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical orientation of this study is informed by a constructivist perspective. From this perspective, "knowledge is always knowledge that a person constructs" (Larochelle & Bednarz, 1998). From a constructivist perspective, "absolute realities are unknowable, and the objects of inquiry are individual constructions of reality" (Hatch, 2002, p. 15). For constructivists, knowledge does not consist of truths to be discovered and transmitted. Rather, constructivist theory describes knowledge as "emergent, developmental, nonobjective, viable constructed explanations by humans engaged in meaning-making in cultural and social communities of discourse" (Fosnot, 2005, p. ix). From a constructivist perspective, learning, then, is carried out through negotiation with others in social activity and is mediated by cultural tools and symbols

(Fosnot, 2005; Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1999). Such a position on learning calls to mind sociocultural theories that inform this study such as those offered by Vygotsky and Bakhtin, respectively, each of which were addressed in the second chapter.

In addition to constructivism's alignment with sociocultural theories on language and learning, its focus on individual experiences and acts of meaning-making (Crotty, 1998) made it an appropriate theoretical perspective for this study. Rather than focusing on the meaning-making carried out collectively by a group of learners—the general focus of constructionism (Crotty, 1998)—this study was designed to explore the unique experiences described by individual secondary English teachers who explore issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy as they participate online. Though constructivism and constructionism are often conflated, it was important to distinguish between the two concepts when designing this study.

Participant Selection

In this section I explain the sampling method I used to identify individuals suited to help me investigate the study's guiding research questions, provide an overview of the process I used to locate prospective participants, and offer brief descriptions of the individuals who agreed to participate in the study.

Purposive Sampling

Among other characteristics, qualitative research is typically distinguished by an in-depth focus on relatively small samples that have been purposefully selected (Patton, 2002). Accordingly, I employed purposive sampling to select participants for this qualitative study. Purposive sampling allowed me to select participants who could assist in illuminating questions central to the research (Patton, 2002). More specifically, sampling was criterion-driven (Patton, 2002); that is, secondary English teachers who

reflected predetermined criteria were identified for participation. Employing a constructivist methodology requires a degree of homogeneity among participants (Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes, 2009), and criterion sampling helped to ensure a measure of homogeneity among the participants invited to take part in this study. For the purposes of this study, I sought individuals who met the criteria presented in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1. Criteria and rationales for participant selection.

Criterion	Rationale
The prospective participant is currently employed as a secondary English teacher in a face-to-face setting.	Given that my area of interest is secondary English education, it was appropriate to seek out secondary English teachers.
The prospective participant engages in two or more online environments within which he or she explores issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy. This may include blogging, microblogging, contributing to a professionally oriented social network site, or routinely contributing to a personal website.	To build an understanding of English teachers' experiences engaging in professionally oriented participation online, teachers who have had those experiences were vital. I sought participants who were active in two or more environments with the intention of ensuring that participants had ample experiences from which to draw.
The prospective participant is a member of a reputable professional organization that has historically informed research and the teaching of the English language arts, such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) or the National Writing Project (NWP).	Though not foolproof, this criterion was intended to ensure a measure of quality in terms of the teaching practices prospective participants share online. Presumably, the practices of a teacher holding membership in a professional organization would be informed by the professional literature.

Following Digital Footprints

Documents and artifacts generated before or during the research process—including diaries, computer files, websites, and other materials available on the Web—may prove to be valuable sources of data when conducting qualitative research (Mason, 2002). I began this study by locating online artifacts or "digital footprints" (Richardson,

2008, p. 16) to help me identify individuals who met the criteria for participation detailed above. Richardson (2008) described digital footprints as those indicators of "who we are, what we do, and by association, what we know" (p. 16) that we leave behind as we make contributions online. Basic examples of digital footprints include blog posts and comments, open discussion forum posts, tweets, Flickr photos, and YouTube videos (Richardson, 2008). I began looking for potential participants by searching for the digital footprints left by secondary English teachers who contribute to my own personal learning network (i.e., my Twitter stream, the blogs to which I subscribe, and the social network sites of which I am a member). During this phase, which was distinct from data collection and analysis, I scanned and reviewed profiles, posts, comments, videos, and documents shared online by English teachers in my network to find those who met the criteria for participation in the study. I then expanded the search beyond my own network by looking for potential participants in the networks of individuals with whom I had connected online. Combing through the networks of individuals who are part of my own network had the effect of snowball sampling (Patton, 2002), pointing me in the direction of others who fit the selection criteria.

Description of Participants

In January 2012, after I completed a thorough search for prospective participants, I invited eight secondary English teachers to participate in this study (Appendix A). Three invitations did not elicit responses. However, the other five invitations drew responses from the individuals featured in this study, each of whom is described briefly in Table 3-2 and then in greater detail below. It is important to note that each participant in this study was given the option of creating a pseudonym to mask his or her identity and to ensure anonymity (Appendix B). However, having completed

member checks of interview transcripts and the study's findings, each participant opted to forgo a pseudonym, a decision that seems to mirror the open and public nature of their participation online.

Table 3-2. Participant information

Name	Sex	Age	Degree	Exp.	Grade	Blog	SNS	Twitter	Site
Meenoo	F	30s	M.Ed	6	11 & 12	Y	Y	Y	NE
Brian	M	40s	M.Ed	17	8	Y	Y	Y	NE
Cindy	F	30s	M.Ed	8	9 & 12	Y	Y	Y	NE
Gary	M	50s	MA	32	10-12	Y	Y	Y	MW
Sarah	F	20s	BA	5	9-12	Y	N	Y	MW

Note: F = Female; M = Male; M.Ed = Master of Education; MA = Master of Arts; BA = Bachelor of Arts; Exp. = Teaching Experience (in years); Grade = Grade Level(s) Taught in 2012; Y = Yes; N = No; SNS = Social Network Site; NE = Northeastern United States; MW = Midwestern United States. The information in this table reflects the status of participants as of April 2012.

Meenoo Rami

Meenoo is an Indian female in her early thirties who teaches at an urban magnet school in the Northeastern region of the United States. In her sixth year as a high-school English teacher at the time of this study, Meenoo taught English to 11th- and 12th-grade students. In addition to being affiliated with the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), Meenoo is a National Writing Project (NWP) teacher-consultant and a National Board Certified Teacher. Meenoo also holds a master's degree in secondary education. Online, Meenoo microblogs via Twitter, and she is the founder and moderator of #engchat, a weekly Twitter chat for English teachers. To support #engchat, Meenoo maintains an accompanying blog of the same name: #engchat (http://www.engchat.org). Meenoo also contributes to NWP's Digital Is website (http://digitalis.nwp.org), and she is an active member of the English Companion Ning.

Brian Kelley

Brian is a White male in his mid-forties who teaches at a suburban middle school in the Northeastern region of the United States. In his 17th year as an English teacher at the time of this study, Brian taught five sections of creative writing to 8th-grade students. In addition to his affiliation with NCTE, Brian is an NWP teacher-consultant, and he holds a Master of Education degree in English. Brian writes about teaching, learning, and literacy on his blog, Walk the Walk (http://walkthewalkblog.blogspot.com). Brian microblogs via Twitter, and he is also a member of the English Companion Ning, though he did not contribute to the social network site during the data collection period of this study. In addition to teaching, Brian works as an assistant coach for a Division II football program at a nearby university, and he is a member of the American Football Coaches Association.

Cindy Minnich

Cindy is a White female in her mid-thirties who teaches at a rural high school in the Northeastern region of the United States. In her eighth year as an English teacher at the time of this study, Cindy taught English to 9th- and 12th-grade students (both academic and honors), including those enrolled in a composition class through a local community college, and she also served as the yearbook advisor at her school. In addition to her affiliations with NCTE and the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English (ALAN), Cindy is an NWP teacher-consultant, and she holds a Master of Education degree in English. Cindy microblogs via Twitter, and she is a member of the English Companion Ning. Cindy also co-facilitates and contributes to an award-winning blog that celebrates books, particularly

those written for children and young adults, and literacy: Nerdy Book Club (http://nerdybookclub.wordpress.com).

Gary Anderson

Gary is a White male in his early fifties who teaches at a suburban high school in the Midwestern region of the United States. In his 32nd year as an English teacher at the time of this study, Gary taught literature and composition courses to students in grades 10-12. A member of NCTE, Gary holds a Master of Arts degree in composition and rhetoric, and he is a co-author of *Expository Composition: Discovering Your Voice* (Romano & Anderson, 2013), a writing textbook from EMC Publishing. Gary explores issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy on the What's Not Wrong? blog (http://whatsnotwrong.wordpress.com); on Twitter; and on the English Companion Ning.

Sarah Andersen

Sarah is a White female in her late twenties who teaches at a suburban high school in the Midwestern region of the United States. During the course of this study, Sarah taught English, including a course devoted to young adult literature, to students in grades 9-12. A fifth-year teacher at the time of this study, Sarah was also working toward a master's degree in reading and language arts with a reading specialist endorsement, and she has since completed her degree. Sarah received the "Teacher of the Year" award in her school district in January 2012, and she is a member of NCTE and ALAN. Sarah writes about matters related to the reading and teaching of young adult literature on her blog, Y.A. Love (http://yaloveblog.com), and via Twitter.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection for this study was carried out from January 2012 through April 2012. Data collection featured the gathering of archived online documents and materials

generated by participants, including blog posts, tweets, entries in discussion forums, and other relevant Web-based content, and the completion of a series of in-depth interviews, the primary data source of constructivist research (Grbich, 2007). These data collection methods, each of which is described in greater detail below, assisted me in investigating the three research questions that guided this study:

- What are the features of the online contexts that selected secondary English teachers weave in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy?
- What is the nature of selected secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online in terms of the practices they carry out and the topics they address?
- How do selected secondary English teachers experience professionally oriented participation online?

Archived Online Documents and Materials

Documents created prior to or during the research process, including those available online, may prove to be informative data sources when conducting qualitative research (Mason, 2002). In an effort to support my investigation into the nature of English teachers' professionally oriented participation online and the features of the contexts they weave as they participate online, I collected archived online material posted by participants between July 1, 2011 and the respective date of each participant's final interview. The beginning of July was selected as a starting point with the idea that teachers might begin planning for the upcoming school year during that time and, thus, might be more active online than they would in, say, May, a month that coincides with the end of the school year and brings with it grading and reporting deadlines that might inhibit a teacher's online activity. Collecting data through each participant's second interview was also intentional. I sought to allow room for discussion

of and references to recent online artifacts or experiences as the interviews were conducted.

I began collecting archived online documents and materials in January 2012 after participants agreed to take part in the study. Collected materials included online documents and other participant-generated content that was available freely and relevant to the study, such as blog entries, tweets, discussion forum posts, and archived online chat sessions, as well as screenshots of participants' profiles on Twitter and social network sites. The last of the participant-generated, archived online documents and materials was collected in April 2012.

The collection of online documents and materials was made easier and more efficient with the use of Really Simple Syndication (RSS). RSS is a Web feed protocol used to distribute works that are updated on a routine basis, such as blogs or news sites (Educause, 2007a). RSS feed aggregators (e.g., Google Reader; Feedreader) are used to check for new content from subscribed feeds and download it automatically to one location for easy access, allowing users to control the input of information they receive and reducing the time they spend searching for new content. In this case, I used Google Reader to receive each participant's blog posts, tweets, and, if applicable, updates on activity within social network sites. This saved me the trouble of, for example, visiting each participant's blog daily to see if any new posts had been written. Instead, I was able to simply log into my Google Reader account and access blog posts, tweets, and activity in social network sites as they became available. See Figure 3-1 for a screenshot of the Google Reader interface.

Though using an RSS aggregator proved helpful, not all online artifacts were collected that way. As noted previously, data collection began in January 2012, yet online documents and materials dating back to July 2011 were to be included in the final data set. Therefore, some online content was collected through other means. For example, tweets composed before I began subscribing via RSS were collected using Snap Bird (http://snapbird.org), a Web-based tool that assists in the search of Twitter, the popular microblogging platform. After searching for participants by their Twitter handles (e.g., @AndersonGL), I copied and pasted tweets from Snap Bird into a Microsoft Word document for future analysis. At the time, each participant was using Twitter, so Snap Bird proved to be a valuable data collection tool. Blog posts written before participants consented were collected the old-fashioned way: I visited each participant's blog to pore through the archives. I then copied blog entries and any accompanying comments before pasting them into a Microsoft Word document for easy access and future analysis. In a similar fashion, to complete the collection of materials posted prior to receiving participants' consent, I visited the professionally oriented social network sites participants reported using. Within the sites, I navigated to participants' profile pages and, as applicable, followed hyperlinks to the forums and blogs to which they contributed within the site. I then copied and pasted discussion forum entries and blog posts written on the site into a Microsoft Word document for future analysis.

Semi-Structured Interviews

As a method of data collection, interviews are used commonly in qualitative research due to their ability to "provide avenues into events and experiences that have not been observed" (Hatch, 2002, p. 91). Given the chance to provide explanations during interviews, participants can illuminate their motivations, concerns, and feelings or

reconstruct particular events and experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). With the capacity to position participants as knowledge producers, interviews are used as a primary data collection method in studies informed by a constructivist theoretical perspective (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009). The potential for alignment with a constructivist perspective made interviewing an appealing option when considering methods of data collection.

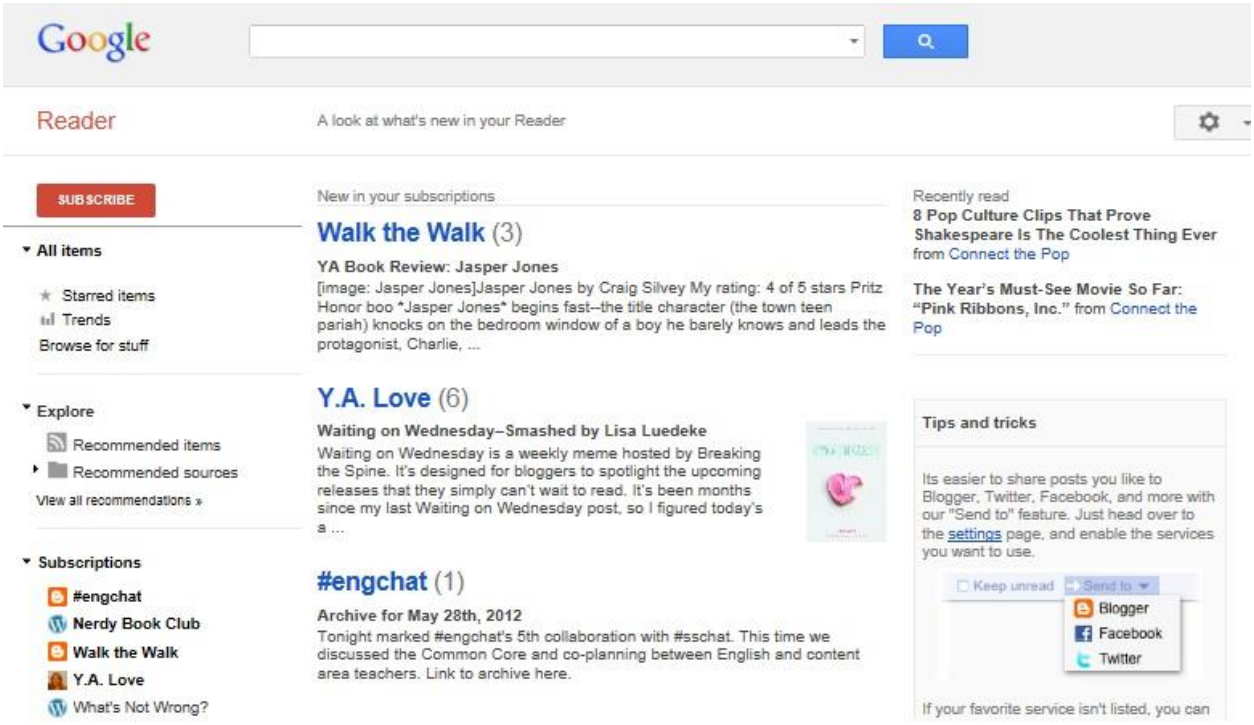


Figure 3-1. A screenshot of the Google Reader interface

With an eye on narrative inquiry, I was intrigued by the potential for interviews to serve as "narrative occasions" (Riessman, 2008, p. 23). Building on the work of Mishler (1986a, 1986b)—and reflecting Bakhtin's notion that meaning and understanding are not the sole creation of the individual but products of a dialogic interaction—Riessman (2008) recognized that, by approaching interviews as opportunities for the interviewer and respondent to co-construct meanings, researchers may begin to facilitate the construction of narrative accounts. With an awareness of the interviewer's role in narrative construction, researchers are positioned to make the purposeful moves in an

interview that help to foster narrative talk. Such moves include allowing for longer turns at talk than those taken typically during daily conversation, letting go of fixed interview formats, and formatting questions in ways that "allow respondents to construct answers in ways they find meaningful" (Riessman, 2008, p. 25). With those points in mind, I set out to employ semi-structured interviewing as a method of data collection.

Aiming to generate narratives that could assist me in exploring English teachers' experiences participating online around issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy, I developed a pair of semi-structured interview guides. The guides provided me with prompts related to my research topic, but I still retained the flexibility necessary for "following participants down their trails" (Riessman, 2008, p. 24) or "probing into areas that arise during interview interactions" (Hatch, 2002, p. 94), as is appropriate when pursuing narrative inquiry. Following Riessman's (2008) suggestions, I attempted to structure prompts and probing questions in ways that would support extended responses. This included using phrasing such as "Tell me about…" or "How did [that] come about?" and probing for more information with questions such as "Can you tell me more about that?" In addition to promoting narrative turns, such prompts align with a constructivist theoretical perspective, for they situate participants as the primary knowledge producers (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009).

The interview guides I developed for use in this study were reviewed and approved by the members of my supervisory committee to ensure epistemological consistency and alignment with my research questions. Sample interview questions were also reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Florida to ensure adherence to the ethical standards of research with human subjects.

The two interview guides used in this study featured primary questions and a set of potential probing questions. The interview guides are available for review in Appendix C and Appendix D, respectively.

After contacting participants via email to arrange dates and times that fit their busy schedules, I conducted a pair of semi-structured interviews with each of them. Aware of the many advantages of in-person interviews, such as contextual naturalness, equal distribution of interactive power, and effectiveness with complex issues (Shuy, 2003), I arranged to interview participants face-to-face for approximately one hour per interview, a duration of time recommended by qualitative researchers (e.g., Glesne, 1999). To ensure that interviews were conducted in locations where participants felt comfortable, as researchers suggest (e.g., Glesne, 1999; Hatch, 2002), I asked participants to determine the site of each interview. I conducted interviews in the participants' classrooms or in other available meeting spaces within the schools where they worked. As the situation dictated, I interviewed participants during their preparation periods, over lunch breaks, or after the school day ended.

I conducted each interview between February 2012 and April 2012. Approximately one month's time passed between the first and second interview for each participant (e.g., a participant interviewed in mid-March was interviewed a second time in mid-April). The time between interviews allowed me and the participants to consider and reflect upon the initial interview. Additionally, the time between interviews allowed me to transcribe the audio recording of the first interview and disseminate it for review, and it gave participants time to review the transcript and return it before the second interview commenced. I personally transcribed all recorded data collected from the 10

interviews. Participants then reviewed the transcripts to ensure accuracy as part of the member-checking process (Hatch, 2002), which will be described in greater detail later in this chapter. Transcribing the interviews firsthand, as opposed to hiring a transcription service, gave me the valuable opportunity to begin familiarizing myself with the data from the onset, allowing me to listen again and again to the narratives constructed during each interview.

Data Analysis

In line with the traditions of qualitative research, data analysis was ongoing and recursive. Data analysis assisted me in addressing the three research questions that guided this study:

- What are the features of the online contexts that selected secondary English teachers weave in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy?
- What is the nature of selected secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online in terms of the practices they carry out and the topics they address?
- How do selected secondary English teachers experience professionally oriented participation online?

I conducted data analysis in two concurrent phases: one for the ethnographic content analysis of collected online artifacts and one for the analysis of narratives within the collected interview data.

Phase I: Ethnographic Content Analysis

In the first phase of data analysis, I borrowed from ethnographic methods to analyze collected online documents. Drawing from Altheide's (1987) ethnographic content analysis, an approach to analyzing documents that is rooted in qualitative traditions, I conducted a reflexive analysis of the online documents and materials gathered during data collection. Oriented toward description, Altheide's ethnographic

content analysis is helpful when researchers aim to “document and understand the communication of meaning” (1987, p. 68). In this case, I appropriated Altheide’s methods to assist me in describing the features of the online contexts in which selected secondary English teachers explored teaching, learning, and literacy. This included close study of the situations and settings and the topics that anchored the selected teachers’ activity online.

The substance of ethnographic content analysis emerges through repeated engagement with collected data. In this way, the researcher is central to ethnographic content analysis, as he or she is “embedded in *constant discovery* and *constant comparison*” (Altheide, 1987, p. 68). Moving reflexively between data collection, coding, analysis, and interpretation, I aimed to adhere to a systematic yet not overly rigid process (Altheide, 1987). Recognized for providing sound descriptive information, ethnographic content analysis also assisted me in identifying the nature of participants’ online activity, and it supported the generation of prompts to be used when conducting semi-structured interviews with participants.

I began the analysis of participant-generated online documents and materials during data collection. After collecting an item, my first reading was an attempt to familiarize myself with it. Then, I uploaded the documents and materials to Dedoose (http://www.dedoose.com), a Web-based program designed to assist in the organization of data for qualitative and mixed methods research. Once documents were uploaded to Dedoose, I began reading the collected material a second time and applying initial codes to the data. For example, among the many codes I proposed when initially

working through participants' tweets were "offering to help," "promoting others' ideas," and "recommending resources."

Employing the technique of constant comparison Altheide (1987) advocated, I re-read the artifacts and their corresponding initial codes, considered how each might align with or challenge others, and, as appropriate, collapsed initial codes into families of focused codes. For instance, through this process the three initial codes mentioned previously were categorized under "supporting teachers," a focused code offering a broader perspective on the nature of teachers' participation online as evinced in the archived data. Additionally, while establishing focused codes, I began making "textual notes" (Altheide, 1987, p. 41), composing brief overviews of the categories of data that emerged and noting the extreme and typical cases within each category. This recursive process continued as I completed data analysis.

Examining the data across individual cases helped me identify common contextual features of teacher-generated online environments and recurring patterns in the nature of the selected teachers' participation online, as well as any notable disjunctions. During this phase of data analysis I also turned to data collected through semi-structured interviews in an effort to extend my analysis, a process akin to data triangulation (Denzin, 1989; Patton, 2002). As Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted, the capacity to extend information from other sources is one of several outcomes of interviewing.

Table 3-3 displays a complete timeline of the study. The findings that emerged from collecting and analyzing archived online artifacts generated and distributed by the teachers featured in this study are presented in Chapter 5.

Phase II: Narrative Analysis

"[O]ne of the most ubiquitous and powerful discourse forms in human communication is *narrative*" (Bruner, 1990, p. 77). Bruner's position on the ubiquity of narrative is embraced widely, as scholars (e.g., Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Herman, 2009; Mishler, 1986b; Riessman, 1993) acknowledge that human experience and recollections of experience are framed in narrative form. Accordingly, the analysis of narratives is a valuable approach to interpreting human experience (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004), and it is a methodological approach that informed the design of this study.

Privileging positionality (Riessman, 2003), a narrative approach to understanding selected secondary English teachers' participation in online environments is important, for it "can access motivation, emotion, imagination, subjectivity, and action" (Laslett, 1999, p. 392), allowing for the close study of personal experience (Riessman, 2003). A narrative approach to qualitative research recognizes that "storytellers select the components of the stories they tell (reconstruct) in order to convey the meaning they intend the listener to take from the story" (Bailey & Tilley, 2002, p. 575). With an emphasis on the meaning participants convey through the narratives they construct, narrative inquiry is consistent with the basic tenets of a constructivist theoretical perspective, particularly the positioning of an individual's constructions of reality as the primary objects of inquiry.

Narrative elements

In line with the ubiquity of the narrative form, definitions of narrative are multiple and varied (Riessman, 2008). However, the representation of information as a sequence of events and the temporal and spatial organization of those events are distinguishing features acknowledged widely by narrative scholars and researchers

(e.g., Herman, 2009; Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Lacey, 2000; Prince, 1982; Riessman, 2003). A lone event precludes a sequence; thus, the narrative form requires the representation of at least two connected events. Furthermore, temporal and spatial organization suggests that the ordering of events is meaningful and that those events transpired in particular times and places.

Regarding structural elements, William Labov's work (e.g., Labov, 1972; Labov, 1982; Labov & Waletzky, 1967) is cited often by researchers taking a narrative approach. Labov (1972) theorized that "a fully-formed narrative" (p. 363) includes the following elements: (a) an abstract that serves as a brief summary or presents the narrative's main point; (b) an orientation that clarifies the time, place, people, and situation; (c) a complicating action that often involves a turning point or problem; (d) an evaluation that provides a commentary on meaning; (e) a resolution that explains the outcome of the plot or a solution to the problem; and (f) a coda that states general observations and returns the narrative to the present time.

Narratives featuring Labovian structural elements have oft been the focus of narrative studies, but Ochs and Capps (2001) reminded researchers that "less polished, less coherent narratives" (p. 57) are not to be dismissed without consideration. They noted, "The plot line of these narratives of personal experience may or may not encompass a beginning, middle, and end, given that…life events are not necessarily coherent nor immediately resolvable" (p. 57).Though Ochs and Capps focused on everyday conversational narratives—not narratives co-constructed in interview settings like those generated in this study—their point is still relevant: Not all narratives come together in a tidy fashion, complete from beginning to end with any and all disruptions

resolved. Their point is one I considered carefully when determining what constitutes a narrative in this study.

Ultimately, I settled on three criteria that must be evident for a segment of the data to be considered a narrative. I decided that a narrative in this study must (a) offer a representation of some complicating action that is comprised of at least two connected, temporally and spatially ordered sequential events; (b) include some reaction or, in Labovian terms, some evaluation of the action; and (c) hold relevance to secondary English teachers' participation in online activities related to the exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy. I included each criterion with a distinct purpose: The first criterion helped to distinguish narratives from other communicative forms; the second criterion helped to illuminate how the narrator made sense of the experience; and the third criterion prevented narratives that were irrelevant to the study from entering the final data set.

Identifying narratives: Initial analysis

Identifying narratives in interview data requires a researcher to develop familiarity with the data. I began familiarizing myself with the content of the in-depth interviews by transcribing them personally and reading them from beginning to end upon completion to ensure accuracy before sending them to participants via email to commence member checks. After reading the transcripts once again following the participants' completion of the member-checking process, I set out to identify narratives in the collected interview data. To do so, I began re-reading the transcripts, this time with an eye for narrative elements. As I found segments that appeared initially to meet the narrative criteria detailed above (i.e., complicating action, evaluation, and relevance to secondary English teachers' participation online), I copied and pasted them into a separate

document for further analysis. After reading carefully through each interview transcript, I returned to the segments identified initially as meeting the narrative criteria.

When re-reading through the collection of potential narratives, I began documenting them, completing a narrative inventory that followed a protocol adapted from Humphries (2012). Documentation required (a) identifying the interview prompt that elicited the segment; (b) labeling the segment with the initials of the contributing participant, the number of the interview from which it was drawn, and the chronological number of the segment within the interview, as well as an *in vivo* title for the segment (e.g., GA1.6: I Didn't Even Have the Questions to Ask); (c) noting the topics addressed in the segment; (d) adding notes pertaining to the identification of narrative elements in the segment (e.g., complicating action, evaluation, and relevance to the investigation of secondary English teachers' participation in online environments); and (e) registering additional notes, including connections to other potential narratives in the collection and thoughts on whether or not the potential narrative seemed to be worth analyzing in greater detail. See Appendix E for the complete narrative inventory.

I learned through the documentation process that not all segments pulled initially from the interview transcripts would be valuable moving forward. Accordingly, I began distinguishing further between items in the narrative inventory based on their potential value to the study. Borrowing from Humphries (2012), I employed an elementary color-coding system, marking items in the inventory to indicate their analytic value (Appendix E). I shaded items with the color green to mark plainly those entries that seemed to hold the highest potential value for analysis. These were items that, to the highest degree, featured the elements of a narrative as defined in this study and appeared likely to

support investigation of the study's research questions. In the Labovian sense, entries shaded green typically represented the most complete narratives in the data set. This is noteworthy, for complete narratives seem more likely to provide an audience with finer contextual detail, and such detail can assist audience members in making sense of the narrative. With the color yellow, I shaded items in the inventory that, to a lesser degree, held the pre-requisite narrative elements and appeared relevant to the study's research questions. The color red was reserved for those items in the inventory that appeared to lack the narrative criteria outlined above and for those items that were irrelevant to or only related tangentially to the study's research questions.

Organizing the data by completing the narrative inventory and then color-marking the collected narratives assisted me in handling a relatively large amount of data, and it prepared me to move more fully into the analysis of narratives. Before doing so, however, I returned to those items in the narrative inventory that were marked with the color red to ensure that I was not overlooking any data that held potential value for this study. An additional review of that data assured me that further analysis was not warranted, given the purposes of this project, though some of those items might be fruitful for future study.

Analyzing narratives: Thematic analysis

After working thoroughly in the initial stage of analysis to identify and organize narratives in the data, I began to analyze those narratives that met the established criteria noted above and that could best support exploration of the research questions guiding this study. Conducting a thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008), I sought to identify common themes among the collected narratives. "There is no standard set of procedures [for analyzing narratives] compared to some forms of qualitative research"

(Riessman, 1993, p. 54), so I opted to begin by conducting a thematic narrative analysis, given the available data and the affordances of the method. For instance, I recognized that a thematic approach is suited for narratives that develop in the context of interviews (Riessman, 2008), and that was the case for each narrative in the data set. Additionally, with a full inventory of narratives from which to draw, it was clear that the final data set was conducive to the method, which, as noted above, requires multiple narratives. Additionally, focusing on the content of each narrative—an approach supported by thematic analysis—would allow me to look closely at the ways participants experience participation online, the focus of the third research question guiding this study. Such reasoning informed my decision to conduct a thematic narrative analysis, as I sought to begin building an understanding of the ways secondary English teachers experience professionally oriented participation online.

As I conducted the thematic narrative analysis, I aimed to keep the narratives intact for interpretive purposes. Doing so prevents against data being presented and interpreted out of context, an issue researchers have found with some qualitative methods of analysis (Bloor & Wood, 2006). Furthermore, keeping the narratives intact helps to preserve the sequences and details that imbue the unique representations of experience participants construct in the telling of their narratives (Riessman, 2008). I also eschewed deriving categories from prior theory. Instead, given the paucity of research on teachers' participation online across multiple platforms, I conducted an inductive analysis, one approach to the thematic analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995). Letting the data be my guide, I moved recursively across the narratives, identifying and labeling similar instances between them. Through constant comparison,

I proposed and refined thematic categories based on the similarities and distinctions between those instances. That is, while preserving individual narratives, I generated common thematic categories across narratives. Throughout this analytic process, I also engaged in memo-writing to support my thinking as I read and re-read across narratives, identified commonalities, and generated, defined, and refined thematic categories. Ultimately, thematic narrative analysis supported me in identifying and thematically categorizing the commonalities that exist across participants' narratives about their experiences participating online in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy, positioning me to develop general knowledge about the collected narratives.

Analyzing narratives: Structural analysis

To strengthen my analysis of participants' narratives, I combined thematic analysis with structural analysis, as Riessman (2008) recommended. Thematic narrative analysis focuses on the content of speech or *what* a participant says when constructing a narrative, and structural narrative analysis shifts attention to the organization of speech or *how* a participant constructs a narrative. This shift is noteworthy, for, as Riessman asserted, "close attention to story structure can yield different findings than a thematic analysis would" (p. 89). For example, by employing only a thematic narrative analysis, one might conclude that all narratives sharing a common theme resemble each other with little to no degree of variation. Instead, combining thematic and structural analysis methods allowed me to describe broad patterns of thematic similarities across participants while also recognizing variations in meaning for individual participants.

I conducted the structural analysis by returning to those narratives previously identified as best meeting the criteria of a narrative and supporting exploration of the

research questions guiding this study. First, I read and re-read each narrative with an eye for Labov's (1972) six structural elements: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. Revisiting the narratives in this way, apart from the initial analysis I conducted when identifying narratives, afforded me an additional opportunity to consider the accuracy of my early readings of the narrative structure. Next, with narratives in hand, I returned to the recordings of each interview and listened for any audible indicators that might signal a misinterpretation of narrative segments as they appear in the printed transcripts. Then I focused on how participants constructed their narratives, looking for meaning in the organization of structural elements. When doing so, I found myself asking a number of questions about each narrative: What structural elements are most prominent in the narrative? What structural elements are missing from the narrative? How does the structure inform the meaning of the narrative? Why did the participant construct the narrative in this way?

Ultimately, by exploring both content and form through thematic and structural analyses I was able to account for broad thematic patterns while also acknowledging degrees of meaning in participants' narratives. The findings that emerged from conducting thematic and structural narrative analyses are presented in Chapter 6 of this document.

Subjectivity

As Peshkin (2001) noted, "researchers are replete with shaping if not determining values, attitudes, preferences, and experiences—all lenses of a sort—through which they apprehend the world around them" (p. 242). Accordingly, I believe it is important that I provide clarification regarding my own subjectivity as it relates to the exploration of

secondary English teachers' experiences participating online. By delineating my subjectivity, I intend to increase the transparency of my work.

While employed as an English teacher at a suburban high school in the Midwestern region of the United States, I participated in countless hours of district-provided professional development workshops and seminars. These were typically one-size-fits all, top-down sessions featuring topics selected by the district's administrators and facilitated by an "expert" who was brought in from outside the district. Though such an approach to professional development is quite common, it is often considered to be inadequate (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008; Sykes, 1996), lacking opportunities for active learning, engagement over a sufficient duration, and a clear content focus (Desimone, 2009). Consequently, I often found that my own specific professional concerns went unaddressed.

Since leaving my position as a high-school English teacher, I have had the opportunity to explore alternative forms of professional development. Through my doctoral studies I have become an advocate for participating online as a means of self-directed professional development (e.g., Rodesiler & Tripp, 2012a, 2012b). My appreciation for and engagement in professionally oriented participation online as an English teacher educator informs my interest in this line of research. Prior to conducting this study, I experienced some of the online learning opportunities described by participants. For example, I have taken part in webinars designed by teachers in the English Companion Ning, the social network site for those interested in the teaching of English that is described in Chapter 2. I have also participated in #engchat, a synchronous Twitter chat with weekly topics related to the teaching of English that is

organized and monitored by Meenoo, one of the participants in the study. Before launching this study, I also subscribed to some of the blogs maintained by participants in this study.

The appreciation I have gained for professionally oriented participation online as a means of supporting my own development has prompted me to incorporate it in my work with prospective teachers. Between the benefits I have found personally and the inadequacies of traditional forms of professional development documented previously, I believe English teacher educators must prepare prospective English teachers to direct their own professional growth by giving them opportunities to participate online in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy before they exit their respective English teacher education programs.

Recognizing the significance of one's subjectivity, I offer this statement in an attempt to illuminate my interest in the topic of study: secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online.

Validation

The definitions of validity in relation to qualitative research are vast and indicative of divergent conceptualizations of the term (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008). For the purposes of this study, I embrace Angen's (2000) use of the term *validation*, a nod to the research community's continuous process of evaluating the trustworthiness of reported research. In an effort to increase the trustworthiness of this qualitative study, I employed a number of validation strategies: member checking, peer debriefing, maintaining an audit trail, and providing thick description.

Member Checking

Member checking is the process in which a researcher provides participants with the opportunity to consider and respond to his or her data and interpretations (Hatch, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) recognized member checking as “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Member checks were particularly important in this study, given that participants opted to forgo pseudonyms. Beyond seeking to establish credibility, I wanted to make sure participants were aware of my representation and interpretation of their experiences and their artifacts. Ethically, I felt compelled to give participants ample opportunities to review the data and the findings. Thus, I employed member checking as a validation strategy at multiple points during the completion of this study.

First, as interview data were collected and analyzed, I shared initial transcripts with participants prior to the subsequent interview. Adopted from the member-checking processes reported by qualitative researchers like Cilesiz (2009), this protocol afforded participants an opportunity to respond to my interpretations and observations, to extend their thinking, and to clarify their words before data collection continued. Multiple participants took the opportunity to offer clarifications and to extend statements during this process. Some participants requested that I remove particular sections of the transcripts, and others approved the transcripts with no corrections, clarifications, or additions.

Second, in addition to requesting member checks of the interview transcripts, I invited participants to review the findings of this study after data analysis was complete and findings were prepared. I sent participants a copy of the findings via email, and I invited them to respond as they saw fit. When sharing write-ups of the findings, I

masked participants' identities from one another until each participant reaffirmed his or her decision to be identified by name. Then, I distributed an iteration of the findings complete with participants' names, providing participants with yet another opportunity to respond to the findings. Each participant engaged in the member-checking process; however, no participants offered any objections to my representation or interpretation of their experiences or artifacts.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing (Schwandt, 2007) is another strategy researchers employ to establish trustworthiness. The process entails a researcher sharing his or her work with a colleague for review in an effort to shore up any logistical and methodological shortcomings. I began using this strategy as I debriefed with colleagues in the design of my study. I continued to use this strategy at various points as the study got underway. For example, following data collection, a review of interview data helped to uphold my efforts to avoid leading questions or prompts. Likewise, upon analyzing data, colleagues assisted in ensuring that my interpretations were sound and based on the data collected. Routine meetings with the chair of my supervisory committee, in which we examined and discussed my methods and my interpretations during the course of the study, also fall under this category.

Maintaining an Audit Trail

Maintaining an audit trail is a way of documenting all aspects of a research project, including data collection and analysis. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), maintaining an audit trail is a technique researchers use to establish trustworthiness. An audit trail should be easily understood, allowing for scrutiny and replication (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This approach requires researchers to record decisions made along

each step of the research process in a systematic way. I maintained an audit trail through the course of this study, documenting each aspect of the project, including the decisions I made as I proceeded and the rationales behind those decisions. See Appendix F for an excerpt of the audit trail I maintained while completing this study.

Providing Thick Description

Thick description entails providing detailed descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation, including details related to the contexts and circumstances in which it is found, allowing readers to develop a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon (Geertz, 1973). In this case, providing thick description required me to offer detailed descriptions that help to contextualize the online environments in which the teachers explored teaching, learning, and literacy. This included detailing the affordances of these environments, the nature of the teachers' participation in these environments, and the texts and topics that anchored their participation in these environments. The use of thick description in this study was also intended to give readers a clear sense of the research carried out and the findings that emerged, enhancing their capacity to evaluate the trustworthiness of my interpretations. Moreover, the provision of thick description may support a reader's efforts to determine the transferability of the study to his or her own unique context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Limitations

The design of this qualitative study is not without its limitations. Notably, the qualitative design of this study does not afford generalizing the findings to those beyond the unique participants involved in this specific study. Rather, readers must rely upon the provision of thick description in order to draw their own conclusions regarding the transferability of the findings to their specific contexts.

Another limitation of this study relates to the temporal scope of the data collection period. The data collected over the course of this study is essentially a snapshot in time. Like any researcher, I had to determine the beginning and ending points of data collection. By declaring and adhering to those boundaries, I had a limited view of participants' online activity. Accordingly, the findings and results of this study are based on only a portion of the participants' online activity and cannot be assumed to wholly represent their professionally oriented participation online.

Finally, drawing parameters around the types of online environments included in the study may also be considered a limitation. In addition to participating online via blogs, Twitter, and professionally oriented social network sites, some participants described engaging with other teachers via Facebook (https://www.facebook.com), a popular social network site. However, because the Facebook profiles of those who mentioned it were not accessible publicly, I opted not to pursue participant-generated materials that may have been shared at that site. Thus, I emphasize that the results of this study cannot be assumed to wholly represent English teachers' professionally oriented participation online.

Summary

I conducted this study by following three guiding research questions:

- What are the features of the online contexts that selected secondary English teachers weave in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy?
- What is the nature of selected secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online in terms of the practices they carry out and the topics they address?
- How do selected secondary English teachers experience professionally oriented participation online?

Embracing a constructivist theoretical perspective, I collected data, including participant-generated online content and semi-structured interviews, from the beginning of January 2012 through mid-April 2012. In the first phase of the study, I collected archived online documents and materials (e.g., participant-generated blog posts, tweets, and discussion forum posts in social network sites) dating from July 2011 through mid-April 2012, and I analyzed the data across cases to examine the contextual features of teacher-generated online environments and the nature of secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online. In the second phase of the study, I conducted a pair of semi-structured interviews with each participant. The interviews produced a rich set of narratives about the participants' experiences online exploring issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy. I carefully defined and identified narratives before analyzing them. I conducted a thematic narrative analysis, cutting across narratives to identify common thematic patterns, and a structural narrative analysis, focusing on how individual narratives are structured to illuminate variations in meaning, in a recursive, inductive manner to examine how participants described their experiences. I also enhanced the trustworthiness of this study by using multiple validation strategies, including member checking, providing thick description, maintaining an audit trail, and peer debriefing. See Table 3-3 for a complete timeline of the study.

Table 3-3. Research timeline

Dates	Pre-Study	Data Collection	Data Analysis
11.11-01.12	Participant identification		
01.12-02.12	Participant recruitment	Online artifact collection	Ethnographic content analysis (ECA) of online artifacts
02.12-04.12		Continuation of online artifact collection; interview data collection	Continuation of ECA; transcription of interview data & member checks of transcripts
04.12-04.13			Identification of narratives; continuation of ECA; thematic and structural narrative analyses & member checks of findings

Note: Online artifacts consisted of participant-generated documents and materials shared online via blogs, Twitter, or professionally oriented social network sites.

CHAPTER 4
PARTICIPATING TEACHERS

In this chapter I present the five secondary English teachers who participated in this study—Meenoo, Brian, Cindy, Gary, and Sarah—and highlight unique online environments each participant generated in exploration of issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy. I also provide a brief overview of the participants' additional activity online during the data collection period.

Meenoo Rami

During the summer of 2010, word regarding a synchronous Twitter chat for English teachers came through my Twitter feed. Though I was relatively new to the Twitter platform at the time, I was aware of weekly synchronous chats like #edchat, through which individuals were communicating via Twitter to exchange ideas and share their experiences related to pressing issues in the field of education. Appropriating that concept and focusing on issues related to the teaching and learning of the English language arts, Meenoo, a high-school English teacher in the Northeastern United States, has been organizing and moderating weekly #engchat sessions since June 2010. She promotes the chat, recruits guest moderators, and participates each week. In July 2011, Meenoo expanded her professionally oriented participation online by creating the #engchat blog to extend the exploration of topics raised during the Twitter chat of the same name. Such activity made Meenoo an ideal participant for this study.

In addition to blogging and microblogging, Meenoo was also an active member of the English Companion Ning (ECN) during this study. In this section I provide an overview of Meenoo's professionally oriented participation online via Twitter, the #engchat blog, and the ECN.

#engchat

Over the course of this study, Meenoo tweeted regularly, often sharing hyperlinks to samples of student work, images of student projects, and the re-tweeted words of others. She provided status updates and shared hyperlinks to poems, articles, and other resources from across the Web. Meenoo also brought other teachers together, encouraging them to share their practice via Twitter during #engchat, an organized, synchronous Twitter chat she founded in the summer of 2010. Meeting virtually each Monday at 7:00 PM (EST), #engchat is for individuals with a shared interest in the teaching of English. Over the course of an hour, people sharing an affinity for the teaching of English interact simultaneously as they explore a scheduled topic related to teaching, learning, and literacy. Individuals taking part in the chat add the hashtag "#engchat" to their tweets, making the tweets accessible to those who follow the hashtag and to those who search for it. Thus, in real-time, #engchat participants exchange ideas, share resources, and explore topics dealing with the teaching of English language arts.

Meenoo founded the weekly Twitter chat, but she has taken a democratic approach to it, welcoming English teachers from far and wide to serve as guest moderators and to facilitate the exploration of specific topics that are of interest to them. She explained:

> And one of the smartest things that I did was I took myself out of the model so it wasn't every single week I'd be moderating or I would be hosting. I mean, I do what good teachers do, which is take themselves out of the picture. They make it about the students or the participants. So I said, 'Every week I'm going to find the best person, whether they have a lot of followers or not. Who are the…English teachers who are doing some really interesting things?'

