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Learning Practices of Livability Toward Elsewheres:

Critical Digital Literacies in the Everyday Activities of Trans and Queer Youth

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Abstract

This dissertation considers how 21 trans and queer teenagers learned to create livable lives in unlivable worlds through routine participation on social media. Through a multi-year partnership with an interdisciplinary gender program in Chicago, I employed a humanizing qualitative design anchored by interview and participatory visual methods over three nested phases to theorize with and alongside 21 participants ages 13-19 from a range of social positions. In the first phase, I conducted semi-structured interviews and surveys. In the second phrase, I conducted follow-up interviews and media reactions with 16 focal participants selected with attention to intersections of identity. In the final phase, I conducted participatory research with four focal participants anchored by five virtual sessions over three months. I argue that youth learn routine practices to nurture life otherwise across differentially marginalized social positions in the face of systematic injustice. These survival-rich practices arise out of necessity, yet they offer windows into possible elsewheres—expansive ways of being and organizing life.

Through this dissertation, I intervene in the dominant paradigm of critical literacy that shapes multiple fields and build knowledge on how youth learn with digital tools. Most scholarship on critical digital literacies trace youth resistance, considering how young people use digital tools to disrupt injustice or participate in activism for school and state inclusion. The dissertation suggests resistance alone is insufficient for youth struggling to survive and thrive amid persistent encounters with injustice. Drawing on queer and trans studies, capaciously considered, to forward the framework of livability toward elsewheres, I expand the critical literacy paradigm from a focus on resistance to include practices of livability that sustain youth in the face of domination and open up possibilities for life otherwise. Specifically, I focus on the role of humor, hope, and radical joy in practices of livability toward elsewheres. In the analysis, I

consider how youth learn these practices through digital activities and tools, from TikTok videos to Twitter threads. Through the study, I contribute new insights on practices of critical digital literacies, as well as how youth learn these practices through participation on social media. The study concludes with three ways the dissertation may inform design for teaching and learning in social justice education and equity-oriented English language arts.

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Chapter 1.
"They Are Living Their Lives": Beginning with Life and Life Otherwise

"I have a whole section dedicated to LGBTQ stuff on Instagram," said Stevie, a 13-year-old Mexican American questioning non-binary kid from a small Midwest town, in describing posts that they had saved on the image- and video-sharing social media platform. Stevie was one of 21 participants in my study of how trans and queer teens learn to negotiate social injustice through everyday participation on social media. We were looking at their social media accounts together toward the end of our first interview, and I asked them to walk me through their best recent experience.

Stevie started scrolling through the section of "LGBTQ stuff" and landed on a post by @jp_means_jumpei, or JP, an Asian American pansexual, disabled, non-binary illustrator on Instagram. "Maybe this thoughtful one about trans youth," Stevie shared poignantly and paused. The post read, "Summer: Your gender is your own sunshine." In the illustrated image, a young person on a surfboard wearing a non-binary flag swimsuit happily rode out the waves. "That's really beautiful," I responded. The art from JP and other accounts Stevie followed often used colors of Pride flags to reflect specific gender and sexual identities in funny, joyful, and cute ways–from illustrations of a skateboarding trans boy to cuddling lesbian koalas. The people and animals depicted were often smiling, relaxing, and "chilling out."

In the follow-up interview a few months later, Stevie talked further about JP and the importance of LGBTQ+ digital art in getting through their day and imagining the future. As the interview began, Stevie shared that they were having a hard week; one of their close queer friends had been hospitalized for suicidality the day before, which was particularly distressing because Stevie had been to the hospital for the same reason the year before. After I connected

Stevie with an on-call counselor for further support and resources to share with their friend after the session, talking about LGBTQ+ spaces on social media seemed to offer lightness. “I do follow a lot of people who do art,” Stevie began. Stevie does not post art on Instagram, but they found scrolling through and curating LGBTQ art like that from JP to be “just so wonderful.” I asked Stevie to reflect on what it means to be able to follow creative posts that reflect or resonate with who they are. They elaborated:

> “It makes me feel more relaxed and more comfortable knowing that if other people can do it then I could do it as well. And it makes me wonder if this could be my future too. If I make choices that could make me more happier, this could be me in the future.”

Digital art and other social media content that illustrates trans and queer people living their lives in joyful, untroubled ways helped Stevie feel better in the moment and shaped how they looked toward their future. The images bolstered the sense that a happy life is possible for them, too.

For Stevie and other youth in the study, digital activities and tools such as illustrations on Instagram sustain life amid interlocking oppressions and mediate how they sense possibility. The account from @jp_means_jumpei includes some illustrations of protest and activism. But it mostly features images of ease, happiness, and social connection. Stevie and others described such images as tools to cultivate humor, joy, and hope for the future as they navigate a present marked by hegemonic enclosures. The digital tools begin with life, and, in so doing, nurture persistence for trans and queer youth. By sustaining forms of life marginalized by hegemonic domination, these everyday practices may grow into life otherwise, or what some scholars I draw on call *elsewheres*: Expansive ways of being and organizing life (Crawley, 2017; de Lauretis, 1991; Muñoz, 1999, 2009). Indeed, elsewheres ultimately arise and are sustained in routine practices. Through moment-to-moment activity, we shape our lives and organize social worlds.

Everyday life can reproduce hegemonic domination. The everyday can also be a site to create social and political formations anew.

"They are living their lives," was a common refrain among study participants as they described trans and queer social media accounts and content that were meaningful for them in negotiating injustice. In navigating forms of domination that seek to deny and repress trans and queer life, every day can feel like a fight: to be safe and affirmed at school, to be respected by family, to feel like the future is possible. Kieran, a 19-year-old white queer trans man, had been kicked out of his family's house as a teenager and experienced severe bullying at school; he never imagined life past high school. "It just didn't seem possible for me with all that I had been through, with all that I was going through. I was like, 'There's no way I'm going to make it past high school.'" This sense of enclosure, what queer studies scholar Cindy Cruz (2011) calls "tight spaces," is often intensified for trans and queer youth who are Black, Indigenous, people of color, and disabled (p. 548).

