

A Space Called Home: An Immigrant Adolescent's Digital Literacy Practices

If teachers hope to engage adolescent learners, then they must move beyond adopting out-of-school practices and digital texts in the classroom and gain a deeper understanding of students and their ways of knowing.

Cheryl A. McLean

It's frustrating and a little hurtful when persons who matter and who *say they care about you* don't seem to want to share an important part of you. T&T [Trinidad and Tobago] is a huge part of who I am. I just wish I could bring more of it to my friends and peers here in the U.S.... I talk about T&T all the time. So, I guess that's one reason I like MySpace and Facebook. I can use proper English, American slang, and all the Trini slangs. I'm proud of where I come from. And of course, since I'm from T&T, I think it's important to know what's going on in the country—not only where you live but where you're from! And so, it's just good, you know, to have the American part of me but still be able to find a space where I call *home*. (Zeek, personal communication, March 17, 2007; all names are pseudonyms)

On many levels, this Caribbean American adolescent's views speak to her awareness of the loss of her words and her world that came with her migration to the United States. It is important to note that whether or not the migrant is prepared to do so, dealing with cross-cultural tensions is a reality that he or she is often forced to confront. When families migrate, there can be challenges in transitioning to new social and cultural environments for all members, including children. The ways in which an individual responds to these challenges ultimately shape that person's experiences of migration.

In the case of Zeek, a Trinidad and Tobago native, migration challenges her knowledge, language, and sense of self, and prompts her to think deeply about her global interconnectedness in relation to her identity as a Caribbean native, adolescent, female, and learner. This young person's life experiences in her adopted home along with her digital literacy practices bring into focus issues of place, identity, literacy, and culture.

For Zeek, the digital world is her virtual "home." Her social networking pages on MySpace and Facebook include photos, comments, symbols, songs, and hyperlinks that reflect her connections to and relationships in the Caribbean and the United States. Having migrated to a southern state in the United States four years ago, this 10th-grade student uses online digital technology as a way to maintain her connections with her native home. Through

the Internet and its social networking sites, Zeek is able to spend much time “talking” with friends via e-mail, text messages, and personal webpages on Facebook and MySpace.

In this article, I examine how Zeek, a 15-year-old student in an urban high school, uses digital media and online social networks to negotiate her identity. I drew on multiple interviews and conversations with Zeek as well as her webpages and online social networks to respond to the central research question: How does the immigrant adolescent use literacy practices to construct her identity?

Literacy as Socially Situated

According to sociocultural theorists (Fanon, 1952/1967; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gee, 1999), social, historical, and linguistic contexts play pivotal roles in determining how individuals understand and experience the world. These theorists hold the view that meaning making is a social process that is inextricably linked to the cultural tools and communicative symbols that are grounded in language.

When applied to the contexts of native and adopted homes, schools, and communities of immigrant youth, a sociocultural theoretical perspective suggests that individuals’ identities come out of the active negotiation of a range of Discourses and literacy practices across cultures and contexts (Gee, 1991; Street, 1984). Gee (1999) offered the term *Discourse* to refer to multiple, socially situated identities that involve performing and recognizing characteristic ways of “acting-interacting-feeling-emoting-valuing-gesturing-posturing-dressing-thinking-believing-knowing-speaking-listening” (p. 38) that individuals take on in different contexts. The discursive practices that characterize group membership allow individuals to signal their memberships and levels of participation and be identified by the members as belonging to the group.

A Postcolonial Perspective

Parry (2004) stated that among the many definitions of the term *postcolonial* is perhaps the unifying and signifying view that it is a worldview that denotes a “historical transition, a cultural location, a discursive stance, and epochal condition distinguished by the

entry into metropolitan cultures, other voices, histories and experiences” (p. 3). In holding to the view of meaning making as a social act, Fanon (1952/1967) challenged us to see individuals’ collective experiences as more than immediate communities and personal histories. Although in some cases the cultural vocabulary (e.g., the terms *colonization* and *imperialism*) and tools may have changed, the tensions of the dialogic process of communication and meaning making within contemporary societies continue to be dependent on and framed by these sociohistoric contexts.