Meenoo followed that model during this study, as she welcomed a host of English teachers, teacher educators, consultants, and authors to serve as guest moderators of #engchat. Guest moderators facilitated the exploration of various topics, including assessment in the English classroom, elevating student writing, studying the events of 9/11, and establishing classrooms as safe learning spaces. To enhance the exploration of such issues during the synchronous chat, Meenoo drew upon the asynchronous affordances of the #engchat blog.

Since July 2011, Meenoo has maintained the #engchat blog in support of the weekly Twitter chat she established. Rather than posting her own original work—though she has done that, too—Meenoo has used the blog primarily as a supplement to the weekly Twitter chat of the same name. Content analysis of #engchat blog posts gathered during data collection indicated that posts generally fell into one of two primary categories: (a) guest posts and (b) archive announcements.

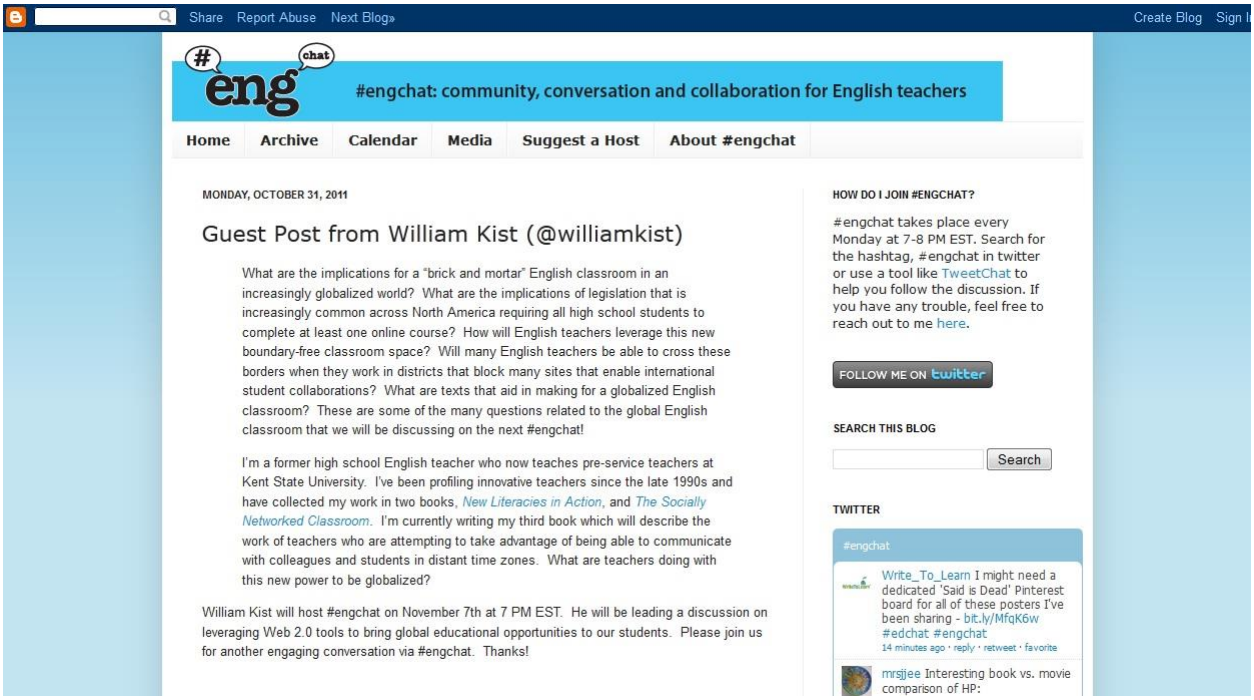


Figure 4-1. A screenshot of the #engchat blog home page

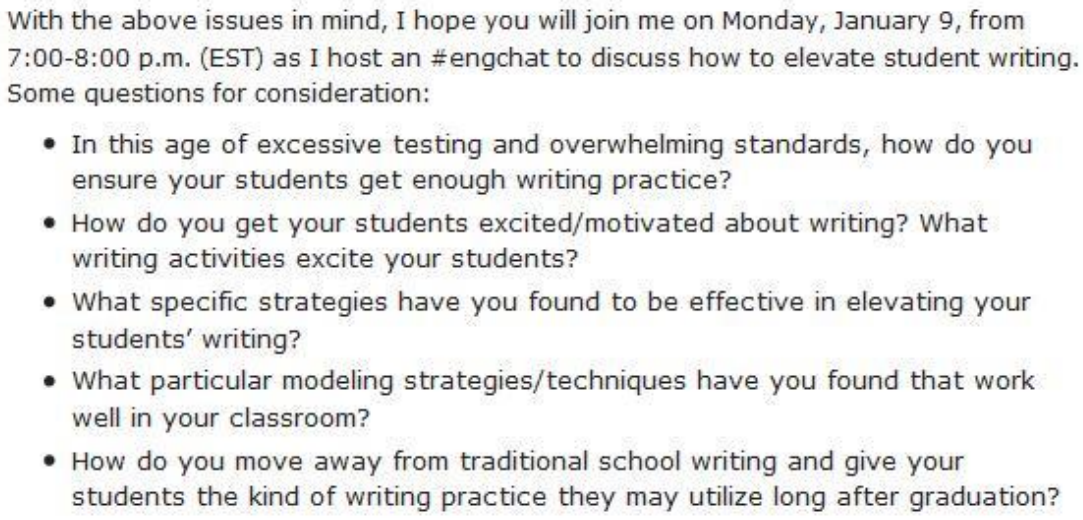
Guest posts, though posted by Meenoo, were authored by and credited to guest bloggers who were preparing to serve as moderators of forthcoming #engchat sessions. Guest posts gave structure to the synchronous #engchat sessions on Twitter, nudging readers to think about particular issues related to the topics of forthcoming sessions. Describing her intentions, Meenoo explained, "I wanted [the guest posts] to be… provocations. Like, 'Here's the topic. Here's what we're going to be discussing. Think about it ahead of time.'" As Meenoo continued, she elaborated on her vision of how the asynchronous guest posts could inform the synchronous chat:

> [The use of guest posts] was very intentional. I wanted it to be thoughtful. I wanted the host to know what he or she was going to talk about before he or she started, and I wanted to sort of shape the conversation and have some—because it is 140 characters [per tweet], one hour, and hundreds of people just trying to get their words out there, so it can be chaotic, especially from the host's perspective.

Serving multiple purposes, including facilitating thinking about upcoming topics, honing topics of discussion, and supporting the chat's guest moderators, Meenoo drew upon the asynchronous nature of blogs and the time for reflection they afford to support the synchronous Twitter chat, which can be quite lively.

For illustrative purposes, Figure 4-2 presents an excerpt from a guest post written for the #engchat blog by English teacher Kelly Gallagher, author of titles such as *Readicide* (2009) and *Deeper Reading* (2004), as he prepared to host a session of #engchat. Gallagher's post is representative of guest posts on the #engchat blog. Like others of its kind, Gallagher's post reminded readers of the upcoming session's date, introduced the topic, and provided prompts that drew on readers' professional experience to support the corresponding synchronous chat. Guest posts written by others who have served as #engchat guest moderators, such as English teacher Gary

Anderson, teacher educator William Kist, and author Jo Knowles, followed a similar structure.



With the above issues in mind, I hope you will join me on Monday, January 9, from 7:00-8:00 p.m. (EST) as I host an #engchat to discuss how to elevate student writing. Some questions for consideration:

- In this age of excessive testing and overwhelming standards, how do you ensure your students get enough writing practice?
- How do you get your students excited/motivated about writing? What writing activities excite your students?
- What specific strategies have you found to be effective in elevating your students' writing?
- What particular modeling strategies/techniques have you found that work well in your classroom?
- How do you move away from traditional school writing and give your students the kind of writing practice they may utilize long after graduation?

Figure 4-2. A screenshot of an excerpt from a guest post on the #engchat blog

Archive announcements, the second type of posts featured on the #engchat blog, appeared as straightforward, functional blog posts announcing the addition of a recent archived #engchat session. The #engchat archivist, a fellow English teacher, often composed the archive announcements. Consistently, the posts included a brief overview of the session's topic, a mention of the session's moderator, and a hyperlink to a file documenting the archived chat session in its entirety. By hosting the archived chat sessions, the #engchat blog became not only a resource for teachers preparing to take part in the Twitter chat but also a resource for those unable to take part in the Twitter chat. That is, teachers with commitments that kept them from participating in a session could review the archived file at a later time to see what they missed, and teachers new to #engchat, the Twitter chat, could peruse the archives for topics of interest covered over the years, such as multi-genre inquiry projects, fandom in the English classroom,

and applying analytical thinking to the reading of literature and nonfiction texts. Figure 4-3 features an archive announcement that appeared on the #engchat blog.

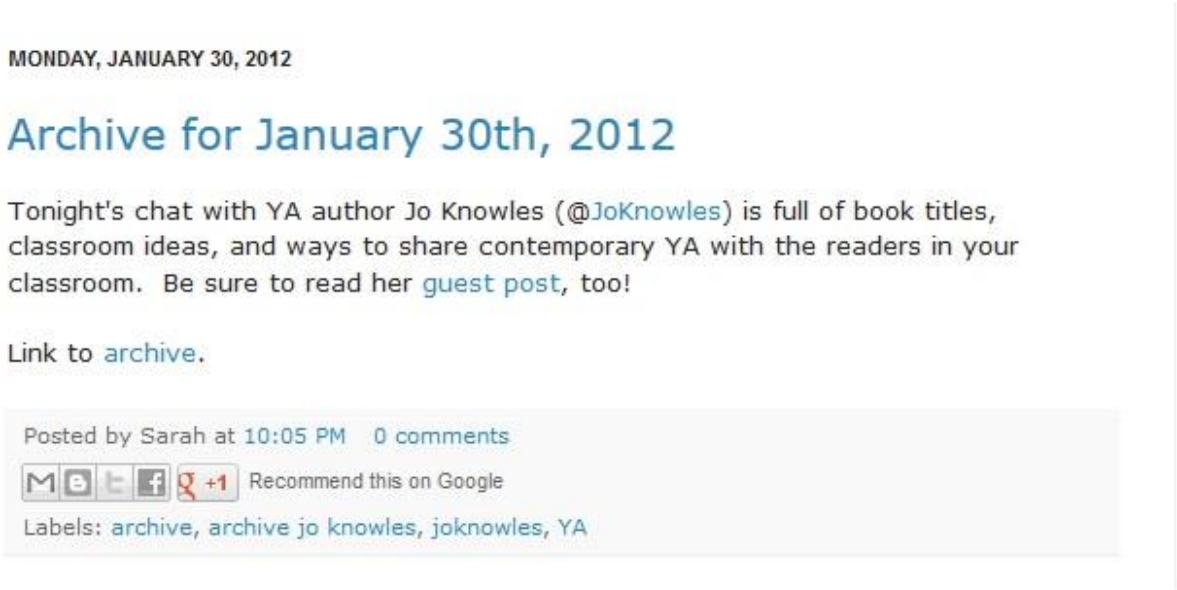


Figure 4-3. A screenshot of an archive announcement on the #engchat blog

During this study, the #engchat blog's additional features included an embedded Google Calendar that documented upcoming #engchat sessions, including the date, time, moderator(s), and topic of each schedule session, and a "Suggest the Host" feature, which allowed visitors to recommend topics and hosts for future sessions by completing an embedded form.

Additional Activity

Though Meenoo was most notably active blogging and microblogging in support of #engchat during this study, she also participated online as a member of the English Companion Ning (ECN). Meenoo took part in the 2011 ECN Summer Webstitute, an event organized by a team of ECN members, including Gary Anderson, a participant in this study. She also made use of the ECN's asynchronous discussion forums, leveraging them in an effort to gather ideas and resources from her online colleagues.

She turned to her online peers to assist her in preparing students to write college application essays, in engaging students in the study of *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 2004), and in helping students create advertisements.

Brian Kelley

When I first contacted Brian about participating in this study, he was eager to welcome me into his classroom. Using a fresh set of iPads secured with grant funds, Brian was facilitating eighth-grade students' participation online, engaging them in blogging and preparing to introduce them to responsible tweeting practices. Upon my initial contact, Brian welcomed me to observe him and his students as they explored writing with new media technologies in a middle-school classroom. As enticing as his invitation was, such activity fell beyond the scope of this study. Rather, as I explained to Brian, I was interested in investigating his own self-directed participation online as a practicing teacher. Just as he had welcomed me to study his teaching practice, Brian agreed to share with me his experiences participating online. During this study, Brian's professionally oriented participation online revolved around the maintenance of his blog, Walk the Walk, and his use of Twitter.

Walk the Walk

Powered by Blogger, a free blog publishing platform, Walk the Walk was designed as a practice-oriented blog for teachers by a teacher. Whether sharing artifacts created for an upcoming lesson, reflecting on the successes or failures of the day's activities, recommending professional resource books for teachers, or suggesting titles for classroom libraries, Brian has been offering subscribers and visitors to his blog an extensive look at his work as a middle-school English teacher in the Northeastern United States.

While Meenoo has drawn upon the contributions of many on the #engchat blog, Brian has been the lone content provider for his blog, Walk the Walk. During this study, much of the blog's content was organized using the navigation bar at the top of each page (Figure 4-4). In the navigation bar, Brian provided visitors with hyperlinks to the site's home page and four other distinct pages within the site:

- *Home:* During the course of this study, the home page of Walk the Walk was like that of many other blogs. The most recent posts were readily accessible; the latest post appeared at the top of the page and others followed in reverse chronological order below it.

- *Suggested YA Books*: On this page, Brian provided a list of hyperlinked titles of young adult literature and the names of their authors. Each hyperlinked title connected visitors to a corresponding blog post Brian wrote as a review of the book. The list of young adult books was vast, including *Looking for Alaska* (Green, 2005), *Thirteen Reasons Why* (Asher, 2007), and *All the Broken Pieces* (Burg, 2009).

- *Suggested Resource Books*: As with the "Suggested YA Books" page, Brian used this page to provide a list of hyperlinked titles and their respective authors, but the list solely featured professional resource books related to teaching, learning, and literacy. Each hyperlinked title connected visitors to a corresponding blog post Brian wrote as a review of the book. Resource books on the list included *Time for Meaning: Crafting Literate Lives in Middle and High School* (Bomer, 1995), *Teaching Adolescent Writers* (Gallagher, 2006), and *The Digital Writing Workshop* (Hicks, 2009).

- *Teaching*: On this page, Brian organized a chronological, hyperlinked list of blog posts he wrote about teaching. Entries in this list included "Classroom Twitter Hiccups," which linked to a post about challenges Brian and students in his creative writing class faced while microblogging; "Visual Story (sample)," which linked to a post featuring an example of a five-image visual story Brian created to serve as a mentor text for students; and "Conferring," which linked to a post featuring Brian's reflections on his experience incorporating conferences between teacher and student as a routine practice in his classroom.

- *Author Interviews*: This page featured a list of hyperlinks to blog posts Brian wrote about authors visiting his classroom. For example, one entry in the list linked to "Wordsalve: poet Sunita Jain & my class," a blog post about the poet visiting with students in his classroom via Skype. Such posts typically featured embedded videos of authors interacting with students and discussing matters related to the craft of writing.

By organizing his blog in this way, with the primary components of the blog delineated plainly, Brian made navigating the site easier for those interested in teaching, learning, and literacy.

For the most part, posts Brian wrote during the data collection period aligned with the four distinct categories featured on his blog's navigation bar: reviews of young adult literature, professional resource book reviews, teaching reflections or commentaries, and author interviews. However, content analysis revealed that some posts on Brian's blog fell into a fifth category: creative writing. Though not as robust as other categories, it does seem noteworthy. Posts titled "driving lessons," "Goodnight, Mrs. Morehead," "Why I Write," and "I refused to close my eyes" all featured Brian's own creative writing. Much of the creative writing available on the site was a product of Brian writing alongside the students in his creative writing classes or a product of writing he began during professional development activities (e.g., the National Writing Project Summer Institute).

Without a more traditional "About" page, like that which appeared on other blogs featured in this study, Brian relied on the sidebar of his blog to offer visitors glimpses of himself, professionally and personally. For example, contrasting sharply against the white background, a blue badge at the top of the sidebar declared, "I'm part of the National Writing Project network." Affiliation with the National Writing Project, a renowned professional development network for teachers, seemed to have the effect of supporting Brian's ethos when considering the credibility of the experiences he has shared as a writing teacher. Brian also personalized his blog with a sidebar plug-in to relay a series of images highlighting his lighter side. Featured photos included shots of

his dogs, his family, and him in costume. Reminding visitors of the humane work of writing, teaching, and learning, the photos seemed to have a humanizing effect.

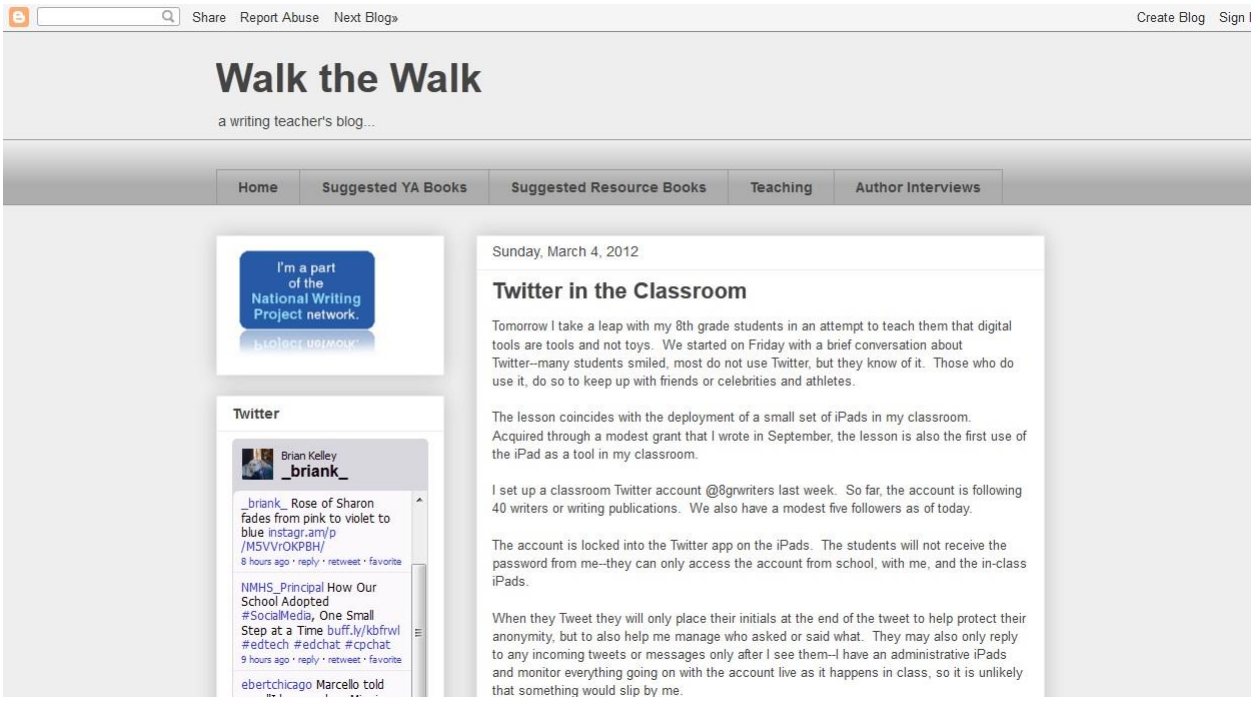


Figure 4-4. A screenshot of the Walk the Walk blog home page

For Brian, the sidebar also served as a means of promoting his participation online, through his blog and through other online environments. Brian encouraged visitors to keep up with the latest posts on his blog by providing options for subscribing via email and Really Simple Syndication (RSS). Brian also used the sidebar to promote his participation in other online environments, as a stream of his microblog posts appeared in the sidebar, and he invited those visiting his blog to follow him on Twitter, to join Walk the Walk through Google Friend Connect, and to join the English Companion Ning, the popular social network site for those interested in the teaching of English.

Additional Activity

Brian supplemented his blogging with his use of Twitter. During this study, Brian's use of Twitter was a bit more reserved than that of other participants. Still, Brian

often utilized Twitter to broadcast new posts on his blog, to participate in #engchat sessions, and to curate resources by sharing hyperlinks to articles and other materials available on the Web. Brian is also a member of the English Companion Ning (ECN). However, during this study, Brian was considerably more active on the Walk the Walk blog and on Twitter than he was the on the ECN. Brian reported visiting the social network site on occasion, but he made no contributions in terms of distributing content on the ECN during this study.

Cindy Minnich

In November 2011, I attended the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Annual Convention in Chicago, Illinois. Among the many dynamic sessions I enjoyed over the course of the weekend was a session titled “Pound for #: Twitter Hashtags Foster Professional Development and Fuel Literacy Initiatives.” With an interest in learning more about the ways secondary English teachers participate online, I attended that session to see how the presenters conceptualized their use of Twitter and, perhaps, to speak with some prospective participants for my dissertation research. Cindy, a high-school English teacher in the Northeastern United States, was one of the discussion leaders of that session. Speaking passionately about her experience using Twitter, Cindy described connections she made by participating online, citing the development of the session as an example, for it was forged completely online by individuals who, in some cases, had not met in person until that morning. Since then, Cindy has become an active blogger. In December 2011, she began co-facilitating the Nerdy Book Club blog with two of the discussion leaders from her session at the 2011 NCTE Convention, teachers Donalyn Miller and Colby Sharp.

Nerdy Book Club

Like Meenoo with the #engchat blog, Cindy's blogging during the data collection period was distinct in that she was not the primary producer of content for the Nerdy Book Club blog. Rather, one might describe the Nerdy Book Club blog and Cindy's work with it as "curatorial." That is, along with two co-facilitators of the blog, Cindy invited and distributed blog posts written by teachers, librarians, media specialists, authors, and other readers eager to celebrate books and, more specifically, the reading of children's and young adult literature. The header on the home page of the Nerdy Book Club blog has long stamped it as "A Community of Readers," and, in a post on the site, Miller (2012) declared, "The Nerdy Book Club blog is a readers' blog." Powered by WordPress, a free blog publishing platform, the Nerdy Book Club blog launched in December 2011.

As a visitor to the Nerdy Book Club blog, I was first struck by the large banner at the top of the home page (Figure 4-5). Flanked by four cartoon figures holding books, "Nerdy Book Club" was spelled out across the banner in a bold black font that stood firm against the site's dotted, light-pink background. Below the banner on the home page was the most recent blog post. Above the banner on each page, Cindy and her colleagues provided a hyperlink to the "About" page, where information about the Nerdy Book Club blog and its facilitators was offered, and a hyperlink to a page documenting the 2011 Nerdies Book Awards. The Nerdies featured six categories: picture books, graphic novels, poetry, nonfiction, young adult fiction, and middle grade fiction.

A large white square placed at the top of the blog's sidebar was another notable feature of the site (Figure 4-5). A message spelled out in a large black font within the white square addressed visitors: "Want to be a Nerdy Blogger? Sign up by clicking

here!" By following the hyperlink, visitors could sign up to share their thoughts about and experiences with young adult and children's literature. Interested parties were prompted to complete the embedded "Next Wave of Nerdy" form by providing their contact information, including a name, email address, and Twitter handle, and indicating the type of post they would like to submit. The seven types of posts from which prospective guest bloggers could choose are addressed later in this chapter.

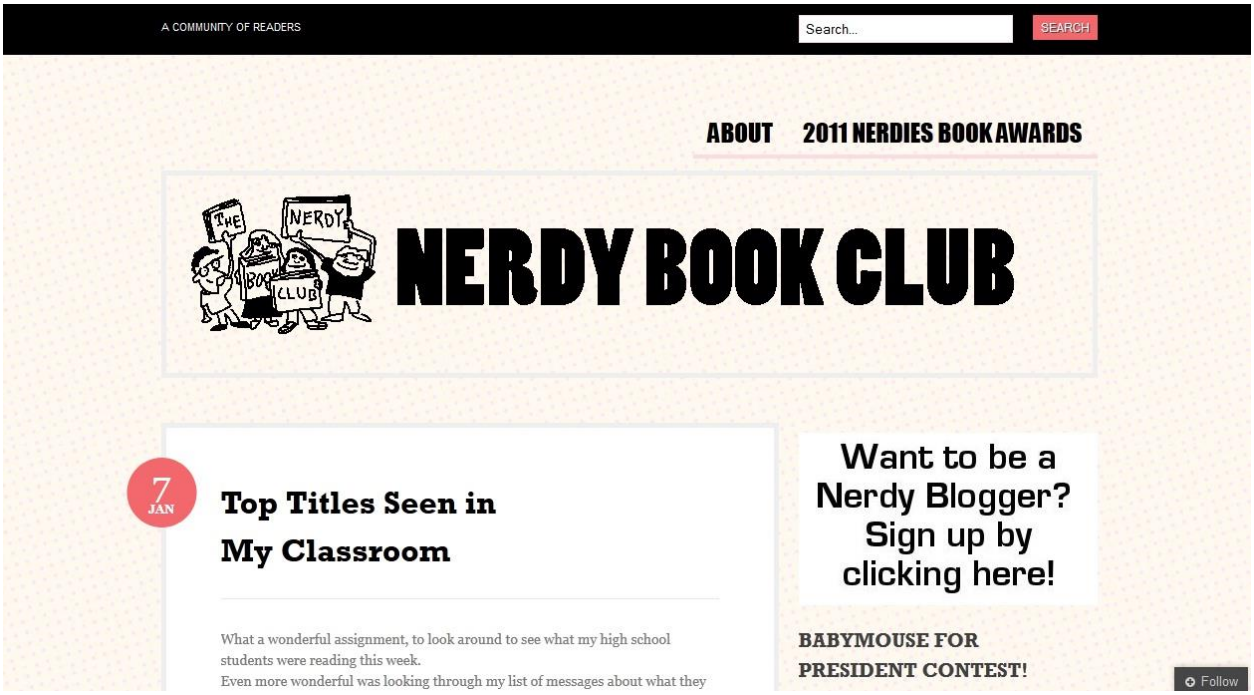


Figure 4-5. A screenshot of the Nerdy Book Club blog home page

Aiming to celebrate reading and a love of books, Cindy and the co-facilitators of the Nerdy Book Club blog advanced this mission by providing options for visitors eager to show their support and promote the Nerdy Book Club. The sidebar included a hyperlink to a CafePress Nerdy Book Club store—the minimal profits of the store would be donated to Reading is Fundamental, a non-profit children's literacy organization (Miller, 2012)—where those so inclined could purchase mugs, clothes, and other items emblazoned with images associated with the Nerdy Book Club blog. For visiting

bloggers, the sidebar also offered an embed code for adding a Nerdy Book Club badge to a blog or website, another means of promoting and celebrating a love of literacy.

The types of posts that appeared on the Nerdy Book Club blog during the study were outlined in the "Next Wave of Nerdy" form made available to prospective guest bloggers. There were seven types of posts from which prospective bloggers had to choose:

- *Reading Lives*: In these posts, guest bloggers documented experiences they have had as readers at various points in their lives. Examples of posts in this category included seventh- and eighth-grade teacher Brian Wyzlic's "My Reading Testimony" and "Returning Home to the Bookshelf," a post written by sixth-grade language arts teacher Beth Shaum.

- *Author Visit*: Posts written by published authors fell into this category. For example, posts written by David Macinnis Gill, author of *Black Hole Sun* (2010), and Amy Fellner Dominy, author of *OyMG* (2011), were representative of this category.

- *New Book Review*: These posts were reviews of recently released books. Examples in this category included middle-school reading teacher Kellee Moye's review of *Bluefish* (Schmatz, 2011) and a review of *The Popularity Papers* (Ignatow, 2010) written by Cari Young, an elementary teacher librarian.

- *Retro Review*: These posts were reviews of books that have been in circulation for an extended period of time. Examples in this category included a review of *Old Yeller* (Gipson, 1956) written by Gary Anderson, a secondary English teacher and a participant in this study, and a review of *Carry On, Mr. Bowditch* (Latham, 1955) written by Sue Van Hattum, a community-college math teacher.

- *Pay it Forward*: Posts in this category addressed helping students find a love of reading or, in other words, paying it forward. Representative posts in this category included "Secret Members of the *Nerdy Book Club*" by Kay Jernigan McGriff, an eighth-grade language arts teacher, and "The Value of Listening" by librarian Sylvie Shaffer.

- *Top Ten*: As the title of this category might suggest, these posts featured lists of ten items with some connection to books or reading. Examples in this category included "Well-Worn and Well-Loved: Ten Classic Professional Books I Cannot Live Without" by Franki Sibberson, an elementary media specialist, and "The Top Ten Reasons to Host a Book Club in Your School" by Nina Anderson, a seventh-grade language arts teacher.

- *Surprise Sunday*: Posts that appeared on Sundays in the Nerdy Book Club blog during this study were wildcards. That is, they did not stick to any particular theme, structure, or topic. Examples included Cindy's post, "A #nerdybookclub Valentine to Books," featuring a video montage of reader-submitted photos of books marked as "to be read" and her post, "Living the Imagination," in which she reflected on Sundays spent with Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes* comic strip.

With seven categories of posts on the Nerdy Book Club blog, Cindy and her fellow co-facilitators offered prospective guest bloggers multiple ways of participating online.

Additional Activity

In addition to blogging, Cindy explored issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy via Twitter. She frequently shared hyperlinks to new posts on the Nerdy Book Club blog and to other resources available on the Web. Cindy provided routine updates on the happenings in her reading and professional lives, often taking the opportunity to share the latest happenings in her classroom. Cindy was also active in Twitter chats, including #engchat and #titletalk. In addition to contributing to the chat sessions, Cindy provided service as the #engchat archivist, the individual who archives the evening's chat, through late-November 2011. Since August 2010, Cindy has served as the archivist for #titletalk, the monthly Twitter chat.

Cindy is also a member of the English Companion Ning (ECN). However, in terms of composing and distributing content during the data collection period of this study, Cindy was considerably more active on the Nerdy Book Club blog and on Twitter than she was on the ECN. Though her activity on the social network site was limited, Cindy did participate in the 2011 ECN Summer Webstitute: Reading Classic and Young Adult Literature with Students, as she contributed to discussions about young adult literature and the works of William Shakespeare (Figure 5-8).

Gary Anderson

As I began developing the online portion of my own personal learning network in 2009, Gary Anderson, a high-school English teacher in the Midwestern United States, was one person I seemed to encounter again and again. I believe I first crossed paths with the veteran teacher via Twitter and then in the English Companion Ning (ECN). Being familiar with the veteran English teacher's online contributions, I was confident that he would be an ideal participant for this study. Sure enough, among all five participants in this study, Gary was arguably the most active during the data collection period. One of three participants to generate content across three platforms, Gary generated a high volume of artifacts, including blog posts, tweets, and discussion forum entries. In this section I highlight Gary's contributions to the ECN, and I provide a brief overview of his additional activity on the What's Not Wrong? blog and on Twitter as documented during this study.

English Companion Ning

When I asked Gary to tell me about his experience participating online in exploration of issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy, he responded simply, "It started, really, with English Companion Ning." Data analysis revealed Gary's contributions to the English Companion Ning (ECN) to be quite extensive. He cross-posted entries on his personal blog, What's Not Wrong?, and on his blog within the ECN. He frequently responded to discussion forums in which ECN members posed questions and sought support from others online. He also served as an administrator on the site, assisting in the granting of privileges to those who requested access to the semi-public site, protecting against unsolicited commercial messages.

Among Gary's vast contributions to the ECN, his work in developing organized professional development opportunities is noteworthy. In the summer of 2011, Gary worked with three of his online peers, each a fellow member of the ECN, to voluntarily organize and facilitate the 2011 ECN Summer Webstitute: Reading Classic and Young Adult Literature with Students (Figure 4-6). A free, structured professional development opportunity for ECN members, the 2011 iteration of the Webstitute was the third one offered on the social network site between the summers of 2010 and 2011. As one of the organizers of the free Webstitute, Gary brought together teachers, authors, and scholars to explore the teaching of classic and young adult literature in the English language arts classroom. The ECN's low threshold to engagement and expression allowed Gary to establish a group within the site that would serve as the home for the Webstitute. As of this writing, the 2011 ECN Summer Webstitute group has drawn 234 members.

Essentially, in developing the 2011 ECN Summer Webstitute, Gary and his online peers worked overtime to add structure to the informal professional development activities that often take place online; it was an effort by Gary and his peers to offer the best of face-to-face professional conferences in an online environment that comes at no expense to virtual attendees, as he explained:

> We wanted to take everything that was good about a real world, real-time conference and blow that up and take everything bad and diminish it. So the problems are you can't do more than one thing at the same time. Session A is running at the same time as Concurrent Session A, so you can't be in two places at the same time. Expense. And the other issue really kind of takes care of itself. Sometimes people go to conferences for weird reasons. For this, if you don't want to go, don't go. Opting in automatically means 'I'm interested.' So I think that's what it was. How can we use the general online experience and the English Companion Ning tech platform specifically to provide an experience that is just as meaningful as what

happens if you plunk down a couple hundred dollars and go to a hotel banquet room for a few hours over a weekend?

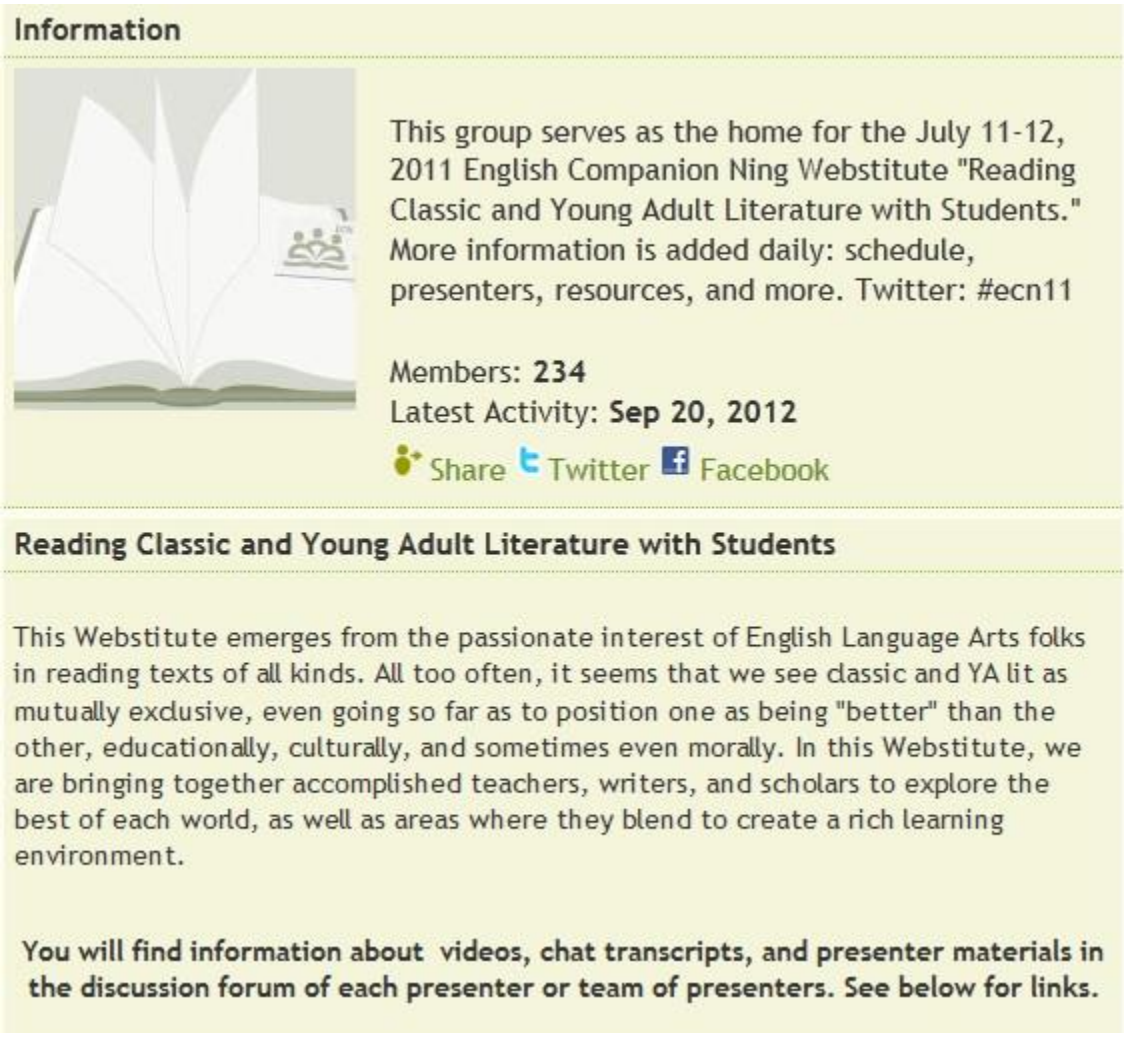


Figure 4-6. A screenshot of an overview of the 2011 ECN Summer Webstitute

With those goals in mind, Gary and his online peers developed a Webstitute that featured sessions facilitated by ECN members who work as classroom teachers, professors, and authors of young adult literature. The facilitators, drawing upon their knowledge of and experiences with young adult and classic literature, generated discussion about the notion of reading ladders, young adult and classic literature pairings, and possible tie-ins between various young adult titles and the works of William Shakespeare. Leveraging the traditionally asynchronous ECN discussion

forums to generate immediate, synchronous exchanges, Gary and his online peers promoted dialogic interactions among Webstitute participants.

Additional Activity

During the data collection period, Gary was very active writing on his blog, What's Not Wrong? Posts appearing on Gary's blog during the data collection period fell into one or more of the following categories: reflections on classroom practice and experiences; reflections on larger issues related to the field; reviews of professional resource books; and reviews of literature that might be used with secondary students. Leveraging the multimodal affordances of the blogging platform, Gary integrated images, videos, and samples of student work in his posts (Figure 4-7).

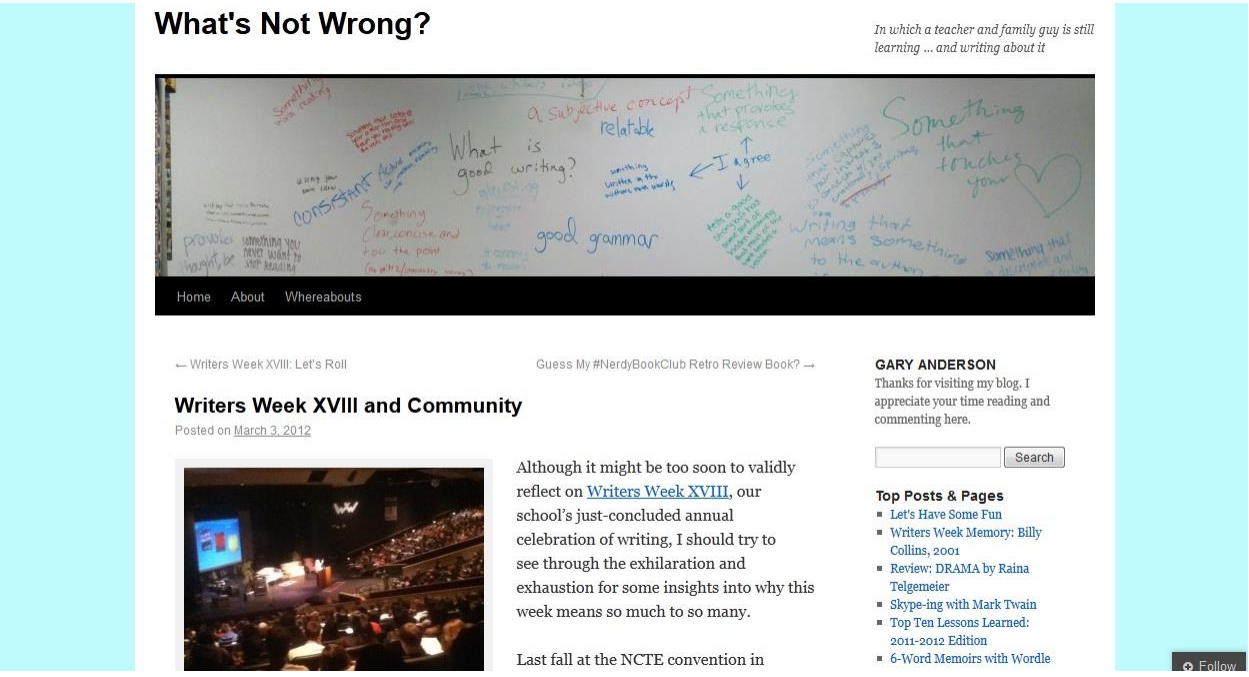


Figure 4-7. A screenshot of the What's Not Wrong? blog home page

Gary also tweeted regularly during the data collection period, often sharing hyperlinks to student work, to new posts on his blog, and to other resources available on the Web. Gary responded to the tweets of his online colleagues, re-tweeted the words of others, and provided routine updates on the happenings in his professional

and reading lives. He also participated in Twitter chats, such as #titletalk, a monthly synchronous Twitter chat about promoting reading among students, and #engchat. In September 2011, Gary served as the guest moderator for a session of #engchat, helping teachers explore ways of engaging disengaged students in the English classroom.

Sarah Andersen

I first encountered Sarah's contributions online in the fall of 2011 through a process I equate to snowball sampling (Patton, 2002). I found Sarah's online presence as I was working to identify potential participants for this study. As I read through tweets posted by Gary Anderson, one of the English teachers introduced above, I spotted an exchange between Gary and Sarah about teacher professional development. In that exchange, Gary commended Sarah for providing teachers with opportunities to expand their knowledge of young adult literature through her routine blogging about the subject. That exchange nudged me to take a closer look at Sarah's work.

Upon visiting Sarah's Twitter profile, I soon discovered her blog, Y.A. Love. As a teacher of prospective English teachers who were reading young adult literature in a concurrent literature methods course at the time, I found Sarah's blog to be rich with resources I could encourage prospective teachers to pursue as a supplement to their coursework. After reviewing a number of Sarah's blog posts and tweets, I soon recognized that Sarah's activity online positioned her as a viable candidate for inclusion in this study. In this section I highlight the online contributions Sarah made via the Y.A. Love blog, and I provide a brief overview of her additional activity online during the data collection period.

Y.A. Love

In bold, black capital letters that seemed to anchor the site's dotted, light-pink background, Sarah, a high-school English teacher in the Midwestern United States, spelled out "Y.A. Love" (Figure 4-8). On one hand, Y.A. Love read as the title of Sarah's blog; on the other, it read as a firm declaration of devotion to the popular genre and the blog's focal point: young adult literature. Though the type of post that appeared on the Y.A. Love blog may have varied, ranging, for example, from Sarah's reviews of trade books and previews of forthcoming releases to student/author interviews and student-generated book reviews, it was clear that young adult literature would be at the heart of each post.

The home page of the Y.A. Love blog provided visitors with immediate access to Sarah's most recent posts. As is typical of blogs, the most recent post appeared at the top of the page, and visitors could scroll down to view older posts in reverse chronological order. However, the home page was but one page among many within the site. Like Brian, Sarah used the site's navigation bar, which appeared at the top of each page, to help visitors move from one page to another (Figure 4-8). Except for a list of books read in 2012, the content on the pages listed in the navigation bar did not change during the course of the study.

Among the pages Sarah highlighted in the navigation bar, including pages featuring information about her and her blog and pages displaying lists of the young adult titles she read in recent years, was the "Review Policy" page of the site. The page helped me as a visitor immediately recognize the site as primarily a book review blog. On the "Review Policy" page, Sarah wrote directly to authors and publishers, declaring her guidelines for reviewing books. Sarah addressed a number of matters, including the

review of e-books (books she reviews end up in her classroom library, so only those also available in print would be reviewed), advance reader copies or ARCs (they, too, would be added to her classroom library), and book giveaways (she welcomed the opportunity to participate). Sarah also used the page to address the site's visitors; she offered a bit of transparency by explaining that she does not receive monetary compensation for her reviews. By making her review policy a prominent fixture on her blog, Sarah made an effort to assure all parties who might be interested in her work—authors, publishers, teachers, students, and other readers—that each review is a personal reflection based on her transaction with a text and not the product of a monetary transaction that secures a positive review.