The precarious relationship to the future youth described is inextricable from a rapid acceleration in phobic, hegemonic ideologies at the time of the dissertation project. I conducted the study during the second half of the Trump administration and the first year of the global COVID-19 pandemic, a time that laid bare and deepened social inequities animated by antiblackness, anti-immigrant discourses, and anti-trans antagonism. It was also a time of global resistance. The extrajudicial killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Tony McDade, among others, sparked uprisings against antiblack police brutality. Thousands of people joined marches against migrant family separations and other anti-immigrant policies. Each year of the study saw a devastating new record of trans fatalities, most often of trans women of color, and anti-trans legislation in dozens of states, including several in the Midwest, that sought to criminalize

gender-affirming health care for trans youth and exclude trans youth from sports. People responded by organizing national protests, such as the March for Black Trans Lives in New York in June 2020, and actions to call state representatives. Youth in the study were aware of and navigated these phobic discourses at school and on social media, and many participated in forms of social activism online and in their communities. Yet, in the face of entrenched and deepening forms of injustice, youth most often described digital practices through which they nurtured life.

Amid the foreclosure of the future, seeing trans and queer people living their lives helped young people get through the day and look toward the future. Helia, a 15-year-old Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Native pansexual trans girl subscribed to "a lot" of LGBTQ+ YouTubers because "it's just normal people living interesting lives." Indigo, a 17-year-old Quechua and white queer non-binary person valued Instagram for the way it allowed them to see trans and queer people "actually living a fulfilling life and being who they are." "There's not really a replacement for getting to see that, and even if it's at a distance," they added. Jacob, a 16-year-old Afro-Puerto Rican and white gay trans boy shared a similar point about watching older trans men on YouTube, saying, "There are guys who are like 50, 40 on testosterone. They've been on testosterone since they were like 20, or 19, or something and ... they're, like, alive." Seeing older trans men who are living their lives, who have survived, helped Jacob feel that his life was possible, too.

In this dissertation, I set out to understand how trans and queer teens in the study learned to create livable lives in unlivable worlds–worlds shaped at every turn by intersecting structures of power that include race, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability–through routine participation on social media. Through a multi-year research partnership with an interdisciplinary gender program, I drew on interview and participatory visual methods to theorize with and alongside

youth about their everyday digital activities and tools and the meanings they hold for youth. My focus on social media, which is central to trans and queer life and activism (Cavalcante, 2019; Fox & Ralston, 2016; Nicolazzo et al., 2022; see also Shrodes, Forthcoming), presents an opportunity to study innovative forms of learning with digital media that support young people to be "critical thinkers, consumers, and creators who advocate for and actively contribute to a better world" (NCTE, 2017; see also Alvermann et al., 2018; Morrell, 2004; Hull & Schultz, 2001). As trans studies in education scholar Z Nicolazzo (2019) argues, "the way people with diverse sexualities and genders are accessing, using, and crafting the Internet as a site for deep connection is nothing short of revolutionary and worth further serious consideration in educational settings" (p. 111). Trans and queer youth are using and evolving social media toward expansive ends that have powerful implications for teaching and learning.

Through this line of inquiry, I seek to inform the design of learning environments that can better support marginalized young people in the work of negotiating entrenched forms of injustice and creating a more just future.[1] Critical theories and pedagogies often foreground social critique, or skills of analysis and production to identify, interrogate, and disrupt relations of power that shape texts, technologies, and the social world. Certainly, it is important to be able to understand domination and participate in struggles to dismantle unjust structures and systems. Yet, trans and queer youth in the study emphasized the need to begin by creating and sustaining forms of life marginalized by structures of power. In their activities to sustain life, practices to view, save, and share digital artifacts such as images, videos, and posts were particularly

[1] I primarily use the adjective "marginalized" as an imperfect term to emphasize the relations of power and hegemonic discourses that marginalize communities and members of communities. Other scholars (e.g., Gutiérrez et al., 2009) use the adjective "nondominant" to emphasize power relations, but I find the term 'marginalized' more direct in naming power and oppression. Please see Paris (2019) for more on naming.

meaningful. These practices of scrolling and screenshotting on social media enabled youth to evade digital surveillance, cultivate social belonging, and imagine possible futures. Digital artifacts, as forms of public pedagogy, also circulated new ways for young people to *feel* about injustice that supported participants to diffuse hate and bolster senses of agency. The digital activities, practices, and tools through which trans and queer youth create life and life otherwise can meaningfully inform design of teaching and learning, particularly for marginalized and multiply marginalized youth who are learning to negotiate everyday encounters with injustice as they dream of more just futures. Indeed, the study has transformed the way that I conceptualize and design social justice education in my own teaching, a point I elaborate upon in the dissertation conclusion.

Beginning with Life in Critical Digital Literacies

Most scholarship and practice in critical digital literacies focus on youth resistance, considering how marginalized young people use digital tools to disrupt injustice or participate in activism for school and state inclusion. Scholars often trace digital literacies that critique, counternarrate, and act against injustice (Ávila & Pandya, 2013; Kelly, 2018; Wargo, 2018). The literature also has tended to privilege practices to compose and post media content that contests power (de los Ríos, 2018; Jocson, 2018; Stornaiuolo, 2020). My own scholarship so far has followed this paradigmatic interest in counter-hegemonic activity and digital practices to disrupt structures of power through multimodal composition on social media (Shrodes, 2021; Shrodes et al., 2021). Resistance offers indispensable tools of critical analysis and social action grounded in anti-assimilationist traditions to dismantle systems of oppression (Giroux et al., 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Yet, my dissertation research suggests that resistance alone is insufficient for young people struggling to survive and thrive in the face of injustice. The digital activities that

were most meaningful to the 21 participants in the dissertation study were not legible as resistance, and often they were not visible at all. Youth described watching YouTube videos, scrolling on meme pages, and taking screenshots of Instagram posts as activities that offered ease in everyday life and helped them imagine the future. Young people need practices to sustain life and create life otherwise as they negotiate interlocking hegemonic domination.