Within hegemonic postcolonial structures, marginalized and minority groups, such as immigrant youth, experience the ongoing and inescapable predicament of equating success and power with the process of becoming part of, being like, and being in the dominant group. In particular, for diasporic peoples, the confrontation of cultures and the negotiation of spaces provide opportunities for elaborating strategies of selfhood (Bhabha, 1994) that involve “processes of transporting and transforming material across symbolic and social borders” (Dyson, 2003, p. 10).

Diasporic Youth Identity

The term *cultural identity* refers to aspects of self-identification as a product of a particular context (Grossberg, 2002). Diasporic identity is collective identification connected to homelands and cultural origins (Dahan & Sheffer, 2001; Jung, 2006). This identification is an ongoing process in which the individual constantly produces and reproduces himself or herself through interactions with the host culture and their own and other diasporic cultures (Hall, 2000). The movement and flow of interactions across and within home and host cultures demonstrate the process of transition: a movement from one context or culture to another, one register to another (Ahmed, 1999).

With the opening up of digital technologies and media in contemporary society, unlike the traditional physical movement and spaces reflected in migratory trends, the Internet is now used to bring people of the same national group together across the span of the diaspora (Karim, 2003). Digital technology facilitates the compression of time and space that affords virtual movement across sociocultural borders. Consequently, diasporic identity must also be seen in the context of

the media, which has played an important role in connecting disparate peoples and maintaining ethnocultural networks for immigrants (Hirji, 2006).

Literacy and Digital Media

Literacy practices associated with the Internet, such as instant messaging and social networking, reflect socially mediated ways of generating meaningful content (e.g., language, images, sounds, performances) that produces digital texts (e.g., personal webpages) for dissemination in cyberspace (Alvermann, 2008). Students have reported learning technical skills, creativity, appreciation for diversity, and communication skills through their use of social networking sites (Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2002). Digital technologies and virtual social networks represent a range of literacy practices involving symbiotic relationships among print, visual images, acoustics, sounds, language, and performance (Kress, 2003). For example, social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook offer their members opportunities to engage in multimodal consumption and production of a range of texts, including photos, videos, text comments, symbols, and images.

In conceptualizing literacy against the backdrop of migration and the movement and flow of peoples across borders and societies, Mitchell (2000) alluded to the issues of globalization, cultural identities, and the use of computer technologies. Giddens (1990) argued that with the new media, time and space are emptied, such that social relations are disembedded from their locations and carried out across long distances. The disembedding of the physical site often brings about relocation to the virtual space, where online social networks become public sites of ethnic identity and cultural interaction. For the current youth generation, the conceptions of “neighborhood” and “home” must be broadened to include the worlds that youths access, visit, and play in through electronic connections (Walsh, 2006).

Digital media transform diasporic cultural contexts. Research on immigrant youth reveals that the Internet, personal webpages, and social networking sites are being used by young persons to create transnational linkages and reinvent and position their national identities. For example, in an ethnographic

study on the transnational Internet literacy practices of Trinidadians, Miller and Slater (2000) found that the Internet provided young people with a natural platform on a global stage for enacting what the researchers identified as the components of the Trinidadian identity: core values and national pride. Miller and Slater showed that participants went to great lengths to make the affinity groups and online communities a “Trini” place where they could “be Trini.”

Similarly, in her work with adolescent immigrant youths of diverse nationalities and regions, Lam (2006) found that students used digital media networks to develop relationships. As with the Trinidadian young people studied by Miller and Slater, the adolescents in Lam’s study established online relationships in the United States and their native countries. More recently, Lam and Rosario-Ramos (2009) pointed to the use of instant messaging and e-mail as a means of increasing the “immediacy and frequency of cross-border communication, that allows young people to keep up to date with the youthful colloquialisms and electronic styles and conventions of the language in their country of origin” (p. 182). In addition, in his study of Korean American young adults’ intercultural identities via the Internet and mobile phones, Jung (2006) found that the Internet can reshape the hybridized and diasporic intercultural identities of immigrant youth.

The invocation, construction, and performance of the literacy and identity-making practices of immigrant youths are not limited to the physical, social spaces of the adopted homes, schools, and communities. Rather, this expanded conception of literacy as socially situated reinforces awareness that digital literacy and online virtual networks can also become transnational sites of socialization that help define the immigrant youth experience.

For the current youth generation, the conceptions of “neighborhood” and “home” must be broadened to include the worlds that youths access, visit, and play in.