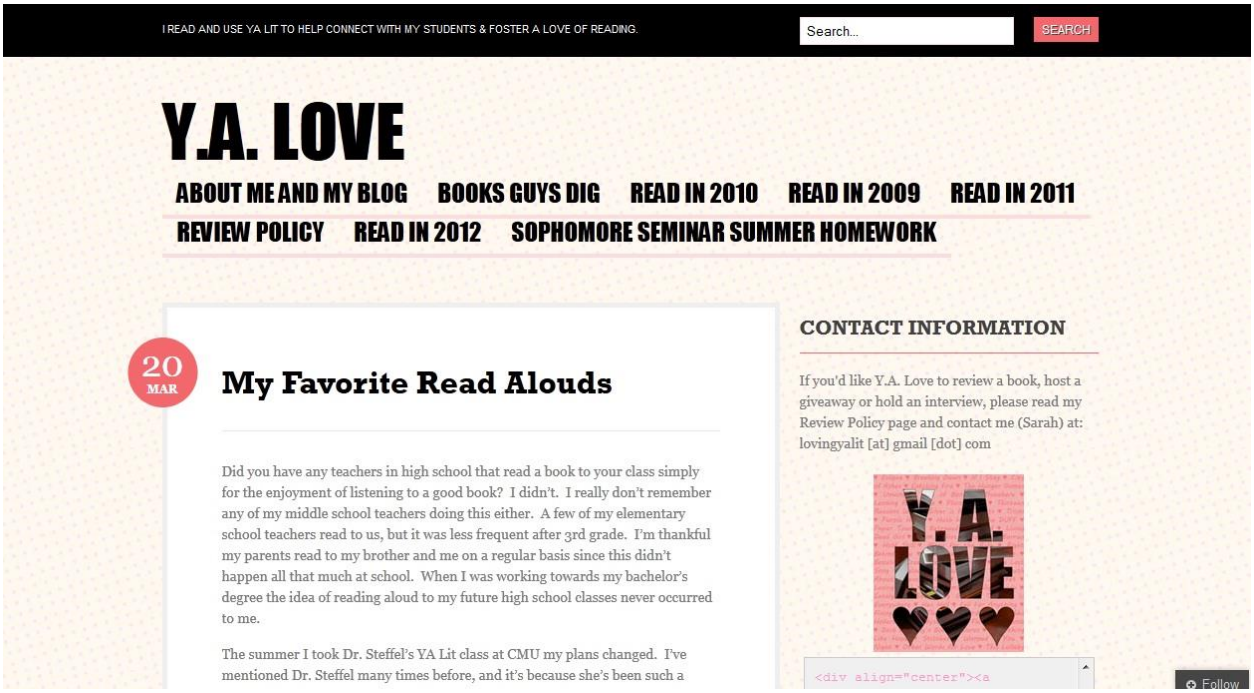


Figure 4-8. A screenshot of the Y.A. Love blog home page

"Books Guys Dig" was another notable page highlighted in the Y.A. Love navigation bar. Sarah created the page to share "guy friendly young adult novels." This page helped to situate Sarah as a classroom teacher, for, with most entries on the

page, she drew upon her classroom teaching experience to provide a brief anecdote about how the book was received by male students in her classroom. For example, the following passage accompanied the entry for *Boy21* (Quick, 2012):

> I'm reading *Boy21* to my freshmen right now and they are loving it. The only other books I've read out loud and have received requests to read more chapters are *Hex Hall* and *The Hunger Games*. I know my students have enjoyed the other books I've read, but when they ask me to read more, I know it's a real winner. The boys say over and over again that they really like this book.

With each title on the page, Sarah provided an explanation for its appearance. She drew upon teaching experiences that ranged from incorporating sustained silent reading (SSR) and reading books aloud to teaching reluctant readers and facilitating an extracurricular book club. Sarah's teaching experiences provided much of the content on the page, as she shared brief anecdotes about helping male readers find and enjoy young adult titles such as *Twisted* (Anderson, 2007), *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007), and *The Chocolate War* (Cormier, 1974). Recalling her efforts to promote reading among male students, Sarah imbued the context of the site with knowledge she has gained from her classroom teaching experiences.

In the navigation bar Sarah created, she also included hyperlinks to pages documenting trade books she has read each year. At the time of data collection, that included the years ranging from 2009 through 2012. The "Read in 2011" hyperlink, for example, connected to a page that listed the titles of 120 trade books Sarah read in 2011. Books on the list for which she wrote reviews were hyperlinked to corresponding blog posts. For example, the second title listed on the "Read in 2011" page was *Wither* (DeStefano, 2011). By clicking on that entry, visitors found a post featuring a book

review titled “Wither by Lauren DeStefano.” The other “Read in” pages followed a similar structure.

As noted above, the Y.A. Love blog is primarily a book review blog. However, Sarah’s posts, many of which leveraged the site’s multimodal affordances, took a variety of forms:

- *Book Review*: These posts were reviews of recently released young adult novels. In addition to Sarah’s review, each post featured standard information (e.g., title, author, and publisher) about the text, how she acquired it (e.g., “ARC received from the publisher”) and a summary direct from a social cataloging site for readers, Goodreads (http://www.goodreads.com). Examples in this category included reviews of *The Unbecoming of Mara Dyer* (Hodkin, 2011) and *Curveball: The Year I Lost My Grip* (Sonnenblick, 2012).

- *Book Trailer Thursday*: Published on Thursdays, posts of this type served as previews of forthcoming young adult novels. Each post featured Sarah’s take on the release, an image of the book’s cover, a summary from Goodreads, and an embedded video of a trailer promoting the book. *Bittersweet* (Ockler, 2012) and *The Gathering Storm* (Bridges, 2012) were among the many books Sarah featured in these posts.

- *Students Want to Know*: These posts showcased question-and-answer sessions between students in Sarah’s secondary English classroom and authors of young adult literature. Questions often pertained to the author’s inspirations, challenges, and experiences as writers. Students interviewed authors Kathy McCullough, Helen Landalf, and Jessica Martinez, among others, as documented during the data collection period of this study.

- *Top Ten Tuesday*: Sarah often participated in weekly memes, including “Top Ten Tuesday,” a feature created by the bloggers behind The Broke and the Bookish (http://brokeandbookish.blogspot.com). Sarah generated lists of ten in various categories, including “Underrated Books” and “Books I’ve Read Because of Other Bloggers.”

- *Waiting on Wednesday*: Created by the bloggers behind Breaking the Spine (http://breakingthespine.blogspot.com), “Waiting on Wednesday” is a weekly meme. The meme was designed for bloggers to highlight the upcoming releases they are eager to read. *Perfect* (Hopkins, 2011) and *Chain Reaction* (Elkeles, 2011) were among the many titles Sarah featured when writing these posts.

Sarah also wrote posts that fell outside of those categories, many related to teaching young adult literature.

Additional Activity

In addition to blogging, Sarah tweeted extensively during the data collection period. Like other teachers in this study, Sarah participated in Twitter chats, re-tweeted the words of others, provided status updates on her reading progress and her teaching practice, and often shared hyperlinks to resources on the Web, including new posts on her blog, Y.A. Love. The materials Sarah shared often found responses from others online.

Summary

The five teachers featured in this study spend their days working as secondary English teachers. Before school, after school, and sometimes during the school day, these teachers have been active online, exploring issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy. Using blogs, microblogs, and social network sites, these teachers have created multimodal environments in which they could engage their peers online in dialogic interactions. The next two chapters present findings based on a cross-case analysis of the data collected.

CHAPTER 5
PHASE I: FINDINGS ACROSS CASES

The purpose of this study was to build an understanding of selected secondary English teachers' participation online as they explored issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy. Three research questions guided this study:

- What are the features of the online contexts that selected secondary English teachers weave in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy?
- What is the nature of selected secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online in terms of the practices they carry out and the topics they address?
- How do selected secondary English teachers experience professionally oriented participation online?

As described in Chapter 3, this study was conducted in two distinct yet concurrent phases. The first phase of this project was designed primarily to assist in the exploration of the first two research questions. It encompassed an ethnographic content analysis (Altheide, 1987) of archived online documents and materials generated and distributed by the five English teachers featured in the study and triangulation with data collected through semi-structured interviews. The second phase of this project was designed primarily to assist in the exploration of the study's third research question. It entailed an analysis of narratives (Riessman, 2008) that emerged from the transcripts of a series of semi-structured interviews I conducted with the English teachers in this study. In this chapter I present the findings that resulted from the study's first phase.

Cutting across cases, I begin this chapter by addressing the prominent features of the online contexts the selected secondary English teachers weaved in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy. Then, I present findings related to the nature of the

selected teachers' professionally oriented participation online in terms of the practices they carried out and the topics they explored.

Contextual Features

As noted in Chapter 2, scholars (e.g., Goodwin & Duranti, 1992) recognize context as a complex concept, one that is "impossible to specify completely, different for each individual, drawn on differently in each instance of speaking and interpreting, and ever in a process of change" (Lindfors, 1999, p. 219). In light of Lindfors's cautionary note, I present this section to examine prominent contextual features of teacher-generated online environments through the surround and weaving views of context Cole (1996) and Lindfors (1999) described. Recognizing the complexity and fluidity of context, my focus is on identifying and describing meaningful contextual features that emerged across cases and on examining how those features may have supported the selected teachers' participation online. Figure 5.1 provides a graphic representation of the contextual features described in this chapter.

Surround Features

A surround view accounts for the "possibilities and constraints" (Lindfors, 1999, p. 232) within the contexts in which interaction is situated, as described in Chapter 2. If focusing on a brick-and-mortar classroom as the surround context, one might attend to the physical environment (e.g., desk configuration, classroom exhibits) and curriculum (e.g., texts of study, corresponding assessments) as contextual features. However, the surround contexts I focused on in this study are teacher-generated online environments. Thus, in line with the dynamic quality of virtual spaces, the contextual features described here are less concrete. For the purposes of this study, I present two broad contextual features that were evident across cases and contexts when examined from a

surround view—(a) multimodal affordances and (b) a/synchronous flexibility—and I describe how those “surround features” supported the selected teachers’ participation online.

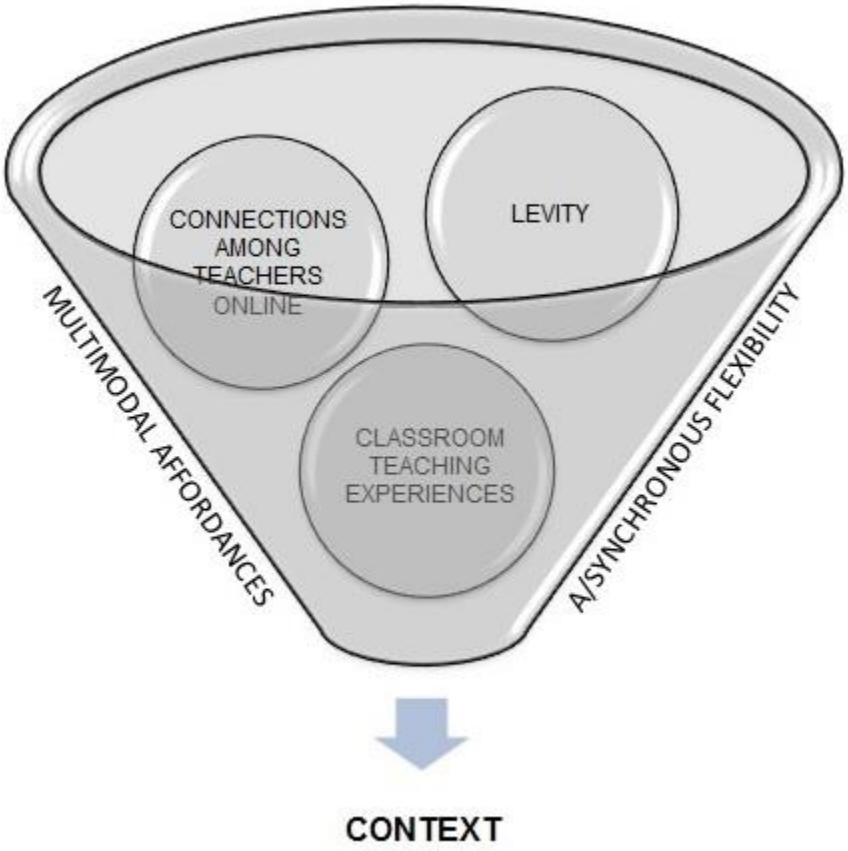


Figure 5-1. A graphic representation of the commingling of contextual features

Multimodal affordances

As explained in Chapter 2, the new media technologies used by the teachers in this study feature multimodal affordances they may leverage to advance their own unique purposes and, in the Vygotskian sense, to extend their capabilities. That is, the new media technologies used by the teachers featured in this study allowed for the integration of multiple modes of expression that may enhance communication. Those multimodal affordances contributed to the surround contexts of teacher-generated

online environments. For example, in addition to allowing for alphabetic writing (Kress, 2003), blogs allow users to embed videos complete with moving images and audio, as well as static images and hypertext, giving bloggers the opportunity to make each post a multimodal reading experience for their audience.

The teachers in this study consistently leveraged multimodal affordances in the blog posts they wrote. For example, on the Y.A. Love blog, Sarah wrote weekly posts previewing forthcoming or recently released young adult literature, including titles such as *Insurgent* (Roth, 2012), *Hunted* (Rainfield, 2011), and *A Monster Calls* (Ness, 2011), among several others. With each "Book Trailer Thursday" post, Sarah introduced a book, its author, and its release date; expressed her thoughts about the novel at hand; and provided a summary of the text from Goodreads. Sarah moved beyond the alphabetic with each post, embedding an image of the cover of the book in question and a video trailer promoting the release of the book. Using multiple modes, Sarah was able to enhance her posts. She moved beyond the summary she provided in alphabetic writing by providing a portal to additional information outside the blog post via hyperlinks; she offered a glimpse of the book via the cover image; and she conveyed the book's tone and significant plot lines through the embedded video's moving images, music, voiceovers, and other sounds. Figure 5-2 displays a screenshot of a typical "Book Trailer Thursday" post on the Y.A. Love blog. The screenshot highlights Sarah's efforts to capitalize on the multimodal affordances of the blogging platform as she previewed *Freshman Year and Other Unnatural Disasters* (Zeitlin, 2012).

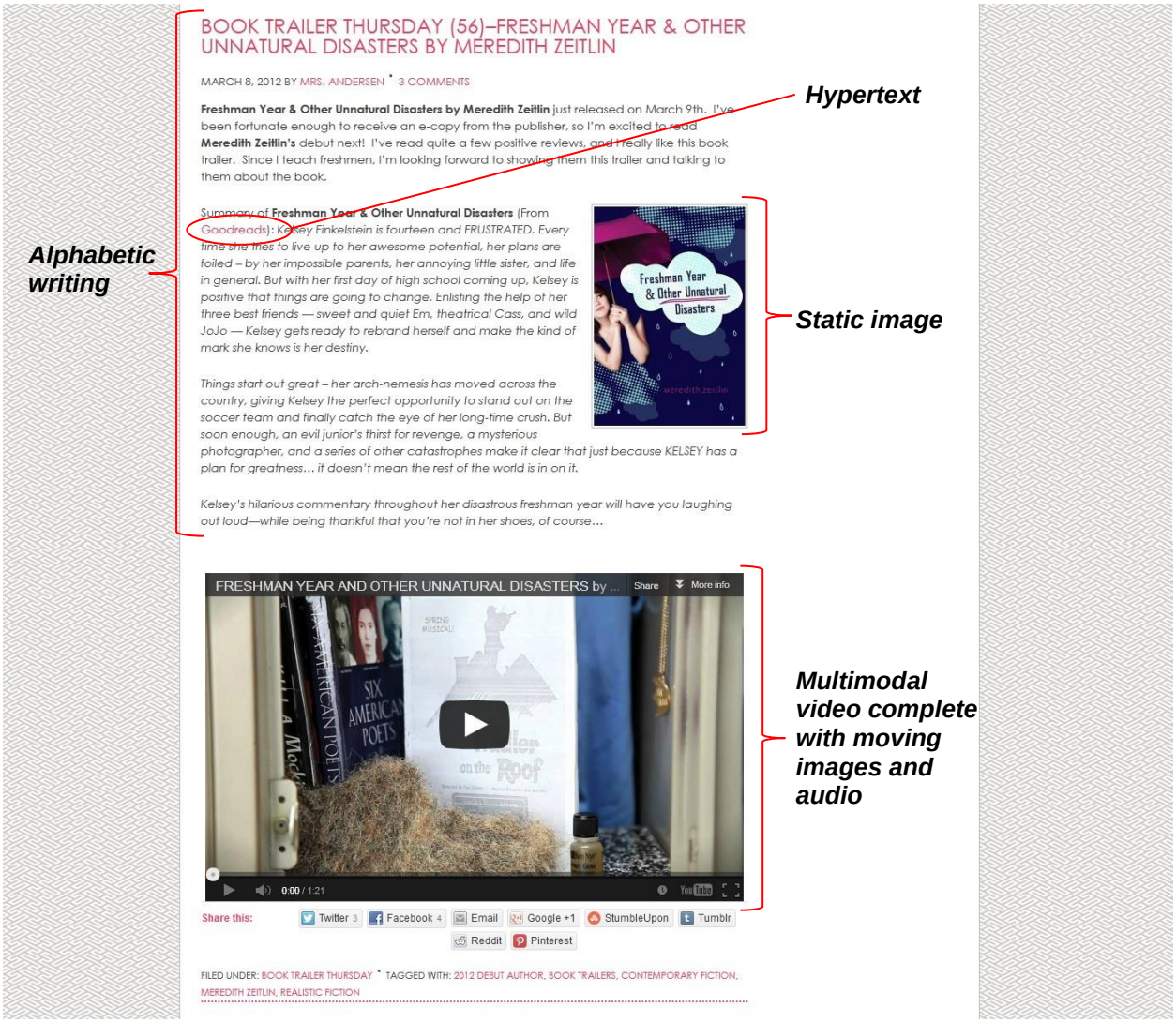


Figure 5-2. A screenshot of a multimodal "Book Trailer Thursday" post on the Y.A. Love blog

The multimodal affordances that contribute to the surround contexts of teacher-generated online environments are not unique to blogs. Social network sites also have multimodal affordances that may foster interactions among teachers. Like blogs, and typical of participatory cultures (Jenkins, 2006a), social network sites have a low barrier to expression and engagement. To a degree, that low threshold is evident in the nearly 40,000 English teachers, teacher educators, and prospective teachers who, as of this writing, are members of the English Companion Ning (ECN). Though it would be naïve

to think that each member is active on the site, many surely are. As noted in Chapter 4, Gary is one such member. He and his online peers capitalized on the site's low barriers to engagement and its vast multimodal affordances, particularly in the design of sessions in the 2011 ECN Summer Webstitute.

The Webstitute, as described in Chapter 4, was housed in a group within the social network site. Within the Webstitute group, Gary and his online colleagues provided hyperlinks to scheduled sessions facilitated by a range of teachers, authors, and scholars. Some sessions were offered in separate video-enhanced chat rooms outside of the ECN, yet others were hosted through the standard discussion forums available within the site. The multimodal affordances of the social network site made standard discussion forums a viable venue for Webstitute sessions. Presenters moved beyond alphabetic writing to facilitate discussion among members attending the session virtually. The forum Gary established to be hosted by Glenda Funk, a National Board Certified Teacher and an alumnus of the Folger Teaching Shakespeare Institute, is a notable example. In her forum, Glenda facilitated a discussion about teaching the works of William Shakespeare by tapping the multimodal affordances of the ECN. Her forum featured an animated presentation, videos from her classroom that showed students engaging in instructional activities such as line tossing and silent scenes, and hyperlinks to corresponding assignments and handouts she had uploaded to the ECN. The ECN's low barrier to expression and engagement allowed Gary and Glenda to incorporate multiple modes in crafting the forum's opening message—a compelling one at that. Opening a virtual window into Glenda's classroom, those multimodal components helped to facilitate dialogic interactions, as attendees responded to the embedded

videos by expressing concerns about how such activities might work in their unique teaching contexts and by seeking clarification about the goals of the instructional activities shared. See Figure 5-3 for a screenshot of an excerpt from the opening message of the discussion forum Gary established and Glenda facilitated as part of the 2011 ECN Summer Webstitute.

Following the location metaphor associated with a surround view of context, the selected teachers' professionally oriented participation online during the data collection period appeared to be situated in online environments that allow for the integration of multiple modes of expression (e.g., alphabetic writing, hypertext, static images, moving images, audio). That is, across cases, multimodal affordances contributed to the surround contexts of teacher-generated online environments, enhancing the selected teachers' capabilities to invoke dialogic interactions among their peers online.

A/synchronous flexibility

Applying the surround view of context to the online environments constructed by the five English teachers featured in this study revealed another notable contextual feature: a/synchronous flexibility. That is, depending on one's purposes, he or she may have the flexibility to engage others in synchronous or asynchronous interactions in the contexts of teacher-generated online environments. Asynchronous interactions occur in delayed time and do not require simultaneous participation among individuals (Johnson, 2006). Conversely, synchronous interactions occur in real-time, and they require simultaneous participation (Johnson, 2006). Popular new media technologies, such as blogs, microblogs, and social network sites, are often recognized as mediating asynchronous interactions, for responses to initial posts tend to be delayed. Conversely,

instant messaging and videoconferencing tools typically require simultaneous engagement among users.

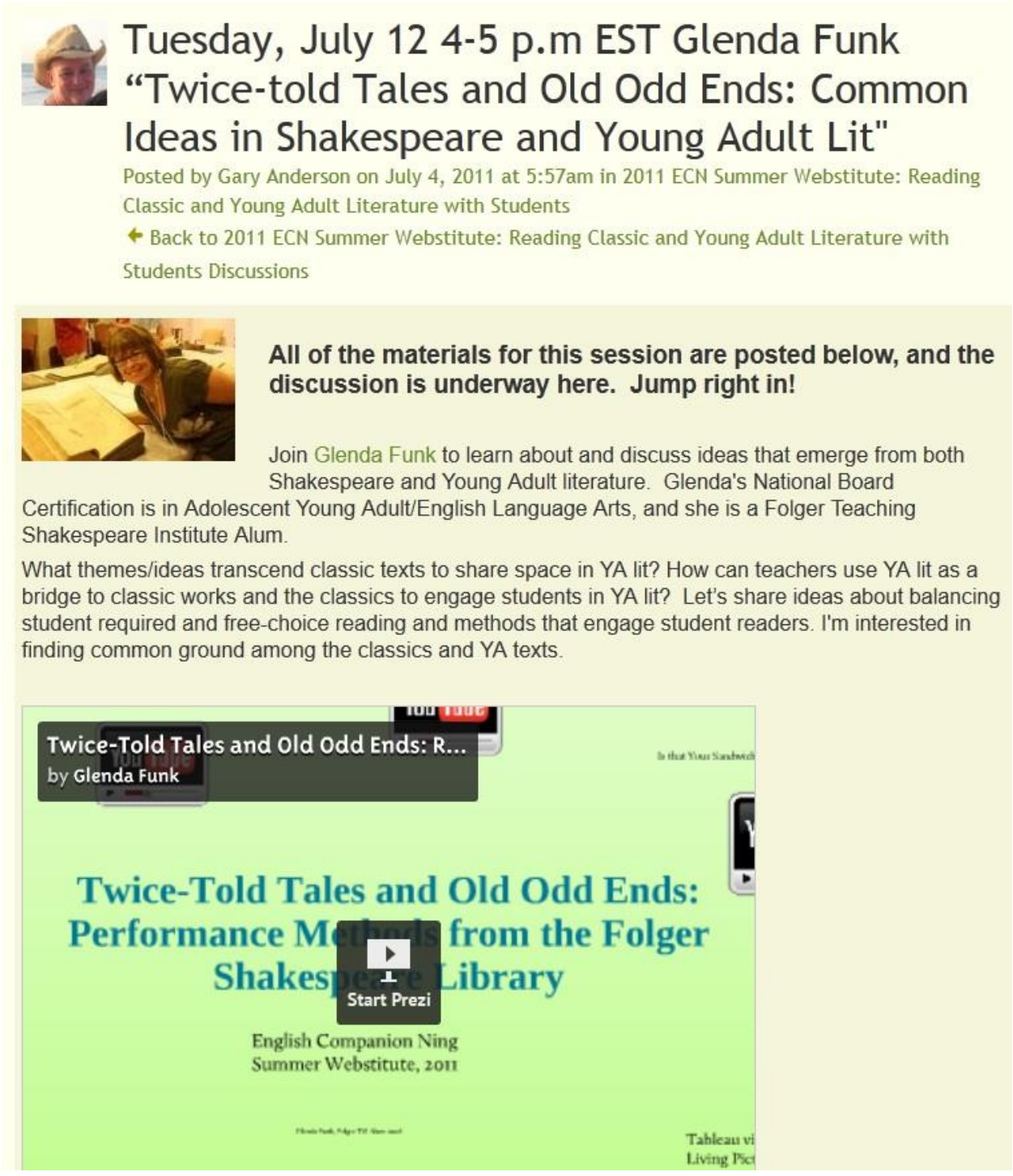


Figure 5-3. A screenshot of an excerpt from the opening message of a synchronous discussion forum featured in the 2011 ECN Summer Webstitute

A cross-case analysis of archived online documents revealed numerous asynchronous interactions among participating teachers and their online peers. Among three participants, a number of asynchronous interactions took place in discussion forums within the English Companion Ning (ECN). For example, Figure 5-4 captures Meenoo turning to her online peers for support as she prepared to teach *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 2004) for the first time. In this instance, the opening message in Meenoo's discussion forum served as an attempt to crowdsource from her peers in the ECN ideas regarding activities and assessments that might prove useful when teaching Fitzgerald's classic. With a "couple of weeks" until she would begin teaching the book, Meenoo could afford the wait-time required of traditionally asynchronous tools like a discussion forum. Before long, Meenoo's wait paid dividends. Within 24 hours, Meenoo received responses from four teachers. Responses ranged from tips for locating *Gatsby*-related content elsewhere on the ECN, various assignment descriptions and handouts, and testimonials about the value of pairing the novel with a film to extend an exploration of the American dream. Responses continued to trickle in over the next several days, including those featuring hyperlinks to online resources beyond the confines of the ECN, recommendations for exploring the novel via Socratic seminars, and reports from teachers about students presenting the novel as a play. Leveraging the asynchronous possibilities of the discussion forum, Meenoo was able to capitalize on the strengths of asynchronous interactions noted by scholars (e.g., Galland, 2002), giving potential respondents time to review her inquiry and consider the ideas and materials they might share before responding.

Figure 5-4. A screenshot of an opening message in an asynchronous discussion forum on the English Companion Ning

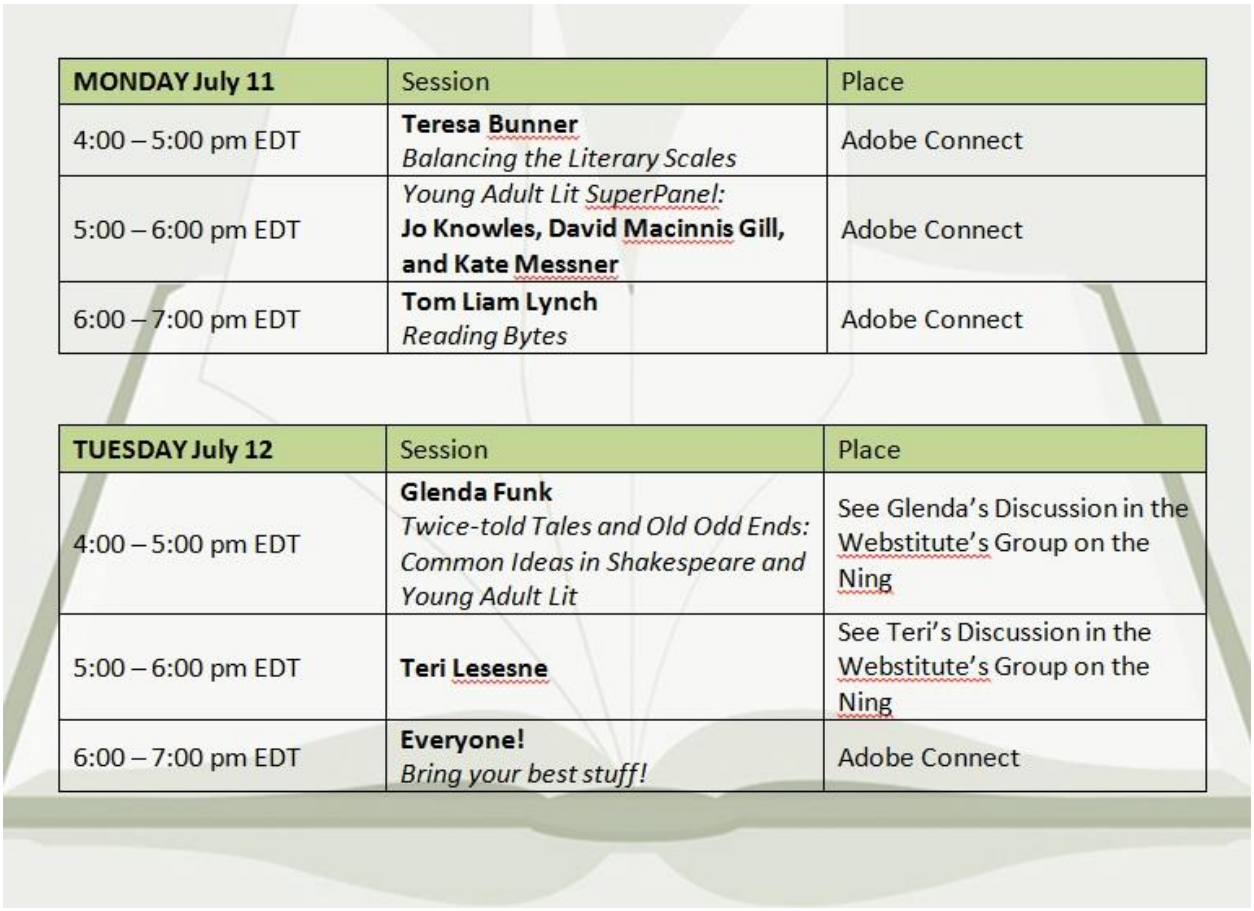
Like discussion forums within social network sites, blogs and microblogs tend to foster asynchronous interactions. As with the example of Meenoo's discussion forum above, participants consistently wrote a blog post or tweet at one point in time, any number of their peers online read the post or tweet and, as the mood struck them or as time allowed, others responded to the post or tweet, adding another link to the dialogic chain. Though perhaps delayed, asynchronous responses like those Meenoo received do resound with dialogicality. As Bakhtin (1986) explained, responses in dialogic interactions need not be immediate, for "[s]ooner or later what is heard and actively understood will find its response in the subsequent speech or behavior of the listener" (p. 69).

Though asynchronous interactions like those described above were typical for participating teachers, the flexibility to organize and carry out synchronous interactions is a noteworthy contextual feature upon which each participant drew. As with many

synchronous interactions that occur face-to-face (e.g., department meetings, interviews, sessions at professional conferences), ensuring synchronous interactions online often requires forethought and advanced communication. Returning to the 2011 ECN Summer Webstitute offers a prime example. The discussion forum Gary established for English teacher Glenda Funk to lead is no different than the forum Meenoo created spontaneously to generate ideas about teaching *The Great Gatsby*. However, the Webstitute had been planned in advance. By advertising the date and time of each session on the ECN (Figure 5-5) and broadcasting those details via Twitter and email, Gary positioned Glenda to facilitate a synchronous interaction as teachers explored the common ground between select titles of young adult literature and the works of William Shakespeare. As Figure 5-8 illustrates through the presentation of an excerpt of a discussion thread about secondary students' capacity to read and comprehend the works of William Shakespeare, participants in the Webstitute were able to respond to one another just minutes apart—the time it takes to read and consider the thoughts of others and to generate a response—simulating the experience one might have when face-to-face with others at a professional conference. Meanwhile, given the spontaneity of her post about teaching Fitzgerald's classic, Meenoo received delayed responses over a number of days. In each case, dialogicality was evident regardless; meaning emerged, as each post brought two or more voices into contact.

Another notable example of participating teachers leveraging the a/synchronous flexibility of online contexts is evident in Meenoo's work with #engchat, the weekly Twitter chat she founded, and her blog of the same name. Meeting virtually each Monday at 7:00 PM (EST), #engchat is a synchronous chat session that draws

individuals with a shared interest in the teaching of English, as explained in Chapter 4. Over the course of an hour, people sharing an affinity for the teaching of English interact simultaneously as they explore a scheduled topic related to teaching, learning, and literacy. Using "#engchat" as a hashtag to categorize tweets, individuals from across the globe may take part in the chat, following along and making contributions as they see fit. From separate locations, teachers may exchange ideas, share resources, and explore ELA-related topics in real-time.



MONDAY July 11	Session	Place
4:00 – 5:00 pm EDT	**Teresa Bunner** *Balancing the Literary Scales*	Adobe Connect
5:00 – 6:00 pm EDT	*Young Adult Lit SuperPanel:* **Jo Knowles, David Macinnis Gill, and Kate Messner**	Adobe Connect
6:00 – 7:00 pm EDT	**Tom Liam Lynch** *Reading Bytes*	Adobe Connect

TUESDAY July 12	Session	Place
4:00 – 5:00 pm EDT	**Glenda Funk** *Twice-told Tales and Old Odd Ends: Common Ideas in Shakespeare and Young Adult Lit*	See Glenda's Discussion in the Webstitute's Group on the Ning
5:00 – 6:00 pm EDT	**Teri Lesesne**	See Teri's Discussion in the Webstitute's Group on the Ning
6:00 – 7:00 pm EDT	**Everyone!** *Bring your best stuff!*	Adobe Connect

Figure 5-5. A screenshot of the advertised schedule for the 2011 ECN Summer Webstitute

As described in Chapter 4, Meenoo supplemented #engchat, the Twitter chat, with the #engchat blog. Acting as a curator of sorts, Meenoo organized and featured blog posts authored by guest moderators of upcoming #engchat sessions. With no

immediate response required or expected, the guest posts were asynchronous, working like anticipation guides for forthcoming chat sessions. Guest posts added an element of structure to the synchronous #engchat sessions, as they provided a frame within which participating teachers might consider the topics of forthcoming sessions. With the complementary pairing of weekly chat sessions and weekly blog posts, Meenoo leveraged the a/synchronous flexibility of teacher-generated online contexts, using asynchronous blog posts and the time for reflection they afford to support synchronous Twitter chats.

The dialogicality of guest posts on the #engchat blog became evident as ideas presented in those posts and responses to those ideas surfaced in the Twitter chats with which they corresponded. Though perhaps delayed, what was understood in the asynchronous blog posts often found response in the synchronous sessions of #engchat, the Twitter chat.

Across cases, a/synchronous flexibility contextualized interactions within teacher-generated online environments. Like the multimodal affordances described above, a/synchronous flexibility was a notable contextual thread that teachers participating in this study leveraged to advance their own and others' experiences online exploring teaching, learning, and literacy.

Weave Features

As described in Chapter 2, the surround view of context is complemented by the weaving view (Cole, 1996; Lindfors, 1999). As the surround view focuses on the resources provided by the context in which interactions are situated, the weaving view sees context being actively constructed as individuals draw upon the experiences and understandings they bring to an event and tap the resources available to them (i.e., the

surround features described above) in the moment. As noted previously, I recognize the complexity and fluidity of context; thus, rather than attempting to define the contexts in which the selected teachers participate, my focus is on identifying and describing meaningful contextual features that emerged across cases and considering how those features may have informed the selected teachers' online exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy. Again cutting across cases, I present in this section the "weave features," those contextual features that, whether brought in from outside the online environment or shared with others online, informed engagement for the teachers featured in this study: (a) classroom teaching experiences, (b) connections among teachers online, and (c) a touch of levity.

Classroom teaching experiences

For each of the participants in this study, the weaving of classroom teaching experiences into the contexts of his or her interactions online appeared routine. Reflecting Lindfors's (1999) contention that "each moment remembers places you *have* been, experiences you *have* had" (p. 232), a thread of participating teachers' experiences in their respective brick-and-mortar classrooms was woven into their posts and interactions with others online. The shape and content of teachers' blogs, for example, was often informed by their recent teaching experiences. Brian's blog, Walk the Walk, presents a representative illustration of this feature.

Many posts on the Walk the Walk blog appeared to be the product of Brian weaving his classroom teaching experiences with the site's multimodal affordances. With the majority of his blog posts tied to his practice as a middle-school writing instructor, as described in Chapter 4, Brian leveraged the multimodal affordances of the site to open virtual windows into his classroom as he embedded mentor texts, images of

classroom exhibits, and videos of authors and poets discussing with students the craft of writing. For example, in “Wordsalve: Poet Sunita Jain & My Class,” a blog post dated February 18, 2012, Brian reported on a class period in which Indian poet Sunita Jain visited with students in his classroom via Skype, a videoconferencing software application. Threading together his own reflections on the experience of helping 8th-graders discuss the craft of writing with a published poet in India, short pieces written by the poet, and a 20-minute video of the poet’s visit in its entirety, Brian brought the experience to life for his audience. Adhering to the old writing adage, “Show; don’t tell,” Brian helped his audience see what hosting a published author via Skype might look like in the middle-school writing classroom and the value it may hold for students and for teachers.

The contextual thread of classroom teaching experiences is also evident in the interactions with others the selected teachers weaved via Twitter. Across cases, the teachers in this study often drew upon their classroom experiences as they tweeted, commonly sparking exchanges with their online peers. For illustrative purposes, consider the following tweet Sarah composed in the spring of 2012:

> Does anyone else have those random moments when you realize a book from your library has been missing for a while? So random. 7:36 PM - 21 Mar 12

Sarah’s tweet was not addressed to anyone in particular; that is, she did not identify any single user by his or her Twitter handle. Understanding that all utterances have addressivity, as Bakhtin (1986) asserted, Sarah’s addressees come into focus with a closer look at her message. In particular, the phrase “your library” indicates that Sarah was addressing her followers (and others reading the tweet) who have a library of some sort. But what is one to make of the word “library”? Was she referring to a public library?

A classroom library? In this utterance, understanding Sarah's *sense* (Vygotsky, 1986) of the word "library" is essential. According to Vygotsky (1986), "[a] word acquires its sense from the context in which it appears; in different contexts, it changes its sense" (p. 245). Because it is dynamic, a word's sense is distinct from its meaning, which is fixed, as both Vygotsky and Bakhtin (1986) asserted. In the context of Sarah's tweet, a context woven with her classroom teaching experiences, recognizing that she is a classroom teacher and not a librarian suggests that she was referring to a collection of books supplied by a teacher and made available for students to borrow for independent reading. Accordingly, Sarah's tweet found responses from a number of classroom teachers, sparking two threads of discussion: one an exchange of titles popular with students, the other an exchange of methods for managing a classroom library.

In the first discussion thread, teachers responded to Sarah's tweet by noting the books that students like to keep for themselves, turning the thread into an exchange of titles that are popular with students. The exchange was somewhat typical in that, among the data collected, posts about the books students are reading appeared in an extended form on the Nerdy Book Club blog, the Y.A. Love blog, and the What's Not Wrong? blog. Drawing upon her experience maintaining a classroom library, Sarah shared titles such as *Don't Expect Magic* (McCullough, 2011), *Catching Fire* (Collins, 2009), and *Anna Dressed in Blood* (Blake, 2011). Others chimed in with titles such as *The Fault in Our Stars* (Green, 2012), *Anna and the French Kiss* (Perkins, 2010), and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (Chbosky, 1999), among others. Though many of those titles are well known, the exchange may have given some teachers new ideas regarding books that might appeal to students in their respective classrooms.

Like respondents in the first discussion thread that emerged from Sarah's tweet, one teacher offered a title that has gone missing from her library on multiple occasions, *Breathing Underwater* (Flinn, 2001), but she quickly turned her attention to solving the problem of missing classroom library books. The classroom-library-management thread began with a response from a high-school humanities teacher, identified here with the pseudonym "Humanities Teacher" and the corresponding @[humanitiesteacher] Twitter handle:

> **Humanities Teacher**: @yaloveblog This happens all the time. While I'm glad they found a book to love, I've replaced Breathing Underwater 4x. What do you do? 8:00 PM - 21 Mar 12

Affirming that they share a classroom-library-management problem, the humanities teacher inquired as to how Sarah tracks books in her classroom library. Her inquiry sparked the following exchange, an illustration of what Jenkins (2006b) described as "collaborative problem-solving" (p. 3):

> **Sarah**: @[humanitiesteacher] That's a really good book. I teach it in my Y.A. Lit class. I have a check out book to keep track of who has what. 8:21 PM - 21 Mar 12
>
> **Humanities Teacher**: @yaloveblog We use a public Google spreadsheet for signouts. Books just see[m] to wander away w/o being signed out. It's a cost I don't mind. 8:34 PM - 21 Mar 12
>
> **Sarah**: @[humanitiesteacher] How do you use the spreadsheet in your class? 8:36 PM - 21 Mar 12
>
> **Humanities Teacher**: @yaloveblog The kids track their check-ins and -outs themselves. The class student librarians maintain the cleanup of the spreadsheet. 8:40 PM - 21 Mar 12
>
> **Sarah**: @[humanitiesteacher] That's an interesting idea. Is there a computer in the room where they do this? Do they originally sign out books on paper? 8:42 PM - 21 Mar 12
>
> **Humanities Teacher**: @yaloveblog We're lucky to have 1:1 netbooks…but you could still do it online with 1 class computer. 8:45 PM - 21 Mar 12

Given the challenge of tracking books Sarah has reportedly experienced, she appeared quite intrigued by the online spreadsheet the humanities teacher reported using, despite the humanities teacher's admission of similar challenges. At this point in the exchange between Sarah and the humanities teacher, an elementary teacher responded to each of them, recommending a free application that can assist with managing a classroom library:

> **Elementary Teacher**: @yaloveblog @[humanitiesteacher] Classroom organizer has an app. Free. Student librarians have login codes. Can print slips. 8:45 PM - 21 Mar 12

Sarah and the humanities teacher continued their exchange, addressing the elementary teacher by name in each response:

> **Sarah**: @[elementaryteacher] @[humanitiesteacher] I really like this idea, but I only have one computer in my classroom (mine). We don't have wi-fi either. 8:47 PM - 21 Mar 12
>
> **Elementary Teacher**: @yaloveblog @[humanitiesteacher] No wi fi for us either. They enter in the 13 isbn on the desktop. Maybe certain kids could maintain the comp? 8:49 PM - 21 Mar 12
>
> **Sarah**: @[elementaryteacher] @[humanitiesteacher] My kids are signing books in and out so often during every class that I would never get a chance to use comp 8:57 PM - 21 Mar 12
>
> **Humanities Teacher**: @yaloveblog @[elementaryteacher] That's why I had to drop the binder sign-out. Kids had a hard time finding their sign-in. Do you use 1 page/kid? 9:06 PM - 21 Mar 12
>
> **Sarah**: @[elementaryteacher] @[humanitiesteacher] What do you mean 1 page/kid? I have 5 entries per page and they're divided according to class. 9:09 PM - 21 Mar 12
>
> **Humanities Teacher**: @yaloveblog @[elementaryteacher] I've heard of each student having his/her own page in the binder to make sign-outs easy and record data of reads. 9:41 PM - 21 Mar 12
>
> **Sarah**: @[elementaryteacher] **@**[humanitiesteacher] Maybe I'll try that with my Y.A. class first and see how it goes. It's a smart idea. 10:03 PM - 21 Mar 12

This exchange, in which Sarah drew extensively upon her classroom experience, reflects Jenkins's (2006b) notion of collaborative problem-solving. Identifying a shared problem, Sarah and the humanities teacher exchanged methods of library management in an effort to resolve the issue. Together and with the support of a third party, they considered multiple methods, including a pencil-and-paper checkout system, a student-run Google spreadsheet checkout system, and free applications designed specifically for classroom libraries. Together they mulled the pros and cons of each method based on the affordances and limitations of their unique teaching contexts. Ultimately, though the humanities teacher seemed to get no further in improving upon her checkout system, Sarah ended the exchange weighing the idea of tweaking her current pencil-and-paper checkout system by assigning to each student a page in the binder to improve the ease and efficiency of signing out books.