In my dissertation, I follow how trans and queer youth learned routine practices to nurture life otherwise across differentially marginalized social positions. These are survival-rich practices that arise out of necessity to sustain marginalized youth amid persistent experiences with oppression. Yet, these practices also offer windows into expansive ways of being and organizing life. In my research, I draw on theorists who call these alternative ways of life "elsewheres," "otherwise possibilities," and "life otherwise" (Crawley, 2017; de Lauretis, 1991; Muñoz, 1999, 2009). Drawing capaciously on queer and trans studies, I assemble and advance a conceptual framework of livability toward elsewheres that looks beyond youth resistance. The paradigm of youth resistance that shapes multiple fields tends to begin with domination. Yet, to begin with domination is also to begin with social erasure, structural dispossession, and denial of being. When every day feels like a fight, beginning with these forms of negation might be untenable. Livability toward elsewheres, in contrast, arises from the need to nurture life and lifeways in the face of entrenched structures of power that inequitably distribute life chances (Snorton, 2017; Spade, 2015). Livability begins with life, and life otherwise, as it unfolds in the everyday. For Stevie and other youth, "living life" can grow into expansive possible futures.

I explicate everyday learning on social media as a site of routine practices through which we "become who we are" and organize our social worlds (Felski, 2000, p. 84). The study of everyday learning has been pivotal in sociocultural traditions in the learning sciences, a space to

understand how youth learn heterogeneous repertoires of practice through participation in cultural communities (Lee, 2001, 2007; Rogoff & Lave, 1984; Rosebery et al., 2010; Scriber and Cole, 1981; Saxe, 1988; Vossoughi & Gutiérrez, 2014). The everyday is also a "bloom space" of social reproduction and change (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 9). That is, moment-to-moment or micropolitical activity can lead to change at macropolitical scales (Gutiérrez et al., 2017; Zavala & Golden, 2016). I am particularly interested in how the everyday practices of livability that youth learn through participation in digital activities can establish the "peopled ground" of political struggles (Lugones, 2010, p. 755). Practices that sustain life in the face of domination are powerfully social; they are developed through observation of and practice with others and often cultivate felt relations in communities (Lugones, 2010; Muñoz, 1999, 2009). Relationality itself can be a condition that sustains life and proliferates life otherwise. As queer of color critique theorist José Esteban Muñoz argues, "Moments of queer relational bliss" have "the ability to rewrite the large map of everyday life" (p. 25). Through repetition, everyday practices of livability may bloom into more liberatory formations of social and political life.

In this dissertation, I primarily talk about these otherwise ways of being and organizing life as "elsewheres"–a term I have been thinking with for years. I found my intellectual home in the humanities before I came to the learning sciences. Reading humanistic social theory, I began to find the words to describe my experience and the world around me. "Elsewheres" was an aspirational word, a utopian method I encountered first in queer theory (de Lauretis, 1991; Muñoz, 1999, 2009). It most often described alternative social realities of queer and trans life, realities that existed alongside hegemonic culture. In my attempt to trace a history of the term, the earliest mention I can find is in 1989, from novelist and decolonial theorist Édouard Glissant. In writing against colonial attempts at stability and control, Glissant theorizes, "But the world

can no longer be shaped into a system. Too many Others and Elsewheres disturb the placid surface" (1989, p. 229). If elsewheres are utopian, they are disruptively so; elsewheres shatter the totalizing hold of hegemony. Here, the conceptual relation between elsewheres and life otherwise comes into focus: To create life other than hegemony prescribes is also to foster possibilities for other social and political formations to emerge across scales–to create the potential for social transformation. As the term "elsewheres" has made its way into justice-oriented educational research (e.g., Grande & McCarty, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2016; Vossoughi, 2021), it continues to be an aspirational word, a way to trace the relationship between everyday practice and expansive configurations of life. By using "elsewheres," I seek to honor the ingenuity of youth practices to imagine and enact possibilities that are not predicated on domination–futures that are different than the systems they are living in predict for them. Trans and queer youth digital life has the capacity to disrupt hegemony and make worlds anew.

In the dissertation, I examine humor, joy, and hope within practices that construct trans and queer lives as livable and, in so doing, gesture toward possible elsewheres. There are numerous potential dimensions of livability toward elsewheres, many of which are beautifully explored in emerging queer studies in education scholarship.[2] I closely consider themes of humor, joy, and hope across the dissertation because they emerged as salient within the stories of youth in the study and build purposefully on my prior work on critical digital literacies in LGBTQ+ social media (Shrodes, 2021; Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit; Shrodes et al., 2021). Conceptual framings around humor, joy, and hope shape how I narrate youth practices, yet I also

[2] Bishop Owis's (2022) work on queer ethics of care in QTBIPOC education, Page Regan's (2021) work on queer imaginings of love, Shamari Reid's (2021) exploration of Black LGBTQ+ youth agency in NYC's ballroom culture, Suraj Uttamchandani's (2021) work on educational intimacy among LGBTQ+ youth are a few that come to mind.

consider how youth practices enter the stream of thinkers and concepts, shifting how we understand survival-rich practices. Youth in the study expressed the significance of humor in helping them learn to cheer up during tough moments, cultivate feelings of affinity and belonging, and laugh off encounters with hate. I sustain my focus on radical joy as a specific cultural formation of emotion through which youth subvert interlocking hegemonies and insist on life otherwise (Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit), exploring how youth learned to reach for and step into radical joy through multimodal choreographies of a reaction video. One of the most common conditions of livability youth described was hope–hope for the next day, for life after high school, for a better world. I further unpack hope in relation to storying trans and queer disabled futures with digital artifacts, seeking to understand how learning to hope for more just future was meaningful in their digital lives. As we saw in Stevie's story at the beginning of this chapter, practices of humor, joy, and hope nurtured comfort and ease for youth, offering a viable path to engage in struggles for liberation.

Study Purpose and Significance

Through a qualitative study focused on storying, I explore how 21 trans and queer teens learned to negotiate social injustice through everyday activities on social media (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Paris & Winn, 2014; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017). Taking a humanizing stance, I seek to co-construct knowledge oriented toward critical understanding and social action through narratives. In alignment with my conceptual framework of livability toward elsewheres, this research is animated by two questions:

- How, and in what ways, did 21 trans and queer teens learn practices to create livable lives in unlivable worlds through everyday digital media activities?
- How did these practices of livability gesture toward elsewheres?

