

## Introduction

Digital media and online communication have become a pervasive part of the everyday lives of youth in the United States. Social network sites, online games, video-sharing sites, and gadgets such as iPods and mobile phones are now well-established fixtures of youth culture; it can be hard to believe that just a decade ago these technologies were barely present in the lives of U.S. children and teens. Today's youth may be engaging in negotiations over developing knowledge and identity, coming of age, and struggling for autonomy as did their predecessors, but they are doing this while the contexts for communication, friendship, play, and self-expression are being reconfigured through their engagement with new media. We are wary of the claims that there is a digital generation that overthrows culture and knowledge as we know it and that its members' practices are radically different from older generations' new media engagements. At the same time, we also believe that current youth adoption of digital media production and social media[1] is happening in a unique historical moment, tied to longer-term and systemic changes in sociability and culture. While the pace of technological change may seem dizzying, the underlying practices of sociability, learning, play, and self-expression are undergoing a slower evolution, growing out of resilient social structural conditions and cultural categories that youth inhabit in diverse ways in their everyday lives. The goal of this book is to document a point in this evolutionary process by looking carefully at how both the commonalities and diversity in youth new media practice are part of a broader social and cultural ecology.

We write this book in a moment when our values and norms surrounding education, literacy, and public participation are being challenged by a shifting landscape of media and communications where youth are central actors. Although today's questions about "kids these days" have a familiar ring to them, the contemporary version is somewhat unusual in how strongly it equates generational identity with technology identity.[2] There is a growing public discourse (both hopeful and fearful) declaring that young people's use of digital media and communication technologies defines a generational identity distinct from that of their elders. In addition to this generational divide, these new technology practices are also tied to what David Buckingham (2007:96) has described as a "'digital divide' between in-school and out-of-school use." He sees this as "symptomatic of a much broader phenomenon—a widening gap between children's everyday 'life worlds' outside of school and the emphases of many educational systems." Both the generational divide and the divide between in-school and out-of-school learning are part of a resilient set of questions about adult authority in the education and socialization of youth. The discourse of digital generations and digital youth posits that new media empower youth to challenge the social norms and educational agendas of their elders in unique ways. This book questions and investigates these claims. How are new media being taken up by youth practices and agendas? And how do these practices change the dynamics of youth-adult negotiations over literacy, learning, and authoritative knowledge?

Despite the widespread assumption that new media are tied to fundamental changes in how young people are engaging with culture and knowledge, there is still relatively little research that investigates how these dynamics operate on the ground. This book reports on a three-year ethnographic investigation of youth new media practice that aims to develop a grounded, qualitative evidence base to inform current debates over the future of learning and education in the digital age. Funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation as part of a broader initiative on digital media and learning, the study represents a \$3.3 million investment to contribute to basic knowledge in this emerging area of research. The project began in early 2005 and was completed in the summer of 2008, with the bulk of fieldwork taking place in 2006 and 2007. This effort is unique among qualitative studies in the field in the breadth of the research and the number of case studies that it encompasses. Spanning 23 different case studies conducted by 28 researchers and collaborators, this study sampled from a wide range of different youth practices, populations, and online sites, centered on the United States. This book has a broad descriptive goal of documenting youth practices of engagement with new media and a more targeted goal of analyzing how these practices are part of negotiations between adults and youth over learning and literacy.

This introduction sets the stage for the body of the book, which is organized based on different domains of youth practices that cut across our various case studies. We begin with a discussion

of existing research on youth new media practice and describe the contribution that our project makes to this body of work. We then introduce the conceptual frameworks and categories that structure our collective analysis and description.

## Research Approach

Although a growing volume of research is examining youth new media practice, we are still at the early stages of piecing together a more holistic picture of the role of new media in young people's everyday lives. In the United States, a number of survey-based studies have been documenting patterns of technology uptake and the spread of certain forms of new media practice (Griffith and Fox 2007; Lenhart et al. 2007; Rainie 2008; Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout 2005), and they provide a reference point for understanding broad trends in media engagement. We understand from this work that youth tend to be earlier adopters than adults of digital communications and authoring capabilities, and that their exposure to new media is growing in volume, complexity, and interactivity (Lenhart et al. 2007; Lenhart et al. 2008; Roberts and Foehr 2008; Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout 2005). Research across different postindustrial contexts also suggests that these patterns are tied to broader trends in the changing structures of sociability, where we are seeing a move toward more individualized and flexible forms of engagement with media environments. Researchers have described this as a turn toward "networked society" (Castells 1996), "networked individualism" (Wellman and Hogan 2004), "selective sociality" (Matsuda 2005), the "long tail" of niche media (Anderson 2006), or a more tailored set of media choices (Livingstone 2002). Youth practices have been an important part of the drive toward these more networked, individualized, and diversified forms of media engagement.

In addition to these quantitative indicators, there is a growing body of ethnographic case studies of youth engagement with specific kinds of new media practices and sites (some examples include Baron 2008; Buckingham 2008; Ito, Okabe, and Matsuda 2005; Ling 2004; Livingstone 2008; Mazzarella 2005). Although the United Kingdom has funded some large-scale qualitative studies on youth new media engagements (Livingstone 2002; Holloway and Valentine 2003), the United States has not had comparable qualitative studies that look across a range of different populations and new media practices. What is generally lacking in the literature overall, and in the United States in particular, is an understanding of how new media practices are embedded in a broader social and cultural ecology. While we have a picture of technology trends on one hand, and spotlights on specific youth populations and practices on the other, we need more work that brings these two pieces of the puzzle together. How are specific new media practices embedded in existing (and evolving) social structures and cultural categories?

In this section of the introduction, we describe how our work addresses this gap, outlining our methodological commitments and descriptive focus that have defined the scope of this book. The first goal of this book is to document youth new media practice in rich, qualitative detail in order to provide a picture of how young people are mobilizing these media and technologies in their everyday lives. In this section of this introductory chapter, we outline our methodological approach and how we have defined the objects and focus of our study. The descriptive frame of our study is defined by our ethnographic approach, the study of youth culture and practice, and the study of new media.