Across contexts and across cases, classroom teaching experiences were woven through the selected teachers' professionally oriented participation online, as those experiences provided the content that fueled many of their posts and tweets, their contributions to the dialogic chain of utterances related to teaching, learning, and literacy.

Connections among teachers online

The connections teachers in this study formed with others through interactions in online environments appeared to offer another contextual feature that shaped their participation. Generally, participants seemed to draw upon supportive, collegial relationships formed through extensive interactions with others online, giving them people to whom they could turn with questions and concerns, personal or professional.

In the first of our two interviews, Gary explained the value he has found in the connections he has made through repeated interactions with other teachers online and how those bonds were forged. What he described reflects experiences reported by other teachers in this study:

> I think one of the most meaningful things…is when those little squares become real people. And there are people who I've met [online] who are extremely important colleagues to me. I've [since] met them in person, and we've spent probably a grand total of six or eight hours in actual physical proximity, but they're extremely valuable colleagues to me, lifelines….On that [ECN] Webstitute stuff, [my colleagues and I] worked really hard together on those things. When you build something like that with people it tends to stick with you…. [W]e spent a lot of time on camera, you know, on screen, working together. And when you work together in true collaboration and build things, you know, that's relationship forming….And then when a couple of those people have gone through rough times—and I have, too—and we sent messages of support that have nothing really to do with English-y stuff at all, then the relationships, I think, kind of get warmer and more significant.

In Gary's experience, through extensive interactions and collaboration of a professional nature over time, the small square images that appear with comments on one's blog, with tweets in one's Twitter feed, and with responses to one's discussion forum can spring to life, gaining meaning where there was none before and offering sentiments that pertain more to traversing the obstacles of life than to teaching students of literature.

The relationships Gary described, those warm and significant relationships that have seen people at a distance offering support and encouragement to those facing difficult times, were evident in "Plate = Full," a blog post Sarah wrote on the Y.A. Love blog. Written out of a sense of obligation to those who have been steady readers of her blog, the post and the responses it elicited from those very readers indicated the ways relationships among teachers online may support their continued participation. Dated

February 27, 2012, the post served as Sarah's attempt to explain what she noticed to be a recent shortage of book reviews and posts on her blog. Sarah cited her workload as an English teacher as a factor in her perceived blogging rut:

> [T]his current trimester…We've taught three new units, most of which we've been working on as we go. As you can imagine, it's been tough…. Right now my classes are finishing their memoir unit which has been fun, but it needs tweaking. I'm overwhelmed at the moment because we assigned compare/contrast essays for [*Of Mice and Men*] and [*The Pull of Gravity*] which the kids wrote, turned in, and then we handed back with comments and collected again to grade again. Phew! Those took a while to get through, but my kids really improved the second time around. Right after I finished grading those I collected their memoirs. I have 90 freshmen right now. I have 90 memoirs to grade. The trimester ends on Tuesday. I'll have final exams to grade. Plus, I have my Young Adult Lit class to think about as well. I still have book reviews and responses to grade, plus their final projects. Yep, I'm feeling the pressure.

Sarah's self-reported struggles with her teaching workload put a face to the contention that "heavy workloads spread [quality teachers] too thinly" (Burns, 2007, p. 129). Considering that, for the sake of students and teachers, the National Council of Teachers of English (1990) encouraged districts "to limit each language arts teacher's workload to not more than 80 students," it is easy to see why Sarah might have felt overwhelmed. Still, as Sarah continued the post, she acknowledged that the workload came with the job and that participating online, though beneficial for her, was another task she needed to balance:

> I don't want anyone to think that I'm looking for sympathy because I'm an English teacher, and I know this is part of the job. I always feel the push to get the grading done in a timely manner. The difference right now is that I've been an active blogger for a year and a half which adds to the balancing act. It's tough keeping up with the reading, writing my reviews, commenting on other blogs, staying active on Twitter, and doing my actual job. But I love all of it, so I continue everything. Blogging has become a fantastic hobby and way of connecting with wonderful people. Twitter is often a place of sanity for me when I feel the way I do right now. I'm not giving any of this up.

Despite the incredible demands of teaching and the added work that comes with staying active professionally online, Sarah steadfastly refused to quit. Citing her passions for teaching, reading, and writing, as well as her appreciation for the connections she forged with others online, Sarah explained that relenting and walking away was not an option.

Moving outside of the professional realm, Sarah continued the post by identifying health issues as the second major factor in her self-perceived blogging dry spell. Relaying struggles with her immune system, Sarah explained that fatigue and sluggishness hindered her reading stamina, resulting in fewer books read and, accordingly, fewer blog posts written. As Sarah explained in the post's opening line, it is not often that she delves into personal issues on her blog. However, by opening up about matters of personal health, Sarah demonstrated the level of comfort she established with loyal readers of the Y.A. Love blog.

The comments readers offered in response to the post seemed to reward Sarah for her openness, her willingness to write about trying times and the pressure she was feeling as an English teacher. Sarah's heartfelt, almost-apologetic blog post elicited warm, encouraging responses from teachers with whom she connected online. One teacher offered a brief word of encouragement before empathizing with Sarah, drawing a parallel between Sarah's active professional and personal lives and those of her own:

> You're doing GREAT and as a fellow English teacher who's trying to teach, grade, read for fun, blog, Tweet, *and* live her life I mostly understand! You're allowed to take time for you or cut back (and I think sometimes teachers are ones who have the most difficult time doing so). 🙂

Similarly, another teacher responded by stating her belief that English teachers have a unique challenge in balancing their personal and professional lives, due in part, presumably, to the singular workload of an English teacher:

> I still contend only an English teacher could understand the battle for balance that we have to fight for every year. Add in health issues and it just becomes that much more stressful to manage. Just remember, blogging started as a way to share and have fun, so we need to make sure we don't feel overly obligated. Everyone reading our blogs knows we're teachers – I hope they can be understanding of our stretches of limited posts (especially at the end of grading periods), and enjoy our summers of abundance in our blogging lives. Glad to hear things might be getting back on the right track for you. And, hey, it's your blog and you can write what you want to! 😉

This commenting teacher's word choice projects an empathetic stance. For example, use of the pronouns "we" and "our" in the utterances "we need to make sure we don't feel overly obligated" and "Everyone reading our blogs knows we're teachers" position the commenting teacher firmly alongside Sarah, providing a strong reminder that she is not alone in facing the daunting task of meeting the demands placed on English teachers who participate online, exploring teaching, learning, and literacy. Such responses seemed to reaffirm Sarah's refusal to relent, her insistence that she continue in her pursuits despite the extensive work they require.

A touch of levity

Another notable feature evident in the contexts participants created online was a touch of levity. Bakhtin (1986) asserted, "Everything that is truly great must include an element of laughter. Otherwise it becomes threatening, terrible, or pompous" (p. 135). As though the participants in this study had read Bakhtin's words for themselves—and perhaps they had—an element of laughter, or at least a playful attempt at humor, and other jovial touches appeared to be woven into the online contexts the selected teachers constructed.

Attempts at humor were evident as participants contributed to memes involving wordplay on Twitter, such as #lessambitiousbooks. A meme that could appeal to nearly any English teacher, #lessambitiousbooks challenged users to demonstrate their wit by reducing the titles of classic and contemporary literature to something less ambitious with a subtle turn of phrase. Gary, for example, made the following contributions:

- The Things They Asked Someone Else to Carry #lessambitiousbooks 6:49 AM - 3 Jan 12
- All the Pretty Jackasses #lessambitiousbooks 7:47 PM - 2 Jan 12
- Slaughterhouse Three or Maybe Four at the Most #lessambitiousbooks 6:46 PM - 2 Jan 12
- Atlas Twitched #lessambitiousbooks 6:37 PM - 2 Jan 12
- The I-Could-Stand-To-Eat-A-Little-Something Games #lessambitiousbooks 6:20 PM - 2 Jan 12

Deviating from the norm of sharing the day's creative writing prompt (e.g., "Today's #E307class journal topic: Tell how you knew it was over."), providing hyperlinks to student writing (e.g., "New student book blog post: "[book title]" on [the school] Ning: [hyperlinked URL]"), and offering updates on classroom activities (e.g., "Today in Creative Writing we're watching the live stream of @[user]'s students' slam poetry: [hyperlinked URL]"), Gary offered a touch of levity with his #lessambitiousbooks tweets, likely prompting a chuckle or two from his followers, many of whom are fellow English teachers.

Other teachers lightened the mood with images they shared online. For example, as explained in Chapter 4, Brian personalized his blog, Walk the Walk, with a sidebar plug-in that streams a series of images capturing his lighter side. While tackling some rather heady topics on his blog (e.g., teaching research, conferring with student writers,

and accounting for the Common Core State Standards), Brian struck a balance by offering levity through personal photos from his youth; shots of him in oversized hats and in costume, including that of a character from the *Peanuts* gang (Figure 5-6); images of his dogs; and playful shots in which his face had been superimposed, among other images. Including such photos seemed to be humanizing in a way, serving to remind his audience of the humane work of writing, teaching, and learning.

Figure 5-6. A touch of levity in the form of a photo of teachers dressed as characters from the *Peanuts* gang that appeared on the Walk the Walk blog. Photo courtesy of Stacy Remphrey.

Given the intensification of teacher work in the current climate of public education (Apple, 1988; Easthope & Easthope, 2010; Hargreaves, 1994) and the sense of isolation many teachers perceive (Herrington et al., 2006; McCann et al., 2005), as

noted in Chapter 1, it is easy to imagine why the teachers participating in this study might try to offer their online peers a laugh, be it through a 140-character punch line or a light-hearted image. As the selected teachers in this study extended their professional lives by exploring complicated issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy well beyond the hours of the school day, during weekends, and over scheduled breaks during the summer, spring, and winter months, it is reasonable to think that they might find the need to interject some levity into the proceedings from time to time for the very reasons Bakhtin (1986) cited. Accordingly, participants in this study weaved threads of humor and jovial thoughts into the online contexts they constructed with their online peers.

This section featured findings related to the first of three research questions that guided this study: What are the features of the online contexts that selected secondary English teachers weave in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy? The findings resulted from an ethnographic content analysis of collected online artifacts and triangulation with data generated through semi-structured interviews. Cutting across cases, findings indicated that notable contextual features included multimodal affordances and a/synchronous flexibility, as recognized from a surround view of context, and classroom teaching experiences, relationships among teachers online, and a touch of levity, as recognized from a weaving view of context. In the next section I provide findings related to the second research question that guided this study: What is the nature of selected secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online in terms of the practices they carry out and the topics they address? I address the practices in which the selected teachers engaged and the topics they addressed as

they participated online in exploration of issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy.

Nature of Participation

This section is intended to describe the nature of five secondary English teachers' participation online as they explored teaching, learning, and literacy from the summer of 2011 through the spring of 2012. In the first half of this chapter, I described contextual features—from surround and weaving views—of the online environments in which the selected teachers participated. My focus now shifts to detailing the nature of the teachers' professionally oriented participation online in terms of the kinds of practices they carried out and the topics they addressed.

Participatory Practices

Ethnographic content analysis of participant-generated online artifacts (i.e., blog posts, tweets, and discussion forum posts within social network sites) supported me in examining participatory practices that reflect the nature of participation for the five secondary English teachers featured in this study. Informed by the work of Scribner and Cole (1981), practices in the context of this study are recognized as common patterns of participation. Cutting across each of the five cases, five prominent participatory practices emerged: (a) supporting teachers, (b) seeking support, (c) promoting one's own online content, (d) curating ideas and information, and (e) providing status updates. In the pages that follow, I describe each participatory practice, providing examples from collected online artifacts for illustrative purposes.

Supporting teachers

The practice of supporting teachers was prominent across platforms. Whether blogging, microblogging, or engaging in social network sites, the teachers in this study

actively supported their online peers through their participation online. This practice did take different forms, appearing most prominently in the form of (a) teaching teachers and (b) providing models from the classroom, including student work samples. Both forms of support are explained below.

Teaching teachers. "Teachers-teaching-teachers" is a professional development model the National Writing Project (NWP) has embraced since its inception at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1973 (National Writing Project & Nagin, 2003). The model positions teachers to draw upon their own practice-based knowledge and experiences related to the teaching of writing in order to support the work of other teachers across all disciplines in grades K-16. A similar model of teachers tapping into their own knowledge and experiences to teach teachers at a distance was evident in the blog posts generated by participants featured in this study.

On his blog, Walk the Walk, Brian wrote posts that drew upon his own teaching practice and served to teach teachers how to implement similar activities in their respective classrooms. In "Altering One's Aspect towards the Sun," a blog post dated September 17, 2011, Brian continued a series in which he considered the ways his experience in the National Writing Project Summer Institute (NWP SI) had informed his teaching practice. Early in the post, Brian shared a concern not uncommon to English teachers, one he heard as a participant in the NWP SI: "How do we use the writing-based methods in a literature-based classroom?" Ong (1975) asserted that a writer imagines his or her audience in terms of the writing's topic and form. In presenting the concern about employing writing methods in a literature classroom, Brian quickly established the audience for the post, turning to an imagined group of middle- and high-

school English teachers he wrote into being. In the post, Brian went on to illustrate one way he answers this challenge in his classroom: by applying a concept he learned at the NWP SI—"'[W]hat have you read [that] is like what you are trying to write?'"—to a reading of *The Red Badge of Courage* (Crane, 1925). He explained:

> I took that lesson from this summer, altered the way I looked at the sun, and placed a small passage by [Stephen] Crane under my classroom ELMO document camera and projected it on the wall. I circled nouns, highlighted adjectives, underlined verbs, noted articles and pronouns and phrases and clauses. And then together as a class we would write like Crane…we would imitate this passage. Where Crane placed an article, we would place an article. Where Crane crafted a prepositional phrase, we would craft a prepositional phrase, etc.

After explaining the basics of the exercise, Brian reiterated for readers the lesson he learned at the NWP SI and, presumably, the lesson he wanted readers to take away from the post: "What have you read [that] is like what you are trying to write?" Brian then provided additional details about the imitative writing exercise and how it played out in his classroom:

> I told [students] we must change the subject of what we are imitating. That took knowledge of the passage. We read it aloud, discussed it, and decided that Crane took the time, showed the patience, to describe a "horde" of soldiers moving forward. However, a student noted that it was more than that. It was how two different sets of eyes might describe the "horde" of soldiers--some might say they were grizzled and angry and ready to tear a house apart piece of wood by piece of wood, others might suggest they were sad, hungry, and weak.

With the details of the exercise established, Brian provided a passage the students wrote in collaboration as they shouted out words during the whole-class exercise. As Brian noted, the passage he and his students crafted is "about a 'swarm' of butterflies from the perception of someone who loves nature and then from the perception of a child." He provided the student-generated passage for his audience:

> *Some whispered of golden, freckled swarms that were drifting with blithe dips and twisting ascents with awe-inspiring beauty; fragile wings of gentle creatures who flutter like autumn in the wind. Others cheered floating and eternally playful crayons that played tag in the sky.*

Though Brian did not provide the excerpt that the passage is based upon for comparison, the provision of the passage allowed readers to get a sense of the length of a passage one might explore with students and the variety of parts of speech one might find in a passage ideal for the exercise.

In addition to providing readers with a product that resulted from the exercise, Brian also explained the benefits of students completing the exercise independently following his modeling of the task and the whole-class collaboration:

> The lesson allowed me to circulate around the room and assist kids with identifying parts of speech, and it also allowed me to dust off the classroom set of the most foreign of books to my kids--the thesaurus. I gave each kid one to use to grow their writing as we also discussed imagery and motif in small, individual conferences. The lesson also offered opportunities for me to talk about Crane in small chunks, one on one with kids, as they worked on deciphering what we meant and how his craft influenced his story.

As a teacher, Brian saw a variety of perks to the exercise, including opportunities to explore literary concepts with students individually and to engage them in close study of an author's craft. Finally, Brian explained what resulted from students' independent efforts to tackle the exercise:

> The kids wrote about things they wanted to but in the patterns and style of Crane. I heard Cranesque passages about everything from football and lacrosse to pumpkin picking and dance lessons. When the students read them aloud to the class we noted the similar cadence and rhythm in what we wrote, but the vastly different stories. We noted that this imitative lesson made us be patient as writers and it taught us to be open-minded toward an author and a book some despised only days ago.

In addressing issues related to the teaching of writing on his blog, Walk the Walk, Brian often made his practice public—as he did in this example—sharing strategies he has

used firsthand to support adolescent writers. Brian employed the practice of teaching teachers in other blog posts he wrote, including “Visual Story: Love Conquers All,” “Golden Lines: The Second Day of Class and More NWP Influence,” and “How the NWP Altered My Teaching—Day 1.”

Like Brian, Gary routinely addressed middle- and high-school English language arts teachers in posts featured on his blog. In those posts, Gary detailed activities and practices with which he has found success in his classroom, and he did so as though he was teaching other teachers how to adapt those practices for use in their own classrooms. Dated January 24, 2012, “Zapping Apathy with Daily Journals” is one such post. Walking readers through his use of daily journals, Gary wrote:

> Each day I write on the board: “Today’s journal topic,” followed by a prompt that comes to me or that I adapt from other sources. I tend to draw the prompts from Natalie Goldberg’s *Old Friend from Far Away*, Susan Shaughnessy’s *Walking on Alligators*, our *Expository Composition: Discovering Your Voice*, or from a variety of sites that I find through Googling “high school writing prompts,” “journal prompts,” “writing ideas,” or some other similar search terms.

Gary’s inclusion of recommended resources, particularly in the form of hyperlinked text, demonstrates dialogicality, a turning to his audience. That is, the hyperlinks serve as an invitation for readers to learn more about the sources he uses to locate prompts for students in his classroom, evincing the “quality of turning to someone” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 99).

After recommending resources, providing hyperlinks for those interested in learning more about those resources, and suggesting other means of generating writing prompts, Gary explained his habit of sharing the daily prompts with others online via Twitter:

> Each journal prompt also goes on Twitter so that absent students can get the day's prompt. A happy by-product of the tweets is that quite a few people see them, use them, and chime in with ideas. In the past, I've used the hashtag #journal, but that one has become sort of busy and distorted, so this semester I'm using #E307, our school's code for the Creative Writing course. Feel free to follow along and join in!

The expressiveness of this utterance, particularly in the invitational phrase "Feel free to follow along and join in," conveys the author's awareness of others in the dialogic event and the welcoming stance he takes toward them. Moreover, by explaining his reasons for sharing journal prompts via Twitter, Gary may help other teachers see the value he finds in embracing an open-learning ethos and in making his practice public.

Continuing the post, Gary then recommended that teachers provide students with an alternative to the day's writing prompt, a way for students to engage in writing even when the prompt fails to move them:

> When I write the day's journal prompt on the board, I always add "… or ?…" The idea is that students can use the prompt or not. I tell them that when it comes to the journal prompts, they are free to explore or ignore. Why should students be tied down to my idea when they might be more compelled to delve into their own ideas? The goal is to explore their own depths and imaginations, so it's 100% OK with me if they never use my prompts, but at the same time, I don't want anyone to struggle with "I don't know what to write about."

By offering this well-reasoned justification for not requiring that students write in response to the prompts the teacher provides, Gary positioned his audience to make an informed decision for their own classrooms, should they choose to make journaling a part of their daily practice.

Gary continued his step-by-step breakdown of journaling in his secondary English classroom by offering his approach to closing out the writing activity:

> After about ten minutes [of writing], I say something like, "OK. Can we please bring that in for a landing?" All of the writers find a way to come to a stop within about a minute. This is followed by, "Does anyone have

anything you'd like to read today?" On most days, several writers will share something from their journals.

Beyond giving teachers a metaphor to use when nudging students to find a stopping point, Gary modeled for teachers an attempt to promote the sharing of student writing. Furthermore, the step-by-step nature of this and other posts reflecting the practice of teaching teachers demonstrates dialogicality, a turning to another in explaining how to carry out an instructional process in the secondary English classroom. Gary employed the practice of teaching teachers in other blog posts he authored, including "6-Word Memoirs with Wordle," "Zapping Apathy with College Application Essays," and "Zapping Apathy with Word of the Year Hangman."

Among participants in this study, the practice of teaching teachers is one that was most consistently evident in posts shared by Brian and Gary. The fact that they had a combined 49 years of teaching experience between them might shed light on why they, more than their less-experienced peers in this study, employed such a direct, step-by-step approach to supporting teachers. This practice, particularly when carried out by veteran teachers like Brian and Gary, reflects the informal mentorship evident in participatory cultures (Jenkins, 2006b), whereby what is known by the most experienced individuals is passed along to novices.

Providing models from the classroom. In addition to explicitly teaching others how to carry out specific instructional activities, teachers featured in this study supported their online peers by providing models direct from their own classrooms. In some cases, providing models for other teachers took the form of sharing images from the classroom, as with the following tweets Sarah composed:

- .@[user] asked about my room/class lib. Pictures [hyperlinked URL] [hyperlinked URL] [hyperlinked URL] [hyperlinked URL] 9:12 AM - 30 Mar 12

- More classroom [hyperlinked URL] (student reviews) [hyperlinked URL] (class reading goals) [hyperlinked URL] [hyperlinked URL] 9:15 AM - 30 Mar 12

With those tweets, Sarah opened a window into her classroom, helping others see, for example, how she has showcased young adult novels in her classroom library (Figure 5-9), displayed student work (Figure 5-10), tracked class reading goals (Figure 5-11), and promoted an extracurricular book club (Figure 5-12). With each image shared, Sarah provided a clear model for other teachers to consider, to respond to, and to implement for themselves, should they be so moved.

The addressivity of the tweets featured above is noteworthy. In the first tweet, Sarah explained that one of her online peers had been asking about her classroom library. However, rather than simply replying to that individual, Sarah included a period in front of the at sign (@) in the first tweet. That subtle move ensured that the tweet would be received by each of her followers, not just those who follow her and the individual named in the tweet. Likewise, by not addressing anyone in particular in the second tweet, Sarah ensured that each of her followers would receive hyperlinks to more images of her classroom. With those subtle moves, Sarah demonstrated an awareness of others in the dialogic event and a willingness to share her practice with a wide audience.

The teachers featured in this study also made their practice public and supported their peers by publishing student work online. In such instances, student work samples provided models of finished products and revealed the sorts of activities the teachers featured in this study have facilitated in their own classrooms. For example, Meenoo composed tweets in which she shared hyperlinks to images of student products and of

students at work, and she distributed hyperlinks to a class website housing student writing:

- Gatsby Pivotal scenes illustrations #engchat [hyperlinked URL] 5:51 AM - 7 Feb 12
- #[school] students are sharing their independent reading choices this morning via their tweets. Check 'em out! 6:35 AM - 15 Dec 11
- Independent reading in classroom of love (learning) #[school] [hyperlinked URL] 7:31 AM - 14 Sep 11
- Check out #[school] students' Where I'm From poems: [hyperlinked URL] #engchat #comments4kids 10:21 AM - 9 Sep 11
- Developing essential questions in rethinking popular culture #[school] [hyperlinked URL] 5:38 AM - 9 Sep 11

With such tweets, Meenoo ensured a wider audience for student work, but she also gave others a peek at her teaching practice, offering ideas and activities teachers might adopt and use in their own unique contexts. For example, a handful of ideas for the English language arts classroom can be pulled from just the five sample tweets above. Such ideas include illustrating the pivotal scenes in a novel (Figure 5-13); facilitating independent reading; book-talking independent reading selections digitally; composing "Where I'm From" poems; publishing student work online; basing a unit of study on student-generated questions (Figure 5-14); and studying popular culture from a critical perspective. Like Meenoo, other teachers featured in this study shared hyperlinks to student work via Twitter, posted student-authored posts on their blogs, and, in one case, shared streaming video of students reading their written work.

During a particularly noteworthy stretch in late February and early March 2012, Gary showcased the work of students and teachers at his school during a school-wide event hosted in celebration of writing. The week-long event, Writers Week, saw its

eighteenth iteration in 2012. Since 1995, Gary and his onsite colleagues have invited students to the school's auditorium where they could hear writers share their writing during each period of each day of Writers Week. The event has drawn an impressive array of writers, as Gary explained in "Writers Week XVIII: Let's Roll," a post on the What's Not Wrong? blog:

> More than two hundred professional writers have visited our campus since the program's inception. More than one thousand students have shared their writing over the years, and faculty members from nearly every department in our school have stepped up to the microphone to give us their stories.

To share those stories with an even wider audience in 2012, Gary live-tweeted the event throughout the week. That is, via Twitter, Gary microblogged about happenings from the event in real-time. Using the hashtag "#ww18" for those interested in following along, Gary shared snippets of essays and poems written and read aloud by students and teachers, and he posted photos and lines from talks given by authors, poets, and other professional writers:

- Rock star time with @veronicaroth at #ww18 [hyperlinked URL] 12:16 PM - 29 Feb 12
- "This piece is for everyone running from something, toward something, or just running in circles." – [student] #ww18 8:03 AM - 29 Feb 12
- "The ink isn't just on you. It is you." – [student] #ww18 10:53 AM - 28 Feb 12
- Novelist Thomas E. Kennedy on stage now at Writers Week XVIII #ww18 [hyperlinked URL] 10:48 AM - 27 Feb 12
- "Standing up here right now, I'd like to say I'm sorry to everyone I've hurt." – [student] #ww18 10:14 AM - 27 Feb 12

In addition to sharing lines read and photos taken during Writers Week XVIII, Gary offered hyperlinks to streaming video of the event, inviting a global audience to enjoy the event virtually:

- #ww18 Streaming now from Writers Week @EllenHopkinsYA [hyperlinked URL] 9:28 AM - 1 Mar 12
- Great Writers Week student session streaming now → [hyperlinked URL] #ww18 9:04 AM - 29 Feb 12
- Streaming now → Patricia Smith! [hyperlinked URL] #ww18 1:16 PM - 28 Feb 12
- See @JennaMarotta live from Writers Week in 10 minutes! [hyperlinked URL] #ww18 9:11 AM - 28 Feb 12
- See Sierra DeMulder @sierrademulder right now from Writers Week XVIII [hyperlinked URL] #ww18 9:20 AM - 27 Feb 12

As Gary explained in "Writers Week XVIII and Community," a blog post dated March 3, 2012, going public with the event enabled Gary and the student and professional writers involved to reach a worldwide audience:

> Those in our auditorium experienced Writers Week directly, but people around the world watched our streaming sessions. Family members who live elsewhere, siblings and other alumni away at college, fans of specific writers, and interested educators all checked in to say how much they appreciated being able to participate in Writers Week via our online streaming.

Furthermore, by making Writers Week XVIII available to the public through tweets, blog posts, embedded photos, and streaming video, Gary provided his peers at a distance with an extended view of a model of a successful, long-running program that shines a light on student writing, puts students in touch with professional writers, and, by Gary's estimation, fosters a sense of community within the school. Gary making his work with Writers Week public in such varied ways—via image, text, and streaming video—and across multiple platforms reflects the sort of sharing of teacher work that scholars (e.g., Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2010) contend supports professional learning and is characteristic of participatory cultures (Jenkins, 2006b).

Seeking support

The English teachers featured in this study provided guidance and support for their online peers as they taught others how to employ classroom activities and presented student work and other models from their classrooms, but content analysis of archived blog posts, tweets, and discussion forum entries revealed that they also sought support for their own teaching practice and turned to their online peers for help. More specifically, participants in this study consistently carried out information-seeking inquiry acts (Lindfors, 1999), as they sought specific pieces of information. For example, in "My Literary Achilles' Heel," a post from the Y.A. Love blog dated January 21, 2012, Sarah turned to her readers for support in identifying books that belong to genres she has a tendency to avoid but students in her classroom tend to enjoy. In the post, Sarah identified high fantasy and science fiction novels as her literary Achilles' heels. Regarding the science fiction genre, Sarah wrote:

> Science fiction has never been a genre that I enjoy reading. I read *Insignia* by S.J. Kincaid (releases in July 2012–review coming closer to the release date) and loved it. It's about gaming and virtual reality, so I'd qualify it as science fiction. I read *Tempest* by Julie Cross, and even though there are some plot points that I didn't like, I enjoyed reading the novel overall. The Chaos Walking trilogy by Patrick Ness could be seen as dystopian, but I also look at it as science fiction because it takes place on a different planet, much like Beth Revis's *Across the Universe* and *A Million Suns*. I'm not sure what I'm missing in this genre. I've obviously enjoyed a few novels that fit within in, so why don't I find myself reading more novels in this genre?

Having shared her history with high fantasy and science fiction novels, Sarah went on to explain her reasons for writing the post and issued a call for help, asking readers of the post to assist her in identifying titles she could add to her classroom library:

> I'm writing about all of this because I feel like I'm letting my students down, in particular the students who do enjoy reading these genres. I have a few titles that I can discuss with them and recommend, but I don't have enough to feel like I'm doing a good enough job. Does anyone else feel like this?

> What's your literary Achilles' heel? And if you love these genres, please leave me some recommendations! I have that [award] money to spend, so I want to buy some worthy YA titles in each genre to provide for my students. And since I don't have that much going on this weekend (FINALLY!), I think I'm going to break out of my comfort zone and try reading one or two. So please, if you have any recommendations, or if you feel the same way I do about these genres or others, leave me a comment

Explicitly inviting feedback from her online peers, Sarah sought to strengthen areas she perceived to be weaknesses in her work as an English teacher. Her information-seeking inquiry paid dividends, for readers responded by commenting on the post, offering a number of suggested titles from the fantasy genre. Suggested titles included *Silver Phoenix* (Pon, 2011), *Crown Duel* (Smith, 1997), and *Stardust* (Gaiman, 2001).

In addition to seeking support via blog posts, participants used Twitter to quickly crowdsource ideas and recommendations from their followers. For example, Meenoo reached out to her followers for suggestions regarding a range of texts, including short films, songs, and traditional literary texts:

- Do you have a favorite short film? Pls share links, TIA. #engchat #edchat 1:10 PM - 11 Mar 12
- Looking for your favorite profiles from the @NewYorker. TIA. #engchat 11:47 AM - 13 Feb 12
- I am making Jay Gatsby's playlist for one of his epic parties. What should I include? #engchat 6:48 PM - 16 Jan 12
- help me out, want to create a playlist with theme of American Dream – what songs should I include? #music #engchat 6:36 PM - 16 Jan 12
- Looking for Independent Reading recommendations book list for 11th and 12th grade students. Cc @[user] @[user] @[user] 5:43 PM - 8 Sep 11

The dialogicality of the examples above, Sarah's "Literary Achilles' Heel" blog post and Meenoo's sample tweets, is evident, for each teacher turned to her online peers in information-seeking inquiry acts, those product-oriented attempts to understand by

engaging another. In the examples above, the participants knew what they were looking for (e.g., book recommendations, short film titles, *New Yorker* profiles, songs thematically linked to the American Dream), and they knew when their goals would be satisfied.

The absence of inquiry acts that take the shape of more playful wondering (Lindfors, 1999) in the examples above is notable, yet seemingly explainable when one considers the participants' purposes in their communicative acts. As explained at the beginning of this chapter, threads of participants' classroom teaching experiences were woven into their activity online. Such threads are evident in the examples above, each a support-seeking utterance that took on a "working" quality. That is, in each case, the participants worked to secure a product, be it a book, an article, a film, or a song, for use in their teaching practice. In many cases, participants turned to their online peers in search of materials for immediate use "at the point of need" (Swenson, 2003, p. 299), a concept that lends itself to the work-ful quality associated with information-seeking rather than the playful quality associated with wondering.

The ways new media technologies mediate activity also might have informed participants' expressions of inquiry. Tools mediate activity (Vygotsky, 1978), and Twitter is no different. In the case of Meenoo's information-seeking inquiries above, the use of Twitter, a microblogging platform that restricts the number of characters per post or tweet, mediated her communication. Though one could surely be economic enough with his or her words to express more playful, open-ended wonderings via Twitter, it seems that, being bound to 140 characters per tweet, the channel lends itself most immediately

to communication associated with the complete and direct utterances of information-seeking inquiry.

Promoting one's own online content

Some participants in this study generated a rather high volume of microblog posts or tweets, yet Brian was a bit more reserved in his use of Twitter. Brian occasionally shared resources available on the Web, and he provided updates on the happenings in his classroom, but Brian's use of Twitter as a tool for directing readers to his blog, Walk the Walk, stood out. Consistently, Brian promoted the content on his blog by composing and distributing tweets that featured the title of a new blog post or a reference to the post's general topic and a hyperlink that would open the post in a new browser tab or window. The following examples illustrate Brian's use of Twitter as a tool to broadcast blog posts:

- Upending the Twitter Apple Cart [hyperlinked URL] 2:18 AM - 13 Mar 12
- I carry the lessons [hyperlinked URL] 6:14 AM - 28 Feb 12
- YA Book Review: Wonderstruck [hyperlinked URL] 3:58 AM - 22 Jan 12
- From Digital Toy to Digital Tool [hyperlinked URL] 3:51 AM - 12 Nov 11
- Resource Book Review: Hidden Gems [hyperlinked URL] 8:27 AM - Jul 11

In each example above, Brian provided the title of a new blog post and a corresponding hyperlink. It is noteworthy that such tweets were not directed toward any one particular individual in Brian's network. That is not to say that the tweets have no addressee. The tweets above have both an author and an addressee, as all utterances do (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 95). With such tweets, Brian appears to have targeted his followers and anyone who might come across his Twitter profile as an addressee, imploring them to respond to the written utterances by following the featured hyperlinks.

In this way, the tweets above and others like them served as blanket invitations announcing to Brian's followers and any other interested parties the presence of new content on his blog. Considering that the hyperlinked content addressed issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy, it becomes apparent that Brian envisioned an audience of individuals who, like him, are interested in pedagogical matters.

Broadcasting one's own online content in this way is not a practice that is uniquely Brian's. Cutting across cases, it is clear that each of the other five teachers featured in this study carried out this practice in a similar way. For example, in the spring of 2012, Sarah shared the following tweet:

> Every day at the beginning of class I read a book aloud to my students. These are my faves [hyperlinked URL]. 5:39 PM - 20 Mar 12

With that tweet, Sarah broadcasted a new post on the Y.A. Love blog: "My Favorite Read Alouds." As the title of the post suggests, Sarah highlighted titles that have worked well as read alouds in her secondary English classroom, including *Catalyst* (Anderson, 2002), *Harris and Me* (Paulsen, 1993), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). Not addressed to anyone in particular, though the content of the tweet indicates an imagined audience of secondary teachers, Sarah's tweet elicited response from an online colleague who teaches English in the Midwestern region of the United States. In the following excerpt, the respondent appears with the pseudonym "Midwest Teacher" and the corresponding @[midwestteacher] Twitter handle:

> **Midwest Teacher**: @yaloveblog Thank you for this! Definitely doing read alouds this trimester. They scared me but when I polled students, they are interested. 6:35 PM - 20 Mar 12
>
> **Sarah**: @[midwestteacher] I love doing it. If you're nervous, practice at home:) It's good to know the section/chapter ahead of time anyway. 6:41 PM - 20 Mar 12

Grateful for Sarah's post, the respondent stated her intention to add read alouds to her practice, despite her reservations. Recognizing the respondent's hesitance, Sarah reiterated her appreciation for the teaching practice and offered a practical tip to support her peer. Quickly, a high-school humanities teacher joined the discussion, prompting Sarah to expound on her experience reading books aloud to secondary students:

> **Humanities Teacher**: @yaloveblog @[midwestteacher] Sarah, I used to do RAs and now they just ignore me and read their own books, even on WorldReadAloudDay! Thoughts? 6:42 PM - 20 Mar 12
>
> **Sarah**: **@**[humanitiesteacher] **@**[midwestteacher] I've noticed some of my kids doing the same thing. I usually let it slide b/c they may not enjoy the book I read. 6:43 PM - 20 Mar 12
>
> **Sarah**: @[humanitiesteacher] @[midwestteacher] You could always try the "book parking lot" idea during your read aloud… 6:44 PM - 20 Mar 12
>
> **Humanities Teacher**: @yaloveblog @[midwestteacher] So do you still have time for independent reading in-class every day? 6:45 PM - 20 Mar 12
>
> **Sarah**: @[humanitiesteacher] @[midwestteacher] Not every day :(We have SSR Mon/Weds/Fri but I sometimes squeeze time in every day. 6:46 PM - 20 Mar 12
>
> **Sarah**: @[humanitiesteacher] @[midwestteacher] My department really pushes grammar and wants it covered every week so that's what I have to balance with SSR. 6:47 PM - 20 Mar 12
>
> **Humanities Teacher**: @yaloveblog @[midwestteacher] Yes! Love that! We work system for some of my sneaky readers, the ones that hide books-not phones-under their desks 6:49 PM - 20 Mar 12
>
> **Humanities Teacher**: @yaloveblog @[midwestteacher] I face a similar challenge. Even working in more free writing time. It's all a tricky balancing act. 6:50 PM - 20 Mar 12
>
> **Sarah**: @[humanitiesteacher] @[midwestteacher] It really is. Today was a grammar day, but my kids were grabbing SSR books. I went with SSR today. #rebel. 6:51 PM - 20 Mar 12
>
> **Humanities Teacher**: @yaloveblog @[midwestteacher] Good for you! We practice the idea of "stealing minutes," so they regularly take books out while they wait for others. 6:54 PM - 20 Mar 12

A brief inquiry about managing student behavior during read alouds quickly evolved into an exchange about how teachers make time for extensive independent reading, grammar instruction, and writing instruction, given the demands placed on English teachers.

While Sarah and the humanities teacher exchanged ideas related to classroom and time management, the initial respondent faded out of the exchange despite being addressed throughout. Given the spontaneity of the interaction, the initial respondent could have been pulled away by a prior commitment or stepped out for a number of other reasons. She did, however, re-emerge with a clarification about the nerves she had described previously:

> **Midwest Teacher**: @yaloveblog I am more nervous about them hating it & ignoring me. But don't they do that anyway? :) 7:02 PM - 20 Mar 12
>
> **Sarah**: @[midwestteacher] If you pick a good book they'll love it. You can always poll them after a couple weeks to see if they enjoy the book. 7:08 PM - 20 Mar 12
>
> **Sarah**: @[midwestteacher] Actually, we just voted against my read aloud choice in my YA class. It's a great book, but not a good read aloud choice. 7:10 PM - 20 Mar 12

The exchange that ensued following Sarah's initial broadcast of her favorite read alouds blog post did not end on the idea of changing read aloud selections. More teachers chimed in, recommending the use of online polls to gauge student interest, encouraging read alouds from whole novels and from book-talk books, and suggesting the use of student-generated book blogs to balance writing and reading in the English classroom. However, the excerpt provided here captures the type of dialogue that may emerge from a single tweet and the ways teachers may come and go during an exchange. Moreover, the exchange above illustrates how spontaneous, synchronous exchanges

that bloom online may help teachers generate ideas and find support from colleagues at a distance as the intensification of teacher work escalates.

Curating ideas and information

In addition to broadcasting their own online content, participants in this study also engaged consistently in the practice of curating ideas and information generated by others. As described in Chapter 4, two participants maintained blogs that could be categorized as primarily curatorial in nature. In maintaining their respective blogs, Cindy and Meenoo invited, collected, and re-distributed guest posts written by teachers, authors, librarians, media specialists, and consultants with a shared affinity for teaching, learning, and literacy (see, for example, Figure 4-2). Guest posts on the #engchat blog were authored by a different educator each week and posted with the intention of supporting a corresponding Twitter chat. Meanwhile, the Nerdy Book Club blog featured a new post daily, each written by a guest blogger with a passion for literacy.

While Cindy's and Meenoo's curatorial blogging provided subscribers and other readers with fresh content and diverse perspectives, it also provided guest bloggers with a platform for showcasing their ideas and experiences. Though already maintaining their own blogs, two participants in this study served as guest bloggers during the data collection period. Gary wrote for the Nerdy Book Club and #engchat blogs, and Sarah wrote for the Nerdy Book Club blog. With the platforms provided by Cindy and Meenoo, Gary and Sarah found greater exposure, another venue for sharing their ideas and experiences related to teaching, learning, and literacy. Writing for other popular venues introduced Gary and Sarah to new readers with whom they could engage in dialogic exchanges related to "zapping apathy" in the secondary English classroom and the

merits of his literary favorites in Gary's case and, in Sarah's case, finding a passion for reading.

Though Cindy and Meenoo were the only participants in this study maintaining blogs that might be recognized as primarily curatorial in nature, they were not the only ones curating ideas and information related to teaching, learning, and literacy. Without being prompted, participants collected and re-distributed via Twitter hyperlinks to articles, websites, blog posts, and other resources relevant to the work of English language arts teachers. For example, when not using Twitter to announce the publication of new posts on his blog, Walk the Walk, Brian often shared hyperlinks to various articles and other resources as evident in the tweets below:

- Looks like a good mentor text for our classrooms. Born to Not Get Bullied: [hyperlinked URL] #NWP #PAWLP 5:59 AM - 1 Mar 12
- Teachers take to Twitter to improve craft & commiserate [hyperlinked URL] 8:54 PM - 21 Jan 12
- Concise inform/explain mentor text for your classes: [hyperlinked URL] #NWP #mentortexts 5:05 AM - 14 Dec 11
- Using Twitter in Classrooms and for Professional Development - National Writing Project [hyperlinked URL] via @writingproject 7:38 AM - 30 Nov 11
- Social media finds place in classroom - USATODAY.com: [hyperlinked URL] via @USATODAY #NWP 3:33 AM - 25 Jul 11

With such tweets, Brian re-distributed hyperlinks to texts teachers might use in the classroom with young writers and hyperlinks to articles teachers might consider as they think about the roles new media technologies play in their own professional learning and in their work with students.

In a similar fashion, Gary used Twitter to curate teaching-related resources he found noteworthy, as illustrated by the following sampling of tweets:

- "Poverty is, in fact, the issue." Recommended reading → [hyperlinked URL] 2:29 PM - 6 Apr 12
- Doff thy gender stereotypes!: [hyperlinked URL] 6:14 AM - 13 Feb 12
- Great blog post model here to use in class → Remembering Whitney [hyperlinked URL] via @[user] 10:54 PM - 11 Feb 12
- "Meaningful Work: How the History Research Paper Prepares Students for College and Life": [hyperlinked URL] #engchat #sschat 11:16 PM - 22 Dec 11
- Just want to be sure EVERYONE has seen this → When an adult took standardized tests forced on kids [hyperlinked URL] @washingtonpost

Like Brian, Gary re-distributed links to potential mentor texts for the classroom and to articles and blog posts teachers might find relevant to their own professional interests. Though Gary included the phrase “Recommended reading” to describe an article he shared on April 6, 2012, the recommendation seems to go without saying. That is, the simple act of re-distributing hyperlinks to specific articles and blog posts reverberates with dialogicality, a call for response. Gary seems to be encouraging others to respond with action, to follow the hyperlinks and read the articles shared. Presumably, if Gary did not think an article was worth the time and energy it takes to read it, he would not bother passing it on. Yet Gary and his peers routinely curated resources, introducing others to ideas and information they might not have discovered otherwise.

Each of the five teachers featured in this study engaged in the practice of curating ideas and information, circulating media to others who share an affinity for teaching, learning, and literacy. Participating teachers shaped the flow of media in ways akin to what Jenkins (2006b) described as “circulation” (p. 3), as they located resources of interest and re-distributed them online for other teachers to consider and employ as appropriate.