Research Contexts and Methods

Zeek, who self-identifies as Caribbean American, was purposefully selected as the focal participant from a group of immigrant families in a metropolitan city in

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the southern United States. Over the course of one year, data were collected in the participant's school, home, and physical and online communities. The three forms of data included were (1) three semi-structured, two-hour interviews focused on eliciting stories of migration and transition experiences; (2) websites, webpages, instant messages, e-mails, and personal profiles on Facebook, MySpace, AOL Instant Messenger (AIM), and Microsoft Network (MSN); and (3) researcher field notes of conversations and observations of Zeek's interactions with peers and

friends in person and online.

As part of the sociocultural framework that sees language as a way of organizing, structuring, and making sense of the world, I viewed stories and narrative as a means of expressing agency (Riessman, 1993). I used Zeek's stories as a method of data collection and a way to represent the findings. To construct narratives of the participant's identity-making practices, I drew on Cortazzi's (1993) approach, which offered the concept of narrative as having five key elements: setting, conflict, crisis, evaluation, and resolution. Gee's (1999) framework for identifying cultural models allowed for in-depth exploration of Zeek's beliefs, values, actions, judgments, and experiences in her stories. The overarching narrative was constructed from key story lines that spoke to how she used her digital literacies to construct her identities.

A Space Called Home

At school, I don't use my accent. But, it's because when I first came here, it was really hard for them to understand me, I guess. My accent was thick, thick. [sighing deeply, then continuing with an apologetic laugh] Americans—if you don't sound like them, then they think that you're hard to understand. It was so frustrating. So, I decided to change my accent to sound like them so that I didn't have to hear the annoying "What're you saying?" or "Can you say that again?" [insisting] But, it's not because I'm ashamed or anything. I'm very proud. Everyone knows I've got big small-island pride!

T&T is me! I'm proud of it. I can't keep it down. I won't keep it down. So, I keep my friends on Facebook and MySpace, and I IM [instant message]. My T&T friends write on my wall. I have all their pics and know what's going on in their lives. And, because of my age, my peers are important. They matter. It's important for me to know what going on in the place where I come from. It's made me who I am. So, I'm always gonna keep that part of my life. (Zeek, personal communication, June 5, 2007)

Zeek is an avid member of the popular online networking sites Facebook and MySpace. Observing her at home, in school, and online, I soon learned that these electronic and digital (con)texts represented much more than her facility with technology and her digital literacies. Rather, her digital literacies afforded her direct and immediate opportunities to move across and within her sociocultural contexts and bring together her communities in the United States and those back home in Trinidad and Tobago. Through digital media, Zeek is able to adapt to the United States while staying connected to her native identity.

When I asked Zeek what she does online, she replied,

I guess we talk, instant message, instant conversations—just, "Hey what's up?" You know, that kind of stuff.... AIM, MSN, and Facebook. Now you can make a Facebook conversation by just writing, replying to other people's posts when they post on your wall, which is this wall of comments. Like, you can speak in proper English or even American-like, slang. But then, there's also Trinidadian slang, right! And, so that's just been good. And, I mean, of course, they can tell me what's cool and hip and what's going on in Trinidad and all that stuff.... That's another thing that we talk about: keeping me *in the know*. (personal communication, July 27, 2007)

Through written texts, images, and music, Zeek bridges the contexts of her identities as student, adolescent, Trinidadian, Caribbean, and American. Her webpages boast colorful, animated collages of candid photos as well as videos, notes, music, hyperlinks to favorite websites, e-mail, and comments in colloquial "Trini" and Caribbean expressions alongside those of her friends in the United States. In an interview in which she talked about her friends and peers, she commented,

Girl, thank God for MySpace and Facebook! I still have most of my friends who I went to school with. And, it's just great to have a Trini presence in the Facebook group. It's just fun because, living in America, they wouldn't know what you're talking about. Like, if I said, *Boyo and Carla* (who taught everybody to read), or *Crix, Vital Supplies*, or something like that, they would be like: "What? What are you talking about?" So, it's just something that I can bond in: "Yeah, oh my gosh, I know what they're talking about! I get it!" (personal communication, July 27, 2007)

Discussion

The story lines in this article illustrate how Zeek was able to draw on her digital literacies to construct, maintain, and re-present her various identities as a Caribbean person, female adolescent, and learner. The key story lines are reauthoring cultural models and performing identities.