## Ethnography

An ethnographic approach means that we work to understand how media and technology are meaningful to people in the context of their everyday lives. We do not see media or technology as "determining" or "impacting" society, culture, or individuals as an external force with its own internal logic, but rather as embodiments of social and cultural relationships that in turn shape and structure our possibilities for social action and cultural expression (see Bijker, Hughes, and Pinch 1987; Edwards 1995; Hine 2000). It follows that we do not see the content of the media or the media platform (TV, books, games, etc.) as the most important variables for determining social or cognitive outcomes. For example, we look at how video-game play is part of youth social lives, where it is situated in the home, how parents regulate play with the game, and how youth identify with the content and characters. We see outcomes not only in whether a child has identified with or learned media content but also in such things as how they are able to negotiate social status among peers, gain autonomy from parents, or acquire expertise in related domains such as knowledge seeking on the Internet. The strength of this approach is that it enables us to surface,

from the empirical material, what the important categories and structures are that determine new media practices and learning outcomes. This approach does not lend itself to testing existing analytic categories or targeted hypotheses but rather to asking more fundamental questions about what the relevant factors and categories of analysis are. We believe that an initial broad-based ethnographic understanding, grounded in the actual contexts of behavior and local cultural understandings, is crucial in grasping the contours of a new set of cultural categories and practices.

In other words, we describe media and technology as part of a broader set of social structures and cultural patterns. We have organized our description based on practices and contexts that structure youth engagement with new media—friendship, intimacy, family, gaming, creative production, and work. A focus on these foundational social practices enables us to describe changes in youth social lives and culture while also being attentive to the continuities with prior practice and structure. In the service of this broad descriptive goal we describe the continued relevance of gender and class in determining new media practice. Our focus, however, is on the issue of age and generational identity as structuring new media engagements. We look both internally at youth culture and the divisions between different youth as well as at the negotiations between youth and adults. How does new media engagement relate to different categories of youth culture and identity? To what extent are new media part of the definition, or conversely, a disruption of a generational identity? How are new media practices mobilized in the negotiations between adults and youth, particularly over learning and socialization? Any generation gap we might find in new media literacy and practices needs to be understood in its cultural diversity and specifics.

Our case studies have included diverse studies of youth in particular local communities, studies of after-school youth media programs, as well as studies of youth practices centered on online sites or interest groups. These include fans of Harry Potter and Japanese animation, video-game players, hip-hop creators, video bloggers, and participants on YouTube, MySpace, and Facebook. By looking at a range of different populations and youth practices, we were able to combine in-depth textured description of specific group dynamics with collaborative analysis of how these different groups defined themselves in relation or in opposition to one another. We describe these different studies and the specifics on data collection and joint analysis in the following chapter on Media Ecologies. Our material covers both “mainstream” practices of new media use that are widely distributed among U.S. teens as well as more subcultural and exceptional practices that are not as common, but that represent emerging and experimental modes of technical and media literacy. In this, our work resembles other ethnographic studies that look at the relationships between different kinds of childhood and youth subcultures and identity categories (Eckert 1989; Milner 2004; Thorne 1993), but we focus on the role of new media in these negotiations. To the extent possible, we have also situated our ethnographic cases and findings in relation to the quantitative work in the field. Through this approach, we have worked to mediate the gap between the textured, qualitative descriptions of new media practices and analysis of broader patterns in social, technical, and cultural change.

## Youth

Foundational to our descriptive approach is a particular point of view and methodological approach in relation to youth as a social and cultural category. In our research and writing we take a sociology-of-youth-and-childhood approach, which means that we take youth seriously as actors in their own social worlds and look at childhood as a socially constructed, historically variable, and contested category (Corsaro 1997; Fine 2004; James and Prout 1997; Wyness 2006). Adults often view children in a forward-looking way, in terms of developmental “ages and stages” of what they will become rather than as complete beings “with ongoing lives, needs and desires” (Corsaro 1997:8). By contrast, the “new paradigm” in the sociology of childhood (James and Prout 1997) sees that children are active, creative social agents who produce their own unique children’s cultures while simultaneously contributing to the production of adult societies and that “childhood—that socially constructed period in which children live their lives—is a structural form” (Corsaro 1997:4). This structural form has varied historically and is interrelated with other structural categories such as social class, gender, and race (Corsaro 1997; James and Prout 1997). In keeping with this sociology-of-youth-and-children approach, we moved beyond a simple socialization model in which children are passive recipients of dominant and “adult” ideologies and norms, and instead we deploy what Corsaro calls an Interpretive Reproduction model. In this

norms, and instead we deploy what Corsaro calls an interpretive reproduction model. In this model children collectively participate in society, in which children “negotiate, share, and create culture with adults and each other” (Corsaro 1997:18). In doing so we seek to give voice to children and youth, who, while they have not been absent in social-science research, have often not been heard (James and Prout 1997).

Our work has mostly focused on youth in their middle-school and high-school years, between the ages of 12 and 18. As we indicate above, we have made our best effort at examining the diversity among youth, rather than suggesting that youth share a monolithic identity. As described in the following chapter, we have also engaged, to a lesser extent, with parents, educators, and young adults who participate in or are involved in structuring youth new media practices. The category of youth and youth culture is co-constructed by adults and young people (Alanen and Mayall 2001). We capture what is unique about the contexts that youth inhabit while also remaining attentive to the ways in which new media practices span different age cohorts. In addition to their role in provisioning and regulating youth new media ecologies, adults are important coparticipants in youth new media practices. In fact, one of the important outcomes of youth participation in many online practices is that they have an opportunity to interact with adults who are outside of their usual circle of family and school-based adult relationships. The age populations that we look at are keyed to the specifics of the particular case study. In studies that focus on mixed-age interest groups, we have a significant proportion of young adults, while studies that focus on family life or school-based cohorts will focus more exclusively on teens and their relationships to parents and teachers. An ethnography of youth insists on attention to both the focal object of youth culture and to the adult cultures that have a formative and pervasive influence.

Readers will see the subjects of this research referred to by a variety of age-related names—children, kids, youth, teens, adolescents, young people, and young adults. In keeping with an ethnographic approach we try to use terms that our respondents use themselves, but given that youth do not commonly refer to themselves in age-graded categories (Thorne 1993), we frequently have to impose categories. To that end, for respondents age 13 and under, the general age of cutoff for the term “children” (Wyness 2006), we will usually use the word “kids” and, perhaps less often, “children.” While “kids” might seem a pejorative term, researchers have documented that this is the term they often use to refer to themselves; as Barrie Thorne noted in her research on schoolchildren, one of her respondents “insisted that ‘children’ was more of a put-down than ‘kids’” (Thorne 1993:9). For participants between the ages of 13 and 18 we will usually use the category of “teen” or “teenager” and, less frequently, the more biologically oriented “adolescent.” We do this to note that teenagers are, now, a slightly different social category. Teens have more agency than children, develop more elaborate peer cultures, self-consciously construct public and private selves, and challenge conventions of adult life (Fine 2004). We refer to those between the ages of 19 and 30 as “young adults,” and we use the term “young people” to refer broadly to both young adults and teens. “Youth” is the category we reserve when we are referring to the general cultural category of youth, which is not clearly age demarcated but which centers on the late teenage years.