Guided by these questions, I developed three sets of empirical research questions, conceptual framings, and analytic methods to construct findings around humor, radical joy, and hope.[3]

I employed a qualitative research design anchored by interview and participatory visual methods over three nested phases to theorize with and alongside participants through stories. Participants were ages 13-19 and occupied a range of social positions, which I further recount in Chapter 3. I conducted the project through a multi-year partnership with behavioral health therapists at Lurie Children's interdisciplinary gender program in Chicago. In the first phase (July-October 2019), I conducted semi-structured interviews and surveys (Weiss, 1994; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). In the second phrase (October 2019-January 2020), I conducted follow-up interviews and media reactions, a form of participatory visual method, with 16 focal participants selected with attention to intersections of identity (Gubrium et al., 2015). In the final phase (June-September 2020), I conducted participatory visual research with four focal participants anchored by five virtual sessions and biweekly digital artifact submission over the course of three months (Halbritter & Lindquist, 2012; Switzer, 2019).

In analyzing these data, I seek to understand and theorize youth digital activities and their meanings through storying. I draw together multiple methods of analysis appropriate for research questions across my findings chapters, Chapters 4-6, but they share a focus on making meaning of and through youth stories. In Chapter 4, I evidence findings from qualitative analysis of 37 interviews by constructing context-rich youth stories (Charmaz, 2014). In Chapter 5, I primarily use a narrative approach to interactional analysis of video data from media reactions, choosing and analyzing a video event for how it has meaning and illustration within a narrative (Derry et

[3] As a hybrid dissertation format, I have developed three findings chapters that I will further revise as articles. The third findings chapter, Chapter 6, is currently under review by a journal.

al., 2010, p. 14). Finally, in Chapter 6, I employ narrative analysis of stories youth constructed with digital artifacts to understand how they theorized disability in desired futures (Riessman, 2008; Gee, 1991). Across these chapters, stories allow for conceptual clarity while breaking open the complexity of a lived life (Tuck, 2009). Through centering story, I seek to also center how youth theorized their digital activities as experts of their own lives (Cammarota & Fine, 2010; Cruz, 2011). I strived at each step of the analysis, from initial coding of interviews to interaction analysis of an illustrative video event, to stay close to youth experiences and meanings.

In the dissertation more broadly, I seek to highlight some of the ingenious digital practices that trans and queer young people learned to nurture livability in the face of entrenched structures of power. By doing this, I contribute to multiple fields of thought, which include literacy studies of critical, digital, and queer literacies. I draw these areas together through a focus on critical digital literacies with LGBTQ+ youth. My dissertation findings on humor, joy, and hope in practices of livability toward elsewheres enter a growing stream of critical literacies scholarship that uplift practices through which marginalized communities nurture life amid and beyond domination (Coleman, 2021; Cruz, 2011; Davis, 2018; Griffin & Turner, 2021; Johnson, 2017; Pritchard, 2017; Wargo, 2018; Toliver, 2020). By considering the role of invisibility in creating conditions that sustain life, I also make new contributions to studies of digital literacies, broadly, and critical digital literacies, specifically by demonstrating how lurking and viewing are social practices to create felt relations and negotiate disbelonging in digital cultures (Ávila & Pandya, 2013; de los Ríos 2018; Jocson 2018; Kelly 2018; Stornaiuolo, 2020). Across this scholarship, I build on and contribute to queer literacies as an area of inquiry that attend to situated practices of meaning making that foreground issues of power, identity, and representation at the intersection of gender and sexuality (Blackburn, 2003, 2004; Cruz, 2011;

Johnson, 2017; Lizárraga & Cortez, 2020; Wargo, 2018). I further elaborate on these literatures and contributions in Chapter 2 and consider additional areas of theoretical and methodological contribution in each findings chapter. Ultimately, this project has implications to expand how we notice and design for forms of possibility in the media-rich lives and educational experiences of young people. For millions of youth like Stevie, practices of livability have real consequences to survive and thrive in a world marked by enclosures.

A Note on Gender and Sexuality

Since my dissertation focuses on the lives of trans and queer youth, and is one of the first to do so in the learning sciences, I want to take a moment to describe how I understand LGBTQ+ identities.[4] I approach gender and sexual identities as self-determined and dialogically situated within social, cultural, and political contexts. Gender and sexual self-determination is built on the assumption that people and communities should have the right to self-determine and express their gender and sexual identities "without redress of social, institutional, or political violence" (Miller, 2015, p. 38). The concept emerges from liberation and abolition movements that refuse forms of ontological erasure, or denial of being and humanity (Stanley, 2017; see also Miller, 2015). To assert self-determination is to refuse systems of domination and control, thereby building collective power. Simultaneously, gender and sexual identities are mediated by sociocultural contexts of use and intersections of identity and structures of power that include race, class, coloniality, Indigeneity, and dis/ability. Cherokee scholar Qwo-Li Driskill (2010) emphasizes that people fluidly and purposefully take up different identity terms (in Driskill's

[4] I am grateful for the scholarly community of Jacob McWilliams (2015), Suraj Uttamchandani (2021), and Dylan Paré (Forthcoming), who have recently written dissertations in learning sciences with a focus on queerness and LGBTQ+ youth, as well as learning scientists José Ramón Lizárraga and Arturo Cortez (2019, 2020), who have published work in queer studies in education.

case, Two-Spirit, tribally specific terms, and LGBTQ+ terms) across different times and places. As such, gender and sexual identities can be multiple, fluid, and subject to change over time.

In describing individual participants, I use the identities and pronouns they self-identified.[5] I checked in with participants throughout the study, honoring any explorations or shifts in gender and sexuality in how I write about them. Throughout the dissertation, I use both "trans" and "queer" as umbrella terms to describe the group of participants who variously are transgender, non-binary, gender fluid, and/or genderqueer *and* gay, pansexual, bisexual, lesbian, asexual, questioning, and/or queer. Though I aim to use the terms for gender identity, gender expression, and sexuality that participants define and use for themselves, I recognize that all the terms I use may change or become outmoded.