Reauthoring Cultural Models

The dominant cultural models in the adopted country appear to challenge the immigrant person's self-image. Cultural models are "images or storylines or descriptions of simplified worlds that contain social and cultural assumptions about what is 'typical' or 'normal'" (Gee, 1999, p. 59). These images and story lines are specific to one's discourse group and context. For example, upon migrating, Zeek modified her accent and discourses to meet her U.S. peers' and teachers' expectations of a typical, normal student. As a relative newcomer to her high school, Zeek has found herself being socialized into the dominant Discourse of what the student is, does, says, and sounds like.

In Zeek's case, membership in the student Discourse group includes adherence to linguistic codes. The collective negative responses by her peers to her accent and dialects of English have forced Zeek to modify, adapt, and conform her language use. However, in so doing, some core aspects of her voice and identities are silenced. When individuals silence or confine their language of intimacy, the practice brings with it another layer of conflict: guilt and resistance associated with the use of the master discourse (Fanon, 1961/2004).

This young person's digital literacy practices in her online networking sites can be viewed as her

deliberate attempts to subvert and reauthor some of the proscribed images of herself. Zeek's use of these digital texts and social networks move beyond that of participation and interaction to a strategic creation of a place called "home," where she can purposively re-author alternate cultural models. This home is a safe space where she can actively exercise agency in controlling and performing her multiple identities and literacies. The virtual home has become a site of resistance where this young person can redefine the deficit model of herself as immigrant and learner.

The Power of Social Languages. By creating her own virtual home, Zeek has actively made a space where, mediated by digital language, her primary and secondary social languages—Standard English and dialects of her native and host cultures—can coexist and inform each other. A commingling of previously separate and hierarchical linguistic forms and social languages across geographic and cultural boundaries occurs in her online affinity groups (Bakhtin, 1981). By assigning equal worth to her multiple language forms, Zeek's cultural resources are no longer positioned as deficits. In doing so, she is able to marshal her Caribbeanness. According to Bakhtin,

To take control of language, speakers must give those words their own accent, infuse them in some way with their own intention—that is, deprivilege or dialogize the language, to render it an option among options, a world among worlds. (pp. 426–427)

Facility with multiple discourses and linguistic codes and registers allows this adolescent to reframe herself and find her voice. The more expert she becomes at using language, the more conscious and deliberate her use of power. Within the virtual space, the language user can consciously choose to have the "individual word retain their alien expression, but they can also be re-accentuated" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 91). Dyson (2003) alluded to this reconceptualizing of language practices in her research on the classroom literacy practices of young children when she found that learners brought the discourse structures and styles of their unofficial (i.e., out-of-school) worlds into the official school world, and deprivileged official school material in the unofficial worlds.

Figure 1 An Excerpt From Zeek's Facebook Wall

Joons (Trinidad/Tobago)
haha, its so funny lyrics, but ye...its kinda mean! lol,,
"Pooor people fed up to how yuh system sheg up
everyday the ghetto youths dead up" yes i had ah vybz
moment of music ystrdy fu ah bit
hahahahaha,,, love u

Pius (Port-of-Spain High)
wha gwan tanty gyal lolol...im chillin you good!!!!
Exams! I guess its gonna all work out in the end and
when i get those Results i'll be soo happy and den nuthin
is keepin me home!
mi ah love u babe!

Zeek (T.G.I.F. Thank God I'm Fresh ;)
lol... Nah boy dread! wda you know bout that!?!?!?
hahahaha jk.
Everybody'll be who that crzy person in da bak dere...
That lime will be sweet too bad. Haha

Nahim (The Abbey)
Wow, i'm not going to lie...i kinda want to be you right
now Oh, and I'll def relay the message for you...haha
JLink said "Gangsta B" again this year. What am I doing?
hmmm...procrastinating?...at least debate is over...oh
yeah, and that whole prom thing...lol I MISS you

Natalie (Trini 2 d Bone)
Hey Girl!!! How are things..how is your luv life going
chile?? Wey Ha!
All is well on the home front. I hear that there is a hot
LNG summer party at ZEN that you absolutely cannot
miss...Say hi to your mom pls. xoxoxoxo

Note. All names are pseudonyms.