Providing status updates

When first conceptualized, Twitter was presented as a mobile personal status update service (Stone, 2009). Initially, users were prompted to share brief responses to the following question: “What are you doing?” Given that users were leveraging the platform to share resources and information beyond the bounds of that question, as demonstrated by the sample tweets featured in this chapter, the prompt was revised to “What’s happening?” Though Twitter’s co-founder asserted that it has “long outgrown the concept of personal status updates” (Stone, 2009), each teacher participating in this study did, in fact, provide status updates on a consistent basis, informing others of what he or she was doing in the classroom. Consider, for example, the following sampling of status updates Cindy composed:

- Can't even say how much I enjoyed & appreciated Skyping with @SarahDarerLitt @thunderchikin & @gaepol today! #bestdayever:-) 1:25 PM - 6 Mar 12
- Working on coming up with a topic for my own assignment in my senior honors class. Think I might interview a couple of my reluctant readers. 5:18 PM - 1 Feb 12
- What we did on #dlday - talked about evaluating web sources, posted links for projects to @diigo, signed up for @goodreads. #productive30min 2:18 PM - 1 Feb 12
- Using data + research on topic to create proposals for change. They seem into it. Never tried anything like this before. 2/2 #engchat 4:39 PM - 7 Nov 11
- Freshmen are working on a massive research unit - creating a survey for their class about bullying. Coming up with hypotheses...1/2 #engchat 4:38 PM - 7 Nov 11

At first glance, one might be inclined to dismiss status updates as products of the self-indulgent. However, from a Bakhtinian perspective, status updates may be viewed as another way of entering into a discursive relationship with others online. The bounded nature of status updates invites response, for, as Bakhtin (1986) asserted, “[t]he

speaker ends his [sic] utterance in order to relinquish the floor to the other or to make room for the other's active responsive understanding" (p. 71). With an absolute beginning and an absolute end, a status update orients its author toward the response of others, be it approval, disapproval, or other response.

The use of hashtags (e.g., #dlday) and mentions (e.g., @goodreads) as seen in the sampling of Cindy's status updates expands the possibilities for response. As noted previously, the inclusion of a hashtag in a tweet adds metadata that assists in categorizing it among tweets that share a keyword or phrase. This allows a tweet to be visible not only to one's followers but also to those following or searching for a particular hashtag, expanding the pool of potential respondents. For Cindy, then, status updates featuring hashtags such as "#dlday" (used on Digital Learning Day, a national awareness campaign to celebrate the effective use of technology to enhance learning) and "#engchat" (the same hashtag used during the synchronous chat) may have thrust her into a very large pool of potential respondents well beyond those who follow or subscribe to her tweets. There is no certainty as to who will respond, but the possibilities have grown with increased visibility.

By mentioning a specific user or including a user's Twitter handle in an update, direct response also seems likely. Though the update may not be as visible as those featuring a popular hashtag, addressing another user directly may elicit response, for those mentioned will receive the message. For example, while using #engchat and #dlday hashtags improved the visibility of those status updates more broadly, Cindy's mention of specific users in her update about Skyping brought the update to the

attention of those mentioned. As one might expect, each user Cindy mentioned in the Skype-related status update she offered did, in fact, respond to her.

Aside from inviting response for the author, the practice of providing status updates may hold additional value, offering ideas for other teachers to consider for their respective classrooms. For example, returning to the sampling of Cindy's tweets, teachers may find half-a-dozen ideas, including bringing published authors into the classroom via Skype; writing and researching alongside one's students; participating in Digital Learning Day; evaluating sources on the Web; engaging students in social bookmarking; employing Goodreads to facilitate response to independent reading texts; and engaging students in projects intended for the betterment of a community.

Topics Addressed

During the data collection period, participating teachers explored a wide range of topics related to teaching, learning, and literacy. A cross-case analysis revealed three topics that arose most consistently: young adult literature, reading instruction, and writing instruction.

Young adult literature

To varying degrees, the topic of young adult literature anchored many of the participants' blog posts and tweets. For example, Meenoo touched on the topic as authors of young adult literature wrote guest posts on the #engchat blog and hosted corresponding #engchat sessions. When not sharing their practice or reviewing professional resource books, Gary and Brian wrote reviews of young adult literature on their respective blogs. Maintaining a blog titled Y.A. Love, Sarah wrote about young adult literature almost without exception. Her blog posts often served as reviews of young adult novels, previews of forthcoming young adult novels (complete with book

trailers embedded in the posts, as noted previously), or compilations of young adult novels organized in some subjective manner (e.g., favorite books of 2011; books to be read; underrated books). A blog intended to celebrate the reading of books, especially those written for children and young adults, Nerdy Book Club is another blog that addressed young adult literature. As noted previously, the Nerdy Book Club blog could be categorized as curatorial, for the majority of the content on the site was generated by guest bloggers. However, Cindy did add original content to the site on occasion, and one such post, “Top Titles Seen in my Classroom,” is representative of the dialogic potential of participation in teacher-generated online environments.

The concept of the post dated January 7, 2012 is quite simple: having spent time looking around her classroom to see what students were reading that week and having read messages from students about what they had been reading lately, Cindy was reporting back to readers of the Nerdy Book Club blog. Presenting the top twelve books and an honorable mention, Cindy presented titles, authors, brief statements about the state of the books in her classroom, and embedded videos featuring promotional trailers. She reported that students were engrossed in young adult novels such as *Thirteen Reasons Why* (Asher, 2007), The Hunger Games series (Collins, 2008), *Want to Go Private?* (Littman, 2011), and *Before I Fall* (Oliver, 2010), among others.

As is typical with blog posts, readers responded asynchronously with comments, adding additional links to the dialogic chain. Responding to Cindy’s post, one commenting teacher opened by expressing her intention to investigate some of the titles Cindy highlighted: “Thank you for sharing. I have most of these on my shelves or checked out but I plan to check out the ones I don’t have in the classroom library.” In

addition to expressing gratitude, the commenting teacher built on Cindy's mention of The Hunger Games series by recommending titles that students in her classroom have embraced:

> I highly recommend the Matched series for anyone who loves the Hunger Games series. In fact, several of my students have told me that they like it even more. I don't think Matched will hold the same appeal for my boys as Hunger Games.

Cindy offered a rejoinder to the commenting teacher's response, speculating why *Matched* (Condie, 2010) and *Crossed* (Condie, 2011), titles in the Matched series recommended by the commenting teacher, would lack appeal for male readers:

> I think you're right about Matched and Crossed not having the same sort of appeal for guys. It makes me wonder though – why? Is it because they see it as a love story and that's not what they think guys like? But I have seen guys curl up with books about the guy trying to get the girl. Is it dependent on who the protagonist is? Just wondering…maybe it's something to talk to my guys about in the near future…

The comment Cindy received in response to her original blog post appeared to spark some wonderings for her. Echoes of the commenting teacher's initial comment are evident in Cindy's response. Cindy puzzled over why male readers might find the Matched series less appealing than The Hunger Games series, a notion first proposed by the commenting teacher, before resolving to discuss the matter with male readers in her classroom at a later date.

Piqued by Cindy's wondering, the commenting teacher offered an answer to Cindy's reply, her own suspicions as to why for male readers The Hunger Games series might hold more appeal than the Matched series:

> My gut reaction is that it's related to the heroine. Katniss is a huntress and the book is full of "the thrill of the hunt." There is also more action in Hunger Games. It seems to me, and perhaps I'm wrong, that Matched is a bit more cerebral.

Though this response from the commenting teacher went without further comment from Cindy, it seems that the brief dialogic interaction between a blogger and a reader extended thinking for each, including the consideration of titles to include in one's classroom library and the contemplation of a protagonist's appeal to particular audiences. This dialogic interaction supports the idea that "mental functioning in the individual originates in social, communicative processes" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 13), a notion that harks back to the ideas advanced by Vygotsky and Bakhtin.

The response to Cindy's "Top Titles Seen in my Classroom" blog post presented above is representative of other responses the post elicited. Other teachers who responded to the post did so in a fashion much like the commenting teacher highlighted above. As with the commenting teacher's response, most other responses featured expressions of appreciation for the titles presented in Cindy's original post and for those listed in the several comments it elicited. Many responses were marked by reciprocity, as commenting teachers offered lists of books students in their classrooms were reading, and each post reverberated with dialogicality.

In addition to sharing reports from the classroom regarding students' reading trends, four of the five participants in this study also wrote and distributed reviews of the young adult novels they had read personally. For example, on his blog, Walk the Walk, Brian routinely wrote reviews of young adult literature. In a blog post dated January 21, 2012, Brian reviewed *Looking for Alaska* (Green, 2005), a novel that has been a target of scrutiny, including a ban in Sumner County, Tennessee and a challenge in the state of New York (Nazaryan, 2012). Brian began his review by explaining his motivation for reading Green's novel in the first place:

> I see [John Green's] books self-selected by my 8th grade students, and had one tell me this week that he is their favorite author. Another enthusiastically showed me signed copies of his latest book. Not having John Green on any of my classroom library shelves, and never having read him, I'm working through them now in the hope of discovering more high interest literature for my room.

Aware of the reading habits of students in his classroom, Brian's reading of *Looking for Alaska* was reportedly an effort to find literature that speaks to the students he teaches. As Brian continued, it became clear that the blog post was less a critical review of the novel's literary merit and more an exploration of the appropriateness of the novel's content for a secondary classroom library. Brian wrote:

> The Printz Award winner *Looking for Alaska* is excellent—John Green doesn't need me to say that. Starred reviews of this novel hit 5/5 stars all over the place, but before you put it on your classroom shelf you need to read it and have *that* talk with yourself—is this appropriate for my classroom?

Addressing an imagined audience of middle- and high-school teachers, Brian urged them to think carefully before adding Green's novel to their classroom libraries. However, Brian went on to express his own conflicting feelings about having "*that* talk" about an award-winning novel: "Part of me writhes and despises [that] talk. When we have [that] talk about a great book I feel naïve and like an old fuddy-duddy." Still, despite that admission, Brian would go on and have *that* talk with himself through the remainder of the blog post.

Having highlighted for readers controversial parts of Green's novel, including characters smoking, drinking, and having sex, Brian recalled a popular text from his youth that had its own share of characters performing acts one might deem controversial: *Grease* (Carr, Machlis, & Stigwood, 1978), a film released when Brian was just a middle-school student himself. He recalled:

> While my mom used to cover my eyes in the movie theater if someone kissed or worse in a film, she didn't ban me from seeing *Grease* and I can't recall anyone blaming Stockard Channing or Olivia Newton John for inspiring sexual deviance in their children, and John Travolta and Jeff Conaway seem like they are off the hook for smoking among teens in America and calling their car a "pussy wagon."

Despite featuring content that some might deem questionable for a young audience, *Grease* is not a film Brian recalled scarring his generation. Rather, it is one he looked back upon fondly:

> I think I've only met people in my age bracket who regard *Grease* fondly, and when we talk about it we don't hyperfocus on "flogging the log"—mostly we remember the story and the connection to some part of our adolescence.

Through his reflection on *Grease* and its reception among his peers decades after its theatrical release, Brian seemed to be taking an anti-censorship position, speaking back to teachers and other readers who, like the officials in Sumner County, Tennessee, might be quick to deem *Looking for Alaska* (Green, 2005) and other titles like it "inappropriate" for secondary students. Brian noted that it is not the controversial elements of *Grease* that stuck with him through the years but the story itself and the connections he made with it as an adolescent. As he continued the post, Brian made his position clear: "Things are only inappropriate in hindsight—after we experienced it for ourselves—and in the case of *Grease* I'd be a hypocrite to call it inappropriate. I'm having the same thought about *Looking for Alaska*." After reflecting upon his personal experience—both as a child and as an adult—with what some consider to be controversial material for adolescents, Brian seemed to conclude that, given the compelling story at the heart of *Looking for Alaska* and the ways students seem to connect with it, Green's controversial novel *is* appropriate for his classroom library.

Though Brian may have come to grips with his own position on Green's novel, he asked readers, "[I]s it a book that you have to leave to [students] to find, or do you make it a little easier to access by keeping it on your bookshelf in your classroom?" And, in closing, Brian again addressed his imagined audience of classroom teachers, reminding them, "But before you put it on your shelf, have *that* talk first." By re-phrasing the question about the novel's place in a secondary classroom library and re-emphasizing his original suggestion to teachers, Brian seemed to state, "Regardless of my position on the novel's appropriateness for my classroom, be comfortable with the choice you make about providing the book for students in *your* unique context," driving home the point of his review.

Many of the blog posts written by participants in this study featured reviews of young adult novels, including but not limited to *The Running Dream* (Van Draanen, 2011), *Shooting the Moon* (Dowell, 2008), and *Wonderstruck* (Selznick, 2011) on the Walk the Walk blog; *Winter Town* (Emond, 2011) and *See You at Harry's* (Knowles, 2012) on the What's Not Wrong? blog; and *Dead to You* (McMann, 2012), *Leverage* (Cohen, 2011), *Divergent*, (Roth, 2011), and *Everybody Sees the Ants* (King, 2011) on the Y.A. Love blog. Whether crafted as reports on what students are reading or as formal reviews of novels read firsthand, blog posts concerning young adult literature may promote dialogic interactions and assist teachers in putting books in the hands of students who frequent their respective classroom libraries.

Writing instruction

Writing instruction was another popular topic among participating teachers. The subtitle of Brian's blog, Walk the Walk, is "A Writing Teacher's Blog..." Appropriately enough, Brian used his blog as a platform for exploring various aspects of writing

instruction, including conferring with students (e.g., “Halfway Point Reflection: Conferring”), providing writing mentors for students (e.g., “Mentors, Research, & Cubism as a Writer”), and revising one’s writing (e.g., “I Think Therefore I Revise”). In a blog post related to yet another aspect of teaching writing, Brian reported on his attempts to showcase the work students generate in his classroom. With “Literally Putting a Frame Around Them,” a post dated February 8, 2012, Brian offered a piece in which he described literally framing student work, his latest effort to elevate students’ writing in their own eyes.

Brian opened the post by explaining that, while cleaning up the remnants of a framed poster that fell in his classroom, he recalled a line from *Hidden Gems: Naming and Teaching from the Brilliance in Every Child’s Writing* (Bomer, 2010), a professional resource book he read and reviewed on his blog: “If we have to literally put a frame around a piece of writing to get kids to see their work as art then that is what we must do.” Continuing the post, Brian explained how Bomer’s line and the notion of putting the frame to use struck him:

> My teaching of writing has shifted in recent years—I no longer write on student writing. Using post-its and face-to-face conferring, I am trying to elevate their perception of themselves in their own eyes. This includes their writing…this especially includes their writing.

With the goal of elevating students’ perceptions of themselves and their writing, and in a clear dialogic response to Bomer’s *Hidden Gems*, Brian began framing students’ work. As he went on to explain, students began taking notice:

> Placing the frame directly over a portion of the class white board, I place a new piece of student writing inside each day. It has created a buzz… whose piece will show up next? Students gather around the bulletin boards and they scan the many one-pagers/book reviews posted around the room, but the energy and the smile the simple frame has generated has been quite a happy accident.

Complementing the written portion of the blog post, Brian capitalized on the multimodal affordances of his blog and included two images to illustrate what he had described in writing. Figure 5-7 features one of the images from the post, a shot of framed student work accompanied by a statement written on the board: “Treat your writing with respect. It is art.”

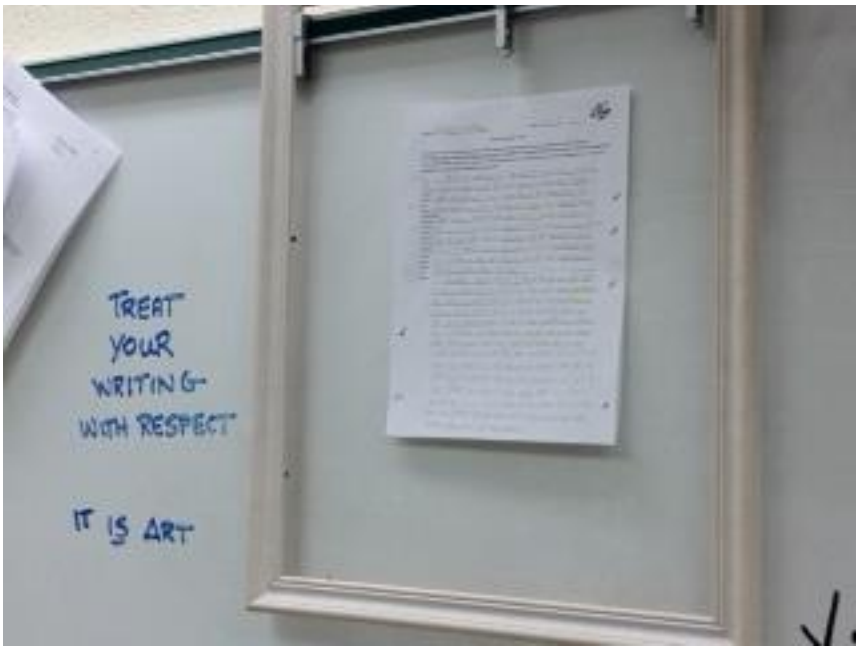


Figure 5-7. An image of framed student work featured on Brian’s blog, Walk the Walk. Photo courtesy of Brian Kelley.

After describing how he has also taken to framing sentences students have written while completing in-context vocabulary quizzes, Brian closed the post by sharing some final thoughts on his use of the frame to elevate student writing: “By using the simple frame I see the evidence that more students are seeing what they do as a piece of art…which is just another way of saying *important*…*valued*…*special*. Or elevating them in their own eyes.” By sharing his experimental method of showcasing student work, providing images to illustrate what he described, and capping the post with a closing testimonial, Brian offered an idea, in detail, for other teachers to consider as

they contemplate ways of supporting student writers in their respective classrooms. Moreover, with that post, Brian advocated a pedagogy that values student work and respects students as writers.

In addition to promoting broader ways of thinking about student writing, the participants in this study also encouraged the use of specific writing assignments in the secondary English classroom. For example, in “Zapping Apathy with College Application Essays,” a lengthy, multimodal post dated September 25, 2011, Gary encouraged teachers to use college application essays as a writing assignment with upper-grade students. Drawing upon his 32 years of classroom teaching experience, Gary rationalized the assignment upfront:

> Writing college essays as a class assignment provides an authentic audience, extreme personal relevance, and an opportunity for introspection—in other words, all the makings of a meaningful writing experience. Students appreciate the advice and guidance, not to mention receiving academic credit for something they would otherwise be doing on their own.

With a rationale boosted by the authenticity of the literacy event and the relevance it holds for many students, Gary went on to guide readers through the process he employs when teaching students to write college application essays. He highlighted the importance of helping students to recognize their audience and to identify personal experiences that can anchor an essay. He encouraged teachers to provide models of essays that have been successful for others and to engage students in peer review, nudging them to read from the perspective of an admissions officer at a college or university. Gary also encouraged teachers and students to attend to word counts, and he included multiple drafts of a student’s essay to illustrate how one might revise an essay to ensure that it is lighter on words and richer with emotional impact. In these

ways, Gary provided sound reasoning, veteran advice, and examples straight from the classroom to support teachers' writing instruction. Though writing specifically about college application essays, much of the guidance Gary offered could apply to most any writing assignment.

Many other posts on participants' blogs addressed the teaching of writing, including "Golden Lines: The Second Day of Class and More NWP Influence," "The Lens of Strong Nouns & Verbs," and "Stopped in our Tracks--Bridging the Writer's Notebook to Literature" from the Walk the Walk blog; "Writers Week XVIII and Community," "Zapping Apathy with Daily Journals," and "Brit Lit: Reading, Writing, and Relevance" from the What's Not Wrong? blog; and "Guest Post by Kelly Gallagher, @KellyGToGo," and "Guest Post from gmfunk: Multi-genre Inquiry Projects" from the #engchat blog.

Reading instruction

Alongside writing instruction, the teaching of reading was also a topic explored at length by participating teachers during this study. Specifically, reading aloud to students, fostering independent reading, maintaining classroom libraries, and facilitating book clubs were topics broached at various times via blogs, Twitter, and social network sites. In some cases, participants drew upon their own teaching practice to share experiences and to offer suggestions that other teachers might find helpful. For example, as described previously, Sarah set off a series of exchanges with her online peers via Twitter after sharing a link to "My Favorite Read Alouds," a post she wrote for her blog, Y.A. Love. In the post dated March 20, 2012, Sarah identified books that lend themselves to oral readings in the secondary classroom. After acknowledging one of her college professors as the inspiration for making read alouds part of her classroom

practice, Sarah wrote about her first attempt at reading a novel aloud as a pre-service teacher:

> I tried my first read aloud while student teaching. I had a few sophomore English classes, so I decided on *Shattering Glass* by Gail Giles. It's an edgy book, and there's some bad language and mature situations, but it's an excellent pick for reluctant readers. I was nervous about reading this during student teaching, but I went ahead and did it anyway. I had a rationale prepared and everything. My students loved it and often asked me to read "just one more chapter." Since then I'm much more comfortable reading books where characters swear, but I make sure to choose books that aren't over the top in that category. It sometimes shocks my students to hear me read those parts, but we have a conversation about why that language is in the book and how we won't be using that language in class.

By revisiting her first attempt at a read aloud and sharing the trepidation she felt, particularly due to her selection's coarse language and representation of mature situations, Sarah attempted to relate to readers of the post who might be reluctant to read a novel aloud to secondary students. Furthermore, recognition of the obstacles teachers might face when reading aloud (i.e., coarse language and mature situations) may serve notice to those taking up the practice for the first time. Sarah provided additional support for teachers by noting strategies one might employ when reading aloud, including preparing a rationale in advance, selecting audience-appropriate books, and engaging students in conversations about the contextual nature of language.

Sarah continued the post by offering the qualities she looks for in a potential read aloud:

> I like these books for a number of reasons, but one of the most important qualities I look for in a potential read aloud is the amount of dialogue. Too much dialogue can get confusing when reading it aloud, especially since the kids don't have the book in front of them to follow along. I also try to pick books that I know will be entertaining and have a nice moral. Shorter chapters are always a plus too. And I need to really like the book, too, because otherwise I'm not going to enjoy reading it out loud over and over again.

Informed by Sarah's firsthand experience reading novels aloud in the secondary English language arts classroom, such tips position readers to make thoughtful decisions when selecting texts to read aloud, should they opt to adopt the practice. That is, rather than selecting books blindly, readers of this post are prepared to choose titles that lend themselves to oral readings by looking for specific features such as the length of chapters and the amount of dialogue featured.

Drawing upon her classroom teaching experience, Sarah then shared her favorite read alouds and a few additional titles she intends to read aloud to future classes. Her favorites included *Speak* (Anderson, 1999), *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008), *Hex Hall* (Hawkins, 2010), and *Boy21* (Quick, 2012). In explaining her preferences, Sarah referenced the features she noted previously, as she did in this explanation for her selection of *Boy21*:

> *Boy21* is a powerful read with a fantastic message without being preachy. It's diverse, has guy appeal without alienating the girls, and it's humorous. The chapters are short so I have more flexibility in how much I choose to read each day. Finley doesn't like to talk that much, so the dialogue is balanced with Finley's thoughts and observations. Right now my kids are really curious about Russ, aka Boy21, and what's going to happen between him and Finley as the story progresses.

By providing titles and explaining what makes them ideal read alouds for the secondary English classroom, Sarah offered readers of her blog the opportunity to make reading books aloud an immediate part of their teaching practice. She saved teachers the time it takes to sift through potential titles and pointed them in the direction of titles that have proven value as read aloud texts for the secondary classroom.

In addition to resource-sharing related to specific teaching practices, participants explored broader pedagogical concerns regarding reading instruction. For example, in a blog post he wrote in July 2011, Gary challenged readers' thinking about the methods

and goals of reading instruction. In “Learning Reading or Loving Reading,” Gary explored the balance required between reading instruction, literary instruction, and opportunities for pleasure reading in an English language arts classroom:

> Yesterday I found myself saying in an online discussion forum that “teaching reading, teaching literature, and nurturing a love of reading are three different pedagogies with some overlapping areas.” I wonder if this explains why some of the literacy activities we use are actually counter-productive.

In addressing the first two pedagogical threads he identified, teaching reading and teaching literature, Gary acknowledged the value of supporting a student’s capacity to make inferences and comprehend texts. He also recognized the importance of students understanding grand ideas in the development of culture and the literature teacher’s role in that. But Gary questioned, ultimately, how far such reading and literary pedagogical approaches will move students toward a “lifelong love of reading.” Gary conceded that “[we] cannot force anyone to learn. We cannot force anyone to love anything, including reading.” Still, Gary asserted, teachers can “build cultures and use classroom practices that motivate students to find books they enjoy.”

Gary concluded the post by advocating a balance among the three pedagogical strands, warning against schools shortchanging “experiences that nourish a love of reading,” though he did not pretend to know the magic formula required to strike that ideal balance. Rather, Gary closed by turning to the teachers in his readership, inviting them to help him think through how one might balance the three pedagogical threads he identified: “So, what’s the appropriate balance of reading instruction, literary instruction, and pleasure reading opportunities in our classrooms? Your success (or horror) stories are welcome and appreciated.”

A number of other posts from participants' blogs addressed matters related to reading instruction. Such posts included "My Literary Achilles' Heel" from the Y.A. Love blog, "Liking and Hating Have No Home" from the Walk the Walk blog, "Why Read?" from the What's Not Wrong? blog, and "The Top Ten Reasons to Host a Book Club at Your School" from the Nerdy Book Club blog.

Summary

To varying degrees, the five secondary English teachers featured in this study engaged in professionally oriented participation online via blogs, Twitter, and social network sites. Cutting across cases, this chapter presented findings related to two of the three research questions that guided this study: (a) What are the features of the online contexts that selected secondary English teachers weave in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy? (b) What is the nature of selected secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online in terms of the practices they carry out and the topics they address?

The findings resulted from an ethnographic content analysis of collected online artifacts and triangulation with data generated through semi-structured interviews. Cutting across cases, findings indicated that notable contextual features included multimodal affordances and a/synchronous flexibility, as recognized from a surround view of context, and classroom teaching experiences, connections among teachers online, and a touch of levity, as recognized from a weaving view of context.

Findings also provided insights regarding the nature of the selected teachers' participation online. Across each of the five cases, five prominent participatory practices emerged: supporting teachers, seeking support, promoting one's own online content, curating ideas and information, and providing status updates. Furthermore, findings

revealed that the selected teachers addressed three central topics as they participated online in exploration of issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy: young adult literature, writing instruction, and reading instruction.

The next chapter features findings related to the exploration of the third research question that guided this study: How do selected secondary English teachers experience professionally oriented participation online?

Figure 5-8. A screenshot of an excerpt from a synchronous exchange in a discussion forum featured in the 2011 ECN Summer Webstitute

Figure 5-9. An image of a bookshelf in Sarah's classroom library. Photo courtesy of Sarah Andersen.

Figure 5-10. An image of student work on display in Sarah's classroom. Photo courtesy of Sarah Andersen.

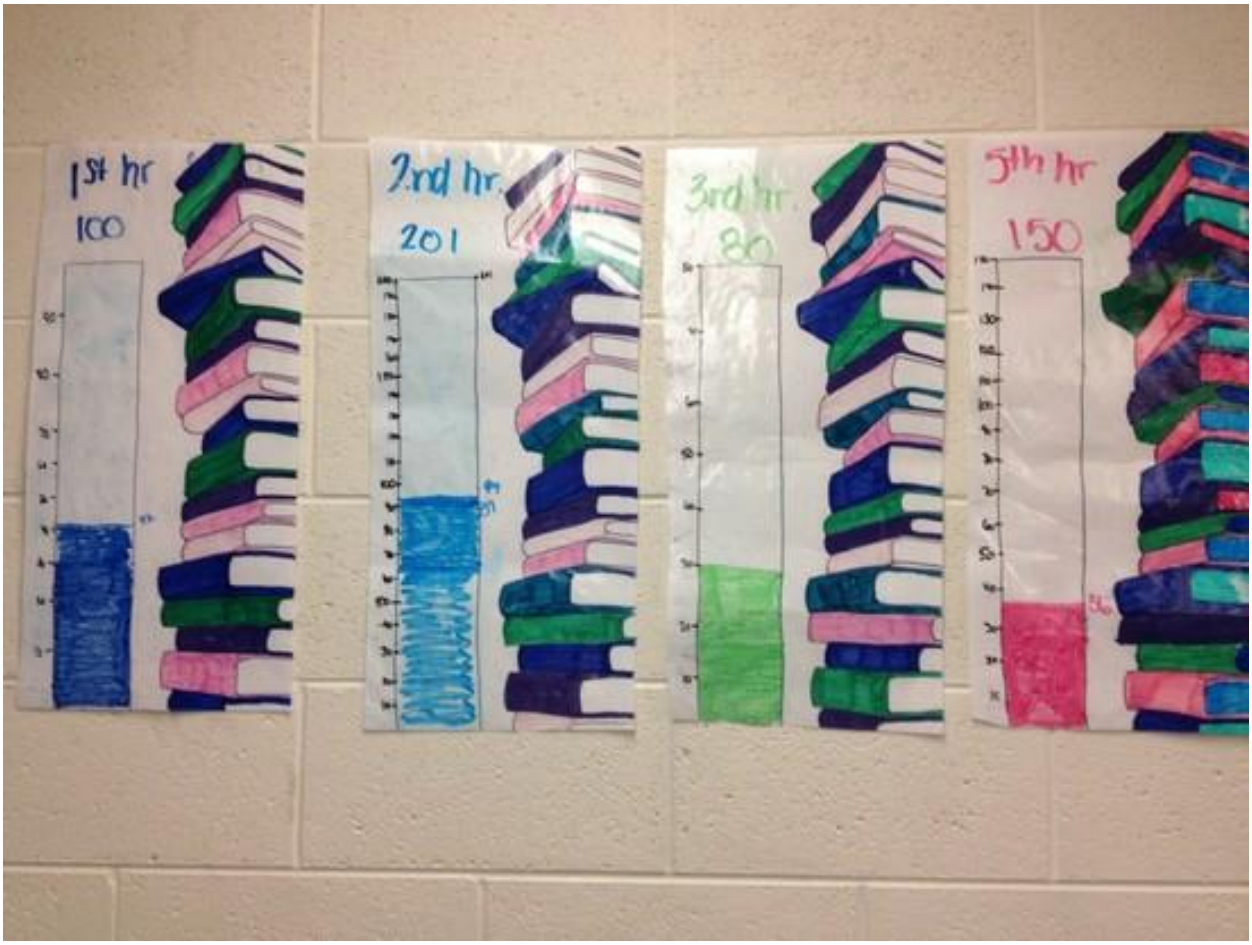


Figure 5-1. An image of class reading goals in Sarah's classroom. Photo courtesy of Sarah Andersen.

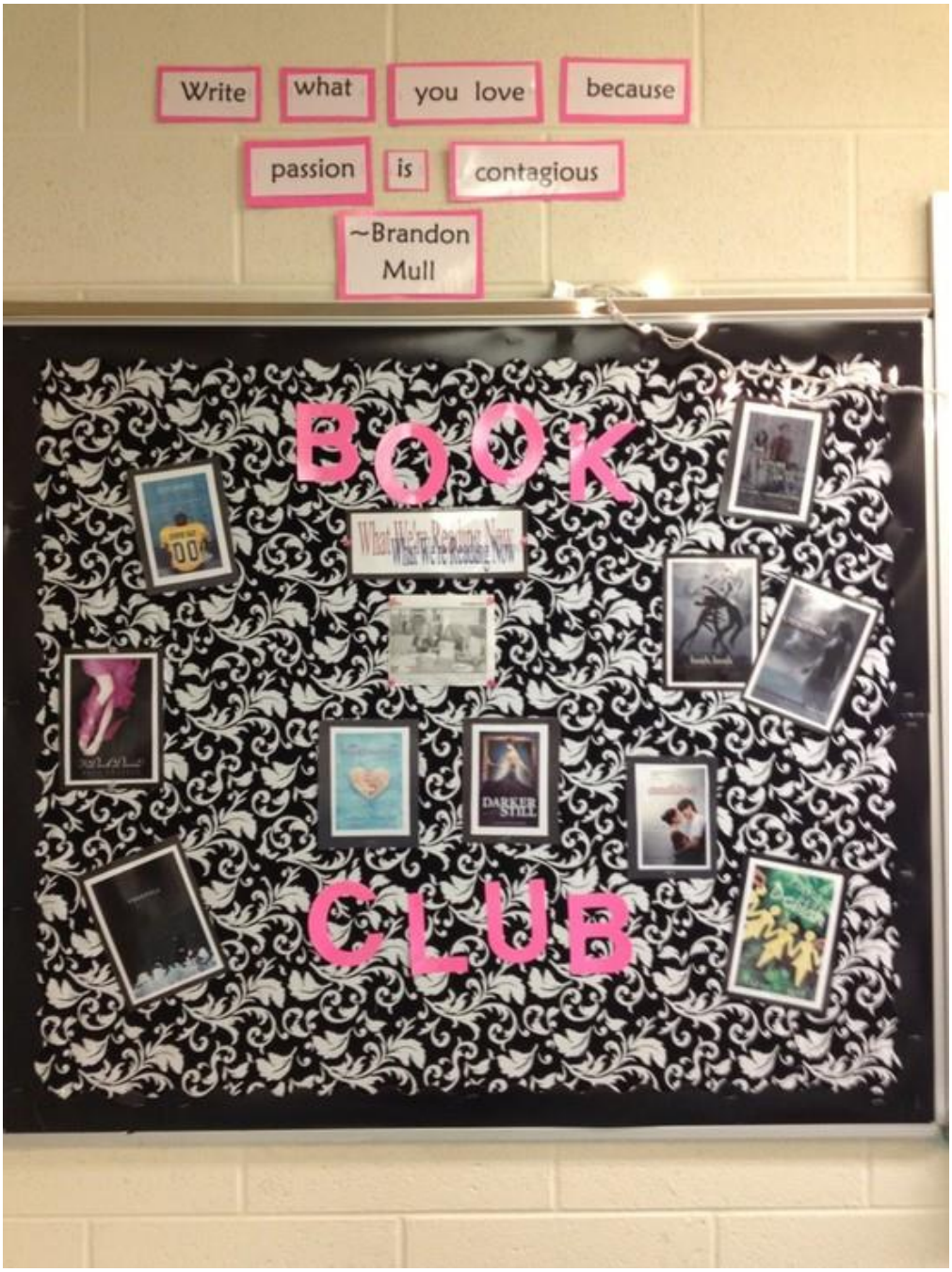


Figure 5-2. An image of a bulletin board promoting the extracurricular book club Sarah advises at her school. Photo courtesy of Sarah Andersen.

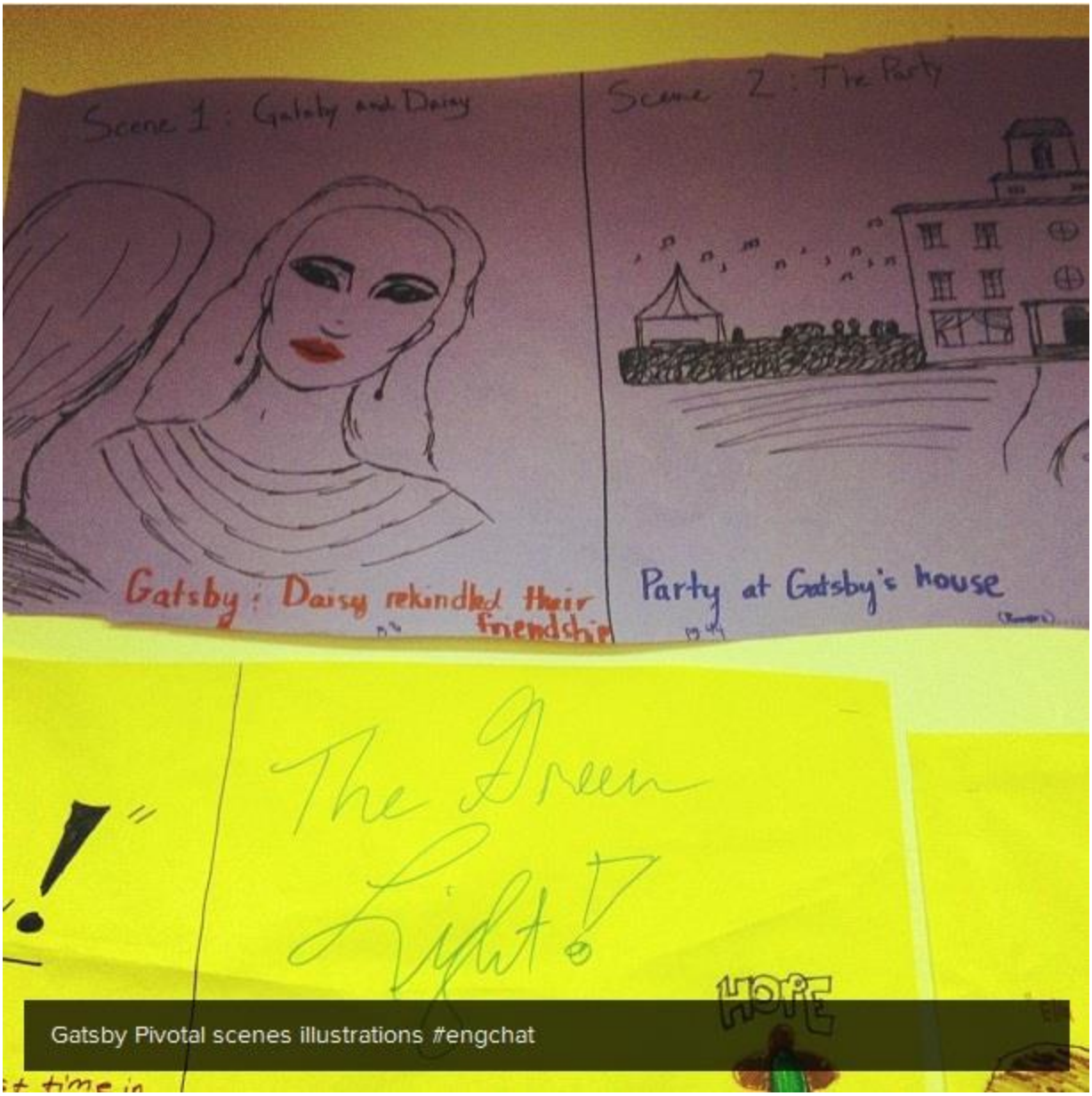


Figure 5-33. A screenshot of an image of student-generated scene illustrations created in Meenoo's classroom. Photo courtesy of Meenoo Rami.

Figure 5-14. A screenshot of an image of students developing essential questions in Meenoo's classroom. Photo courtesy of Meenoo Rami.

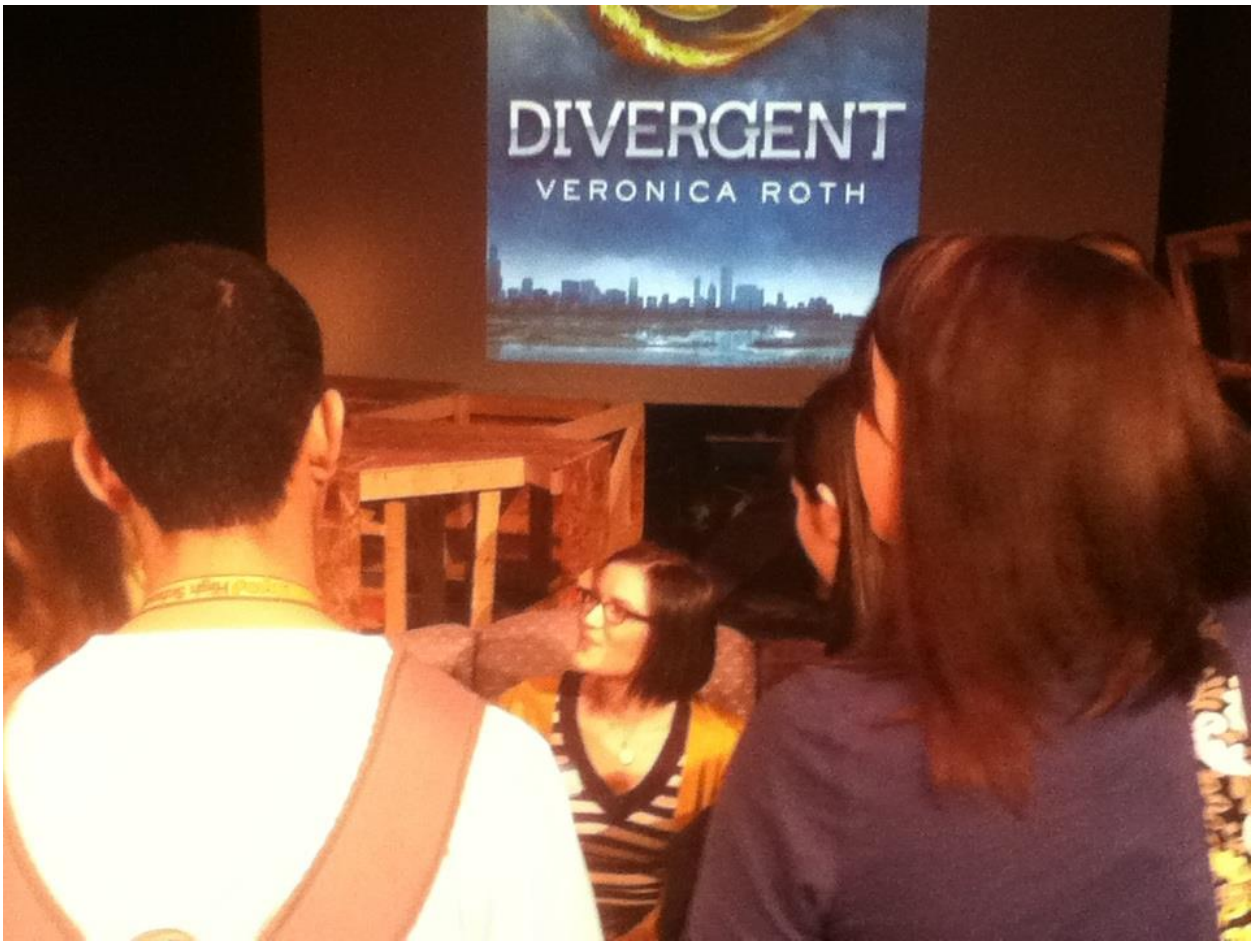


Figure 5-45. An image of author Veronica Roth visiting with students as part of an event Gary and his onsite colleagues organized. Photo courtesy of Gary Anderson.

CHAPTER 6
PHASE II: FINDINGS ACROSS CASES

The purpose of this qualitative study was to begin building an understanding of secondary English teachers' participation online as they explore issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy. Three central questions guided my research:

- What are the features of the online contexts that selected secondary English teachers weave in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy?
- What is the nature of selected secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online in terms of the practices they carry out and the topics they address?
- How do selected secondary English teachers experience professionally oriented participation online?

Having addressed findings related to the first two questions in Chapter 5, I devote this chapter to addressing the third research question.

To illuminate the ways the secondary English teachers featured in this study experience professionally oriented participation online, I present the findings that resulted from an analysis of narratives pulled from the transcripts of a series of semi-structured interviews. Findings across cases suggest that the featured teachers experienced professionally oriented participation online as a way of (a) finding relief from a perceived sense of isolation, (b) establishing a network of support, (c) informing thinking and shaping practice, (d) positioning themselves as writers, (e) opening doors to new professional opportunities, and (f) enhancing their capacity to support students. Each of the six themes is explored in-depth below. As relevant, I address the insights gleaned from analyzing the structure of the narratives featured.

Finding Relief from a Perceived Sense of Isolation

During the initial interview with each participant, I asked, “Is there something you get from participating online that you were missing before you started?” Consistently, the selected English teachers described their experiences engaging in professionally oriented participation online as helping them combat a sense of isolation they have perceived during their professional careers. To illustrate, I share two narratives that emerged following that prompt, the first from Sarah and the second from Meenoo.

SA1.11: It’s Very Reassuring

With this narrative, Sarah captured the sense of isolation and self-doubt she has felt at times during the early part of her teaching career, and she clarified its origin. Sarah opened the narrative with an abstract that summarized what she gains from participating online: “[By participating online] I have reassurance that what I’m doing in my classroom—even though it’s different from what the other teachers in my department are doing—is not bad.” As she had when constructing a previous narrative (i.e., SA1.9: I Sometimes Feel Like a Black Sheep), Sarah indicated that differences in the pedagogical approaches she and her onsite colleagues embrace factored into her perceived sense of isolation. Previously, Sarah described finding relief upon seeing that her online peers’ practices and beliefs aligned with her views on teaching and learning. In a similar fashion, Sarah opened this narrative explaining that her participation online affirms that her practice, though perhaps different than that of her onsite colleagues, is not inferior. With that opening, Sarah set the stage for the complicating action of her narrative, where she explained more fully the source of her self-doubt:

> **Complicating Action:** A lot of times before [I started participating online] I would leave the building feeling like I’m a bad teacher because I wasn’t killing my kids with grammar and drill-and-kill exercises….there’s a lot

> traditional teaching—not that that's a bad thing—but there's a lot of traditional teaching in my department, and I'm more of an out-of-the-box thinker—or at least I try to be. I want to be. So I kept thinking, 'Wow. Am I not doing what I'm supposed to be doing? Am I leading my kids astray? Are they going to fail the ACT, the [state exam]? Am I just not preparing them for life?'