Terminologies that describe trans and queer identities, experience, and politics matter to the people who use them to understand and represent themselves and to find a community where they feel recognized. Terminology also changes over time and across communities. As trans studies scholar Susan Stryker writes of trans experience, "new terms and concepts come into existence all the time" (2017, p. 10). Black trans feminist thought indeed cultivates an ethic of radical openness to do "the really hard stuff of imagining what we must become, and what we must give up, in order for the beings who have not yet been allowed to emerge to do so" (Green & Bey, 2017, p. 448). I invoke trans scholarship to employ terms to engage "proliferating possibilities" of trans identities, rather than limit what the terms may be or become (Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 8). New words may yet arise that open up new ways of being and new ways of

[5] The internet has many crowdfunded resources, including gender.wikia.org and nonbinary.wiki, to understand particular gender identities or terms for gender expression used by participants.

understanding gender and sexuality as intersecting identities and interlocking power structures (see also Shrodes & Paré, 2022).

Though I begin with an orientation to gender and sexual identities and the terminologies I uses to describe participants, I ultimately seek to promote shifts in educational scholarship and practice from 'what is' questions to 'how can' questions of LGBTQ+ life, from 'what is LGBTQ+ identity' to 'how can queerness and transness inform social justice education'? Definitional questions may lead to singular construals that limit what queerness may mean or come to mean across intersections of identity and power and curtail engagement with possibilities for social justice transformation. For instance, singular definitions of queerness may erase Indigenous genders and sexualities as unique categories and lifeways (Driskill et al., 2011). I seek, instead, to answer design questions–questions of how we might construct "new, more humane forms of activity" (Cole, 1998; p. 292). I center ever-unfolding LGBTQ+ ways of being and organizing life to shape understandings of justice, possibilities for social transformation, and design for learning.

Overview of the Chapters

In Chapter 2, I establish the conceptual framework for the dissertation. First, I assemble and advance the theoretical frames that animate the study. Underscoring the importance of a theory of power to study how youth negotiate injustice, I begin by articulating a theory of hegemonic domination and agency through collective struggle (Gramsci, 1971; Collins, 1990; Lugones, 2010). I then ground the study in sociocultural and sociopolitical theories of learning and literacy that shape how I understand learning through purpose-driven activities mediated by social relations and cultural artifacts in dynamic social, cultural, and political contexts (Cole, 1996; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Lewis et al., 2016; Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). With this grounding, I capaciously engage queer and trans studies to advance the

conceptual framework of livability toward elsewheres that explicates youth everyday digital practices of life otherwise (Crawley, 2017; Lugones, 1987; Muñoz, 1999; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018; Snorton, 2017). Second, I review the literature on critical literacies, digital literacies, and queer literacies, paying particular attention to intellectual genealogies and themes among and across these literatures (Cruz, 2013; Wargo, 2018; Lizárraga & Cortez, 2020; Schey & Blackburn, 2019). As I synthesize the literature, I make explicit the ways I contribute to the scholarship at the nexus of critical digital literacies with LGBTQ+ youth.

In Chapter 3, I describe the research design and methods I used to study how trans and queer youth learn to negotiate social injustice through everyday digital activities. I first outline the methodology and locate myself in the research by reflecting on how my positionality and political commitments shaped interactions with youth in data collection and ultimately the study itself. I then describe the research partnership and contexts and recount participants with whom I constructed knowledge. Next, I elaborate upon the methods used to collect and analyze data across three research phases with particular focus on how I sought to understand youth digital activities, engagement with digital tools, and the meanings these activities and tools hold for young people. I conclude the chapter by outlining the analytic approaches I employed to construct findings for each subsequent findings chapter, and how these methods come together in telling a larger story across the dissertation.

In Chapter 4, I employ qualitative procedures in the grounded theory tradition with transcripts of 37 in-depth interviews with 21 participants, considering how teens described the role of humor in routine digital practices that foster livability, and how they narrated the meanings of humor in these practices (Charmaz, 2014). Drawing on conceptual framings of humor from resistance to livability, I argue that humor shapes three primary repertoires of

practice through which participants curated hope for the present and future, constructed belonging in LGBTQ+ communities, and subverted hate in order to nurture joy. First, teens *cultivated hope through laughter* by curating funny digital artifacts (e.g., random memes, animal GIFs, gaming videos) that helped them get through the day and by following comical LGBTQ+ peer-age content creators and older role models through which they survived the present and imagined the future. Second, I find teens *composed felt relations* in LGBTQ+ communities through humorous memes that amplified emotion and fostered recognition. While I explore how teens shared memes to communicate and validate feelings in online communities, I focus on the practices of lurking youth described as meaningful to relate to others in LGBTQ+ communities through viewing memes. Third, I find that youth learned to *enact humor as political possibility*, demonstrating the role of humor in creating critical distance from oppressive ideologies and nurturing feelings of power, joy, and ease in the face of injustice. Throughout the analysis, I pay attention to complexities and tensions as I construct patterns to inform theories of learning and literacy. The qualitative analysis of interview data lays the foundation for analytical directions I take in Chapters 5 and 6, where I further explore the role of radical joy and hope in practices of livability toward elsewheres.

In Chapter 5, I employ qualitative analysis and interactional methodologies with video data of media reactions to explore how eight trans and queer youth of color viewers made meaning of, and took up, multimodal choreographies of radical joy as a way of feeling and a practice of livability in reactions to a YouTube video (Erickson, 2006; Derry et al., 2010; Glaser, 1965; Hall & Stevens, 2015; Jordan & Henderson, 1995). Drawing on conceptual framings in political feeling and performance studies, I understand multimodal choreographies as patterned ways of combining communicative modes in social interaction and performance that can be

compelled by, and produce, feelings. I argue that radical joy is a feeling young people learned online to negotiate bad feelings that arise with experiences with racism, colonialism, transphobia, and homophobia and enact ways of being otherwise. Using interaction analysis, I focus on an illustrative video event from one focal participant to understand how Helia learned radical joy as a life-affirming response to hate through reaching for, stepping into, and improvising upon the multimodal choreographies performed in a reaction video. I knit qualitative analysis from all eight youth participants with in-depth analysis of Helia's reaction to explore narrative alignments and departures across the reactions (Derry et al., 2010, p. 23; Erickson, 2006). If critical literacies and youth resistance often foreground feelings of anger in opposition, I will argue that multiply marginalized youth need to reach for a wider range of emotions to create livable lives in unlivable worlds.