While age-based categories have defined our object of study, we are interested in documenting how these categories are historically and culturally specific, and how they are under negotiation. Age gradations in Euro-American and other postindustrial countries are perhaps more salient and structuring than they have been at any point in history, as age gradation now has emerged as a way to define entire populations of people (Chudacoff 1989). Youth culture—since its midcentury inception by Talcott Parsons (Eckert 1989; Gilbert 1986)—has been characterized by being set apart from adulthood, defined by the process of “becoming” and “leisure” (Chudacoff 1989). Removing youth from the workforce and home left them with large amounts of leisure time with their own “peers” or age cohorts. More recently, researchers have documented how youth have not only been limited in their access to the workplace but also to other forms of public participation, including mobility in public places (Buckingham 2000; Lewis 1990; Livingstone 2002). Youth occupy more age-segregated institutions than they have in recent history (Chudacoff 1989) and have more cultural products that are targeted to them as specific age demographics (Cross 1997; Frank 1997; Kline 1993; Livingstone 2002; Seiter 1993). The ghettoization of youth culture also leads to its construction as social problem, a generational space in which society channels fears and anxieties (Cohen 1972; Corsaro 1997; Gilbert 1986; Lesko 2001). The current debates over the digital generation are the latest instantiation of these public hopes and fears surrounding

youth; as they have in recent history, media continue to play a central role in the contestations over the boundaries and definition of youth culture and sociability. While we have not conducted a historical or longitudinal study, we see our current snapshot of youth new media engagement as part of this longer trajectory in the definition of youth as a historically specific social and cultural category.

## New Media

Popular culture and online communication provide a window into examining youth practice in contexts where young people feel ownership over the social and cultural agenda. The commitment to taking youth social and cultural worlds seriously has been applied to media studies by a growing number of researchers who have looked at how children engage with media in ways responsive to the specific conditions of childhood. In contrast to much of media-effects research, these qualitative studies see children and youth as actively constructing their social and cultural worlds, not as innocent victims or passive recipients of media messages (Buckingham 1993; Jenkins 1998; Kinder 1999; Seiter 1993). By taking children and youth popular culture seriously, this body of work argues against the trivialization of children's media culture and sees it as a site of child- and youth-driven creativity and social action. While we recognize the ways in which popular culture has provided a site for kids to exercise agency and authority, we also think it is important to keep in view the central role of commercial entities in shaping children and youth culture. Media industries have been increasingly successful in constructing childhood culture in ways that kids uniquely identify with (Banet-Weiser 2007; Seiter 1993, 2005). In her analysis of Nickelodeon, Sarah Banet-Weiser describes how the channel constructs a form of "consumer citizenship." She writes, "This recent attention to children as consumers has as much to do with recognizing a particular political economic agency of children as it does to the unprecedented ways in which children are constituted as a commercial market" (Banet-Weiser 2007:8). In other words, the development of children's agency in the local life worlds of home and peer culture is inextricably linked to their participation as consumer citizens.

Within their local life worlds, popular culture can provide kids with a space to negotiate issues of identity and belonging within peer cultures (Chin 2001; Dyson 1997; Ito 2006; Seiter 1999a). In the case of interactive media and communications technology, the constitutive role of youth voice and sociability is further accentuated, in what Henry Jenkins (Jenkins 1992, 2006) has described as a "participatory media culture" and Mizuko Ito (2008b) has described in terms of "hypersociality" surrounding media engagement. In looking at Pokémon, for example, David Buckingham and Julian Sefton-Green (2004) have argued that although all media audiences are in some ways "active," interactive and sociable media such as Pokémon "positively require activity." With teens, this participatory approach toward new media has been channeled into networked gaming and social media sites such as MySpace, Facebook, or YouTube, which have captured the public limelight and added fuel to the discourse of a digital generation. The active and sociable nature of youth new media engagement argues for an ethnographic approach that looks not only at the content of media but at the social practices and contexts in which media engagement is embedded. While we are cautious about assuming a natural affinity between youth and participatory forms of media engagement, it is clear that youth participation in these media forms is high, and that interactive and networked media require particular methodological commitments.

We use the term "new media" to describe a media ecology where more traditional media such as books, television, and radio are intersecting with digital media, specifically interactive media and media for social communication (Jenkins 2006). As described in the subsequent chapter, we are interested in the convergent media ecology that youth are inhabiting today rather than in isolating the specific affordances of digital-production tools or online networks. We have used the term "new media" rather than terms such as "digital media" or "interactive media" because the moniker of "the new" seemed appropriately situational, relational, and protean, and not tied to a specific media platform. Just as in the case of youth, who are always on the verge of "growing older," media are constantly undergoing a process of aging and identity reformulation in which there is a generation of the new ready to replace the old. In other words, our focus is on media that are new at this particular historical moment. Our difficulty in naming a trait that defines the media we are scrutinizing (interactive, digital, virtual, online, social, networked, convergent, etc.) stems from the fact that we are examining a constellation of media changes, in a move toward more digital, networked, and interactive forms, which together define the horizon of "the new."

Our work has focused on those practices that are “new” at this moment and that are most clearly associated with youth culture and voice, such as engagement with social network sites, media fandom, and gaming. In contrast to sites such as Linked In, match.com, or much of the blogging world, sites such as MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, online gaming, and LiveJournal have a high degree of youth participation, and youth have defined certain genres of participation within these sites that are keyed to a generational identity. We can also see this cultural distinction at play in the difference between email and instant messaging as preferred communication tools, where the older generation is more tightly identified with the former. The ways in which age identity works in these sites is somewhat different from how more traditional media have segmented youth as a distinct market with particular cultural styles and products associated with it. Instead, the youth focus stems from patterns of adoption, the fit with the particular social and communicative needs of youth, and how they take up these tools to produce their own “content” as well as traffic in commercial popular culture. In these sites, it is not only youth consumption that is driving the success of new Internet ventures but also their participation (or “traffic”) and production of “user-generated content.” In describing these as youth-centric sites and communications tools, we mean that they are culturally identified with youth, but they can be engaged with by people of all ages. In other words, we are examining the cultural valences of certain new media tools and practices in how they align with age-based identities, but this does not mean that we believe that youth have a monopoly on innovative new media uses or that youth-centric sites do not have a large number of adult participants.