By adding that complicating action to her narrative, Sarah offered insight into why she finds reassurance through her participation online. For Sarah, taking the pedagogical road less traveled has prompted her to question her efficacy as a teacher, and, at times, it has fostered a sense of isolation despite the physical proximity of her onsite colleagues.

As Sarah continued, she explained how, through her professionally oriented participation online, she resolved the complication she faced, finding that the seemingly isolated road she took onsite was well-traveled after all, for it was populated by her online peers:

> **Resolution:** And I really would have moments thinking like that, and then I got on Twitter and met other teachers and even some librarians and it was like, 'Oh. Oh! Okay! They're doing the exact same thing I am! And they have even better ideas than what I've been doing!'

Here, as Sarah alluded to in the narrative's abstract, she explained how her participation online and her engagement with other teachers offered her reassurances about her own pedagogical choices. Sarah seems to find strength in numbers. That is, for example, if other English teachers whose work she respects are making independent reading a priority, then perhaps her students could benefit from that practice as well, or so the thinking goes. With the final line in this segment—"And they have even better ideas than what I've been doing!"—Sarah suggests that, in addition to finding assurances about her practice, participating online has positioned her to pick up new ideas that may enhance instruction in her own classroom.

Next, Sarah offered an evaluation that mirrored the narrative's abstract, emphasizing the reassurance she finds through her participation online:

> **Evaluation:** And so it's very reassuring, knowing that I can go there and talk to them and knowing that a lot of them are dealing with the exact same thing that I'm dealing with and they wish that they had someone else in their department who was doing some of those exact same things.

As before, Sarah indicated that she finds comfort in knowing that she is not alone, that she has other professionals to whom she can turn, and, because some of her online peers are in situations similar to her own, they can turn to her as well.

Sarah concluded the narrative by stressing the comfort she finds through her participation online, citing past exchanges with her online peers to make her point with this coda:

> **Coda:** [Online colleagues and I] have talked a lot about how we wish we could all teach at the same school, [laughs] and have like this Twitter dream school. But at the same time we know that you want to have teachers spread out and all that. But it's a reassuring kind of thing, and I've just gotten amazing ideas and feedback from them.

Those final remarks—particularly an expressed desire to teach in the same school as those with whom she shares a similar approach when it comes to matters related to teaching, learning, and literacy—emphasize the comfort Sarah finds in the virtual company of her online peers and the value she places on shared pedagogical philosophies. Sarah, in closing, reiterated her view on what she gains from participating online that was missing before she started; she stressed the reassurance she feels and the ideas and feedback she has received from her online peers as the primary benefits of her professionally oriented participation online.

Considering this narrative as a whole, it becomes clear that, for Sarah, professionally oriented participation online has offered relief from the self-doubt and

isolation she has felt at times due to the pedagogical differences that seem to separate her from some of her onsite colleagues. Participating online puts Sarah in touch with others who embrace pedagogical methods that mirror her own, reassuring her that she is not alone in finding merit in instructional approaches that veer away from tradition.

MR1.10: I Was No Longer Feeling Isolated

Like Sarah, Meenoo responded to the question "Is there something you get from participating online that you were missing before you started?" by sharing a narrative that revealed a sense of isolation she felt previously in her career. Meenoo opened the narrative with an orienting segment about her current workplace that shed light on her motivations for participating online in the first place:

> **Orientation:** If you had asked me this and I had worked at [this school] my entire teaching career, I would have never done any of these things. There are just amazing people here doing amazing things. Some of them are on Twitter; some of them are not on Twitter. But if I was teaching at a school like this, I would have never done these things even though my principal is like one of those rock star Twitter people with over 10,000 followers. I would have never done these things because I wouldn't have needed it.

At the end of that opening orienting segment, Meenoo implied that she began participating online because she had a need she hoped it would fill. By providing that orienting segment, Meenoo prepared me for the complicating-action/evaluation sequence she offered next, shedding light on the need she referenced previously:

> **Complicating Action:** But before I started teaching at [this school] I was teaching at—even though it was a very good school and I love that school as well—I was teaching in a fairly traditional urban high school. People taught what they taught, they closed their door, and they kind of took grading home or didn't. Teaching wasn't this intense thing that it was for me.
>
> **Evaluation:** I felt isolated. I felt lonely. I felt disconnected. I felt like I was the only one trying to do things new and innovative in my classroom. I didn't necessarily have colleagues that I could go and talk to about their practice.

In the segment above, Meenoo explained the need she felt prior to taking her current position: the need to remedy her sense of isolation and loneliness. Feeling disconnected from her onsite colleagues due to pedagogical differences, Meenoo longed to engage others in conversations about teaching, learning, and literacy. In turning to others online, Meenoo aimed to connect teachers at a distance in ways she was not able to connect with her onsite colleagues.

Meenoo elaborated on her need to connect with others in the next segment of her narrative, as she stepped back to evaluate how her current work environment is shaping her participation online:

> **Evaluation:** Now, in some ways, I don't think I'm doing as much work online this year because I have these really intense connections here at school that kind of meet those needs. Needs like talking about my practice, problem-solving issues I face in the classroom, encouragement for work, getting new ideas, taking risks. All of that I'm getting in-house.

Although Meenoo originally started participating online to fill her need to explore with others issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy, the evaluative segment above indicates that now, in her current position, Meenoo recognizes that need being met onsite. That is, the conversations, encouragement, and ideas Meenoo once sought online are now available in-house, and she enjoys the connections she has made with colleagues within the building where she works. After establishing that notable shift in her experience, Meenoo then returned to the complication of her prior experience, elaborating further on the challenges she faced:

> **Complicating Action:** But before coming to [this school], I was like, 'There's got to be more. There's got to be people doing interesting things. Why do I not know them? What am I doing wrong? Why are my kids not getting it?' Just typical things.

In labeling such self-doubt and lingering questions as “typical things,” Meenoo seemed to recognize that she was not alone in feeling the way she did, that other teachers—like some of her fellow participants in this study—have felt the same way at one time or another.

Then, Meenoo offered the narrative’s resolution as she declared the benefits she has gained from participating online, including a reduced sense of isolation:

> **Resolution:** And I think those are the things that I gained that I wouldn’t have if I didn’t start sharing my work online. I was no longer isolated. I was no longer feeling lonely. People were checking in on me. People knew that I was doing National Board work.

Like other participants in this study, Meenoo found that her participation online assisted her in combating the perceived sense of isolation she felt at times, particularly early in her career, before taking her current teaching position. Through her participation online Meenoo began connecting with other teachers and, accordingly, reported feeling a reduced sense of isolation and loneliness.

This narrative serves as another illustration of the sense of isolation many English teachers perceive within the buildings where they work, a phenomenon documented by scholars such as McCann et al. (2005). Like other participants in this study, Meenoo reported feeling a pedagogical divide that separated her from colleagues at her former school. Also, like other participants, Meenoo reported that participating online helped her connect with teachers with whom she could share ideas and explore issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy. Thus, this narrative also serves as an illustration of the ways professionally oriented participation online may help teachers connect with peers at a distance, providing alternatives to the colleagues with whom they have not connected onsite.

The fact that English teachers featured in this study described experiencing professionally oriented participation online as helping them find relief from a perceived sense of isolation seems to be the product of another theme that emerged from their narratives: establishing a network of support.

Establishing a Network of Support

As I analyzed the narratives teachers in this study constructed about their experiences exploring teaching, learning, and literacy online, it became clear that the relationships they form with others online—relationships that often transcend the virtual environment—are valued as much as any other benefit they might find. To the English teachers taking part in this study, the relationships they have formed with others online serve as the foundation of a network of support. As described in the narrative that follows, such relationships may reflect the kinds of informal mentorship that are characteristic of participatory cultures (Jenkins, 2006b).To illustrate how this theme arose in the narratives participants constructed, I present an exemplary narrative constructed by Cindy.

CM2.4: It's Almost like a Pay-It-Forward Sort of Model

Illustrating the value of establishing a network of support online, Cindy constructed a narrative about a face-to-face encounter she had with an online peer. Cindy opened the narrative with a lengthy abstract that captured the supportive nature of some of the online peers she has gotten to know over the years:

> **Abstract:** I think that Donalyn happens to be part of this really nifty group of people—I would lump Teri in that group and Paul and most of the people that I've met and interacted with at the National Writing Project. They like to see people move forward. They want to kind of nudge you in the right direction and see you succeed. And it's almost like a pay-it-forward sort of model, from what I understand.

The individuals Cindy mentioned above appeared multiple times in the interview transcripts generated during the data collection period. In the abstract above, Cindy acknowledged them as supportive figures with whom she has connected online. In doing so, she introduced what she calls a "pay-it-forward" model, a reference to the concept of individuals re-paying a good deed by doing the same for someone else. Cindy's introduction of that concept prepared me for what was to come as she continued the narrative, orienting me to the circumstances of the action she would go on to recall:

> **Orientation:** I remember when we were in Florida [for the 2010 NCTE Convention] I went to the ALAN breakfast and I was sitting with Paul and Donalyn and Mindi and a few other people. I think Kellee was there.

Though Cindy did not state it directly here, I know from our conversations that each of the teachers mentioned above are individuals she first got to know online, and each teaches in a different state, ranging from Indiana and Illinois to Texas and Florida. In light of the fact that the teachers' backgrounds are disparate geographically, their presence together at a professional conference attended by thousands of educators seems to reinforce the way relationships forged online may extend beyond the virtual world.

After orienting me to the setting and the characters on the scene, Cindy offered the narrative's complicating action, re-constructing a time when one of her online peers, a professor of children's and young adult literature, began introducing her to other professionals in the field:

> **Complicating Action:** And afterwards we were standing there and Teri came over, and she started introducing me to people. I was like, 'Wait a minute. I have his book. Oh my gosh! I have his book! I have her book! Why are you introducing me to these people? I'm not anybody! I haven't done anything! I teach. That's it.' And she looked at me and said, 'You know, the

> first time I came to one of these things somebody took me under their wing and started introducing me around. That's what I'm doing for you.' She was like, 'I like to do that. It's something I can do.' And I'm still sitting there shaking.

From the exchange Cindy re-constructed, it becomes clear how she came to associate a pay-it-forward model with the actions of her online peers: Someone once was thoughtful enough to offer Teri the professional courtesy of introducing her to others in the field, and she reciprocated by doing the same for Cindy, whom she had gotten to know through interactions online. As the audience for Cindy's narrative, I was left to infer from her enthusiastic telling (hence the five exclamation points in the transcribed version of the account) and the closing line of this segment that being on the receiving end of Teri's thoughtful gesture and meeting renowned professionals in the field of English education was important to Cindy. Cindy's take on the experience and her thoughts about her online peers became more evident as she stepped back in reflection to offer this evaluation:

> **Evaluation:** I think that's really kind of an interesting sort of positive, collaborative sort of thing. I'm sure there are those out there that are just kind of, 'I'm not going to share. It's mine.' But most of the people that I interact with [online] are the ones who want to see you succeed. They want to encourage you to do one thing bigger and better than you did the day before. They're—they're teachers. I guess that's part of it. They don't understand the concept of not sharing, of not encouraging. That's what they do. I think it's neat.

From Cindy's perspective, as teachers, the individuals with whom she has connected online have a general disposition toward supporting and encouraging one another, toward looking out for each other as they share advice, resources, and experiences. And, as Cindy noted in the opening and closing sentences of the evaluation above, she appreciates that about her online peers.

In the end, Cindy closed the narrative by declaring her intentions to advance the pay-it-forward cycle she experienced firsthand:

> **Resolution:** I fully intend to continue that cycle.
>
> **Coda:** It's a culture thing. And it seems like most of the people I've interacted with on Twitter who are educators are in that same category.

By concluding the narrative as she did, Cindy revealed her recognition of the pay-it-forward habit of her online peers as more than a mere model. She identified it as a culture within which many educators participate online. Appreciating what she had experienced in that culture to date, Cindy announced her intention to keep that culture alive by supporting others she encounters online.

This narrative, like others constructed during this study, recalls the capacity for teachers to forge relationships with other educators through professionally oriented participation online, and it speaks to the potential for those relationships to serve as the foundation for a network of support. As teachers report feeling isolated within their school buildings for one reason or another, such networks seem to provide teachers with support that helps to sustain them in the face of growing demands, as multiple narratives in this study revealed. As reported in Chapter 5, such support may come in the form of comments offering comfort in response to teachers' blog posts, tweets offering pedagogical suggestions and sentiments of encouragement, and reaffirming responses to discussion forum entries. Furthermore, a supportive relationship like the one evident in the narrative Cindy constructed reflects the kinds of relationships that are described in various affinity groups (Gee, 2004), including communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002).

BK1.1: It Represented the Very Thing I Was Trying to Get Away From

All participants in this study spoke highly of other professionals they had met virtually and connected with online, just as Cindy did in the narrative above. However, there was a narrative that stood as an outlier, a telling that seemed to run counter to the notion of establishing networks of support. Striving to construct a clear representation of participants' experiences online, I thought it was important to present such disconfirming evidence.

Each experience participants reported about engaging others online seemed to fall in line with the notion of establishing networks of support, but Brian recalled one contrary experience he had on the English Companion Ning (ECN):

> **Orientation:** There was a teacher I would say who was a closer to retirement than starting her career on the [English Companion] Ning.
>
> **Complicating Action:** When she would comment on people's posts, whether it was about a lesson they taught or asking a question—'Hey, anybody have an idea for this?'—it was judgmental. Really judgmental.
>
> **Evaluation:** And it represented the very thing I was trying to get away from—collegial judgment doesn't help anybody. This has little to do with the person and more to do with education because offensive or defensive venting is probably representative of everyone in education at one time or another. I just didn't need my time away from the office to be spent immersed in situations identical to what I tried to put behind me for the day.
>
> **Complicating Action:** And she, um, often incited arguments back and the feeling that I sometimes got when I first started teaching from older teachers: 'Oh, you'll get it. You'll learn. You don't know yet.'

In the first half of this narrative, Brian oriented me to a teacher with whom he engaged online and found to be a bit abrasive. As Brian recalled, in response to the inquiries of others, the teacher added comments he interpreted as expressing a judgmental tone and being argumentative in nature. Looking to the ECN for judgment-and-argument-free collegiality, Brian was clearly frustrated with the situation, as he explained:

Evaluation: And that's so counter-productive in this, in this business. So it turned me off.

Complicating Action: And I consciously pulled back. I didn't comment, and I commented less there,

Evaluation: but I still needed that outlet to write.

Resolution: So I found my blog.

Coda: I'm happy.

In the second half of the narrative, Brian explained that he found the teacher's presence to be so counter-productive to what he sought to do in the ECN that he stepped back, ceased commenting, and found another outlet: his blog. Over the course of the narrative, Brian took a negative—encounters with an abrasive teacher in the ECN—and turned it into a positive—his blog. Though he may get less traffic by blogging on an independent site than he might by exploring ideas within the confines of the ECN, Brian seemed content focusing on his writing in what he deemed to be a judgment-free zone while still checking in occasionally on the ECN.

A notable contrast in the structure of narratives Cindy and Brian constructed is the complicating-action/evaluation pattern evident in Brian's recollection of his encounters with an abrasive teacher on the ECN. Part of that contrast might be due to the fact that the complicating action of Cindy's narrative was not much of a "complication" at all. Granted, Cindy's complicating action presented the events of the narrative—and the events are undoubtedly informative—but in terms of being a *problem* to resolve, it was not much of one. Accordingly, one solid segment represented the narrative's complicating action, and one corresponding evaluative segment followed in a straightforward manner. The structure of Brian's narrative, however, was a bit more complex, following the lead of his complicating action.

Brian's narrative was marked by three consecutive shifts between complicating action and a corresponding evaluation. Beyond standing in contrast with Cindy's narrative, the repetitive complicating-action/evaluation pattern is noteworthy, for it was not common to Brian's narratives. However, it seems that, in recalling a negative experience, extensive evaluation like that which Brian offered is only fitting. Evaluations tend to reveal one's reactions and feelings about an event and to offer some conjecture, explanation, or interpretation of those feelings (McVee, 2004). In crafting this narrative, Brian found himself interpreting his response to what he perceived to be a negative stimulus. In the midst of an interview that featured reconstructions of many positive experiences online, perhaps the heavy complicating-action/evaluation pattern arose because he felt compelled to explain why the experience was not as positive as other experiences he had shared. Regardless, the coda of Brian's narrative revealed his contentment in the present day, as he found an outlet for his writing while standing free of the abrasiveness he sought to avoid.

Affinity groups and participatory cultures, as Gee (2004) and Jenkins (2006b) contend, are marked by supportive relationships among members. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in the narrative Brian constructed, online environments, like brick-and-mortar sites, may be populated by individuals who are less-than-supportive. Additionally, Bakhtin (1986) asserted that an utterance, as a link in the dialogic chain, seeks response. However, Bakhtin did not promise that the response it finds would be a positive one.

Informing Thinking, Shaping Practice

Beyond finding support and relieving a sense of isolation, the English teachers featured in this study revealed through multiple narratives that their professionally

oriented participation online has informed their thinking about teaching, learning, and literacy and, as a result, shaped their teaching practice. As their narratives suggest, through social, communicative processes online, such as organized online book clubs and asynchronous discussion forums in social network sites, the teachers in this study have extended their thinking as it relates to pedagogical matters and altered their teaching practice accordingly.

GA2.2: English Companion Ning was Doing Some Book Clubs

One lengthy narrative Gary constructed about participating in an online book club illustrates this finding. Gary opened the narrative with a passage that served as a lengthy abstract summarizing what would unfold:

> **Abstract:** I think when English Companion Ning was doing some book clubs—I'll single out the Kelly Gallagher *Readicide* book club—it was enormously influential for me. I read that book, and it was talking about—I mean, I read that book and I had to plead guilty on every page almost. And that book changed the way I thought about how students learn to read and how schools teach students to read and I learned so much from that online book club, not only from Kelly, but also from other participants who were taking his ideas and doing them in different ways. So, I would say the English Companion Ning book clubs, and the *Readicide* one specifically, were really, really influential for me.

With that extended summary, Gary made clear to me the influence he has found his participation in online book clubs to have on his practice. The summary Gary offered also prepared me for the prominent role his participation in the English Companion Ning's *Readicide* (Gallagher, 2009) online book club, in particular, would have in the narrative he was constructing. In step with his summary, Gary continued with a sub-narrative that, while serving as an orientation in the larger narrative, explained how pedagogical ideas he picked up through his participation in the online book club took form in his classroom:

Orientation – Sub-narrative: I was doing 95-99% whole-class stuff

> **Orientation:** One of the tenets of that book is that we over-teach the books and we under-teach the books, and that students, you know, need about 50%. If they're going to learn to read well, they need about 50% of their reading material to be self-chosen and the other 50% can be whole-class.
>
> **Complicating Action:** I was doing 95-99% whole-class stuff, so I experimented with a sophomore class. The first 10 minutes of each day was reading whatever book you want. And they're accountable for that. I've got a grading system for that.
>
> **Evaluation:** And it's been enormously successful. Kids are reading all the time. A lot of kids drop out of reading for choice around fourth or fifth grade. So many kids have said, 'It's good to be reading again. It's good to have books back in my life again.' We talk about books, and we book-talk all the time.

In the sub-narrative above, Gary drew a direct line between a concept he encountered through his participation in the online book club—the 50/50 balance between choice and whole-class readings—and his own practice. First he noted the contrast between Gallagher's recommended reading breakdown and that which he used in his own classroom. Then Gary described how he changed his approach thereafter by simply allotting 10 minutes of each day to independent reading. Furthermore, Gary reported the success he has found as a result of the pedagogical shift, noting students' positive reactions to the increase in choice reading.

Following that orienting sub-narrative, Gary continued the larger narrative and provided the following sequence, reiterating the way his engagement in an online book club around *Readicide* (Gallagher, 2009) informed his thinking and shaped his practice:

> **Complicating Action:** Before I [participated in the online book club] I did things a certain way. Then I read *Readicide* and participated in that [book club]. Now I do things differently and better.
>
> **Evaluation:** That book helped me see my own practice in a whole new light, and the light wasn't that favorable.

> **Resolution:** So I made some changes in terms of how I structure my whole-class and choice reading material. It also started some intra-departmental discussion on similar issues. That discussion was not sustained in any comprehensive way, but after implementing some of the suggestions in *Readicide*, I continue to refine the way those changes are used in my class. So…I can put a finger on a concrete example where that improved my practice, not to mention that that book then became the summer reading book for our department.

The resolution Gary offered in the sequence above went beyond the shift he made in his own classroom. As he explained it, the book and his discussion about it in an online book club helped to spark discussions locally, with the brick-and-mortar colleagues in his department. Gary elaborated on the book's influence in his building in a sub-narrative that extended his resolution:

> **Resolution – Sub-narrative: I think everybody in our department read that book**
>
> **Orientation:** I think everybody in our department read that book or almost everybody in our department read that book. Several of my colleagues have used aspects of it in their practice, too. I'm not going to say that it all came through me, but it came on my radar through English Companion Ning.
>
> **Complicating Action:** When I had that book around, one of my colleagues read it and bought copies for other people, and then it kind of caught fire.
>
> **Evaluation:** It's been an important book in our English department's culture.
>
> **Complicating Action:** Either me or one of my colleagues gave a copy to our principal, and she read it. You know, she wrote back a little note to me that basically said, 'I admire his balanced approach.'
>
> **Evaluation:** So that book went from an English Companion Ning book club to inserting its tentacles in our school in a variety of ways.

With the sub-narrative above, Gary detailed another result of his experience in the ECN's *Readicide* book club. Just as Gary described ideas explored in dialogue with the text and with online colleagues reverberating in his classroom, he described how the

book he read with colleagues at a distance became one he read with onsite colleagues and an administrator in his building.

Given the extensive and firm position Gary took on the betterment of his practice as a result of his engagement with the text in the ECN book club, I pressed him to explain how he could be so sure of the results he described. He explained the source of his certainty in what would serve as the coda of this lengthy narrative:

> **Coda:** Kids tell me [the change has been effective]. That's pretty valuable for me. The kids say, 'I didn't used to read books.' 'I stopped reading books.' 'I did the CliffsNotes versions, or I didn't read at all.' Now, with 10 minutes a day, it's 'I'm reading books.' 'I'm finishing books.' 'I find myself reading books outside of school.' 'I read books every night.' A more objective indication might be that in the course of this year, I haven't counted it, but more and more Nooks and Kindles are showing up in my class. That's telling me that these kids are being seen as readers when it wasn't that way at the beginning of the year. I had maybe one Nook or Kindle in each class. Now I have five or six or seven. So, that tells me that for those kids, anyway, books and reading are more important in their lives. Another way I know is I see it with my own two eyes. They're sitting there every day engrossed in their books, and it is stone silent in our classroom for those 10 minutes while everybody, including me, is reading a book. I see it with my own two eyes.

Though perhaps drawing upon anecdotal evidence, Gary cited multiple measures to explain how he came to conclude that the shift in his practice has been for the better. From the testimonials of students to the increased presence of e-readers in his classroom and his own daily observations, Gary explained how he arrived at his conclusion.

With multiple sub-narratives, Gary constructed a complex narrative with a heavy emphasis on the resolution of the complicating action. That is, much of the narrative focused on the outcomes of his participation in the ECN's *Readicide* (Gallagher, 2009) book club. Gary placing such emphasis on the resolution in the structure of his narrative seems to underscore his conviction that the online book club had a meaningful impact

on his thinking about reading instruction, on students' reading habits—or at least those he witnessed in the classroom—and on the English department of which he is a member.

BK1.3: It Made Me Better Here

When prompted to talk about the ways he first started participating online, Brian shared an experience he had within the English Companion Ning (ECN):

> **Orientation:** I saw a rubric conversation [in a discussion forum on the English Companion Ning], and honestly I hadn't thought much about [rubrics] over 15 years of teaching. A rubric's a rubric. You follow the [state] rubric. Great. And I saw this conversation about the history of the rubric and how teachers are, um, we've lost our focus on it. We don't really understand what it was really intended as a tool. We're misusing it. So when we misuse it, we teach the kids to misuse it, and we teach parents to misuse it, and we have this conversation—completely inauthentic—about what the thing is supposed to be in the first place. And that interested me because I had never heard that.

With this narrative opening, Brian oriented me to the circumstances of a discussion about rubrics that was playing out in a forum on the ECN. As Brian recalled, a group of teachers' discussion about rubrics, including the fallout that occurs when teachers misuse the tool, got him thinking about issues he had not taken the time to consider during the previous 15 years he had been teaching English.

After establishing his interest in the rubric discussion, Brian continued by providing the narrative's action, explaining how his participation in the discussion forum put him in touch with professionals who shared a similar interest in the topic at hand:

> **Complicating Action:** So I just started to follow the conversation, and then the author of the book [mentioned in the discussion forum] was on the [English Companion] Ning, so she started to talk to me and other professors from colleges would weigh in on my questions about it, and all of a sudden I'm having a very valid, collegial conversation with people I didn't know but whose expertise I valued.

From the way Brian recalled the experience, his exploration of rubrics in an online discussion forum was facilitated by his genuine interest in the topic. Consequently, as Brian described it, he found himself immersed in a “very valid, collegial conversation.” As Brian revealed during our interviews, the authentic discussion that emerged from his genuine inquiry into the use of rubrics was an experience that stood in contrast against many of the traditional professional development offerings he had experienced during his teaching career.

Then, Brian offered a brief evaluation of the experience, likening it to the positive professional experiences he has enjoyed as a football coach: “And it was like that coaching thing, that fraternity. People were willing to share their ideas and thoughts, and no question was dumb. You know, I wasn’t judged on it.” For Brian, the collegiality displayed by professionals within that discussion forum was akin to the positive experiences he has enjoyed at football coaching clinics, where coaches share their philosophies, strategies, and instructional approaches openly and without reservation. As a former high-school football coach myself, I can appreciate the comparison. Brian found that the individuals participating in the rubric discussion forum, like the coaches he has met at football coaching clinics, were sharing ideas freely and were happy to answer questions without passing judgment. Considering Brian’s delivery of the narrative, it becomes clear that he appreciated such collegiality. Moreover, the notion of being free of judgment harks back to BK1.1: It Represented the Very Thing I was Trying to Get Away From, the narrative in which Brian shared his disdain for harsh teacher-on-teacher criticism.

Finally, Brian brought the narrative to a close, explaining the resolution or outcome of his participation in that rubric discussion forum as he saw it:

> **Resolution:** And it helped. It made me better here. [brings hand down to desk for emphasis] And that's—to go back to an earlier comment I made—that's the piece. I feel like you have to have that personal accountability to say 'I want to be better at what I do.'

Brian believed that his self-directed participation in that discussion forum, which gave him the opportunity to engage other educators in the exploration of issues pertaining to the use of rubrics in the teaching of writing, improved his practice, making him a better teacher of writing onsite. From his final words in that segment, it is clear that Brian's aim in participating online is "to be better at what [he does]," and, in this case, he is convinced his participation in the rubric discussion forum has helped him achieve that very goal.

The structure of Brian's narrative is noteworthy. Looking back, it is clear that the most extensive portion of this narrative is the orientation he offered, followed by the complicating action. Given the result of the narrative—what Brian reported to be improved practice—such heavy lifting in the orientation is necessary. To clear a path to the narrative's resolution, Brian had to establish room for movement from point A, where he stood prior to engaging in the discussion forum, to point B, where he stood after engaging in the discussion forum. The orientation situated the issue of rubrics as one Brian had not considered critically during his previous 15 years as a teacher, and it highlighted points of discussion that came up in the online forums. The weight of the complicating action and the plausibility of the resolution would be lost without the orientation planting Brian in the dark in terms of rubrics. As the narrative is constructed, it is reasonable to think that, through dialogic interactions online with individuals more

knowledgeable about the topic of rubrics, Brian's understanding and, in turn, his practice may have shifted in nuanced ways. Such thinking is reasonable, for it falls in line with Vygtosky's (1978) notion of the zone of proximal development. As explained in Chapter 2, Vygotsky asserted that an individual may develop further when provided with scaffolding in the form of support from more knowledgeable others than he or she could independently. In this case, as Brian explained in his narrative, educators in the discussion forum had more knowledge about rubrics than he had at the time, and they offered the support that helped to advance the limited understanding of rubrics he had developed independently during the first 15 years of his teaching career.

While the structure of the narratives Gary and Brian offered is distinct, the bottom line is clear; Gary and Brian reported that engaging others online in exploration of topics and texts of interest informed their thinking and shaped their practice.

Positioning Themselves as Writers

Just as the teachers featured in this study reported experiencing professionally oriented participation online as informing their thinking and shaping their practice, they also constructed narratives indicating that such participation online positioned them as writers. In some cases, participants saw themselves in that light for the first time. However, in each case, such positioning was reported as enhancing their practice as teachers of writing and of the English language arts. This section features a narrative constructed by Meenoo that reflects this theme and is representative of narratives shared by other participants.

MR1.11: I Became Way More Empathetic

Meenoo constructed a narrative that captured the ways writing publicly through her participation online has shaped her practice. In constructing this narrative, Meenoo

opened by offering a brief yet striking abstract: “Really, my practice as a teacher changed the first time I ever [published online]. My practice became richer, became fuller, became more complex because then people were examining it, people who had maybe years on me, decades on me.” With that powerful hook, Meenoo pulled her audience into a narrative detailing the transformative nature of her experience engaging in professionally oriented participation online. She then elaborated on the change she saw in her practice, offering the following orientation:

> **Orientation:** It was being seen by so-called experts in the field. It was being seen by the person just down the road in another neighborhood who also happened to be teaching *Romeo and Juliet* in ninth grade. So my practice changed. I don’t know when or how I did this, but my role as a teacher, my role as a writer, my role as a practitioner changed the day I made my students’ work public.

For Meenoo, making her practice public online opened her work to critique from other teachers who could offer fresh insights that might inform her practice, and this is something that Meenoo would address in greater detail in future narratives (e.g., MR2.5: It Makes My Practice Deeper). However, Meenoo also recognized that the change in her practice she described was not solely the result of receiving feedback from more experienced others. Rather, it was also the product of putting herself in the vulnerable role of a writer who makes her writing public, a role familiar to the students in her classroom. Meenoo explained, orienting me to her own love/hate relationship with writing and sharing her writing:

> **Orientation:** When I write online or when I publish work online I’m completely frightened. [English teacher] Jim Burke says that writing is the most public display of our intelligence, and I always feel like, ‘Oh my god. People are going to think that I’m a complete idiot when they read this.’

As other teachers participating in this study have done (see, for example, SA2.3: People Were Seeing My Teacher’s Guide), Meenoo revealed her own insecurities about writing

and making that writing public. Like others in this study, Meenoo expressed concerns about looking foolish in the eyes of her peers. However, as she went on to explain when providing the narrative's complicating action, she still pushes herself to write:

> **Complicating Action:** I'm trying to write right now. I just spent all afternoon trying to write. I haven't written, but I'm trying to write something, and I haven't done it. I'm completely frightened by writing. I'm fascinated by writing. I love reading and writing. I love teaching writing, but I'm completely frightened of it and by it.

Again, Meenoo put her love/hate relationship with writing on full display, this time by sharing her current struggles to put words together.

Then, Meenoo provided the outcome or resolution of her effort to write and to make that writing public, followed by an extensive evaluation:

> **Resolution:** And what [publishing online] did for me is it allowed me to experience what my students experience all of the time, which is having to produce work, having to share work, you know?
>
> **Evaluation:** And when I started to do that I became way more empathetic. I became way more thoughtful about my practice. I became way more tolerant. Right? I was not that queen of the classroom. Like, my way—'How come you don't know how to use a semi-colon?' Right? It truly humbled me because I knew what my students felt. I knew that I was frightened of other people's opinion of my work, just like my students were frightened of opinions of their work by me or their peers.

Like other teachers in this study, Meenoo found that participating online gave her firsthand experience completing the same challenging tasks she asks students in her classroom to complete each day: writing and sharing writing. Reportedly, like other teachers in this study, Meenoo's experience making her practice public online has left her feeling a bit humbled and more empathetic to the students in her classroom.

The structure of Meenoo's narrative is noteworthy in that, of all the narratives featured, it has the slightest complicating action, which revolves around an attempt and failure to write an unspecified piece. Much of the narrative is spent establishing

Meenoo's love/hate relationship with writing in extended orienting segments. The frontloading of Meenoo's struggles to write, which then play out in the complicating action, adds weight to her resolution and credence to her evaluation and interpretation of events. That is, knowing in advance that Meenoo finds the idea of making her writing public to be a scary proposition, it is easy to see how she would find herself to be a more empathetic teacher following her own efforts to write and to publish online for a wide audience.

Opening Doors to New Professional Opportunities

Across cases, the secondary English teachers featured in this study also consistently constructed narratives indicating that they have experienced professionally oriented participation online as opening doors to new professional opportunities. That is, as participating teachers have connected online with other professionals (i.e., teachers, professors, and authors) while exploring issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy, they have been offered and have accepted new opportunities to stretch themselves as professionals in the field of education. Such opportunities include invitations to work closely with authors while developing teacher's guides for young adult novels; invitations to collaborate on professional development presentations for the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention; and invitations to represent national organizations at professional meetings and conferences, among others. To capture the variety of opportunities participants have found through their participation online and the varying ways they experience those opportunities, narratives constructed by Sarah, Cindy, and Meenoo, respectively, are examined below.

SA2.3: People Were Seeing My Teacher's Guide

During the second of two interviews with Sarah, I asked her, "Can you tell me about the professional opportunities—if any—that participating online has opened up for you?" Sarah responded quickly with a statement that served as a brief abstract summarizing the lengthy narrative that would unfold: "[W]hen it comes to my blog I've had the opportunity to write the teacher's guide for Gae Polisner, for her book, *The Pull of Gravity*." Gae Polisner was a name I had seen multiple times when collecting Sarah's online artifacts, and the narrative Sarah offered shed light on the working relationship they shared. Sarah continued the larger narrative about her new professional opportunity by sharing an orientation composed of a sub-narrative detailing the complicating action that facilitated their partnership:

> **Orientation – Sub-narrative: She found me through my blog**
>
> **Complicating Action:** She found me through my blog, and she sent me an email.
>
> **Evaluation:** The email was really funny.
>
> **Complicating Action:** She said she felt awkward emailing me and asking this question. She's like, 'I'm not stalking you.' She sent me her book and it was almost a whole year in advance that I had her book. I read it, wrote my review,
>
> **Evaluation:** and I really liked it.
>
> **Resolution:** I don't even remember how, but we started emailing back and forth about things.

In this instance, it is clear that Sarah's participation online, particularly the writing of her book review blog, introduced her and her work to others online—specifically an author of young adult literature in this case—and ultimately opened a door to a professional opportunity she would not have been likely to receive otherwise.

Looking back on her thinking at the time, Sarah then offered the following brief evaluation: “I thought her book was really good, and I liked the idea that her book was about a journey that these kids go on, and it connected with *Of Mice and Men*.” With that statement, Sarah prepared me for another sub-narrative that doubled as an orienting statement for the larger narrative she was constructing:

> **Orientation – Sub-narrative: We were teaching *The Odyssey***
>
> **Complicating Action:** We were teaching *The Odyssey* and our freshman just flailed through it.
>
> **Evaluation:** It wasn’t working, so we decided as a department to try something new. We decided to set *The Odyssey* aside for a while and see if we could try something different.
>
> **Complicating Action:** Some money was opened up for us, and I suggested *Of Mice and Men* and maybe pairing it up with Gae’s book, *The Pull of Gravity*. I told them about it, gave them a chance to read it,
>
> **Resolution:** and we agreed that it was a good idea.

With the sub-narrative above, Sarah oriented me to the circumstances that led to *The Pull of Gravity* (Polisner, 2011) landing a place in the curriculum of a 9th-grade English class as a thematic complement to *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1993). The sub-narrative is significant, for it establishes Sarah, an advocate of Polisner’s young adult novel and a teacher who would be using it in her own classroom, as a suitable choice to develop an accompanying teacher’s guide. As Sarah explained, she had also forged a connection with the novel’s author by that time: “By that point Gae and I had a pretty good friendship built up online just through different things like me trying to help promote her book and talking about it online and doing interviews and stuff like that.” Sarah continued, adding this complicating action to the narrative:

> **Complicating Action:** [Polisner] just decided, I guess, that she wanted me to—she had a couple of people in mind, but she told me that I was her first

> choice to write the teacher's guide. If I didn't feel comfortable with it she had other people to do it. So over the summer I started writing it and I went back and forth with her for feedback, and I looked at other teacher's guides to get some ideas as to what people include in those. I told her I was putting it together based on what I wanted to use when we taught it, which she wanted me to do, and that's just kind of how we worked that out. So I spent about a month in July—it was about a month, maybe a month-and-a-half that I was working on it, just tweaking it and making it as good as I could.

In light of Sarah's online connection with Polisner and her status as an English teacher who was actually incorporating the author's debut novel into the curriculum at her school, it is easy to see why Polisner would tap Sarah to write the novel's teacher's guide. For Sarah, writing the teacher's guide gave her a chance to think through how she would be using the book with students in her classroom in the fall, and models of other teacher's guides helped to familiarize her with the format of the unique genre.

Sarah then provided the narrative's resolution, explaining how the teacher's guide Polisner invited her to write for *The Pull of Gravity* (2011) is now widely available through multiple venues:

> **Resolution:** And then she put it—it's on the McMillan website and her website. Um, I think it gets—I'm not sure if she has it connected with Perma-Bound to get passed out when people buy copies of her book, but I know that it's been going around. Whenever people order it from one of the bookstores in New York, the indies, whenever they order *Of Mice and Men* they include a copy of *The Pull of Gravity* with the teacher's guide in case they want to consider using it with *Of Mice and Men*. And my name's, you know, on it.

An experience that started for Sarah as exchanges with a debut author through the Y.A. Love blog evolved into a friendship and an invitation to develop supplemental materials for the author's book, and it ended with her work being distributed widely by publishers, bookstores, and the author, too. The final statement in the section above—recognition that her name and, presumably, her reputation as a teacher are tied to the teacher's

guide she developed—foreshadowed the evaluation of the experience Sarah offered in reflection:

> **Evaluation:** It was fun. I was really—I was really stressed out doing it. I was like, 'Oh my gosh! Other teachers are going to look at this. What if it's really bad?' [laughs] Well, I was honored that she wanted me to do it. I'm just someone who—I constantly second-guess myself about things and I don't think I give myself enough credit about things, so I just kept thinking, [laughs] 'Are you *sure* you want me to do it? What if there are smarter people out there that could?' [laughs]

Though Sarah recalled the opportunity being an enjoyable experience—one she felt honored to have—she also revealed feeling the anxieties and self-doubt many writers have when making their work available for public consumption, a feeling other participants noted during the course of this study. As Sarah continued, she noted Polisner's efforts to alleviate her concerns about the quality of the teacher's guide:

> **Complicating Action:** And [Polisner] just—whenever I would send her snippets or ideas of things I was working on, she was like, 'Oh, this is brilliant! I love it!' And she was showing it to her kids, 'cause she has teenage boys, to see what they thought of it. They were giving her feedback on what I was doing and, um, she just really liked it, so that made me feel more confident about it.

In addition to acknowledging the role receiving positive feedback from the author played in putting her doubts to rest, Sarah again cited the power of gaining reassurance from her online peers. In another reflective moment, she stated:

> **Complicating Action:** And then when [Polisner] would—she was tweeting it, and when some of the people that I follow saw it they were telling me how awesome it was,
>
> **Evaluation:** and that was really reaffirming, too. Like, 'Okay. My peers like it, too.' So that made me feel a little better, too, and they really liked it.

Just as Sarah reported finding affirmation regarding her own practice in the connections she made with teachers online (e.g., SA1.11: It's Very Reassuring), she reported receiving reassurances from her online peers that the supplemental material she was

producing for a young adult novel could be a valuable tool for classroom teachers. In closing, Sarah offered a coda that confirmed the sentiment of her online peers by citing students' responses to activities included in the teacher's guide that she employed in her own classroom: "And the kids got a lot out of it. There are some project ideas that we did with it that I had in class and that they liked doing."

This narrative offers multiple insights. First, in constructing the narrative, Sarah recalled a professional opportunity she enjoyed that, most likely, would not have been available to her if she was not participating online. As Sarah explained, it was through the Y.A. Love blog that she came into contact with Polisner, the author, setting in motion the invitation to develop a teacher's guide for wide distribution. Without her online presence, it is unlikely that Sarah would have had the professional opportunity she described—an opportunity that, according to Sarah, has led to invitations to develop supplemental materials for novels written by other authors of young adult literature.

Second, this narrative reinforces Sarah's contention that participating online offers her reassurance and affirmation about her own teaching practice. As an early career teacher whose pedagogy reportedly does not always mirror that of her onsite colleagues, Sarah's tendency to second-guess her practice at times seems reasonable. In constructing this narrative, Sarah revealed another instance when she has found the positive feedback from her online peers to have a reassuring effect, helping her to ease any self-doubts she might entertain.

Third, this narrative highlights the ways Sarah, as she participated online, seemed to oscillate between various positions, including that of a more knowledgeable other in the Vygotskian sense and that of a learner, too. The fact that Sarah was invited

to write the teacher's guide for *The Pull of Gravity* (Polisner, 2011) by the novel's author indicates that she is recognized as being knowledgeable about young adult literature and the teaching of said literature. In this narrative, Sarah noted that Polisner found her through her blog, Y.A. Love. Analysis of posts collected from the Y.A. Love blog suggests that, over time, Sarah demonstrated her knowledge of and experience with young adult literature by writing extensive book reviews, book previews, and reflections on the ways she has incorporated the genre in her classroom (e.g., through read alouds, independent reading, and novel study). And yet, though Polisner identified Sarah as an expert by inviting her to write that teacher's guide, Sarah still reported finding herself questioning her capacity to do such work. Such second-guessing on Sarah's part suggests that she viewed herself as someone who still had more to learn and, as the analysis of collected artifacts revealed, she continued to do so through her participation online. In this way, it seems that professionally oriented participation online may foster oscillating between the roles of knowledgeable other and learner as teachers leverage new media technologies to both demonstrate and develop their knowledge as situations dictate.

Finally, this narrative serves as a reminder of the difficult work of participating online in ways that make one's teaching practice public. Sarah recalled the stress she felt upon realizing that teachers far and wide could be reading the teacher's guide she developed. Presumably, that audience of teachers would then pass judgment on Sarah's ideas and, perhaps, on her as a teacher. Indeed, for some, that could be a scary proposition—one that is not unfamiliar to the teachers featured in this study (see, for example, MR1.11: I Became Way More Empathetic). For the teachers in this study,

participating online is a very public act. The blogs these teachers maintain and the information they share via Twitter are accessible publicly. The affordances that make new media technologies valuable are the same ones that might also make them seem intimidating to many teachers who already feel a rush of criticism from administrators, legislators, and community members.

CM2.2: We Were Able to Present Last Year

In addition to serving as providers of affective and cognitive support for one another, the individuals in the networks teachers develop as they participate online may serve as collaborators on projects that enhance the professional experience of participating teachers. For example, multiple teachers in this study reported collaborating with online peers to develop and present sessions at professional conferences. Cindy was one of those teachers. She shared the following narrative about collaborating with her online peers to develop and present a session at the 2011 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Convention in Chicago, Illinois. She opened the narrative with a segment serving as an abstract, summarizing the narrative that would unfold:

> **Abstract:** [W]orking with Donalyn [Miller] and Meenoo [Rami] and Sarah [Mulhern Gross], we were able to present last year [at the 2011 NCTE Convention] on Twitter hashtags. We would never have had that [opportunity], obviously, if we hadn't interacted online. As a matter of fact, I don't even think Sarah and I had met [face-to-face] before we presented that morning.