In Chapter 6, I employ narrative analysis methods to examine digital artifact-based interviews, considering how four focal teens narrated desired futures, how digital artifacts (e.g., images, videos, posts) mediated those narratives, and how teens theorized the relation between disability and desired futures in those narratives (Riessman, 2008; Gee, 1991). In constructing narratives with digital artifacts they selected, Bailey, Mateo, Jacob, and Noah narrated how their experiences with disability including mental illness shaped their practices of imagining the future. Teens complicated narratives of 'getting over' or invisibilizing disability by turning to artifacts that position disabled futures or narratively expanding upon artifacts to make meaning with and through experiences with disability. Mateo, a 16-year-old Puerto Rican bisexual trans boy, and Bailey, an 18-year-old white lesbian trans girl, narrated practices of insistent hope for a better future and better world they developed through experiences with depression. Noah, 15-year-old white gay trans boy, storied practices to extend an elastic present (Israeli-Nevo, 2017),

practices that for him arise through anxiety toward the future and a refusal to view the future as the solution to all the social problems of the past. Jacob, 17-year-old Afro-Puerto Rican and white gay trans and gender nonconforming boy living with disabilities, storied coming into care and recovery networks on social media in the past and present, dreaming of a future where his existence as disabled and trans is not erased. Through the analysis, I foreground the practices and meanings that arise through experiences with disability, what queer disabled femme activist Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha describes as the "innovative and virtuosic skills" grounded in the commitment to "not leaving each other behind" (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, 126). This chapter was developed in the 2021 *Curriculum Inquiry* Writing Fellowship.

In Chapter 7, I situate the dissertation study in relation to my own scholarly trajectory and reflect on the broader implications for theory, teaching, and research. I first reflect on how my scholarly interests and the sociopolitical context of the study shaped the analytical directions of the study in dialogue with youth, considering how I have answered the larger questions that animate the dissertation study. Next, I summarize the findings from the study and elaborate on how I contribute to studies of critical digital literacies with a particular focus on research with LGBTQ+ youth. Then, I discuss implications for theoretical orientations and lines of inquiry in educational studies and gender and sexuality studies. Turning to implications for teaching, I subsequently propose three ways the dissertation may inform design for teaching and learning in social justice education and equity-oriented English language arts. I then describe implications for research, reflect on the limitations of this dissertation, and outline future directions in my analysis and study. In conclusion, I return to the broader stakes of this work, reflecting on ways the study may shed light on how to design equitable learning environments for LGBTQ+ youth.

Chapter 2.
Conceptual Framework: Trans and Queer Livability Toward Elsewheres

In this chapter, I draw together multiple theoretical and scholarly traditions to establish the conceptual framework for the dissertation study. I begin by assembling the theoretical frames that guide my research design and analysis with attention to how I theorize power and agency, learning and literacy, and my conceptual focus of livability toward elsewheres. Together, these sections forward a theory of change that articulate the nature of domination and the possibilities for young people to contest and transform relations of power and create life-affirming formations of social and political life through everyday practices of livability (Tuck & Yang, 2014). Then, I review the primary literature that I draw on and extend through the study with a focus on the disciplinary field of literacy and English language arts. Though I review the scholarship on critical literacies, digital literacies, and queer literacies in sections to follow each area's intellectual genealogy and themes, I also aim to surface the numerous connections among these literatures. Many of the scholars I build on most directly move fluidly across critical, digital, and queer literacies (e.g., Cruz, 2013; Wargo, 2017a, 2017b; Lizárraga & Cortez, 2019, 2020; Schey & Blackburn, 2019). Throughout my synthesis of the literature, I articulate the ways I build with and extend these bodies of work through tracing practices of livability in the everyday digital activities of trans and queer youth.

Theoretical Framework

Several traditions of thought in queer, trans, feminist, sociocultural, and sociopolitical theories, broadly considered, shape my thinking and analysis. Anchored by theories of Antonio Gramsci, Patricia Hill Collins, and María Lugones, I first describe hegemonic domination and agency through collective struggle as my theoretical lenses of power and agency. I begin here

because any research on practices to negotiate, resist, or transform relations of power are shaped by a theory of power, implicitly or explicitly. I make my theory explicit, as it animates the study. Guided by sociocultural and sociopolitical theories, I then outline my theory of learning as the transformation of participation in purpose-driven activities mediated by social relations and cultural artifacts in dynamic social, cultural, and political contexts. Finally, I move capaciously across queer and trans studies to forward the conceptual framework of livability toward elsewheres. In this section, I cultivate a sustained dialogue with scholarship in gender and sexuality studies to demonstrate how I draw from, depart from, and contribute to queer and trans studies through a focus on young people's everyday practices of life otherwise.

Hegemonic Domination and Agency through Collective Struggle

In my study, I follow the ways in which trans and queer participants resisted, transformed, and created life in the face of hegemonic domination—the systems of belief, values, practices, and representations that legitimize and justify interlocking oppressions (Gramsci, 1971; Collins, 1990; Lugones, 2010). First theorized by Italian Marxist and anti-fascist activist and writer Antonio Gramsci, hegemony is a mechanism of domination through legitimating ideologies and norms, which shift constantly to accommodate resistance and reestablish consent (Gramsci, 1971; see also Shrodes, 2021). Hegemony organizes consent to domination from marginalized groups by exerting authoritative, often imperceivable, influence. Structures of power and attendant worldviews appear legitimate, natural, and even morally right. Conversely, hegemony constructs marginalized ways of being, knowing, and doing as deviant, remote, and even impossible. Though hegemony operates by rendering nondominant forms of life unintelligible, the theory of power conceptually opens up possibilities for agency. By developing critical consciousness of self and society, people can perceive hegemonic ideologies and norms

as social constructs, resist domination, and sustain alternative social and political formations in the face of domination (Gramsci, 1971; Shrodes, 2022). Yet, critical consciousness requires vigilance to hegemonic adaptations.