New media researchers differ in the degree to which they see contemporary new media practices as attached to a particular life stage or more closely tied to a generational cohort identity. For example, in looking at mobile-phone use, Rich Ling and Brigitte Yttri (2006) have argued that communicative patterns are tied to the particular developmental needs of adolescents who are engaged in negotiations over social identity and belonging. Naomi Baron (2008) also examines the relation between online communication and changes to reading and writing conventions. She sees youth uptake of more informal forms of online writing as part of a broader set of social and cultural shifts in the status of printed and written communication. Ultimately, the ways in which current communication practice will lead to resilient cultural change is an empirical question that can be answered only with the passage of time, as we observe the aging of the current youth cohort. If history is any guide, however, we should expect at least some imprint of a generation-specific media identity to persist. The aim of our study is to describe media engagements that are specific to the life circumstances of current youth, at a moment when we are seeing a transition to what we describe below as widespread participation in digital media production and networked publics. At the same time, we analyze how these same youth are taking the lead in developing social norms and literacies that are likely to persist as structures of media participation and practice that transcend age boundaries. For example, we have seen text messaging expand from a youth demographic to encompass a broader age range, and the demographics of media such as gaming and animation are gradually shifting upstream.

Finally, the new media practices we examine are almost all situated in the social and recreational activities of youth rather than in contexts of explicit instruction. In this, our approach is in line with a growing body of work in sociocultural learning theory that looks to out-of-school settings for models of learning and engagement that differ from what is found in the classroom (Cole 1997; Goldman 2005; Hull and Schultz 2002b; Lave 1988; Lave and Wenger 1991; Mahiri 2004; Nocon and Cole 2005; Nunes, Schliemann, and Carraher 1993; Rogoff 2003; Singleton 1998; Varenne and McDermott 1998). Our approach also reflects an emerging consensus that the most engaged and active forms of learning with digital media happen in youth-driven settings that are focused on social communication and recreation. As Julian Sefton-Green (2004:3) has argued in his literature review *Informal Learning with Technology outside School*, educators must recognize that much of young people’s learning with information and communication technologies (ICTs) happens outside of school. “This recognition requires us to acknowledge a wider ‘ecology’ of education where schools, homes, playtime, and library and the museum all play their part.” By focusing on recreational and social media engagement, in the everyday contexts of family and peer interaction, we fill out the picture of the range of environments in which youth learn with new media and prioritize those social contexts that youth find most meaningful and motivational. In this, we see our work as addressing an empirical gap in the literature as well as addressing the need to develop conceptual frameworks that are keyed to the changing landscape of new media

engagement.

To summarize, our primary descriptive task for this book is to capture youth new media practice in a way that is contextualized by the social and cultural contexts that are consequential and meaningful to young people themselves, and to situate these practices within the broader structural conditions of childhood that frame youth action and voice. In this, we draw from an ethnographic approach toward youth studies and new media studies. This commitment to socially and culturally contextualized analysis is also evident in the thematic and conceptual frameworks that guide our analysis of participation, learning, and literacy.

## Conceptual Frameworks

Through our collaborative analysis, we have developed a series of shared conceptual frameworks that function as threads of continuity in the chapters to follow. Our work is guided by four key analytic foci that we apply to our ethnographic material: participation, publics, literacy, and learning. Our primary descriptive research question is: How are new media being taken up by youth practices and agendas? Our analytic question follows from this: How do these practices change the dynamics of youth-adult negotiations over literacy, learning, and authoritative knowledge?

In keeping with our focus on social and cultural context, we consider learning and literacy as part of a broader set of issues having to do with youth participation in public culture (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988, 1995). We draw from existing theories that are part of the “social turn” in literacy studies, new media studies, learning theory, and childhood studies. The 1980s and 1990s saw the solidification of a new set of paradigms for understanding learning and literacy that emphasized the importance of social participation and cultural identity, and that moved away from the previously dominant focus on individual cognition and knowledge acquisition. This social turn has been described in terms of new paradigms of situated cognition (Brown, Collins, and Duguid 1989; Greeno 1997; Lave 1988), situated learning (Lave and Wenger 1991), distributed cognition (Hutchins 1995), and New Literacy Studies (Gee 1990; Street 1993). We see a counterpart in the “new paradigm” of childhood studies and the recognition among media scholars of the active agency of media audiences, as we have described in the previous section. We tailor these approaches to our specific interdisciplinary endeavor and our objects of inquiry that are at the intersection of these different fields.

While the social turn in learning and literacy studies is now well established, there is relatively little work that applies these frameworks to learning in the context of networked communication and media engagement. Further, though situated approaches to learning and literacy engage deeply with issues of cultural diversity and equity, they tend not to see generational and age-based power differentials as a central analytic problematic in the same way that the new paradigm in childhood studies does. We see the topic of youth-centered new media practice as a site that can bring these conversations together into productive tension. New media are a site where youth exhibit agency and an expertise that often exceeds that of their elders, resulting in intergenerational struggle over authority and control over learning and literacy. Technology, media, and public culture are shaping and being shaped by these struggles, as youth practice defines new terms of participation in a digital and networked media ecology. We have developed an interdisciplinary analytic tool kit to investigate this complex set of relations between changing technology, kid-adult relations, and definitions of learning and literacy. Our key terms are “genres of participation,” “networked publics,” “peer-based learning,” and “new media literacy.”

## Genres of Participation

One of the key innovations of situated-learning theory was to posit that learning was an act of social participation in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). By shifting the focus away from the individual and to the broader network of social relationships, situated-learning theory suggests that the relationships of knowledge sharing, mentoring, and monitoring within social groups become key sites of analytic interest. In this formulation, people learn in all contexts of activity, not because they are “internalizing” knowledge, culture, and expertise as isolated individuals, but because they are part of shared cultural systems and engaged in collective social action. This perspective has a counterpart within work in media studies that looks at media engagement as a social and active process. A notion of participation, as an alternative to

“internalization” or “consumption,” has the advantage in not assuming that kids are passive, mere “audiences” to media or educational content. It forces attention to the more ethnographic and practice-based dimensions of media engagement as well as querying the broader social and cultural contexts in which these activities are conducted.