By shifting—if not removing—linguistic boundaries, Zeek tries to give all languages equal opportunities to enter her social relationships online. Within her online social networks, her “friends” are allowed to use whichever languages and codes they choose (see Figure 1). Zeek’s literacy practices signal her resourcefulness in participating in and creating communities across her various identities and linguistic forms.

Crossing Cultural Borders. The Internet social networks afford freer movement and control within and across multiple geographic and social spaces. A Facebook wall acts like a message board for the profile owner’s “friends” to post comments, notes, hyperlinks, images, and sounds. The wall becomes a living text that site members co-construct. This structure offers a public space that makes visible the profile

owner’s relationships, discourses, activities, and interests, and affords members opportunities to collaborate and participate.

In particular, as an identity marker, Zeek’s Facebook wall re-presents her as a member of multiple communities. Her friends talk to her using a range of linguistics codes, including Standard English, Creole, and Internet shorthand and jargon, which suggests that Zeek is able to switch codes, registers, and discourses with facility. More so, as seen in Figure 1, the content of some of the posts on her wall reference school and academic activities in both her native and host countries, thereby placing her identity as learner/student central to her social worlds. Through the digital spaces and mediated by the *lingua franca* of the Internet, this adolescent student has opened up the cultural model of what the student sounds like, does, and so forth, as opposed to the model proffered by her U.S. peers.

It is this conscious move to action—to participate in and create online communities, as reflected in her digital literacy practices—that signals this young person’s agentic response to her social worlds. The traits that make Zeek different from her U.S. peers can now be interpreted and received in positive ways: as a producer of ethnocultural, transnational space and a multilingual user of multiple dialects of English and multitextual literacy (i.e., semiotic and linguistic knowledge). Hers is a stance that appears to challenge the deficit normative narratives of the immigrant or diasporic youth.

Performing Identities

The young woman in this study actively uses technology to constitute her ethnocultural identity. By building and maintaining relationships that validate her Trinidad and Tobago and Caribbean heritage, the Internet and affinity groups have become tools with which she is able to “be Trini.” When defining *ethnic identity*, Tajfel (1981) stated that it is “part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (p. 255). Researchers who have studied black immigrants offer the view of ethnicity as “culture difference” and how the individual relates to his or her own group as a subgroup of

the larger host society (Hintzen, 2001; Phinney, 1990; Vickerman, 1999; Waters, 1999).

Zeek views herself in relation to her peers and friends “back home” in her native country. Her digital literacies, along with the digital texts that she consumes and produces, can be viewed as an identity marker and group membership. Print, video, audio, and visual texts (e.g., the Trinidad and Tobago national flag, photos of friends and favorite Caribbean destinations, soca and dance hall music) on Zeek’s Facebook profile signal her ethnic group membership and her attempts to maintain cultural identities (Yi, 2008).

Gendered Identities. The interactions within Zeek’s virtual worlds provide more complex identity-making practices connected to gender. Gender is something that we “do” as we talk, act, read, and write in ways that constitute us as masculine or feminine within social structures (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Zeek’s online affinity site and digital literacy practices also reflect her sense of herself as belonging to the specific Discourse group of “female.” Within her online social networks, language use by Zeek and her friends on MySpace and Facebook acknowledge and reinforce the image of Zeek as female.

In their written communications with her on her webpages, both male and female group members refer to Zeek using gender-specific terms (e.g., *girl*, *gyal*, *tanty*). There is evidence of reciprocal positioning, for through her linguistic performance, she also appears to take up the normative or regulatory discourses of a gendered identity (Butler, 1990). However, by finding and embracing commonalities through gender, Zeek is able to use gender as a resource to subvert her difference across her various communities. Williams (2006) reminded us that “dominant cultural ideology lives with us online as it does in the rest of our lives, for both good and ill” (p. 304).

Zeek’s literacies and identity-making practices appear to run counter to the findings by some researchers that have suggested that digital and technological literacies typically represent male gender roles and that females are less connected to computer and online technology (Finders, 1997; Marsh, 2003; Sanford, 2005). These researchers have found that girls often

limit their expectations and perceptions of literacy and are not often seen or allowed to challenge traditional gender orders.

In one sense, Zeek appears to challenge the traditional school-sanctioned literacy practices (i.e., print-based reading and writing) through her mastery of the digital media. Yet, her use of social networking sites and computer-mediated literacy have nurtured relationships and friendships across sociocultural and geographic contexts (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004; Lankshear, 1997; Lankshear, Peters, & Knobel, 1995; Sanford, 2005), which supports the view that females are more involved than males in relationship building, social interaction, and identity.