I attended the session Cindy described above. The session featured presenters discussing English teachers' use of hashtags to participate in Twitter chats (e.g., #engchat) and Twitter initiatives (e.g., #speakloudly, an initiative to heighten awareness of book challenges) and, ultimately, to enhance teacher professional development. It is

noteworthy that Cindy mentioned Meenoo as a collaborator on the development and presentation of the session. Like Cindy, Meenoo was a participant in this study, and she is another teacher who spoke to the ways participating online has contributed to her obtaining and enjoying new professional opportunities (see, for example, MR2.5: It Makes My Practice Deeper).

Cindy then went on to offer the narrative's action, explaining how she came upon the opportunity to present at the NCTE Annual Convention for the very first time:

> **Complicating Action:** Donalyn messaged me and said, 'We're going to present on something. I don't know what it is yet. Think about it.' I said, 'Well, you know books. I know tech-y, geeky things, and I know some books.' I'm not quite in the same ballpark. But we kind of started talking about that and how we'd gotten involved in all these different conversations [online] and things like that.

The representation of Cindy's online colleague, Donalyn, in this narrative is consistent with the way she characterized her in CA2.4: It's Almost like a Pay-It-Forward Sort of Model, a narrative featured above. Here, Cindy recalls Donalyn nudging her to share her expertise with other English teachers at the field's largest professional conference. Following that nudge, Cindy and Donalyn began negotiating the topic of the session, drawing upon prior online and face-to-face exchanges to inform their thinking.

Next, Cindy explained how the other collaborators of the session came aboard the project, orienting me to their work online:

> **Orientation:** It just so happened that Sarah kind of had a spin-off of #titletalk. I was archiving #titletalk; Donalyn was helping with that with Paul at the time. Paul was supposed to present with us. And Meenoo and I had worked together on #engchat. So it seemed like a reasonable collaboration to work on because we all had that in common. Originally, I think we were just going to talk about #titletalk and #bookaday and #ARCsFloatOn, which is Sarah's project.

This orienting segment helped me understand how others fit into the session Cindy and Donalyn were developing, but it also revealed more of Cindy's own participation online. For example, she noted helping to archive sessions of #titletalk, a monthly synchronous Twitter chat about promoting reading among students, and assisting Meenoo in archiving sessions of #engchat, the weekly Twitter chat about issues related to the teaching of English. Such examples seem to highlight additional ways teachers collaborate with and support one another through their participation online.

Cindy had alluded to the process of negotiation she and her online peers employed to develop the session, and she elaborated on how she used that process to invite others into the mix before noting the result of the complicating action and a brief interpretation as she offered the narrative's next sequence:

> **Complicating Action:** And I said, 'Well, I'm also doing #engchat. Do we want to include that, too? That's not just me.' So I had Meenoo kind of invited in.
>
> **Resolution:** *Everything* was planned online. Everything was done on Google Docs. We had big, long, crazy writing sessions, and we did the same thing for our proposal for next year as well...
>
> **Evaluation:** But that was a big [opportunity], obviously.

Having established the collaborating parties and how they fit with the session's topic, Cindy stressed the online component of the session's actual development. In light of the group's active participation online and the history of their virtual connections, their choice to develop the session completely online is understandable. It is also noteworthy that Cindy and some of her online peers repeated the process to develop a proposal for the following year's convention. The conscious decision to employ those same methods of online collaboration speaks to the success and enjoyment Cindy and her online peers found in using that method the first time.

Regarding the structure of the narrative, Cindy's minimal use of evaluative segments to construct the narrative is striking. However, the word "obviously" at the end of the utterance is telling. Often used to explain away what one perceives to be redundancy, the word "obviously" as it appears in this narrative suggests that Cindy believes the significance of the events of the narrative goes without saying. Readers may wonder why Cindy would find the events so obviously significant, and I trace it back to the fact that the events she recounted—an online collaboration to develop a proposal for a session at the 2011 NCTE Convention—led to the first presentation Cindy made at a national conference. It seems likely, then, that Cindy's minimal use of evaluation in the narrative can be explained as an effort to avoid restating what she believed was obvious: collaborating with online peers to address a national audience was a valuable professional opportunity.

This narrative is also noteworthy for it seems to present an instance in which, through her participation online and with the support of her online colleagues, Cindy assumed, in the Vygotskian sense, the role of a more knowledgeable other. Having developed a degree of expertise in leveraging Twitter as a tool for engaging other teachers in the exploration of issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy, Cindy sought to help teachers at the NCTE Annual Convention move beyond their present understandings of microblogging and to provide the scaffolding that would enable session attendees to begin participating in Twitter chats and initiatives related to their work as English teachers.

MR2.5: It Makes My Practice Deeper

Meenoo, like Sarah, Cindy, and other teachers featured in this study, recognized that participating online has opened up additional professional opportunities that she

might not have enjoyed otherwise. For example, over the course of our two interviews, Meenoo explained how her participation online has led her to receive invitations to represent the National Writing Project (NWP) at various events and to write for NWP's Digital Is website, an online repository of resources and reflections related to digital writing. Such opportunities have been incredibly valuable to Meenoo's development as a teacher, as she explained with the abstract she offered to open her narrative:

> **Abstract:** I'm in my sixth year of teaching, and I don't think I would have stayed as long if not for those opportunities [that arose through my participation online]. That sounds like a really big statement, I know. Of course I love my students. Of course I love teaching…I'm still recovering just from the day. It's a very intense, emotional day and experience of teaching. But, like, if you don't see—if you're not able to have a little bit of a bird's eye view of your practice as a teacher, I think you burn out much quicker. What these opportunities and these organizations and these networks have done is they've allowed me to see my own practice almost as a third person outside of myself. That sounds hokey or kind of unreal in some ways but, really, that's what it's done.

This summative statement is heavy with evaluative overtones. In this segment, Meenoo stepped back to offer a reflection upon the opportunities her professionally oriented participation online and the resulting connections she has made have afforded her. Meenoo concluded that without those opportunities, some of which have given her a chance to reflect upon her teaching practice, she might not have made it to her sixth year as a teacher. Aware of the gravity of the statement, Meenoo clarified her appreciation for the students in her classroom and for the act of teaching while also acknowledging the mental and emotional toll teaching can take on an individual. This segment is informative, for in it Meenoo revealed her reverence for reflection, something she is afforded when sharing her work at professional conferences and with others online.

To illustrate her point, Meenoo continued the narrative by describing one such opportunity for reflection. She began with an orienting statement that would set up the action to come:

> **Orientation:** For example, my kids—I taught a class on media literacy with seniors last semester. One of the units was on advertising. We looked at biases in advertisements based on race, class, gender, and sexuality, and how those were used or manipulated to sell products.

Almost as though she wanted to stress that she was not a special case or that any teacher could undertake what she was about to describe, Meenoo offered this evaluation of the unit: “Not a ground-breaking thing. A lot of teachers do that and a lot of good work with it.” Then, Meenoo provided the narrative’s complicating action:

> **Complicating Action:** I asked my students to create advertisements that either shared a new idea or made fun of, made a satire of an already existing advertising campaign. Some of the work I took to the Digital Media and Learning Conference and shared it. Now I’m writing an article—not a scholarly article—but I’m writing an article for the Digital Is archive, which is a MacArthur Foundation initiative. Long story short, I taught a unit on advertising, and I could have just taught that unit, right? It could have lived in these four walls, but that work went to San Francisco and it was looked at by all these people, and then I posted my write-up of it to Digital Is, and people from around the country are looking at it and pushing back against some of the things that I’m saying in that piece that I wrote.

In this segment, Meenoo illustrated just what she had described previously: opportunities to present at professional conferences and to publish online have given her a chance to reflect upon her practice. By going public with her teaching, Meenoo gives other teachers a chance to consider and respond to her practice. It is then, as Bakhtin (1986) asserted, that Meenoo’s voice as a speaker and the voices of other teachers as listeners can come into contact and meaning can emerge. In the end, it is the students in Meenoo’s classroom that stand to benefit most from such dialogic interaction.

Meenoo then continued the narrative by offering an evaluation of her experience sharing her advertising unit with a wider audience, both online and face-to-face:

> **Evaluation:** What all that does for me is it creates like a helix of sorts. It brings me back to what's essential about what I was trying to do. How can I do it better? How can I move my practice forward? And I wouldn't have at all. That lesson could have just lived in [this classroom] and would have been fine and would have been great, but by doing this chain of events it has made that unit more interesting to me and more relevant for me and will hopefully improve my practice.

Meenoo recognized that, as a result of making her practice public, by sharing it at a professional conference and distributing it online, she is afforded the opportunity to consider feedback from other professionals and apply it to future iterations of the unit as she sees fit. According to Meenoo, professionally oriented participation—both online and at face-to-face conferences—strengthens her practice, challenging her to reconsider her work from new and varied perspectives.

Continuing the narrative, Meenoo then offered the resolution, the outcome of the complicating action:

> **Resolution:** Will I do [the unit] differently next time? Yeah, probably, because I've had all these people interact with it. It didn't just stay here. Does it happen for all the units? No, right? That's physically and humanly impossible. But what that does is it makes my practice deeper. It makes my practice more relevant.

While Meenoo recognized the value of putting units of study on display for critique, she also maintained a sense of pragmatism. She acknowledged that, though beneficial, giving all units such treatment is not practical for teachers. Finally, Meenoo closed the narrative by returning to her claim at the onset that she might not be teaching today if not for the opportunities she gained through her participation online:

> **Coda:** And it goes back to that old idea that what we do is incredibly hard—and by 'what we do' I mean teaching—and the more connections we have the more intricate the weave is between our connections, the stronger that

> bond will be. And then maybe we would be able to sustain more new teachers.

With that coda, Meenoo brought the traditionally structured narrative full circle. She contended that, in light of the challenging work of teaching, the connections teachers form through meaningful discourse at professional conferences and in online environments have the potential to sustain novice teachers. This very narrative, in which Meenoo recognized how her own professionally oriented participation online has sustained her passion for teaching, serves as a testament to that contention.

Enhancing Their Capacity to Support Students

Across cases, findings indicated that the five English teachers in this study have enjoyed a number of personal benefits from their professional engagement online. This includes gaining reassurances about their pedagogical decisions, finding relief from a perceived sense of isolation, and even drawing fresh professional opportunities. However, the findings also suggested that these five teachers have experienced an enhanced capacity to support the students in their classrooms. Among others, Sarah provided multiple narratives to illustrate this point. In one such narrative she described her attempts to expand her knowledge of literary genres that hold great appeal for the students in her classroom and little-to-no appeal for her as a reader.

SA1.13: I Probably Wouldn't Have Even Known

Sarah began the narrative by orienting me to her tastes in literature and sharing her efforts to explore this issue through a post on her blog, Y.A. Love, and in exchanges with others via Twitter:

> **Abstract:** Traditionally I like contemporary realistic fiction and I really like the paranormal fantasy, although honestly I'm starting to get burnt out on it because I can't keep up with all those series, and it's expensive. [laughs]

> Anyway, I actually wrote about [efforts to enhance my knowledge of genres I don't read].
>
> **Orientation:** I had a blog post that I called "My Literary Achilles' Heel" because I do not read science fiction and I don't read enough high fantasy. There are others, but those are two I know my students really, really enjoy, and I'm not offering them enough.
>
> **Complicating Action:** So I wrote this blog post about it,
>
> **Orientation:** and I got that "literary Achilles' heel" idea from Donalyn Miller after she had mentioned it at a conference.
>
> **Complicating Action:** So, anyway, I put it on there and I put it on Twitter and [my online colleagues] gave me a whole bunch of recommendations of books that I just had to have in my classroom, books I should read.

In the sequence above, Sarah identified science fiction and high fantasy as her "literary Achilles' heel," those genres she recognizes as personal areas of weakness, for she does not typically read books in those genres and, consequently, she is generally not well-equipped to offer them to students who might appreciate them. As Sarah explained, publicly exploring Miller's idea of the literary Achilles' heel provoked a number of responses from online peers who, presumably, were more knowledgeable than Sarah when it came to those particular genres.

After establishing that she received responses with suggestions from her online peers, Sarah provided an outcome and corresponding evaluation of her attempt to reach out, turn to her online peers, and strengthen areas of weakness in her knowledge of young adult literature:

> **Resolution:** So I ended up starting this series by Cinda Williams Chima.
>
> **Evaluation:** It's actually really good and I'm glad they told me because I love it. And I know my kids that like *Lord of the Rings* or if they like some of the high fantasy things in particular or if they like wizards and stuff like that they'll really like that series. That author has another series that I tried and I didn't like, but I have it in here for my kids. This one I liked and, having read it, I can talk with them about it.

In Sarah's construction of this narrative, her attempt to enhance her capacity to support students in choosing books that might appeal to them was a success. In reflection, Sarah noted her appreciation for recommendations offered by her online peers, for she found a series that she could enjoy personally and that she was confident many students would also enjoy. Additionally, though another series did not appeal to her, she became more knowledgeable about it and made it available for students in her classroom library, should they want to read it. In this way, Sarah's participation online has served to enhance her capacity to support the students in her classroom.

Sarah then continued, offering a resolution that took the form of a sub-narrative about another set of books she picked up at the urging of an online peer. Those titles were sports-related books, another area Sarah mentioned in her "My Literary Achilles' Heel" post. She shared:

> **Resolution – Sub-narrative: I wouldn't have had those in there**
>
> **Abstract:** But, yeah, there was that and there was one in my room that's been really popular that a teacher told me about and I put in here.
>
> **Complicating Action:** One of my middle-school friends [online] told me about an author named Carl Deuker, and I read a couple of his books.
>
> **Evaluation:** They were okay, but they were very sports-focused.
>
> **Orientation:** One or two of his books have been extremely popular in my classroom.
>
> **Resolution:** Boys just can't get enough of those ones, yet I wouldn't have had those in there. I probably wouldn't have even known about that author if she didn't tell me about him.
>
> **Coda:** So.

Again, Sarah found that, based on the input of her online peers, she was able to expand her knowledge of young adult literature, particularly in relation to genres with which she

is less familiar. As a result, having read sports-related titles that she may not have been aware of otherwise, as she admitted freely, she is better prepared to support students in selecting books that align with their interests and that fit their needs as developing readers. Sarah concluded the sub-narrative with a one-word coda that also signaled the end of the greater narrative.

As a whole, this narrative illustrates the ways English teachers like Sarah participate online to enhance their capacity to support secondary students. In this case, by blogging and microblogging about perceived shortcomings in her knowledge about and familiarity with specific genres of young adult literature, Sarah relied on the dialogic nature of utterances, provoking a discursive relationship by inviting her online peers to help her identify titles she could read and, in turn, recommend to the students in her classroom. As Sarah recalled, her online peers came through, helping her to enhance her capacity to support students in selecting books for independent reading. Such crowd-sourcing is indicative of the ways English teachers in this study participated online to support the students in their classrooms.

Summary

Looking across cases, I employed thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008) to identify broad patterns in the ways five secondary English teachers experience professionally oriented participation online. Analysis revealed six prominent themes: (a) finding relief from a perceived sense of isolation, (b) establishing a network of support, (c) informing thinking and shaping practice, (d) positioning themselves as writers, (e) opening doors to new professional opportunities, and (f) enhancing their capacity to support students. Supplementing the thematic analysis with a structural analysis (Riessman, 2008), I asked various questions as I examined the narratives: What

structural elements are most prominent in the narrative? What structural elements are missing from the narrative? Why did the participant construct the narrative in this way? Such questions were helpful, for they revealed the relation of narrative segments from one to another and offered insights into how participants made sense of their experiences engaging in professionally oriented participation online. That is, attending to the structure of participants' narratives helped to refine my process and underscore the content of the narratives, as variations in structure (e.g., unique complicating-action/evaluation sequences in BK1.1: It Represented the Very Thing I Was Trying to Get Away From; extended resolutions in GA2.2: English Companion Ning was Doing Some Book Clubs) helped to illuminate points of contention, points of emphasis, and, ultimately, variations in meaning.

CHAPTER 7
DISCUSSION

In this chapter I explore the findings of my research, drawing connections to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 as appropriate. I conclude the chapter by addressing the implications of the findings as they relate to English teacher education and by suggesting directions for future research, but I begin by providing an overview of the study.

Overview

In the current climate of public education, teachers find themselves burdened by greater demands and an increased level of scrutiny—what some scholars (e.g., Apple, 1988; Easthope & Easthope, 2010; Hargreaves, 1994) recognize as the intensification of teacher work. Likewise, a sense of isolation has been recognized as a challenge with which English teachers must contend (McCann et al., 2005). Such challenges persist at a time when the emergence of participatory cultures (Jenkins, 2006a, 2006b) has taken shape in response to the rise of new media technologies that enable users to generate and distribute new content easily and efficiently. With many teachers distributing teaching-related content via blogs, microblogs, and social network sites, I set out to begin building an understanding of secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online.

Framed by sociocultural theories of literacy and learning, this qualitative study was intended to begin building an understanding of selected secondary English teachers' participation online in exploration of issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy. To that end, three questions guided my research:

- What are the features of the online contexts that selected secondary English teachers weave in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy?

- What is the nature of selected secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online in terms of the practices they carry out and the topics they address?
- How do selected secondary English teachers experience professionally oriented participation online?

With those questions in mind, I recruited five secondary English teachers to take part in the study. All five teachers had demonstrated a history of participating online in exploration of issues related to teaching, learning and literacy. I collected participant-generated online artifacts, including archived blog posts, tweets, and discussion forum entries within social network sites, and I conducted a pair of face-to-face semi-structured interviews with each participant. Informed by Altheide's (1987) ethnographic content analysis, I analyzed the collected online artifacts to explore the features of the contexts teachers weave as they participate online and to investigate the nature of the selected teachers' professionally oriented participation online in terms of the practices employed and the topics addressed. Concurrently, and while drawing upon Riessman's (2008) approach to narrative analysis, I conducted thematic and structural analyses of narratives identified in the transcripts of semi-structured interviews to begin building an understanding of how the selected teachers experience professionally oriented participation online.

With participants forgoing pseudonyms and opting to be identified by name, I found myself wrestling with the challenge of representing the data in ways that did not compromise the research and yet still ensured participants would not suffer consequences for being honest with me about their experiences. As described in Chapter 3, I employed member checks at multiple points as I collected and analyzed the data, which helped to ensure participants' comfort with my representation and

interpretation of their experiences and artifacts. However, providing participants with opportunities to respond to and, if compelled, to even withdraw narratives and artifacts from the study did not compromise the quality of the research. Only one narrative was struck from the entire set of interview transcripts at the request of a participant, and no objections were offered in response to the findings. Though the narrative removed was informative, it addressed a theme represented extensively in the final set of narratives.

Findings indicated that teachers leveraged the multimodal affordances and a/synchronous flexibility of particular new media technologies and drew upon their classroom teaching experiences, relationships with others online, and a touch of levity, among other features, to weave the contexts of their participation.

Regarding the nature of the selected teachers' participation online, five prominent participatory practices emerged: (a) supporting teachers, (b) seeking support, (c) promoting one's own online content, (d) curating ideas and information, and (e) providing status updates. Furthermore, findings revealed that the selected teachers addressed three central topics as they participated online in exploration of issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy: young adult literature, writing instruction, and reading instruction.

Regarding the ways selected secondary English teachers experienced professionally oriented participation online, analysis across all cases revealed six prominent themes: (a) finding relief from a perceived sense of isolation, (b) establishing a network of support, (c) informing thinking and shaping practice, (d) positioning themselves as writers, (e) opening doors to new professional opportunities, and (f) enhancing their capacity to support students.

Theoretical Connections

As explained in Chapter 2, this study was informed by sociocultural views of language, literacy, and learning. In this section I draw connections between findings related to the selected English teachers' professionally oriented participation online and relevant theoretical concepts.

The Dialogic Quality of Professionally Oriented Participation Online

Bakhtin (1986) asserted that meaning and understanding are products of a dialogic interaction, of two or more voices coming into contact. Identifying the utterance as a speech unit, Bakhtin asserted that each utterance, spoken or written, has an author and an addressee, and, together, the two give shape to an utterance. The author envisions the possible responses and actions the utterance may evoke in the addressee, and the author tries to "act in accordance with the response [he or she] anticipate[s]" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 95). According to Bakhtin, the author/addressee dynamic also informs the author's selection of tools that mediate the utterance. The findings of this study suggest that the online activities associated with professionally oriented participation online (e.g., blogging, microblogging, and engaging others in social network sites) have a dialogic quality. Such activities have the potential to promote new understandings among individuals seeking to extend their professional development as secondary English teachers.

Bakhtin (1986) claimed that the response to a speaker's utterance may not be immediate, but what is understood by others will eventually find a response, be it in the form of speech or behavior. In this study, again and again, asynchronous activities, including blogging, microblogging, and posting to discussion forums illustrated Bakhtin's claim. Response may not have been immediate, but, over time, the participants' blog

posts, tweets, and discussion forum entries did find response. Often, those responses and the dialogic interactions that emerged took the shape of collaborative problem-solving (Jenkins, 2006b), as teachers worked together over time to generate knowledge and ideas to address challenges related to the teaching of the English language arts.

Just as the asynchronous nature of an online activity did not deter dialogic interactions for the selected teachers, the brevity of tweets, which are limited to 140 characters, did not inhibit dialogic interactions. Whether responding to spontaneous questions or engaging in organized, synchronous chat sessions, the selected teachers in this study acted in accordance with the medium to stoke and extend dialogic interactions as they explored matters related to teaching, learning, and literacy.

The Mediation of Human Activity by New Media Technologies

Vygotsky (1978) asserted that material and psychological tools, while mediating human activity, allow for the extension of human capability. The findings of this study support his assertion. As tools continue to evolve, they continue to shape how we communicate with and learn from one another. As the findings reported in Chapter 5 suggest, in this study, the selected teachers' professionally oriented participation online was mediated by new media technologies (e.g., blogs, microblogs, social network sites). Those technologies offered multimodal affordances and a/synchronous flexibility that allowed participants to extend their capacity to invoke dialogic interactions with other teachers across time and space. For example, rather than relying solely on alphabetic writing to make public the many happenings of Writers Week, a celebration of writing at his school, Gary used the multimodal affordances of his blog and of Twitter to share images (Figure 5-15) and to include hypertext, linking readers to streaming videos of author visits, student readings, and teacher performances. Likewise, whether

spontaneously seeking support through an asynchronous discussion forum as Meenoo did when preparing to teach Fitzgerald's (2004) *The Great Gatsby* (Figure 5-4) or participating in the scheduled exploration of classic and young adult literature pairings in a synchronous Webstitute as Cindy did (Figure 5-8), the selected teachers found themselves leveraging the a/synchronous flexibility of new media technologies to engage in dialogic interactions with teachers at a distance, exploring teaching, learning, and literacy with professionals who share a similar passion for their craft.

The findings of this study illustrate the ways teachers may leverage new media technologies to enhance their capacity to go public with their practice in the ways that scholars advocate (see, for example, Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2010). That is, the five teachers in this study demonstrated the many ways teachers may capitalize on the multimodal affordances of new media technologies, open virtual windows to their respective corners of the world, and spark dialogic interactions that have the potential to inform their own and others' thinking and teaching practice. The selected teachers virtually welcomed those at a distance into their respective classrooms in various ways, including offering teacher-to-teacher instruction, sharing teacher-generated (Figures 5-8 through 5-11) and student-generated models (Figures 5-12 and 5-13) from the classroom. Moreover, the selected teachers reported on happenings in the classroom in ways that oriented them toward the response of others.

Oscillation between the Roles of Learner and More Knowledgeable Other

Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) is another concept that has informed sociocultural views of learning, and it is reflected in the findings of this study. The ZPD, as explained in Chapter 2, is the range between what an individual is capable of independently and his or her potential developmental level in collaboration

with more knowledgeable others. In a classroom, for example, the teacher is often recognized as the more knowledgeable other, providing scaffolding to help students achieve more than they could independently. However, in some instances, a student could fill the role of a more knowledgeable other and offer support that helps to advance the capabilities of his or her peers or even his or her teacher. Filling the roles of a learner and a more knowledgeable other in a literacy event is not an either/or proposition, and the findings of this study bear that out. The findings of this study illustrate the ways that teachers engaging in professionally oriented participation online may oscillate between the roles of a learner and a more knowledgeable other.

As Table 3-2 (page 47) indicates, the teachers in this study have varying types and amounts of teaching and life experience and, to varying degrees, their professional interests cover a range of topics, including young adult literature, writing instruction, reading instruction, and technology integration, among others. Likewise, the individuals online who make up the selected teachers' respective networks of support have varied experiences and professional interests. Thus, there were times when the teachers in this study found themselves supporting their peers and filling the role of the more knowledgeable other, and there were other times when the selected teachers found themselves positioned firmly as learners eager to enhance their understandings or capabilities. For example, a pair of blog posts from Sarah's blog, Y.A. Love, illustrates how she oscillated between the role of the more knowledgeable other and the role of learner at different points during the data collection period.

As noted in Chapter 5, Sarah addressed using read alouds as part of her teaching practice in a post from March 2012 titled "My Favorite Read Alouds." Drawing

upon her personal experience dating back to her time as an undergraduate student, Sarah wrote about read alouds from the position of a more knowledgeable other. In the post, Sarah explained her introduction to read alouds as an undergraduate, described her first attempt at a read aloud as a student-teacher, and recommended titles she has read aloud with success, such as *Speak* (Anderson, 1999), *Boy21* (Quick, 2012), and *Hex Hall* (Hawkins, 2010). By opting to write and distribute the post, Sarah, reflecting a characteristic of participatory cultures (Jenkins, 2006b), seemed to believe that it was a meaningful contribution, something teachers who are considering read alouds might find useful. As explained in Chapter 5, the post did indeed resonate with a teacher in the Midwest who was eager to try her hand at incorporating read alouds into her practice and with another teacher who was trying to make room for it among her many other responsibilities. Via Twitter, Sarah continued to address read alouds from the position of the more knowledgeable other, following up the blog post by offering additional tips (e.g., “practice at home,” “know the section/chapter head of time”) and explaining how she balances read alouds with independent reading time (e.g., “We have SSR Mon/Weds/Fri”).

Two months prior to taking the position of the more knowledgeable other in the post on reading aloud, Sarah found herself writing from the position of a learner. As explained in Chapter 5, Sarah wrote “My Literary Achilles’ Heel,” a post in which she sought help from her online peers to strengthen areas she perceived to be weaknesses in her knowledge of young adult literature. Sarah cited high fantasy and science fiction novels as her literary Achilles’ heel, and she invited readers of her blog to help her fill that void. Sarah’s acknowledgement of her literary weakness and her direct request for

support firmly positioned her as a learner in this instance—a position distinct from the one she would assume when addressing read alouds in a future post.

While oscillating between the roles of learner and more knowledgeable other seems like a natural occurrence dictated by the topics in question and the individuals involved, Sarah did reveal in an interview that she is, at times, reluctant to assert herself as a more knowledgeable other:

> I feel like I'm not someone necessarily that *should* be talking about what I'm doing in my classroom yet because I don't feel like I've *earned* that or something, like I need to have more years under my belt. I always have that feeling like I'm only, you know, a fifth-year teacher. [I haven't done] enough.

Early career and prospective teachers questioning whether or not they have something to contribute in online environments and indicating a general reluctance to assert themselves as more knowledgeable others has surfaced in previous studies (e.g., Rodesiler & Tripp, 2012a). Given the inner conflict Sarah reported, it seems the matter warrants additional research.

Connecting Online to Combat Isolation

In line with reports of teacher isolation offered by McCann et al. (2005) and Herrington et al. (2006), multiple teachers in this study reported feeling a sense of isolation for one reason or another. Teachers in this study, like those in previous studies (e.g., DeWert et al., 2003), reported finding relief from a perceived sense of isolation as they connected with and engaged other teachers online. The findings of previous studies have also indicated that prospective teachers in language arts methods courses (Paulus & Scherff, 2008; Scherff & Paulus, 2006) and practicing teachers with a shared institutional affiliation (DeWert et al., 2003) may find emotional support from their peers online. Extending those findings, the findings of this study indicate that practicing

teachers seeking connections with other teachers of their own volition—and having no prior relationship with those colleagues at a distance—may find similar affective and cognitive supports, which may contribute to the sense of relief selected teachers reported.

As explained in Chapter 6, teachers in this study valued connecting with others online who shared similar pedagogical philosophies and instructional approaches. They described finding comfort in knowing that they were not alone in their pedagogical thinking. However, the value of diverse networks must be considered. As Gee (2004) explained, “if people…are networked with diverse others, then they are going to learn and keep learning new things, things that are not already in their own repertoire of knowledge and skills” (p. 286). Just as participating online may hold value in that it can help teachers connect with others who share similar pedagogical approaches, the potential for connecting with online colleagues who take divergent approaches to teaching the English language arts—and the value in those connections—must not be overlooked. If only connecting with online colleagues whose thinking mirrors their own, teachers may develop networks of support, but those networks may ultimately function as echo chambers, where the same line of thinking and the same approaches are touted again and again with little pushback. As Gee asserted, it is the diverse network that enables individuals to continue learning as they weigh fresh ideas, defend their own thinking, and consider how other approaches might apply to their unique teaching contexts. It seems as though it is within such diverse networks that teachers may continue truly oscillating between the roles of learner and more knowledgeable other,

for forging diverse connections means having others from whom you may learn and to whom you may offer support.

Opportunities to Move toward Full Participation within the Field

The findings of this study suggest that professionally oriented participation online may offer teachers the opportunity to move toward full participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) within their field. As described in Chapter 2, Lave and Wenger (1991) presented legitimate peripheral participation as the process in which individuals within a community of practice move from the community's periphery to its core, becoming more active and engaged within the culture. As Lave and Wenger (1991) describe it, an individual's changing knowledge corresponds with his or her changing identity, for "[*k*]*nowing* is inherent in the growth and transformation of identities" (p. 122). The findings of this study suggest that, through their participation online, the selected teachers gained opportunities to change their knowledge and, accordingly, develop their identities within the field.

Narratives explored in Chapter 7, including SA2.3: People Were Seeing My Teacher's Guide and CM2.2: We Were Able to Present Last Year, illustrate cases in which teachers found themselves embracing changes in their positions within the field—Sarah by authoring her first teacher's guide for wide distribution, Cindy by presenting to a nation-wide audience of English teachers for the first time at the NCTE Annual Convention—as a result of their professionally oriented participation online. Having gained and then demonstrated online their knowledge in distinct areas—teaching with and about young adult literature and leveraging online technologies for professional learning, respectively—Sarah and Cindy positioned themselves to become more active, to accept new responsibilities, and to take on new identities. In each case, it seems as

though the opportunity to develop and demonstrate knowledge by engaging others online was critical in moving them from the periphery toward full participation as in the process of legitimate peripheral participation.

Conclusions

I conclude my investigation into selected secondary English teachers' professionally oriented participation online by presenting implications that may inform English teacher education and recommendations for future research before closing with some final remarks.

Implications for English Teacher Education

To date, the capacity to participate online in activities related to the exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy has not been recognized specifically by the field of English education as a required standard of professional knowledge and skills for prospective English teachers (CEE Standards Revision Writing Task Force, 2012). However, the findings of this study indicate that English teachers may benefit from blogging, microblogging, and engaging others in social network sites. For example, as noted above, the English teachers featured in this study reported experiencing professionally oriented participation online as a way of:

- finding relief from a perceived sense of isolation;
- establishing a network of support;
- informing thinking and shaping practice;
- positioning themselves as writers;
- opening doors to new professional opportunities; and
- enhancing their capacity to support students.

Furthermore, analysis of teacher-generated online artifacts indicated that the participating teachers extended their capacity to invoke dialogic interactions with their online peers and to engage in collaborative problem-solving by leveraging the affordances of new media technologies as they explored teaching, learning, and literacy. Noting such potential benefits, the findings of this study suggest that prospective English teachers could benefit if English teacher educators provided opportunities to participate online in the exploration of issues related to the professional work of secondary English teachers.

The findings of this study also offer English teacher educators multiple avenues for helping prospective English teachers ease into professionally oriented participation online. When preparing prospective teachers to participate online, English teacher educators could use the data from cases presented in this study as models. For example, when introducing prospective teachers to blogging as a mode of professionally oriented participation online, teacher educators can share the distinct types of blogs maintained by participants in this study, such as the primarily practice-based blogs maintained by Gary and Brian, Sarah's book review blog, and the curatorial blogs maintained by Cindy and Meenoo, respectively. Using those models, prospective teachers might consider the various forms of participation open to them, the available designs of a blog, and the ways teachers use blogging as a means of reflecting on their practice, of sharing resources, and of engaging peers in the exploration of issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy.

When providing opportunities for prospective teachers to participate in social network sites, teacher educators could share narratives presented in this study to

illustrate the ways participation may inform one's thinking and shape his or her practice. For example, Brian's narrative about how exploring rubrics in a discussion forum altered his assessment of student writing and Gary's narrative about how engaging in an online book club featuring *Readicide* (Gallagher, 2009) changed the face of reading in his classroom illustrate the transformative potential that professionally oriented participation online holds for teachers. Such powerful narratives may serve as quasi-testimonials for prospective teachers who are unsure what value professionally oriented participation online might hold for them.

Teacher educators might also consider easing prospective English teachers into professionally oriented participation online by inviting them to engage in some of the opportunities described in this study. Requiring students to participate in local professional conferences has been identified as a practice employed by English teacher educators (Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995), and that comes with the expense of registration fees and travel costs. In a similar fashion—though without the expenses of registration and travel—English teacher educators might require prospective teachers to participate in online professional learning opportunities such as weekly #engchat sessions or ECN Webstitutes or book clubs, particularly if scheduled topics happen to coincide with specific areas of study for a particular course. Through participation and corresponding reflection on the experience, including consideration of the challenges and affordances they note, prospective teachers would get a taste of the opportunities available to teachers eager to engage their peers online in the exploration of issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy.

For prospective teachers, a formal introduction to professionally oriented participation online may also serve as an opportunity to explore the ethics of making student work public. As noted in Chapter 5, teachers in this study often shared with their online peers images, excerpts, and videos of student work (e.g., student-generated book reviews, performances, posters, poetry). Making one's practice and corresponding student-generated products public is recognized by scholars as a way of placing teachers at the center of professional development, opening them up "to critique, to learning, and to expanding their repertoire" (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2010, p. 86). The findings of this study support such claims (see, for example, MR2.5: It Makes My Practice Deeper). However, teachers must not lose sight of their obligation to protect the interests and well-being of the students they teach. By providing opportunities to engage in professionally oriented participation online, teacher educators may help prospective teachers consider how that obligation might inform what they share online. When sharing student work or other classroom activities online, as the teachers in this study have done, protecting students' well-being may require careful planning. Such planning includes ensuring that students' names are not visible on products shared (Figure 5-13) and framing images in ways that minimize the potential for identifying students (Figure 5-15) or that keep students out of the picture completely (Figure 5-14). Exploring the ethics of sharing student work may protect prospective teachers, the school districts that will employ them in the near future, and the students whose work they will share as they explore teaching, learning, and literacy with their peers online.

Recommendations for Future Research

In addition to holding implications for English teacher education, this study offers multiple directions for future research. In this section I suggest each of the following

avenues for future research: (a) exploring teacher leadership in online environments; (b) investigating other, less visible forms of participation online; (c) inquiring into other online environments teachers are using to engage their peers; (d) researching the efficacy of teachers' participation online; (e) digging into prospective teachers' professionally oriented participation online; and (f) studying the institutionalization of self-directed, professionally oriented participation online as formal, district-approved professional development activity.

Teacher leadership in online environments

It is not a stretch to contend that teachers who facilitate opportunities for their peers to explore teaching, learning, and literacy online are performing acts of teacher leadership. The findings of this study indicate that some English teachers' professionally oriented participation online is marked by the provision of opportunities for other teachers to join in the exploration of issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy. For example, as noted previously, Meenoo welcomed teachers to share their expertise and facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences through the weekly meetings of #engchat, the Twitter chat, and her blog of the same name. Likewise, as one of the three facilitators for the curatorial blog Nerdy Book Club, Cindy provided a platform for teachers, librarians, and readers more generally to share and to celebrate their literacy experiences. Additionally, Gary has worked with a team of his peers in the English Companion Ning to offer organized professional development Webinars that engage teachers within the social network site. Such work resembles constructivist leadership (Lambert et al., 2002), which separates itself from more traditional conceptions of leadership derived from top-down, authority-driven models.

Constructivist leadership is characterized as a reciprocal process that emphasizes dynamic relationships rather than directional ones, and it is not restricted by formal appointments of authority; rather, it is embraced by those who see the need or the opportunity (Lambert et al., 2002). Characterized in this way, constructivist leadership seems made for online environments, as they may foster dynamic relationships between users and are often informal in nature. Research exploring teacher leadership has focused primarily on the school or district level (Collinson, 2004), and little research regarding the phenomenon as it pertains to the work of teachers participating online has emerged. Future research may begin filling that gap in the academic literature by adding the lived experiences of teachers who perform acts of constructivist leadership in online environments—what I have taken to calling "constructivist online teacher leadership"—to the existing body of knowledge, broadening understandings of teacher leadership in the process.

Other forms of participation

In this study, the notion of participation was conceptualized through Jenkins's (2006a, 2006b) work, and the data collected (i.e., online artifacts) reflected forms of participation that were active and plainly visible (e.g., blogging, microblogging). Researchers continuing the exploration of English teachers' participation online might consider accounting for forms of participation that are not seen or heard, placing a greater emphasis on the experiences of teachers who might be considered "lurkers" in various online environments. How do those who engage in these ways make sense of their online experiences? What is the nature of their participation?

Other online environments

As I noted when addressing the limitations of this study in Chapter 3, some participants described engaging other teachers through Facebook, a popular social network site. However, because the Facebook profiles of those who mentioned it were not accessible publicly, I opted not to pursue participant-generated materials that may have been shared in that environment. Researchers investigating English teachers' participation online related to the exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy might design future studies to include Facebook as a space of inquiry, given its continued popularity.

Additionally, as one might expect with online technologies, new sites and tools continue to emerge. For example, during the course of this study, Pinterest (http://pinterest.com), a virtual pinboard of sorts that essentially allows users to act as curators of online content, gained traction among teachers who recognized the value of organizing and sharing content they found notable on the Web. Future research might inquire into the sites and tools teachers are using to engage their peers online outside of those featured most prominently in this study (i.e., blogs, Twitter, and professionally oriented social network sites).

The efficacy of teachers' participation online

The findings of this study indicate that professionally oriented participation online may expose English teachers to ideas that can inform their thinking and shape their teaching practice. Notable examples of this are seen in the narrative Gary relayed about how engaging in an online book club revolutionized his approach to facilitating reading among secondary students and in the narrative Brian shared about altering his assessment of student writing based on online discussions about rubrics. However, little

is known about how a teacher's professionally oriented participation online ultimately affects students. Additional research is needed to better determine the ways English teachers' professionally oriented participation online actually informs student achievement.

Prospective teachers' participation online

As suggested above, the findings of this study indicate that secondary English teachers may benefit in various ways from participating online in exploration of teaching, learning, and literacy. Accordingly, I have recommended that English teacher educators ensure that prospective teachers have meaningful opportunities to participate online. In line with that recommendation, I believe that the field could benefit from studies that delve into prospective teachers' experiences participating online. A prior study (Rodesiler & Tripp, 2012a) indicated that some prospective teachers feel as though their status hinders how they and their experiences are received online by practicing teachers, which serves as an impediment to their developing sense of belonging to the field and seems to add to their reluctance to assume the role of a more knowledgeable other. Additional research into the narratives prospective teachers share about their experiences exploring teaching, learning, and literacy online alongside practicing teachers could prove to be beneficial as more and more prospective teachers find their way online.

The institutionalization of professionally oriented participation online

Though the findings of this study indicate that secondary English teachers are participating online in ways that shape their pedagogical decisions and help them support students, such self-directed participation online is not recognized widely as valid professional development activity in many school districts. However, there are

exceptions, and such cases are worth examining more closely. For example, during our second interview, Gary shared a narrative about how he has “institutionalized” his professionally oriented participation online by building it into his district professional development plan. Additional research into similar cases would be useful in determining the utility of institutionalizing teachers’ self-directed participation in online environments or, in effect, formalizing teachers’ informal online activity.

Concluding Remarks

I began the first chapter of this dissertation by recounting my experience as an English teacher, an experience I imagine many English teachers across the country have known. I made note of the long hours and the breakneck pace of each day. As exhausting as those days were, I did not recount them to elicit sympathy. Rather, I intended to establish a baseline for the work of a secondary English teacher. That is, I wanted to capture what I believe to be a typical experience based on the years I have spent as a secondary English teacher and as an English teacher educator. Establishing that baseline was important, for I wanted readers to recognize when teachers exceed that baseline, as the five participants in this study do on a routine basis.

Though observations in the classroom were beyond the scope of this study, the incredible volume of artifacts and narratives I analyzed indicated that the participating teachers exceeded that baseline as they stole away moments, morning, noon, and night, to share their practice, to offer words of encouragement, and to be the “other” in dialogic interactions with teachers online who were relative strangers until, over time, they were not. The teachers in this study exceeded that baseline by reading title after title to share with students, and they went even further by writing review after review to share those titles with their online colleagues.

However, as laudable as the five participating teachers have been in their dedication to teaching, learning, and literacy, over the course of this study I have found that they are not special cases. In fact, they are only five of many passionate English teachers nation-wide who are extending themselves to read more, to share more, and to learn more online in the shadow of scrutiny that darkens the teaching profession.

APPENDIX A
PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Dear _____:

My name is Luke Rodesiler, and I am a doctoral fellow studying English education at the University of Florida. I am writing today to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting in partial fulfillment of a doctoral degree.

With this study, which is partially funded by the Conference on English Education, a constituent group of the National Council of Teachers of English, I aim to build an understanding of secondary English teachers' participation in online environments. As a secondary English teacher who is active online, you have been identified as an ideal participant for this study.

In order to complete this study, I will ask each participant (1) to allow texts they have written online about teaching and learning (e.g., blog posts, microblog entries, and communication within social network sites) to be considered as data for analysis; (2) to participate in two one-hour interviews; and (3) to review transcribed interview data for accuracy. Unfortunately, I cannot provide any compensation for participation at this time. However, with this research, I hope to inform English teacher education, to illuminate how English teachers participate in online environments around issues related to teaching and learning, and to provide directions for future research.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please contact me at your earliest convenience. You may reach me via email at [redacted] or by phone at [redacted].

I appreciate your consideration.

Respectfully,

Luke Rodesiler
Doctoral Fellow
University of Florida

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Protocol title: Investigating English teachers' participation in online environments.

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to describe English teachers' contexts and experiences as they relate to participating in online environments that provide opportunities for networked learning.

What you will be asked to do in the study: (1) To allow texts you have written online about teaching and learning (e.g., blog posts, microblog posts, discussion forum posts, and chat session contributions) to be analyzed as data; (2) to participate in two one-hour interviews about your participation in online environments related to teaching and learning; and (3) to review transcribed interview data for accuracy.

Time required: 2 hours and 20 minutes

Risks and benefits: There is no more than minimal risk, and there is no direct benefit to the participant in this research. However, this research may add to the understanding of English teachers' participation in online environments. It may also promote discussions related to the implications of English teachers' experiences on teacher preparation, on teacher leadership, and on professional learning in online environments.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participating in the study.

Confidentiality: Your privacy will be protected to the extent allowable by law. You will be invited to review data collected, including transcripts and online artifacts, and you may elect to exclude content as you see fit. Moreover, if you prefer, a pseudonym will be used for you in any publication/presentation of this work. The final results will be presented in a dissertation as partial completion of a doctoral degree, and they may be submitted to academic journals for publication consideration.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:
Luke Rodesiler, College of Education, 2216 Norman Hall, Gainesville, FL 32611
[redacted].

Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:
UFIRB Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; 392-0433.

I have read the procedure outlined above. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study, and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant's signature and date

_____

Principal Investigator's signature and date

_____

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW GUIDE I

Thank you for participating in this study. As you know, I'm interested in learning more about your participation online around issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy.

1. Tell me about your experience participating online.
   - Which sites have been most significant to you?
   - Can you tell me more about their significance?

2. In what ways did you first start participating online?
   - Tell me more about _____.
   - Is there something you get from participating online that you were missing before you started?
     - Can you tell me more about that?

3. With what purpose(s) do you participate online?
   - Can you tell me more about _____?
   - Can you describe for me your intended audience?

4. Tell me about some of your most meaningful experiences in these environments.
   - Can you tell me more about _____?
   - What happened to make that experience so meaningful?
   - What did you get out of that experience?
   - Do any other experiences stand out?