Henry Jenkins has put forth the idea of “participatory media cultures,” which he originally used to describe fan communities in the 1970s and 1980s, and which he has recently revisited in relation to current trends in convergence culture (1992, 2006). Jenkins traces how fan practices established in the TV-dominated era have become increasingly mainstream because of the convergence between traditional and digital media. Fans not only consume professionally produced media, but they also produce their own meanings and media products, continuing to disrupt the culturally dominant distinctions between production and consumption. More recently, Jenkins has taken this framework and applied it to issues of learning and literacy, describing a set of twenty-first-century skills and dispositions that are based on different modes of participation in media cultures (Jenkins, 2006). In a complementary vein, Joe Karaganis (2007) has proposed a concept of “structures of participation” to analyze different modes of relating to digital and interactive technologies. In our descriptions of youth practice, we rely on a related notion of “genres of participation” to suggest different modes or conventions for engaging with new media (Ito 2003, 2008b). A notion of participation genre addresses similar problematics as concepts such as habitus (Bourdieu 1972) or structuration (Giddens 1986), linking activity to social and cultural structure. More closely allied with humanistic analysis, a notion of genre, however, foregrounds the interpretive dimensions of human orderliness. How we identify with, orient to, and engage with media is better described as a process of interpretive recognition than a process of habituation or structuring. We recognize certain patterns of representation (textual genres) and in turn engage with them in social, routinized ways (participation genres).

In the chapters to follow, we identify genres of participation with new media as a way of describing everyday learning and media engagement. The primary distinction we make is between friendship-driven and interest-driven genres of participation, which correspond to different genres of youth culture, social network structure, and modes of learning. By “friendship-driven genres of participation,” we refer to the dominant and mainstream practices of youth as they go about their day-to-day negotiations with friends and peers. These friendship-driven practices center on peers whom youth encounter in the age-segregated contexts of school but might also include friends and peers whom they meet through religious groups, school sports, and other local activity groups. For most youth, these local friendship-driven networks are their primary source of affiliation, friendship, and romantic partners, and their lives online mirror this local network. MySpace and Facebook are the emblematic online sites for these sets of practices. We use the term “peer” to refer to the people whom youth see as part of their lateral network of relations, whom they look to for affiliation, competition, as well as disaffiliation and distancing. Peers are the group of people to whom youth look to develop their sense of self, reputation, and status. We reserve the term “friend” to refer to those relations that youth self-identify as such, a subset of the peer group that individual youths have close affiliations with. By “friendship-driven,” we refer even more narrowly to those shared practices that grow out of friendships in given, local social worlds. The chapters on Friendship and Intimacy focus on describing these friendship-driven forms of learning and participation.

In contrast to friendship-driven practices, with interest-driven practices, specialized activities, interests, or niche and marginalized identities come first. Interest-driven practices are what youth describe as the domain of the geeks, freaks, musicians, artists, and dorks, the kids who are identified as smart, different, or creative, who generally exist at the margins of teen social worlds. Kids find a different network of peers and develop deep friendships through these interest-driven engagements, but in these cases the interests come first, and they structure the peer network and friendships, rather than vice versa. These are contexts where kids find relationships that center on their interests, hobbies, and career aspirations. It is not about the given social relations that structure kids’ school lives but about both focusing and expanding an individual’s social circle based on interests. Although some interest-based activities such as sports and music have been supported through schools and overlap with young people’s friendship-driven networks, other kinds of interests require more far-flung networks of affiliation and expertise. As we discuss in the chapters on Gaming, Creative Production, and Work, online sites provide opportunities for youth to connect with interest-based groups that might not be represented in their local communities.

Interest-driven and friendship-driven participation are high-level genre categories that orient our description as a whole. Individual chapters go into more depth on the more specific genre conventions of their domain.

Certain forms of participation also act to bridge the divide between friendship-driven and interest-driven modes. In the chapter on Gaming, we describe how more friendship-driven modes of “hanging out” with friends while gaming can transition to more interest-driven genres of what we call “recreational gaming.” Similarly, in the chapter on Creative Production, we describe how the more friendship-driven practices of creating profiles on social network sites or taking photos with friends can lead to “messaging around” in the more interest-driven modes of digital media production. In the following chapter on Media Ecologies, we identify a genre of participation of “messaging around” with new media that in some cases can mediate between genres of “geeking out” and “hanging out.” Conversely, we have seen how interest-driven engagements can lead to deep and abiding friendships that might eventually transcend the particular focus of interest and provide a social group for socializing and friendship for youth who may not have been deeply embedded in the more popularity- and friendship-driven networks in their local school or community. Transitioning between hanging out, messaging around, and geeking out represents certain trajectories of participation that young people can navigate, where their modes of learning and their social networks and focus begin to shift. Examining learning as changes in genres of participation is an alternative to the notion of “transfer,” where the mechanism is located in a process of individual internalization of content or skills. In a participatory frame, it is not that kids “transfer” new media skills or social skills to different domains, but rather they begin to identify with and participate in different social networks and sets of cultural referents through certain transitional social and cultural mechanisms. In other words, it is not sufficient to “internalize” or identify with certain modes of participation; there also needs to be a supporting social and cultural world.

Rather than relying on distinctions based on given categories such as gender, class, or ethnic identity, we have identified genres based on what we saw in our ethnographic material as the distinctions that emerge from youth practice and culture, and that help us interpret how media intersect with learning and participation. By describing these forms of participation as genres, we hope to avoid the assumption that these genres attach categorically to individuals. Rather, just as an individual may engage with multiple media genres, we find that youth will often engage in multiple genres of participation in ways that are situationally specific. We have also avoided categorizing practice based on technology- or media-centric parameters, such as media type or measures of frequency or media saturation. Genres of participation provide ways of identifying the sources of diversity in how youth engage with new media in a way that does not rely on a simple notion of “divides” or a ranking of more- or less-sophisticated media expertise. Instead, these genres represent different investments that youth make in particular forms of sociability and differing forms of identification with media genres.

