

Notes on the Text

This book is a synthesis of three years of collaborative, ethnographic work conducted through a project funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation: Kids' Informal Learning with Digital Media.

Early in the planning of this book, we made a decision not to structure it as a traditional edited volume, nor as a book singly written by a principal project investigator. Instead, this book was written in a highly distributed collaborative process that aimed to integrate both the ethnographic material and the analytic insights of all the project's researchers involved at the time of its writing. We thought this approach was most in line with the spirit of collaborative, interdisciplinary inquiry that has guided our project from its inception. Each chapter has one or more lead authors who took responsibility for the writing, but every chapter incorporates material and input from a wide range of coauthors and the case studies that they represent. In line with this stance, we use a collective voice to describe this work, even in chapters with only one lead author. We did not always reach complete consensus on all aspects of this book, but there was agreement among the coauthors that we would take collective ownership.

Although Mizuko Ito took the lead in the writing of this book, the three other principal investigators, Peter Lyman, Michael Carter, and Barrie Thorne, provided indispensable leadership and support for this project. In addition, we have integrated ethnographic material from former project members, who are named as contributors to this book. The full range of people who have contributed to this three-year project and this book are mentioned in the acknowledgments.

The case studies and approaches that the coauthors brought to the writing have been diverse, but we have agreed on certain representational conventions to provide some consistency in our writing:

- Unlike in more traditional forms of ethnography, the descriptions in this book draw from a wide range of case studies conducted by a large team of ethnographers. When a research participant is quoted or identified, we indicate which case study the material comes from and the name of the fieldworker who conducted the interview or the observation. We use short identifiers (e.g., Horst, Silicon Valley Families) for the studies to avoid cluttering the text. A table of short titles, full study titles, and study researchers is included in Appendix III.
- Full descriptions of the framework for the projects are described in the appendices. More detailed descriptions of the twenty-three individual research studies conducted by members of the Digital Youth Project between the years of 2005 and 2008 are provided online at <http://digitalyouth.ischool.berkeley.edu/projects>.
- The various case studies were conducted using different data-collection methodologies, and we have varying degrees of access to contextual information about our participants. In every case, if we know the information, then we have indicated age, gender, and what each participant self-identified as his or her racial or ethnic identity. If this information is not indicated, then it means that we did not know the information for this participant due to the constraints of the particular case study. For example, in many of the studies that focus on online interest groups, interviews were conducted over the phone or through online chat. In most cases, we derived this information from self-reports in background questionnaires we administered in advance of most of our formal interviews. Although we do not see race as a key analytic category in our work, there are times when we think it is relevant to our description, and we thought that if racial or ethnic identity were to be mentioned for some number of participants, then we needed to be symmetrical in our treatment and indicate racial identity for all respondents for whom we did have this information.
- We have used pseudonyms in most cases when referring to our research participants. In many, but not all, cases our participants chose these pseudonyms. In the case of some media producers, these names correspond

with their creator identities or screen names in their respective interest groups, an approach that we think honors the reputations and investments of time that many of our participants work very hard to develop. When participants specifically requested it, we have used their screen names or their real-life names. When real names or screen names are used, we indicate this by a footnote in the text.

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Hanging Out, Messing Around, and Geeking Out

Kids Living and Learning with New Media

By: Mizuko Ito

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