Since Gramsci theorized hegemony primarily through attention to social class to describe the domination of one group over another, I also take up theorists who employ hegemony to consider the ways in which ideological domains of domination organize multiple, intersecting oppressions that include race, class, coloniality, gender, and sexuality. In doing so, I move from the singular term *hegemony* to attend to multiple, interlocking forms of *hegemonic domination.* Black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins (1990) theorized hegemony in a matrix of domination that organizes intersecting oppressions of race and gender through structural (e.g., social institutions), disciplinary (e.g., social policies and surveillance), hegemonic (e.g., dominant ideologies), and interpersonal (e.g., everyday interactions) domains. Through concepts such as the *controlling image* within the hegemonic domain, she demonstrated how negative beliefs and stereotypes about Black women are used to legitimate oppression (1990). Decolonial feminist María Lugones (2010), then, employs hegemonic domination to consider how the settler nation-state constructs and maintains colonialist configurations of domination through interlocking beliefs and norms that violently mobilize categories of the human and non-human alongside race, class, gender, and sexuality. Theorizing the *coloniality of gender*, Lugones demonstrates that racialized, classed gender was a tool to naturalize colonial domination through the category of the human:

> Indigenous peoples of the Americas and enslaved Africans were classified as not human in species—as animals, uncontrollably sexual and wild. The European, bourgeois,

> colonial, modern man became a subject/agent, fit for rule, for public life and ruling, a being of civilization, heterosexual, Christian, a being of mind and reason. (p. 743)

Decoloniality requires–thought does not end with–dismantling colonial beliefs and norms that justify oppression, which include the gender binary, hierarchical gender relations, cisheteronormativity, and domination of land as feminine (see also Arvin et al., 2013; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Importantly, the theorists I mobilize allow for distance from hegemonic domination in order for marginalized communities to cultivate agency and organize for change. This attention to agency in the face of power complicates queer and feminist post-structural theories of power and agency that often shape analysis attentive to gender (e.g., Butler, 1990). Through the concept of *performativity*, post-structural queer theorist Judith Butler argues possibilities for agency are constituted by hegemonic ideologies and norms that guide social scripts we can repeat or resist (1990). While postcolonial theorist Saba Mahmood (2001) agrees with Butler that possibilities for agency arise within structures of power, she departs from Butler's attachment to resistance, arguing that it is shaped by western, liberal notions of freedom. Mahmood argues that capacities and modes of agency are also the product of "operations of power" (2001, p. 210). For Butler, Mahmood, and other post-structural theorists, there is no outside to power. The theorists I consider take a different stance on power, arguing that marginalized communities can critically reflect on, analyze, and organize against relations of domination. Similar to Mahmood, Lugones theorizes that the colonial subject is constituted by colonial relations of power. Yet, Lugones creates an outside to power through her theorization of the "fractured locus" (p. 748). In the face of dispossession and dehumanization, the colonized subject "perceives doubly, relates doubly" (p. 748). She writes with force, "in our colonized, racially gendered, oppressed existences we are

also other than what the hegemon makes us be" (p. 746). This fractured locus, perceiving and relating doubly, is created through colonial relations of power yet can give rise to distance from, and resistance to, colonial oppression (pp. 746, 748). For Collins, as well, marginalized communities may develop critical consciousness of hegemonic beliefs and norms through reflection and action as they begin to see their personal experiences as part of shared struggles against domination.

For these theorists, agency to resist and transform domination unfolds in collective activity, which may create the conditions for coalitional action. Here, I take collective to mean belonging within a marginalized community and coalition to involve constructing solidarity across marginalized communities with attention to difference. For Collins (1990), situating personal experiences in collective struggles and forming a collective identity are the foundation for the development of critical consciousness to resist hegemonic domination. Moreover, Collins (1997) argues that the development of coalitional politics across marginalized groups and with attention to difference may be necessary to dismantle interlocking systems of domination. Lugones, too, focuses on resistance in relation with others through her concept of "resistant subjectivity" (2010, p. 746). Whereas resistance might be enacted by the self against the conditions of her oppression, resistant subjectivity is intersubjective and requires the recognition and participation of marginalized others. Because resistant subjectivity often expresses itself infrapolitically, a term Scott (1990) coined to describe the off-stage ways marginalized groups struggle against domination, it is not necessarily legible or visible from the point of view of the oppressor. Resistant subjectivity is an intersubjective achievement that does not topple structures of power but rather creates the "peopled ground" for broader political struggles (Lugones, 2010, p. 755). Lugones' focus on intersubjective "be-ing in relation" arises from an interest in "an

ethics of coalition-in-the-making" (p. 755). Said differently, Lugones, too, is invested in coalitions across difference as social formations that might give rise to freedom from colonized relations of subordination.

As a researcher committed to expanding potential to dismantle structures of power and nurture worlds otherwise, my theory of power and agency attunes me to possibilities to transform hegemonic beliefs and norms, as well as ways in which young people may sustain alternative ways of being, doing, and knowing in the face of domination. Any theories of resistance to, and transformation of, domination must respond to the "fact of domination" as theorized (Spillers, 1984, p. 84). Taking up theories of the hegemonic domain of power and possibilities of agency through shared struggle helps me see the many ways in which young people are collectively identifying, resisting, and transforming hegemonic domination through everyday participation in online communities. Agentive practices are often conceptualized as counter-hegemonic or resistant, a focus that Mahmood (2001) has troubled through her critique of the liberal theories of freedom that undergird political attachments in western feminist theory. Yet, attending to collective activity within and beyond resistance also shapes attention to how marginalized communities create, sustain, and expand other forms of life beyond the enclosures of the present—even as these forms are rendered illegible by hegemony. By articulating an outside to power, these theorists also open up the potential for elsewheres and otherwises—to be, live, and organize social and political formations "other than what the hegemon makes us" (Lugones, 2010, p. 746). I aim to develop the capacities to "read and produce meaning across 'many worlds of sense'" in order to responsibly attend to the everyday practices that create the conditions for, or, in Lugones' (2010) terms the peopled ground of, possible elsewheres and liberatory social transformation across scales (Cruz, 2011, p. 549). In this study, I am particularly interested in

practices of livability that create the conditions to sustain struggles for liberation and organize more expansive social and political formations.