## **Networked Publics**

When we consider learning as an act of social participation, our analytic focus shifts from the individual to the broader social and cultural ecology that a person inhabits. Although we all experience private moments of learning and reflection, a large part of what defines us as social beings and learners happens in contexts of group social interaction and engagement with shared cultural forms. Engagement with media (itself a form of mediated sociability) is a constitutive part of how we learn to participate as culturally competent, social, and knowledgeable beings. Although studies of learning in out-of-school settings have examined a wide range of learning environments, these approaches have been relatively silent as to how learning operates in relation to mass and networked media. With some exceptions (Mahiri 2004; Renninger and Shumar 2002; Weiss et al. 2006), contexts of social interaction and public behavior tend to be imagined as local, co-present encounters such as in the case of apprenticeship or learning in the home or street, and work in media studies has largely been in a parallel (though often complementary) set of conversations. The focus on situated learning in contexts of embodied presence has been an important antidote to more traditional educational approaches that have focused on kids’ relationships to abstract academic content, often through the abstraction of educational media, but it has stood in the way of an articulation of situated-learning theory in relation to mediated practices. Our work here, however, is to take more steps in applying situated approaches to learning to an understanding of mediated sociability, though not of the school-centered variety. This requires integrating

approaches in public-culture studies with theories of learning and participation.

Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge suggest the term “public culture” as an alternative to terms such as “popular culture” or “mass culture” in order to link popular-culture engagement to practices of participation in the public sphere. They see public-culture studies as a way of understanding “the space between domestic life and the nation-state—where different social groups (classes, ethnic groups, genders) constitute their identities by their experience of mass-culture mediated forms in relation to the practices of everyday life” (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995:4–5). We draw from this framing and situate it within this current historical moment, where we are seeing public culture, as it is experienced by a growing number of U.S. teens, migrating to digitally networked forms. In this context, youth are participating in publics constituted in part by the nation-state, but also by commercial media environments that are along the lines of the “consumer citizenship” that Banet-Weiser (2007) has theorized. We use the term “networked publics” to reference the forms of participation in public culture that is the focus of our work. The growing availability of digital media-production tools, combined with online networks that traffic in rich media, is creating convergence between mass media and online communication (Benkler 2006; Ito 2008a; Jenkins 2006; Shirky 2008; Varnelis 2008). Rather than conceptualize everyday media engagement as “consumption” by “audiences,” the term “networked publics” foregrounds the active participation of a distributed social network in the production and circulation of culture and knowledge. The growing salience of networked publics in young people’s everyday lives is part of important changes in what constitutes the relevant social groups and publics that structure young people’s learning and identity.

This book delves into the details of everyday youth participation in networked publics and into the ways in which parents and educators work to shape these engagements. As danah boyd discusses in her analysis of participation on MySpace, networked publics differ from traditional teen publics (such as the mall or the school) in some important ways. Unlike unmediated publics, networked publics are characterized by their persistence, searchability, replicability, and invisible audiences (boyd 2007). With friendship-driven practices, youth online activity largely replicates their existing practices of hanging out and communicating with friends, but these characteristics of networked publics do create new kinds of opportunities for youth to connect, communicate, and develop their public identities. The chapters on Friendship and Intimacy describe these dynamics by examining how practices such as “Friending,” public social drama, flirting, and dating are both reproduced and reshaped by online communication through social network sites, online chat, and mobile communication. These technologies facilitate new forms of private, intimate, and always-on communication as well as new forms of publicity where personal networks and social connections are displayed to broader publics than have traditionally been available locally to teens.

In addition to reshaping how youth participate in their given social networks of peers in school and their local communities, networked publics also open new avenues for youth participation through interest-driven networks. In contrast to friendship-driven networked publics, the interest-driven varieties generally do not adhere to existing formal institutions such as school or church, nor are they locally bound. Through sites such as YouTube, fan forums, networked gaming sites, LiveJournal communities, deviantART, or youth media centers, youth can access publics that are engaged in their particular hobby or area of interest. These more specialized and niche publics are settings where youth can connect with other creators or players who have greater expertise than they do, and conversely, where they can mentor and develop leadership in relation to less experienced participants. They are also networks for distributing, publicizing, and sometimes even getting famous or paid for the work that they create. These dynamics of interest-driven networked publics, and the new kinds of peer relations that youth find there, are the focus of the chapters on Gaming, Creative Production, and Work.

The relation between friendship-driven and interest-driven networked publics is complex and grows out of the existing status distinctions of youth culture. Although kids with more geeky and creative interests continue to be marginal to the more mainstream popularity and dating negotiations in school, our work does indicate some shifts in the balance of how kids engage with these different networks. Unlike the older generation, today’s kids have the opportunity to engage in multiple publics—they can retain an identity as a “popular” kid in their local school networks and on MySpace while also pursuing interest-driven activities with another set of peers online. Although the majority of kids we spoke to participate primarily in friendship-driven publics, we also saw

many examples of kids who maintained a dual identity structure. They might have multiple online profiles for different sets of friends, or they might have a group of online gaming friends who did not overlap with the friends they hung out with in school. Although our study does not enable us to identify whether the balance is shifting in terms of how kids participate in different publics, we have clearly identified that there is an expanded palette of opportunity for kids to participate in different kinds of publics because of the growth of the networked variety.

## Peer-Based Learning

Sociocultural approaches to learning have recognized that kids gain most of their knowledge and competencies in contexts that do not involve formal instruction. A growing body of ethnographic work documents how learning happens in informal settings, as a side effect of everyday life and social activity, rather than in an explicit instructional agenda. For example, in describing learning in relation to simulation games, James Paul Gee (2008:19) suggests that kids pick up academic content and skills as part of their play. “These things, which are in the foreground at school, come for free, that is, develop naturally as the learner solves problems and achieves goals.” In *School’s Out!*, an edited collection of essays documenting learning in home, after-school, and community settings, Glynda Hull and Katherine Schultz (2002a:2) ask, “Why, we have wanted to know, does literacy so often flourish out of school?” They describe the accumulating evidence documenting how people pick up literacy in the contexts of informal, everyday contexts, and it is often difficult to reproduce those same literacies in the more formalized contexts of schooling and testing. We see our focus on youth learning in contexts of peer sociability and recreational learning as part of this research tradition. Our interest, more specifically, is in documenting instances of learning that are centered around youth peer-based interaction, in which the agenda is not defined by parents and teachers.

Our focus on youth perspectives, as well as the high level of youth engagement in social and recreational activities online, determined our focus on the more informal and loosely organized contexts of peer-based learning. We discuss the implications for learning institutions in the conclusion of this book, but the body of the book describes learning outside of school, primarily in settings of peer-based interaction. As ethnographies of children and youth have documented, kids learn from their peers. While adults often view the influence of peers negatively, as characterized by the term “peer pressure,” we approach these informal spaces for peer interactions as a space of opportunity for learning. Our cases demonstrate that some of the drivers of self-motivated learning come not from the institutionalized “authorities” in kids’ lives setting standards and providing instruction but from their observing and communicating with people engaged in the same interests, and in the same struggles for status and recognition, that they are.