On one hand, when framed within a gendered lens, the literacy and identity-making practices of this young person appear to reinforce conventional gender cultural models. On the other hand, her use of digital texts to build relationships can also be seen as an act of agency. Here, I take agency to represent the individual’s “strategic making and remaking of selves, identities, activities, relationships, cultural tools, and resources, and histories” (Moje & Lewis, 2007, p. 18). Through Zeek’s relationships within her social networks, she actively resists cultural assumptions and ideologies that have the power to silence. Thus, relationship building should not be taken as passive conformity to cultural models of gender stereotypes; rather, relationship building for Zeek suggests an active re-presentation of her identities across social spaces. Her actions show her purposive use of her digital literacies to construct and perform her multiple identities as a *female* learner, individual, and Caribbean immigrant.

Cyberspace as Ethnic Enclaves. Often, it is the physical communities that are seen as sites for ethnic identity development (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Waters, 1994, 1999). However, as this case study shows, there is a need for a closer look at cyberspace and virtual communities as ethnic enclaves and sites of identity work. The challenge, then, for literacy educators is to begin to see how diasporic youth use digital media as resources to negotiate multiple social and cultural systems. Students’ dynamic use of linguistic, semiotic, and cultural funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) offer a valid

starting point from which to create literacy connections and reconceptualize notions of learning and teaching.

As Lam and Rosario-Ramos (2009) have suggested, literacy practices are often situated in a transnational circuit of news and ideas where they are exposed to political narratives, social expectations, cultural values, and societal experiences that are not often confined to one social system. By opening up the concept and sites of ethnic enclaves, we include global-local dimensions of the funds of knowledge that immigrants bring to their adopted homes, and the virtual spaces and communities in which adolescents move and inhabit.

Creating Literacy Connections

One of our primary tasks as educators is to find ways to engage students in meaningful learning. There is growing recognition that youth are engaged in multimodal ways of thinking, learning, and identity construction (Rowell & Pahl, 2007; Yi, 2008) and are writing, designing, producing, contributing to, and interacting with digitally mediated texts (Kress, 1997, 2003; Street, 1984; van Leeuwen, 2005).

This article shows that our attempts to engage adolescent learners must move beyond coopting and adopting out-of-school practices and digital texts in the classroom (Alvermann, 2008; Moje, 2002, 2008); teaching now requires a deeper understanding of our students and their ways of knowing. However, classroom practice that is responsive to adolescents' dynamic linguistic, semiotic, and cultural resources requires literacy educators to focus not only on the digital texts but also on adolescents' motivations, purposes, and contexts.

Any attempt to integrate digital literacies in the classroom should be guided by an understanding of (a) the digital texts young people interact with and produce, (b) students' reasons and purposes in creating or interacting with these texts, (c) the processes of text production, and (d) the ways the contexts and communities facilitate digital processes and practices. Such an exploration of digital literacy practices can best be achieved through the simultaneous reconceptualization of literacy in the contemporary classroom that values an expanded notion of literacy, a normalized

view of diversity, and meaningful integration of multiple texts.

First, literacy instruction must embrace an expanded view of literacy as multiple modes of expression through which learners make meaning. Incorporating digital activities, texts, and assignments as integral curricular content area components increases opportunities to build on students' knowledge and practices. Second, reconceptualizing classroom practice requires a normalized view of diversity with "complex scenes that are spacious enough for children's diverse ways of being [and] space for the strengths and resources of children who are 'different'" (Genishi & Dyson, 2009, p. 10). The key here is to not have the learner with diverse ethnocultural, linguistic, multimodal or technological backgrounds, knowledge, and abilities be seen as "other" or relegated to out-of-school spaces. Third, as literacy educators, we need to find commonalities across traditional and digital texts. As seen in this study, young people often continue to engage with school-related (con)texts within their online social networks. Therefore, finding common interests, topics, and communication skills can provide creative and valid ways of making meaningful connections in the classroom.

Ultimately, literacy educators must respond to youth literacies as multiple, fluid, and overlapping if we are to create "homes" for the diverse learners who make up contemporary classrooms.

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McLean teaches at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA; e-mail Cheryl.mclean@gse.rutgers.edu.

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