5. While you are active in various online environments, your work with _____ seems particularly noteworthy. How did _____ come about?
   - What intentions did you have when you first started _____?
   - How did you settle on the format for _____?
   - Tell me about the process of maintaining _____.
     - What challenges, if any, has it offered?
     - What, if anything, have you learned through the process?
   - Finally, can you tell me how _____has been received?

6. Why do you participate online?
   - What does your participation offer other teachers?
   - What does it offer you?
     - Can you give me some examples of times when that's happened?

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW GUIDE II

Again, thank you for participating in this study. As we've discussed, I'm interested in learning more about your participation online around issues related to teaching, learning, and literacy.

1. How does your experience participating online compare to more traditional opportunities for professional learning you've experienced as a teacher?
   - Can you tell me more about _____?
   - Can you provide some examples to illustrate what you mean?
   - What was that experience like for you?

2. Tell me about the professional opportunities—if any—your participation online has opened up for you.
   - How did _____ come about?
   - Can you tell me more about _____?
   - What was that experience like for you?

3. How—if at all—has your participation online informed the way you see yourself as a teacher?
   - Can you tell me more about _____?
   - Can you provide some examples to illustrate what you mean?
   - What has that experience been like for you?

4. Can you tell me about a meaningful professional relationship that's grown through your participation online?
   - How did that come about?
   - What has that experience been like for you?

5. How have those around you—your brick-and-mortar colleagues, your family, your friends—responded to your participation online?
   - Can you tell me more about _____?
   - Can you provide some examples to illustrate what you mean?

6. Tell me a story about how—if at all—your experiences participating online have informed your professional practice.
   - Can you tell me more about _____?
   - Can you provide some examples to illustrate what you mean?

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

APPENDIX E
NARRATIVE INVENTORY

Sarah, Interview I				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Tell me about your experience participating online.	SA1.1: I wasn't really very active online	Intro to blogging & microblogging through Pioneers program; blogging in graduate course	Complicating action (CA) and evaluation (E) are evident; the segment is relevant to the research	Lengthy narrative; lone participant introduced to online environments through district PD
Which sites have been most significant to you?	SA1.2: I wish more teachers would use it	Twitter; helping students find book recommendations	CA is evident, but it seems a bit light on the E; relevant to the research	Brief; brings to mind SA1.13, also about microblogging to match students & books
Which sites have been most significant to you?	SA1.3: I can have it whenever I want	Twitter as PD; read-aloud discussion online while in grocery store	Brief, yet CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Like SA1.21, also about read-aloud discussion online via microblog
Are there any specific instances you can recall or stories you can share about [seeking help online]? (probe)	SA1.4: I wouldn't have known about it	Picking up graffiti wall activity shared by others online	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind SA1.12 & BK1.7, also about picking up classroom ideas online
Are there any specific instances you can recall or stories you can share about [seeking help online]? (probe)	SA1.5: A lot of people are just really open	Seeking help for film to pair with a novel and with which to explore archetypes	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	One of the few narratives expressly about seeking help from others online;
Can you tell me about that experience, when you first started trying to get rolling [online]?	SA1.6: One of the best things that helped	Censorship issue sparking interest to learn more about Twitter (e.g., replies, hashtags)	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Rich narrative; seems to speak to importance of need; might explain challenge some teachers face getting started (i.e., lack of pressing need)
Can you tell me about that experience, when you first started trying to get rolling [online]?	SA1.7: That was another way we kind of got involved	Failed attempt to participate in online author chat; playing around	Though brief, CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brief; seems to illustrate the challenges one may face getting started online; touches on play as strategy

Sarah, Interview I (cont.)				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
How did you first start participating with [your blog]? (probe)	SA1.8: Blogging just became a hobby	Evolution of her blog; using other blogs as models	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Captures blog's evolution & her process; like BK1.12, speaks to finding models
How did you first start participating with [your blog]? (probe)	SA1.9: I sometimes feel like a black sheep	Meeting others via Twitter; sense of comfort in finding other teachers who embrace YA lit.	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind SA1.11, CM1.2, MR1.10 & GA1.8, also about self-doubt & finding affirmation online; seems to be common
How did you first start participating with [your blog]? (probe)	SA1.10: Seems like I'm hanging out with my friends	Twitter vs. Facebook; meeting online colleagues in person	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Seems to illustrate how online connections may extend off-line, like CM1.9
Is there something you get from participating online that you were missing before you started?	SA1.11: It's very reassuring	Finding assurance online that her practice is viable; sense of doubt due to pedagogical differences	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind SA1.9, CM1.2, MR1.10 & GA1.8, also about self-doubt & finding affirmation online; seems to be common
Is there something you get from participating online that you were missing before you started?	SA1.12: That's where I get a lot of my ideas	Twitter interactions as resource; displaying student book reviews	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind SA1.4, BK1.7 & BK2.13, also about picking up classroom ideas online
Are there particular genres of books or specific titles that come to mind when you think of [picking up titles that you normally wouldn't]? (probe)	SA1.13: I probably wouldn't have even known	"Literary Achilles' Heel"; expanding her own YA lit knowledge base through online interactions	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind SA1.2, also about matching students with books
With what purpose(s) do you participate online?	SA1.14: I'd like to be someone that's a resource	Desire to be a resource for others online; learning from others	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind GA1.1, also about a desire to help & get help

Sarah, Interview I (cont.)				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Can you tell me more about [your goal] and how is it that you see your participation online feeding that purpose or that long-term goal? (probe)	SA1.15: We all encourage one another	Being observed by others; developing proposal for NCTE Annual Convention with online peers	CA and E are evident in the primary narrative and in the secondary narrative within the segment; plainly relevant	Sharing practice face-to-face seems like a formative experience; captures how online connections may extend beyond, as with CM1.9, CM2.8 & GA1.15
Can you tell me more about [your goal] and how it is that you see your participation online feeding that purpose or that long-term goal? (probe)	SA1.16: Right now I'm working on my master's	Master's degree program; uncertainty about fit; desire to teach teachers	CA and E are evident; seems to be related tangentially to the research	Though emphasizing her desire to teach teachers, content doesn't seem to be an ideal fit given the focus of the study
What intentions did you have when you first started the blog?	SA1.17: I was really playing around with it	Student projects; development of student-author interviews	CA and E are evident in primary & secondary narratives; plainly relevant	Captures blog's initial student focus; like BK1.10, CM2.5 & GA2.7, about author/student connections
Can you tell me how your work with your blog has informed your teaching?	SA1.18: I've seen way more improvement	Evolution of student book reviews; providing audience for students	CA and E are evident; seems to be relevant to the research	Brings to mind MR1.13 & GA2.6, also about providing audience online for students
How are students responding to their work being posted online for a larger audience?	SA1.19: She was so mortified at first	Students' responses to posting reviews online, ranging from trepidation to pride	CA and E are evident; seems to relevant to the research	Seems to capture challenge of making practice public & sharing student work online
Have you begun to look at it and see it as a resource for teachers as well? (probe)	SA1.20: Teachers tell me that they're using it	Sense of pressure; writing with teachers in mind	CA and E are evident in primary and secondary narratives in the segment	Like MR1.9 & CM1.8, also about the pressures of producing online content
Have you begun to look at it and see it as a resource for teachers as well? (probe)	SA1.21: I make sure I'm thinking about teachers	Blogging about read-alouds; response from online peers	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brings to mind SA1.3, also about read-aloud discussion online
What challenges—if any—has maintaining the blog offered you?	SA1.22: It's juggling	Time as challenge; thoughts of giving up blogging; attempts to be more efficient	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	The challenge of time seems to be consistent among participants, like with BK2.15

Sarah, Interview II				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
How does [onsite PD you get from your district] compare to [your online experience]?	SA2.1: They always have good intentions	Broad nature of onsite PD; desire for hands-on experiences	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brings to mind GA2.1, which speaks to the idea of "one size fits all" equating to "one size fits none"
How does [onsite PD you get from your district] compare to [your online experience]?	SA2.2: If I have a specific need	Turning to others online for help teaching the concept of allusion	Though quite brief, CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Very brief narrative; offers specific instance of turning to others for help; no payoff at time of interview
Can you tell me about the professional opportunities—if any—that participating online has opened up for you?	SA2.3: People were seeing my teacher's guide	Being invited to write a teacher's guide for *The Pull of Gravity*; apprehension about making it public; affirmation from online peers	CA and E are evident in the primary narrative and the sub-narrative within the segment; relevant to the research	Apprehension about making writing public brings to mind MR1.11, also about challenges she faces in making her writing public; complex structure; seems noteworthy
Can you tell me about the professional opportunities—if any—that participating online has opened up for you?	SA2.4: We put our presentation together for NCTE	Collaborating with online peers to propose a session at the 2012 NCTE Annual Convention	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind CM2.2, also about preparing a proposal for NCTE 2012 with online peers
Can you tell me about the professional opportunities—if any—that participating online has opened up for you?	SA2.5: I ended up providing a lot of my materials	Facilitating #engchat; sharing YAL class materials; writing for Nerdy Book Club	Though brief, CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Like GA2.3, touches on facilitating #engchat; shifts to address Nerdy Book Club post
Can you tell me about the professional opportunities—if any—that participating online has opened up for you?	SA2.6: I hope they don't think I'm like a fraud	Self-doubt about sharing practice as a fifth-year teacher; finding reassurance	CA is evident; heavy on the E; plainly relevant to the research	The reflection on making her practice public in this piece seems noteworthy
Can you tell me about the professional opportunities—if any—that participating online has opened up for you?	SA2.7: It's fun sharing ideas	Sharing YAL class materials with former classmates through Facebook	Brief, yet CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brief narrative; may not advance, for emphasis is on activity in Facebook, which wasn't a data source

Sarah, Interview II (cont.)				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Can you tell me about the professional opportunities—if any—that participating online has opened up for you?	SA2.8: They used blurbs from my review	Seeing a quote from one of her reviews on the cover of a YA novel	Though brief, CA and E are evident; related to the research	Captures a unique opportunity that arose from her (and a students') participation online
Do you find that these [opportunities] kind of fan the flames, if you will, as far as what you're doing [in the classroom]? (probe)	SA2.9: That's lifted me up quite a bit	Online connections as "pick-me-ups"; a sense of doing the right thing; student benefits of YAL class	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Shifting focus from the benefits of participation to what students get out of the YAL class may prevent it from moving forward
Do you find that these [opportunities] kind of fan the flames, if you will, as far as what you're doing [in the classroom]? (probe)	SA2.10: It's just contagious	Students picking up on her enthusiasm; sharing online ideas & opportunities with students	CA is general, not specific; E is evident; seems to be related tangentially to the research	A bit vague; seems as though the content of the segment is related loosely to online participation
How have those around you—your brick-and-mortar colleagues, family, friends—responded to your participation online?	SA2.11: He's always really supportive	Reversal of roles regarding online activity; evolving understanding of online relationships	Brief, yet CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brings to mind CM2.10, also about spouse's response to high volume of online participation
I'm wondering if you can tell me about how—if at all—your experiences participating online have informed your professional practice.	SA2.12: It's just a hot-button topic	Online conversations informing her position on reading programs	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Interesting take; narrative captures how online interactions may inform what to *avoid* as well as what to do
I'm wondering if you can tell me about how—if at all—your experiences participating online have informed your professional practice.	SA2.13: I was glad to hear about that	Preparing for books in her class being challenged after learning about others	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	The matter of exploring censorship online came up previously (SA1.6)

Gary, Interview I				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Can you tell me more about [what you get from participating online]? (probe)	GA1.1: I felt like I was helping people and people were helping me	Experience with traditional PD compared to experience with ECN	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Like CM2.1, GA2.1, BK1.6 & MR2.3, also describes frustrating experiences with traditional PD
Can you talk a little bit about [offering support to others online]? (probe)	GA1.2: I hope I have some things to offer	Desire to help; bringing department chair experience to online environment	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brings to mind GA1.5, also about leadership qualities not flourishing onsite
Can you tell me more about how [microblogging's] been significant to you? (probe)	GA1.3: It feeds my professional development needs	Personalized, ongoing nature of Twitter feeds PD needs	E is evident, but the segment seems a bit light on CA; relevant to the research	Seems to be more of a commentary on his experience than a narrative as I've defined it
Can you tell me about your initial participation on the [English Companion] Ning? (probe)	GA1.4: I kind of felt a little ownership there	Recognition in ECN; sense of ownership from invitation to oversee it	CA and E are evident; related to the research	Seems to tie back to GA1.2, as he speaks of department chair experience
Is there something you get from participating online that you were missing before you started?	GA1.5: Make a difference here in that role	Opportunity to make a difference online, which wasn't happening onsite	E is evident; CA is a bit light; related to the research	Brings to mind GA1.2, also about leadership qualities not flourishing onsite
Is there something you get from participating online that you were missing before you started?	GA1.6: I didn't even have the questions to ask	Picking up ideas related to technology integration; learning how to write online	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind BK2.8, which also speaks to learning about writing online in order to teach it
Do you have any examples of the tech things that you explored online and then you were able to transport and bring into your classroom? (probe)	GA1.7: I started [school] American Studies Ning	Efforts to bring experience he had with ECN to his classroom; the high volume of traffic it's received	CA and E are evident; related to the research	Like BK2.3 & BK2.4, also describes participating online before incorporating online technologies in the ELA classroom
Can you tell me about some of your most meaningful experiences in some of these environments?	GA1.8: I was definitely swimming upstream onsite	Receiving positive feedback online; finding others who take similar positions	CA and E are evident; plainly related to the research	Like MR1.10, CM1.2, CM1.14, SA1.9 & SA1.11, also about finding comfort online, affirmation

Gary, Interview I (cont.)				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Can you talk a little bit about [finding affirmation online] and maybe dig into that experience for me?	GA1.9: I've entered into some back and forth dialogues in a variety of formats	Finding common ground through dialogue with others online	E is evident, but CA seems a bit vague; relevant to the research	The segment seems a bit too vague to warrant moving forward with it
How is it that some of these relationships you deem to be important and meaningful get to be that? (probe)	GA1.10: When you work together in true collaboration	ECN Webstitute; relationships forming through online projects	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brings to mind CM2.7, also about relationships forming through online projects
How did that webinar come about?	GA1.11: We had a framework	ECN Webstitute; taking best features of face-to-face conference while minimizing worst	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Runs through the thinking behind ECN Webstitute; brings to mind MR1.5, also about providing online opportunity for learning
How did that webinar come about?	GA1.12: I tried a book club	Falling short on online book club; belief in the democratic idea	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brings to mind MR1.7, also a discussion of leadership; seems to capture his vision of democratic online PD
Can you talk a little bit about how you came to organize the webinar in this way?	GA1.13: We had the theme first	Identifying and recruiting presenters for the ECN Webstitute	E is evident; CA seems a bit light; relevant to research	Seems to speak to drawing on the strengths of ECN members while also branching out
What challenges did you face [in organizing the webinars]?	GA1.14: There's a trust factor	Challenging one another; trust	Brief, yet CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Very brief; may not be enough substance to warrant moving forward
Do you have any stories … where you felt like some support you offered…seemed to be valuable to others in the online environment? (probe)	GA1.15: That's very human contact	Human connections growing out of initial pedagogical exchanges	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Speaks to growing relationships by reaching out professionally
Do you have any stories … where you felt like some support you offered…seemed to be valuable to others in the online environment? (probe)	GA1.16: Four colleagues have started blogs	His blog informing conversations at school; potentially influencing blogging of onsite colleagues	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Seems to be the lone case of a participant reporting on his/her online participation informing the online activity of in-house peers

Gary, Interview II				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Can you remember a time recently [when the relevance of onsite PD was in question]? (probe)	GA2.1: We have these monthly mandated PowerPoints	Perceived challenges of one-size-fits-all PD	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brings to mind GA1.1, BK1.6, MR2.3 & CM2.1, also about frustrating traditional PD experiences
Is there a particular [online experience] you were able to learn…from and eventually apply in your classroom? (probe)	GA2.2: English Companion Ning was doing some book clubs	Shifting thought & practice based on participation in ECN book clubs; student reactions; English department embrace	Complex structure; CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Traces his participation in online book club, including how it informed his thinking & his practice; like BK1.4, also about experience in ECN; seems noteworthy
Can you tell me about the professional opportunities—if any—that participating online has opened up for you?	GA2.3: I enjoyed the give and take and the pace of it	Facilitating a session of #engchat on "Zapping Apathy"	CA is evident; the segment seems light on the E; relevant to the research	Brief; brings to mind SA2.6, also about facilitating a session of #engchat
How—if at all—has your participation online informed the way you see yourself as a teacher?	GA2.4: It did get me going with tech stuff	Increasing his facility with online tools through participation online	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Like BK1.8, BK2.2 & GA2.5, speaks to knowing what students experience when writing online by doing it personally
How—if at all—has your participation online informed the way you see yourself as a teacher?	GA2.5: I've learned some things from that	Passing on lessons learned through his own blogging experience	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Like MR1.11, BK1.8, BK2.2 & GA2.4, speaks to being better prepared to help students by having experienced it personally
Were [students writing online] before you started participating online yourself? (probe)	GA2.6: Students were not doing blogs before I was	Students writing for more than just teacher feedback; using models	CA and E are evident; seems relevant to the research	Brings to mind MR1.13, SA1.18, also touching on providing an audience for students
Were [students writing online] before you started participating online yourself? (probe)	GA2.7: There's a YA author	YA authors responding to student blog posts	CA and E are evident; seems relevant to the research	Like CM2.5, BK1.10 & SA1.17, describes using the Web to connect students with YA authors

Gary, Interview II (cont.)				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Can you talk a little about your choice to share your practice [online]?	GA2.8: I'm the luckiest guy in the world	Writing from experience; sharing examples; balance	E is evident; CA seems a bit light; relevant to the research	Cites a specific blog entry, a book review
I'm wondering if we can just begin by talking about how your blog came about.	GA2.9: A place for my own stuff	Consolidating into one online space; choosing a platform	CA is evident; seems a bit light on the E; relevant to the research	Like BK, GA seemed to be looking for his own space
Can you tell me about a post that you'd deem successful? (probe)	GA2.10: It was on fire	"What's not Wrong?" blog post; promotion through Choice Literacy	CA is evident; the segment seems particularly light on the E	Brief narrative; limited evaluation hinders its classification as narrative as I've defined it
Can you tell me a little about the "Trust Teachers" post you wrote recently? (probe)	GA2.11: They're taking our time	Losing time to increased faculty meetings; proving productivity & honesty; response from peers	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brings to mind BK2.15, which also speaks to perceived attacks on teachers' time
How have those around you—your on-site colleagues, administrators, family, friends—responded to your participation online?	GA2.12: I actually institutionalized it	Building online activity into his PD goals; concerns about the new evaluation program	CA is evident; the segment seems a bit light on the E; relevant to the research	Though a brief narrative, the idea of institutionalizing online participation seems interesting
Have you ever experienced [a clash with your peers in the online environment]?	GA2.13: There's another way	Questioning another's approach online; what's good for students; careful wording	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Seems to illustrate that not all is perfect in the online environment; though different, brings to mind BK2.9; seems noteworthy

Brian, Interview I				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Can you tell me about how you came to that decision [to blog separately from ECN]?	BK1.1: It represented the very thing I was trying to get away from	Encountering negative voices in ECN; turning to blog instead	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	First segment to capture clash with an online peer; seems important to consider this angle
Can you talk about [the English Companion Ning's] significance to you?	BK1.2: It wasn't the same 50 faces that I've known for the last 17 years	Early value of ECN; benefit of varied perspectives; ECN compared with department meetings & coaching clinics	CA and E are evident; multiple sub-narratives within the greater narrative also include required CA and E; relevant	Enthusiastic; points are made through comparisons with face-to-face experiences; draws parallel to coaching, as with BK1.13; seems noteworthy
Can you talk a little bit about the ways you first started participating online?	BK1.3: It made me better here	Rubric discussion forum	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Suggests that online participation improved his practice; leads into BK1.4, which offers application
How did you transfer what you were discussing there and apply it to your practice? (probe)	BK1.4: The entire face of writing in my room changed	Applying concepts from rubric discussion in the classroom	CA and E are evident; though brief, the sub-narrative within the greater narrative also includes CA and E	Natural tie-in to BK1.3; also brings to mind GA2.2, about participating in ECN online book club & practical application
What was it about that conversation that sparked this change? (probe)	BK1.5: I felt comfortable enough to come back and talk to my kids about it	Authenticating ideas discussed online with students in classroom	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Follow-up to BK1.4, about how participation online has informed his practice
Is there something you get from participating online that you were missing before you started?	BK1.6: It's the professional development I wish we had here for the last 15 years	Fulfilling PD needs; typical PD experiences during first 15 years teaching	E is evident; the segment seems a bit light on CA; relevant to the research	Like GA1.1, GA2.1, MR2.3 & CM2.1, also describes frustrations with traditional PD experiences; narrative seems somewhat vague
Are there instances you can recall [where you filled needs in your practice through participation online]?	BK1.7: That came from an idea I just saw somebody tweet	Finding ideas online; research-based poetry; recursive nature of writing	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Like SA1.12 & SA1.4, also about picking up classroom ideas by microblogging

Brian, Interview I (cont.)				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
What intentions did you have when you first started the blog?	BK1.8: I need to know what they're going to run into	Seeing himself as a writer; making writing public; experiencing something to teach it	Heavy on the E; seems a bit light on the CA; relevant to the research	Like MR1.11, BK2.2, GA2.5 & GA2.4, speaks to knowing what students experience by writing
Can you talk about how you happened to structure the blog in that way?	BK1.9: I just wrote	Organic nature of blogging; finding audience	Though perhaps relevant to the research, it's light on the CA and the E	Brief; content not likely to be substantial enough to warrant moving forward
Can you talk about how you happened to structure the blog in that way?	BK1.10: It's become a big part of the course that the kids look forward to	Evolution of virtual author visits; student input	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Like CM2.5, GA2.7, and SA1.17, also about using the Web to pull YA authors into the classroom
Can you talk a little about why you wanted to spotlight [the author visits]? (probe)	BK1.11: I'm writing the book that I would want to read	Students' responses to virtual author visits	Seems to be related tangentially to the research, at best	Follow-up to BK1.10; relevance to the study will likely prevent this segment from moving forward
Do you see yourself as being a model or mentor for teachers online as you reflect on your practice and share work online? (probe)	BK1.12: I do look at other people's blogs	Viewing other teachers' blogs as models for his own	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Like SA1.8, describes using the blogs of others as models
Why do you participate online?	BK1.13: It's about being good	Accessing other professionals; parallels to experience as football coach	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	As in BK1.2, an analogy is drawn between experiences coaching and teaching
What does your participation online offer other teachers?	BK1.14: That's something that I can share	Sharing online experiences with teachers onsite	CA and E are evident; seems related to the research	Seems to tie-in with BK1.12, though with BK in role of mentor

Brian, Interview II				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
How—if at all—did the [NWP] Summer Institute experience inform your participation online?	BK2.1: It gave me the opportunity to experiment	SI participants' comfort (or lack thereof) with tech; his NWP demo	E is evident, but the segment is light on CA	Loose narrative; content not likely to warrant moving forward
Tell me more about that connection you were describing [between participating online and your work as a teacher]. (probe)	BK2.2: It makes me more of a sensitive teacher	What being a blogger does for him as a teacher; positioning as a writer after teaching 12-15 years	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	In this segment, BK is emphatic that he's a better teacher because he blogs; brings to mind MR1.11, BK1.8
Tell me more about that connection you were describing [between participating online and your work as a teacher]. (probe)	BK2.3: I felt handcuffed here with equipment	Challenges of limited access; writing grants for iPads in order to support students' blogging	CA and E are evident, but it seems to be related tangentially with a focus on classroom tech use	Seems to underscore the value BK sees in online participation, but it's emphasis is on classroom use with students
Tell me more about that connection you were describing [between participating online and your work as a teacher]. (probe)	BK2.4: That was a good first step	Microblogging with students and the reasons for it	CA and E are evident; however, it seems to be related tangentially with a focus on classroom tech use	As with BK2.3, this narrative leans toward classroom use, but it seems to underscore the value he sees in it
Tell me more about [how microblogging in the classroom was informed by your own experience doing it]. (probe)	BK2.5: I just kind of watched	The evolution of his own microblogging; more reasoning behind introducing it to students	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Like MR1.2 & CM1.19, also an account of moving slowly toward initial participation online
How's [microblogging with students] been going? (probe)	BK2.6: And it made me think	Considering audience in microblogging; personal experience shaping instruction	Though brief, CA and E are evident; seems relevant to the research	Brief; captures an exchange with a teacher online who nudged his thinking
How's [microblogging with students] been going? (probe)	BK2.7: That's something my colleagues don't know	Learning through experience; microblogging hiccups in the classroom	CA and E are evident, but it seems to be related tangentially with a focus on classroom tech use	Like BK1.14, speaks to knowledge he's gained through experience that he can share with colleagues

Brian, Interview II (cont.)				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Would you try [blogging and microblogging with students] if you hadn't used them previously in your professional life? (probe)	BK2.8: You can't just leap	The importance of experiencing something (i.e., technology, a novel) firsthand before using it in the classroom	Though brief, CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brief; supports BK's position on the ways firsthand experience contributes to improved teaching
I'm wondering if you can take me back and tell me about that experience.	BK2.9: It felt like bad faculty meetings	Encountering negative voices online; giving back to the profession	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Follows up on BK1.1, which is also about encountering a negative voice online
Tell me about the professional opportunities—if any—your participation online has opened up for you.	BK2.10: I would have never had the opportunity	Verifying dialogue authenticity for an author	Though brief, CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Shares an opportunity made possible through online presence; brings to mind SA2.3, also about YA author interactions
Can you tell me about the Pennsylvania Middle School presentation? (probe)	BK2.11: I thought it was useful	Virtual author visits; supporting teachers & sharing experience	CA and E are evident; may be relevant to the research	It's not fully evident that the opportunity arose due to online participation
How—if at all—has your participation online informed the way you see yourself as a teacher?	BK2.12: It makes me see myself as having something to contribute	Increased sense of belonging to the field; re-awakening a desire for learning	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind CM1.2, GA1.8, MR1.10, SA1.9 & SA1.11, also about meeting needs online
Can I press you for some examples to illustrate some of the points you've shared? (probe)	BK2.13: I didn't come up with that idea	Picking up classroom ideas online; microblogging in the classroom	Though brief, CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brief; content not likely to warrant moving forward
Have there been choices that you had to make in your curriculum or content that you wanted to bring in? (probe)	BK2.14: Is that book the best fit for us here in our curriculum?	Validating thinking & seeking support in making curricular decisions	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Captures efforts to seek support in making curricular decisions; seems noteworthy

Brian, Interview II (cont.)				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Can you talk a little bit about [the idea of feeling less exposed]? (probe)	BK2.15: There's just no time in a teacher's day	Limits on time in a teacher's day & the isolation that results; combating isolation with connections	E is evident, but CA seems light; relevant to the research	Brings to mind MR1.10, which also speaks to combating isolation with connections online; challenges on time bring to mind SA1.22
Does [your blog] inform how you see yourself or does it make you see yourself in a different light than maybe you did in the first 15, 16 years of your practice?	BK2.16: That reflective experience is something I never made myself have	Shifts in his practice: embracing the role of writer and of mentor	CA and E are evident; the sub-narrative within the greater narrative also includes CA and E	Seems to speak to identity (i.e., seeing himself and being seen by students as a writer)

Cindy, Interview I				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Can you tell me a little bit about your experience participating online?	CM1.1: I can't believe that the world is so small	Signing up; chatting with teachers & authors; engaging "all the time"	Includes each of Labov's narrative elements, including CA and E; relevant to the research	Offers overview of her experience participating online and the benefits she sees in it; seems noteworthy
Can you tell me a little bit about your experience participating online?	CM1.2: I'm not alone	Finding others like her online; contrasts online activity with attending a face-to-face professional conference	E is evident, but the segment seems light on CA; relevant to the research	Seems to be more of a commentary than a narrative; like CM1.14, GA1.8, MR1.10, SA1.9 & SA1.11, it also speaks to finding comfort online
Can you tell me a little bit about your experience participating online?	CM1.3: I had about fifty people message me	Books in the classroom; support from online peers	CA is evident, but the segment seems light on the E; relevant to the research	Very brief; probably not substantial enough to warrant moving forward
Which sites have been most significant to you? (probe)	CM1.4: I 'm kind of a guilty lurker	Introduction to ECN; lurking	CA is evident, but the segment seems light on the E; relevant to the research	Very brief; probably not substantial enough to warrant inclusion
Which sites have been most significant to you? (probe)	CM1.5: I'm always slow to get started	Figuring out the culture of Digital Is	Brief, yet CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Very brief; probably not substantial enough to warrant inclusion
How did the Nerdy Book Club come about?	CM1.6: I'm learning probably as much nerdy techy stuff as I am book stuff	Start of Nerdy Book Club (NBC); invitation to facilitate	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Captures how CM got involved with NBC; seems noteworthy that colleagues invited her aboard
What intentions did you and your colleagues have when starting this site? (probe)	CM1.7: It's really just a place for people to share	Evolution of NBC; the volume of traffic it's drawn	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Builds upon CM1.6
Do you do any editing or anything like that or is just straight whatever they send is what actually gets posted? (probe)	CM1.8: I had to come up with something really fast	Challenge of posting daily; coming up with a last-minute post	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Illustrates a behind-the-scenes challenge; like MR1.9 & SA1.20, also about pressure to produce content

Cindy, Interview I (cont.)				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Can you talk a little bit about what you've learned through the process of maintaining this space? (probe)	CM1.9: There's this funky thing that happens when you run into each other in person	Dinner in Chicago with ECN members; opportunities opening through participation online	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Speaks to the ways online connections might extend off-line, as with CM2.2, CM2.8, GA1.15 & SA1.10
Does any of that change your perception of yourself as a teacher and the work you do? (probe)	CM1.10: There does seem to be this weird disconnect	Onsite peers' responses to her online activity; students' responses	E is evident, but CA seems light	Light CA makes it unlikely that the segment will move forward
Does any of that change your perception of yourself as a teacher and the work you do? (probe)	CM1.11: They just don't acknowledge it	Administrators' responses to online PD & social media technologies	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Not unlike colleagues' reported response noted in CM1.10 & CM2.10
Is there something you get from participating online that you were missing before you started?	CM1.12: I guess it took me a long time to get there	Undergraduate community experience; filling conversation void with online connections	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind MR1.10, BK2.15, CM1.2, GA1.8, SA1.9 & SA1.11, all about meeting needs through online connections; seems noteworthy
Tell me about some of your most meaningful experiences in these environments.	CM1.13: Think about what you're going to do with it	#engchat at ISTE; thinking about what to do as a result of online conversations	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Not the only participant to reference this episode of #engchat
Tell me about some of your most meaningful experiences in these environments.	CM1.14: I'm part of this nerd group	Asynchronously reading online discussion forums; identifying with the participants	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Speaks to the notion of finding comfort in identifying with others online, as with MR1.10, CM1.2, GA1.8, SA1.9, & SA1.11; seems noteworthy
Tell me about some of your most meaningful experiences in these environments.	CM1.15: That kind of stuff clarifies my thinking	Sharing issues discussed online with students (e.g., pre-reading strategies debate)	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brings to mind CM1.10, a segment in which she mentions telling students about online activity

Cindy, Interview I (cont.)				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Can you talk a little bit about the role [microblogging has] played for you? (probe)	CM1.16: I was afraid to actually involve myself in the conversation	Initial discomfort upon getting involved	Though brief, CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brings to mind the initial experiences described in BK2.5 & MR1.2, also about moving slowly to participate at first
Can you talk a little bit about the role [microblogging has] played for you? (probe)	CM1.17: It's weird but it's cool all at the same time	Surprise at friendships forming with others online	E is evident, but CA seems light; relevant to the research	Seems to be more commentary than narrative as I've defined it
Can you talk a little bit about the role [microblogging has] played for you? (probe)	CM1.18: Following the rules I give them	Violating the safety precautions she gives students re: online interactions	CA and E are evident; tangentially related to the research	Brings to mind how online relationships expand off-line , as noted in CM1.9, CM2.8, GA1.15 & SA1.10
Can you talk about [the NWP Summer Institute's] role in shifting your perception on what you had to offer? (probe)	CM1.19: You're talking about me?	NWP's role in her self-perception; positive response to SI teaching demo; networking with NWP TCs online	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Seems like a formative experience, helping to boost confidence online; brings to mind MR1.2, also a segment detailing the importance of NWP
What was the demo? (probe)	CM1.20: I called it 'Salinger's Personal Narrative Machine'	NWP Summer Institute demonstration	CA and E are evident; seems to be related tangentially to the research	May be useful as part of larger narrative about NWP, but content not likely to warrant moving forward
You find that there's more that you get from Twitter than just the resources? Is that what you're saying? (probe)	CM1.21: There's a social thing to it	Importance of finding support from others onsite or online	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Seems to speak to the notion of finding support online; brings to mind BK2.15, which also speaks to the idea of support through connections online

Cindy, Interview II				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
How does your experience participating online compare to more traditional opportunities for professional learning you've experienced?	CM2.1: Sometimes I don't have a need for it right now	PD related to Learning-Focused Schools; need for PD	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Like MR2.3 , BK1.6 & GA1.1, also describes frustrations with traditional forms of PD
Tell me about the professional opportunities—if any—your participation online has opened up for you.	CM2.2: We were able to present last year	Developing a proposal for NCTE 2012 with online peers	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Like SA2.4, proposing NCTE session with online peers; like CM1.9, CM2.8, GA1.15 & SA1.10, speaks to online relationships expanding off-line
How are you helping [with a Peer2Peer U course]? (probe)	CM2.3: There are probably like eight or nine of us all over the country having this big long conversation	Facilitating a P2PU course on self-directed professional learning	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Seems to be a pretty loose narrative
So how did [the opportunity to present at NCTE 2011] come about? (probe)	CM2.4: It's almost like a pay-it-forward sort of model	Attending her first ALAN breakfast; pay-it-forward model face-to-face & online	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Draws a parallel between a face-to-face encounter and what she experiences online; strikes me as noteworthy
How—if at all—has your participation online informed the way you see yourself as a teacher?	CM2.5: I'm more willing to try stuff and see what happens	Virtual author visits; taking risks; comfort in turning to peers online	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind BK1.10, a description of virtual author visits, & his "strength in numbers" statement
Do you see yourself in a different light than you did previously? (probe)	CM 2.6: I still feel like I'm a student"	Feeling like a student; maintaining teacher persona	Quite brief, yet CA and E are evident; related tangentially to the research, at best	Brief; content seems too removed from the focus of the study to warrant moving forward
Can you tell me about a meaningful professional relationship that's grown through your participation online?	CM2.7: I never feel like I'm done when he's around	Sense of surprise at others thinking she has something to say; extension beyond work	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Ties in with CM2.8; reminds me of GA1.10, also describing online relationships growing through projects

Cindy, Interview II (cont.)				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Can you talk a little bit about [the book buddy project]? (probe)	CM2.8: It's a different interaction	Book buddy project; extending beyond online environment	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Another example of online connections extending off-line, like CM1.9, CM2.2, GA1.15 & SA1.10
What's that experience been like for you? (probe)	CM2.9: Those relationships can be just as valuable	Similarities in forming relationships with peers F2F & online	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brief; brings to mind GA1.15, also about bonds forming online
How have those around you—your brick-and-mortar colleagues, your family, your friends—responded to your participation online?	CM 2.10: That balance is probably the trickier one	Responses to online activity from son & spouse; surprise at how much she does beyond work	Brief; E is evident; CA seems a bit vague; relevant to the research	Brief; a bit vague; brings to mind SA2.11, also touching on spouse's response to high volume of online participation
How have those around you—your brick-and-mortar colleagues, your family, your friends—responded to your participation online?	CM2.11: It doesn't really fascinate anybody	Colleagues' response to her online activity; discussion about Choice Literacy	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brings to mind CM1.10, also addressing onsite peers' response to her online activity
Why do you participate online?	CM2.12: If I hadn't had those few interactions in the beginning	Importance of initial encounters online; surprise at others responding to her	Heavy on the E; CA is evident; plainly relevant to the research	Speaks to the importance of initial interactions

Meenoo, Interview I				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Tell me about your experience participating online.	MR1.1: I wanted to connect	EduCon 2010; desire to connect & how she has since then	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Pinpoints experience that piqued her interest in participating online
In what ways did you first start participating online?	MR1.2: I was like many new users	Initial participation; lurking; NWP SI facilitating increased participation	Detailed CA; E is evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind CM1.19, also about NWP's role in her online participation
In what ways did you first start participating online?	MR1.3: I credit [NWP] more than anything else	NWP cheerleaders; exposure to larger network; getting job as SLA	Though brief, CA and E are apparent; relevant to the research	Brief; ties into MR1.2, also about NWP's role in her online participation
What did your participation in the [NWP SI] do for you as far as launching you into putting your work online? (probe)	MR1.4: The experience stands apart from anything I've ever done	NWP SI experience; community; regular chance to write	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Ties into MR1.2 and MR1.3 as the third segment that touches on NWP SI experience
How did #engchat come about?	MR1.5: And how do we bring about change	Development of #engchat; getting buy-in from ELA community	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Lengthy segment; seems noteworthy
What intentions did you have when you first started #engchat?	MR1.6: You prep, you grade, you plan	Difficulty of teaching; #engchat as just-in-time PD; Twitter as starting point	Heavy on E, as she reflects on her thinking at the time; seems light on CA	Provides some insight regarding the initial vision for #engchat, but seems short on CA development
How did you settle on that format?	MR1.7: I really wanted to be truly democratic	Democratic approach to #engchat; not just "rock star" teachers	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Provides more insight into #engchat vision; brings to mind GA1.12, also about democratic nature of online PD; complement to MR1.5
Can you tell me a bit about [your use of the #engchat blog]?	MR1.8: It's like learning	Revising & shaping #engchat; blog posts as provocations	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Seems to capture pedagogical approach; seems noteworthy

Meenoo, Interview I (cont.)				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
Tell me about the process of facilitating #engchat.	MR1.9: It was like a small child	Initial pressure of tracking #engchat hashtag	Though brief, CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brief; brings to mind CM1.8 & SA1.20, also about the pressure to produce once an online presence is established
Is there something that you get from participating online that you were missing before you started?	MR1.10: I was no longer feeling isolated	Remedying sense of isolation in previous position through online connections; needs met in-house in new position	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind BK2.15, CM1.2, GA1.8, SA1.9 & SA1.11, also about needs being met through online connections; seems noteworthy
Can you talk a little bit about [sharing student work online]? (probe)	MR1.11: I became way more empathetic	Humbling experience of making writing public; empathizing with students	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Like BK1.8, BK2.2, GA2.4 & GA2.5, also about experiencing personally what students are asked to do; seems noteworthy;
Can you talk a little bit about [sharing student work online]? (probe)	MR1.12: There was no curtain	Exposing her practice online; accepting mistakes; becoming fearless	Though brief, CA is evident; E is evident; relevant to the research	Ties into MR1.11; reveals how making practice public informed her practice
Can you talk a little bit about [sharing student work online]? (probe)	MR1.13: It gave them real feedback	Sharing students' work online; giving students an audience; PSA assignment	CA and E are evident; sub-narrative also features CA and E; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind GA2.6 & SA1.18, also about providing students with an audience; seems noteworthy
What does your participation offer other teachers? (probe)	MR1.14: Today I got a request to share some document	Old blog accounts; teachers finding online work from previous years	CA and E are evident; related tangentially to the research	Seems relatively vague; primarily questioning what to do with class accounts from previous years

Meenoo, Interview II				
Prompt	**Label** (*in vivo*)	**Topic(s)**	**Narrative Elements**	**Notes & Connections**
How does your experience participating online compare to more traditional opportunities for professional learning you've experienced?	MR2.1: How can you have that experience online?	Situations dictating use of online mediums; difficulty of replicating NWP SI experience online	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Includes example of seeking help online
How does your experience participating online compare to more traditional opportunities for professional learning you've experienced?	MR2.2: My principal…believes in distributed leadership	Distributed leadership & PD at SLA; sense of ownership	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research, though focus is on face-to-face experiences	Stands out in the crowd as a positive experience with in-house PD
How does your experience participating online compare to more traditional opportunities for professional learning you've experienced?	MR2.3: I was already on a different trajectory	District-provided PD experiences; early listserv use	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brings to mind GA1.1, BK1.6 & CM2.1, also accounts of traditional PD experiences
Tell me about the professional opportunities—if any—your participation online has opened up for you.	MR2.4: A lot of it has actually been through NWP	Presenting on NWP's behalf; contributing to Digital Is; credibility	E is evident; seems light on CA	Content seems too vague to dig into; almost seems to just set the stage for MR2.5, which *is* rich
Tell me about the professional opportunities—if any—your participation online has opened up for you.	MR2.5: It makes my practice deeper	Sharing lesson at DML Conference & online at Digital Is to improve practice	CA is evident; heavy on E; relevant to the research	Comes full circle; draws parallels between sharing work face-to-face & online; seems noteworthy
How do you see these relationships coming about? (probe)	MR2.6: I've turned online because I know they're experts	Turning to online peers for book recommendations; give-and-take of online connections	CA and E are evident; relevant to the research	Brings to mind CM2.4, a narrative about the "pay it forward" approach she's experienced
How have those around you—your family, your brick-and-mortar colleagues, your friends—responded to your participation online?	MR2.7: I'm not an oddity in this school, but in my last school… definitely	Comfort in finding onsite colleagues participating online; sense of isolation in previous position	CA and E are evident; plainly relevant to the research	Brings to mind MR1.10, SA1.9 & SA1.11, also about feeling isolated; seems noteworthy

APPENDIX F
AUDIT TRAIL EXCERPT

Table F-1. Audit trail excerpt

Date	Decision	Rationale
02.28.12	To disseminate full interview transcripts and, eventually, the study's findings to participants for member checking	The process of member checking is a valuable validation strategy that may enhance the trustworthiness of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I believe it's important that participants have the opportunity to address the accuracy of any and all statements that appear in the interview transcript. Accordingly, rather than asking only that participants review content that might appear in the final report, I think it is best that I give participants the opportunity to review full transcripts and, eventually, the findings of the study.
03.29.12	To maintain a narrative inventory that will assist in organizing the data pulled from interview transcripts	After conducting two in-depth interviews with each of five different participants, I have collected what amounts to a rather large set of data. To manage that data in an efficient manner, I need to have an organizational system. A documentation process similar to that used by Humphries (2012) could prove to be helpful.
04.10.12	To use *in vivo* titles for items in the narrative inventory	Including *in vivo* titles for each narrative seems to align with a constructivist theoretical perspective. It serves as a good faith effort to honor participants' voices by attempting to use their own words to capture the "big idea" within the narrative.
06.05.12	To conduct an additional review of narratives deemed irrelevant or only related tangentially to the study before moving on in data analysis	I must conduct an additional review to ensure that I didn't overlook themes or patterns in discarded narratives that might contradict or challenge those present in narratives included in the final data set.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A 1997 graduate of Reading High School, Lucas B. Rodesiler studied at Michigan State University (MSU) in East Lansing, earning a bachelor's degree in 2000. After working as a residential counselor for adjudicated youth, he returned to MSU in 2002 to study English education. Following his post-BA program at MSU, Lucas completed Red Cedar Writing Project's Invitational Summer Institute, becoming a National Writing Project teacher-consultant in the process.

In 2004, Lucas began teaching English to students in grades 9-12 at South Lyon High School (SLHS) in South Lyon, Michigan. While teaching at SLHS, Lucas began working as a program leader for Greenrock Writers Retreat, a four-day residential writing program for high-school students, and he earned a master's degree from MSU in 2007.

Lucas accepted a doctoral fellowship in the College of Education at the University of Florida (UF) in 2009, allowing him to enjoy opportunities conducting research, teaching prospective teachers, and supporting interns in the field. While studying at UF, Lucas shared his work at various professional conferences, including the annual meetings of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the American Educational Research Association, and he published his work through various outlets, including NCTE's *English Journal* and *Classroom Notes Plus*.

In 2013, Lucas earned a doctoral degree from the University of Florida. Subsequently, he accepted a position in the College of Education at the University of South Florida in Tampa.