Both interest-driven and friendship-driven participation rely on peer-based learning dynamics, which have a different structure from formal instruction or parental guidance. Our description of friendship-driven learning describes a familiar genre of peer-based learning, in which online networks are supporting those sometimes painful but important lessons in growing up, giving kids an environment to explore romance, friendship, and status just as their predecessors did. In an environment where there are fewer and fewer spaces for kids to hang out informally in public space, these online friendship-driven networks are critical contexts for these forms of learning and sociability. Rather than construe these dynamics negatively or fearfully, we can also consider them as an integral part of developing a sense of personal identity as a social being. Peer-based learning relies on a context of reciprocity, in which kids feel they have a stake in self-expression as well as a stake in evaluating and giving feedback to one another. Unlike in more hierarchical and authoritative relations, both parties are constantly contributing and evaluating one another. Youth both affiliate and compete with their peers.

Just like friendship-driven networks, interest-driven networks are also sites of peer-based learning, but they represent a different genre of participation, in which specialized interests are what bring a social group together. In both cases, however, the peer group becomes a powerful driver for learning. The peers whom youth are learning from in interest-driven practices are not defined by their given institution of school but rather through more intentional and chosen affiliations. When kids reach out to a set of relations based on their interests, what constitutes a “peer” starts to change because of the change in a young person’s social network. In the case of kids who have become immersed in interest-driven publics, the context of who their peers are changes, as does the context for how reputation works, and they get recognition for different forms of skill and

the context for how reputation works, and they get recognition for different forms of skill and learning.

Youth are increasingly turning to networked publics as sites for peer-based learning and interaction that are not reliant on adult oversight and guidance. Among the reasons that youth participation in these networked publics is so high is that they are an alternative to publics that the adult authorities in their lives have control over, and they provide opportunities for private conversation with peers. Commercial media industries have a complicated role in these dynamics. Ever since the growth of a youth-oriented commercial and media culture in the last century, children and youth have been marketed to as a unique demographic, with cultural products and identity categories that are distinct from those of their elders (Cross 1997; Frank 1997; Kline 1993; Livingstone 2002; Seiter 1993). The growing influence of peers in a similar age cohort in determining social values and cultural style (Milner 2004; Willis 1990) has grown in tandem with these broader cultural shifts in defining a distinct youth culture (Frank 1997), or “kid power” (Banet-Weiser 2007; Seiter 1993). Although the contemporary media ecology is characterized by the growing centrality of user-generated content, commercial media are still central to youth culture, and Internet companies are becoming a formidable force in structuring the conditions under which youth connect with their peers. This takes the form of technology design decisions, marketing decisions, and policy constraints that are placed on industry. Although we do not focus on the role of commercial industry in structuring youth peer interactions, we understand that commercial culture and commercial online spaces and services are lending support to youth-centered peer cultures and communication, often at the expense of institutions such as school and family.

### **New Media Literacy**

The negotiations between kids, parents, educators, and technologists over the shape of youth online participation is also a site of struggle over what counts as legitimate forms of learning and literacy. Any discussion of learning and literacy is unavoidably normative. What counts as learning and literacy is a question of collective values, values that are constantly being contested and negotiated between different social groups. Periods of cultural and technological flux open up new areas of debate about what should count as part of our common culture and literacy and what are appropriate ways for young people to participate in these new cultural forms. Education designed by adults for children also has an unavoidably coercive dimension that is situated in a systemic power differential between adults and children. The moral panic over youth new media uptake is also part of this power differential, as adults mobilize public support to direct children away from social forms and literacies that they find threatening and dangerous. Changes in social, cultural, economic, and technological landscapes are often accompanied by anxieties and questions as to what skills need to be learned and taught for subsequent generations to be able to participate in public life, as students, citizens, consumers, and workers.

In our work, we are examining the current practices of youth and querying what kinds of literacies and social competencies they are defining as a particular generational cohort experimenting with a new set of media technologies. We have attempted to momentarily suspend our own value judgments about youth engagement with new media in order to better understand and appreciate what youth themselves see as important forms of culture, learning, and literacy. Those studying literacies within the New Literacy Studies framework have used ethnography as a way of understanding the socially constructed dimensions of literacy, whether studying in schools or out-of-school contexts (Collins 1995; Gee 1990; Hull and Schultz 2002b; Street 1993, 1995). This work, in both its anthropological roots in the work of Brian Street and its sociolinguistic roots in the work of James Paul Gee, sees any discussion of literacy as an inherently ideological one. In other words, definitions of literacy are embedded in institutions, broader cultural dimensions, and power. The emphasis has continually been on the local practices associated with the uses of reading and writing and how these are not determined by text, technology, or media, nor are they determined in a top-down manner. Those who may seem in weaker positions often appropriate and transform the agendas of those who may seem in more dominant positions of power. While we are aware that there may be “limits to the local” in the understanding of literacies as practices (Brandt and Clinton 2002), we believe that it is crucial to examine literacy as a set of standards that are under continuous development and negotiation through social activity. In this, our work is in line with that of other scholars (e.g., Chávez and Soep 2005; Hull 2003; Mahiri 2004) who explore literacies in relation to ideology, power, and social practice in other settings where youth are pushing back against dominant definitions of literacy that structure their everyday life worlds.

We see a moving horizon of what counts as “new” media as the horizon of what those who study technological systems have described as a window of “interpretive flexibility.” Theorists who have described the social construction of technological systems have posited that when new technologies enter the social stage, there is a period of flexibility in which different social actors mobilize to construct the new meaning of a technological artifact (Bijker, Hughes, and Pinch 1987). Through time, and through contestations between different actors, the meaning and shape of an artifact is gradually stabilized and black boxed. Though the meaning of a technological artifact can later be reopened, with the introduction of new facts or new social actors, generally there is a period in the historical evolution of new technologies in which there is heightened public debate and social negotiations about a technology’s shape and meaning. The new media that we are examining in this book, and the related generational struggles over the shape of culture, norms, and literacy, are emblematic of this moment of interpretive flexibility. While what is being defined as “new media literacy” is certainly not the exclusive province of youth, unlike in the case of “old” literacies youth are playing a more central role in the redefinition of these newer forms. In fact, the current anxiety over how new media erode literacy and writing standards could be read as an indicator of the marginalization of adult institutions that have traditionally defined literacy norms (whether that is the school or the family).

Researchers have posited a variety of ways to understand and define new media literacy. For example, David Buckingham comes from a tradition of media education and considers new media literacy as a new twist in the debates over media literacy that have been, until recently, focused on television (Buckingham 2003; Buckingham et al. 2005). Kathleen Tyner (1998) considers media literacy as well as technical literacy in her discussion of “literacy in a digital world.” James Paul Gee (2003) sees gaming as representing new modes of learning of certain semiotic domains, and in his recent work on twenty-first-century skills Henry Jenkins (2007) applies his insights about active media participation to an analysis of new media literacy. One of the more general statements of literacy that is pertinent to considering new media literacy is The New London Group’s (1996:63) work on multiliteracies. It sees a growing palette of literacy forms in relation to an “emerging cultural, institutional, and global order: the multiplicity of communication channels and media, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity.”

Our work is in line with this general impetus toward acknowledging a broader set of cultural and social competencies that could be defined as examples of literacy. However, our work does not seek to define the components of new media literacy or to participate directly in the normalization of particular forms of literacy standards or practice. Rather, we see our contribution as describing the forms of competencies, skills, and literacy practices that youth are developing through media production and online communication in order to inform these broader debates. More specifically, we have identified certain literacy practices that youth have been central participants in defining: deliberately casual forms of online speech, nuanced social norms for how to engage in social network activities, and new genres of media representation, such as machinima, mashups, remix, video blogs, web comics, and fansubs. Often these cultural forms are tied to certain linguistic styles identified with particular youth culture and subcultures (Eckert 1996). The goal of our work is to situate these literacy practices within specific and diverse conditions of youth culture and identity as well as within an intergenerational struggle of literacy norms. Although the tradition of New Literacy Studies has described literacy in a more multicultural and multimodal frame, it is often silent as to the generational differences in how literacies are valued. In our work, we suggest that not only are new media practices defining forms of literacy that rely on interactive and multimedia forms, but they are also defining literacies that are specific to a particular media moment, and possibly generational identities. Although some of the literacy practices we describe may be keyed to a particular life stage, new media literacies are not necessarily going to “grow up” to conform to the standards of their elders but are likely to be tied to foundational changes in forms of cultural expression.

## Overview of Chapters

The chapters that follow are organized based on what emerged from our material as the core practices that structure youth engagement with new media. Unlike the specific case studies that individual researchers will address in independent publications, these chapters are efforts to synthesize across different cases and youth populations. Throughout the book, we include a

series of illustrative sidebars that provide more detailed descriptions of specific youth and cases. With this format, we have tried to provide general summative findings that do justice to the breadth of our research while also providing some of the detailed description that is the hallmark of ethnographic writing.

The chapter following this one, on Media Ecologies, frames the technological and social context in which young people are consuming, sharing, and producing new media. The chapter introduces the various locations in which we conducted our research and our methods of data collection and collaborative analysis. The second half of the chapter introduces three genres of participation with new media that are an alternative to common ways of categorizing forms of media access: hanging out, messing around, and geeking out.

The following two chapters focus on mainstream friendship-driven practices and networks. The chapter on Friendship examines how teens use instant messaging, social network sites, and mobile phones to negotiate their friendships in peer groups that center on school and local activity groups. These are the dominant forms of sociality in teen communication. Familiar practices of making friendships, gossiping, bullying, and jockeying for status are reproduced online, but they are also reshaped in significant ways because of the new forms of publicity and always-on communication.

The discussion of friend-centered practices is followed by the chapter on Intimacy, which also examines practices that are a long-standing and pervasive part of everyday youth sociality. The chapter discusses how teens use online communication to augment their practices of flirting, dating, and breaking up. The dominant social norm is that the online space is used to extend and maintain relationships, but that initial contact should be initiated offline. While these norms largely mirror the existing practices of teen romance, the growth of mediated communication raises new issues surrounding privacy and vulnerability in intimate relationships.

The next chapter on Families also takes up a key “given” set of local social relationships by looking across the diverse families we have encountered in our research. The chapter describes how parents and children negotiate media access and participation through their use of physical space in the home, routines, rules, and shared production and play. The chapter also examines how the boundaries of home and family are extended through the use of new media.

The final three chapters of the book focus primarily on interest-driven genres of participation, though they also describe the interface with more friendship-driven genres. The chapter on Gaming examines different genres of gaming practice: killing time, hanging out, recreational gaming, mobilizing and organizing, and augmented game play. The goal of the chapter is to examine gaming in a social context as a diverse set of practices with a range of different learning outcomes.

The chapter that follows examines Creative Production, looking across a range of different case studies of youth production, including podcasting, video blogging, video remix, hip-hop production, fan fiction, and fansubbing. The chapter follows a trajectory of deepening engagement with creative production, beginning with casual personal media production and then discussing how youth get started with more serious commitments to creative work and how they improve their craft, specialize, collaborate, and gain audience.

The final descriptive chapter on Work examines how youth are engaged in economic activity and other forms of labor using new media. The chapter suggests that new media are providing avenues to make the productive work of youth more visible and consequential. It showcases some of the innovative ways that kids are mobilizing their new media skills and talents, including online publishing, freelancing, enterprises, and various forms of nonmarket work.

In addition to highlighting the key findings of this book, the Conclusion discusses the implications of this research for parents, educators, and policy makers.

## Notes

[1] We use the term “social media” to refer to the set of new media that enable social interaction between participants, often through the sharing of media. Although all media are in some ways social, the term “social

media” came into common usage in 2005 as a term referencing a central component of what is frequently called Web 2.0 (O’Reilly 2005 at <http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-20.html>) or the social web. All these terms refer to the layering of social interaction and online content. Popular genres of social media include: instant messaging, blogs, social network sites, and video/photo-sharing sites.

[2] A wide variety of terms have been coined to link generational identity to digital and information technologies. Some examples include Don Tapscott’s (1998) “net generation,” the Kaiser Family Foundation report on “Generation M” (for media) (Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout 2005), Mark Prensky’s (2006) work on “digital natives,” and John Beck and Mitchell Wade’s (2004) “gamer generation.” See Buckingham (2006) for a critique of the discourse of “digital generations.”