Sociocultural and Sociopolitical Perspectives on Learning and Literacy

To understand how youth learn and practice livability, I draw on sociocultural and sociopolitical theories of learning and literacy that situate learning within activities that unfold in and change social, cultural, political, and ideological contexts (Cole, 1996; Lewis et al., 2016; Rogoff, 2003; Street, 1998). I approach learning as the transformation of participation in purpose-driven activities mediated by social relations and cultural artifacts in dynamic contexts (Cole, 1996; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Lewis et al., 2016; Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). While I primarily focus on practices mediated by digital tools and communities, I also consider how participants transform the communities, purpose, tools, and routine practices of an activity over time (Engeström; 2001; Rogoff, 2003). As Rogoff describes, "humans develop through their changing participation in the sociocultural activities of their communities, which also change" (2003, p. 27). By drawing on New Literacy Studies and multiliteracies, I follow the ways young people learn communicative, interpretive, and discursive practices through which they make meaning of, contest, and transform their social worlds with a range of semiotic modes (e.g., visual, textual, aural) (Gee, 2015; New London Group, 1996; Street, 1995, 1998). In doing so, I mobilize sociopolitical or sociocritical perspectives to foreground how literate practices and activities are shaped by, and have possibilities to change, hegemonic political and ideological contexts (Lewis et al., 2016). For instance, a key literate practice that I analyze is the ways young people interpret and satirize hegemonic ideologies and norms. Following the ways youth learn and enact practices of livability, I am interested in how

learning expands possibilities for action and thereby organizes possible futures (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Uttamchandani, 2021; Vossoughi & Gutiérrez, 2014).

As I follow learning within everyday digital activities, I attend to the roles of digital and discursive artifacts in mediating practices of livability. Drawing on sociocultural and cultural historical activity theory of artifact mediation, I approach digital artifacts such as memes, videos, and posts as simultaneously material and ideal (Cole, 1996; Wartofsky, 1973). For instance, a Tweet can serve as a communicative tool and expand how a young person analyzes and imagines the world (Vossoughi, 2014). Building with Espinoza and Vossoughi (2014), I consider how these digital artifacts are tools for practice and also reflect an imaginary world that "color our perspective of what is possible in ordinary life": "Neither products of fantasy nor heralds of a more just society, imaginary worlds are grasshopper-scale fragments of the future alive in the present" (Espinoza & Vossoughi, 2014, p. 298). For young people, digital artifacts embedded in online communities can offer portals into possible futures that young people can begin to practice in the present. Moreover, I consider the discursive repertoires and gestures that youth learn online as mediational means, following the ways of being expressed in linguistic, symbolic, and embodied resources that participants cultivated through participation in practice (Martinez et al., 2017; Wertsch, 1991). Drawing on queer affect theory and Black feminist thought, I also consider feelings to be cultural formations or artifacts that young people cultivate through participation in activities and subsequently mediate possibilities for political action (e.g., Cvetkovich, 2003; Gould, 2009; Nash, 2011; see also Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit). In Chapter 5, I elaborate on my approach to political feelings and examine how a focal participant took up and transformed the political feeling of radical joy through multimodal choreography in her reactions to an anti-hate video on YouTube.

I similarly attend to social relations as mediators of learning, yet I also follow a recent turn in critical studies of learning and literacy to consider the ways in which making relations can be a goal of activity and a form of literacy. Traditionally, sociocultural scholars have conceptualized social relations as mediators of learning through the concept of joint activity, which speaks to mutual learning mediated by forms of intergenerational collaboration, such as apprenticeship or guided participation (Cole, 1996; Rogoff, 1990). Recently, critical scholars have pushed for more expansive, justice-oriented ways of centering relationality in learning (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016; Bang, 2017; Vossoughi et al., 2020). Bang (2017) has critiqued sociocultural theories that build on Vygotsky (1978) for reifying western, colonial paradigms of individualism that privilege the individual and their goals over expansive forms of making relations and being in relation to humans and more-than-human lands, waters, plants, and animals. Centering Indigenous ways of knowing and being, Bang (2017) argues for a theoretical shift from subject-object relations to subject-subject as the goal of activity, making it possible to conceptualize making relations as a form of activity. The concepts of joint activity and subject-subject relations uplift relationality as both the process and the goal of activity. Literacies scholarship is also undergoing a shift from sociocultural approaches that privilege subjects and their literate practices to affective approaches that center relationality among humans, socio-material others, and more-than-humans with an interest in how subjects act with, and are moved by, the world through flows of feeling (Ehret & Rowsell, 2021; Leander & Boldt, 2013; Lenters, 2016; Wargo, 2015b; Zapata et al., 2018). Drawing on these bodies of scholarship, I attend to the ways young people learn through relations and learn to make relations in everyday digital activity, wherein making relations is a form of literacy that may also spark unexpected trajectories of learning. My theoretical stance on the intersubjectivity and relationality of

learning aligns with my theory of power and agency. I consider how young people learn to compose felt relations in collective struggles and coalitional projects for liberation. These relations may create the conditions for broader forms of social transformation.

Finally, I draw on sociocultural and sociopolitical perspectives to make clear the relationship between everyday practices and larger forms of social transformation. In sociocultural traditions, the study of everyday learning has been central to understand the cultural nature of learning and to design for relationships between everyday and disciplinary repertoires of practice, which has expanded academic disciplines by framing heterogeneity of practices as necessary for learning (Lee, 2001, 2007; Rogoff & Lave, 1984; Rosebery et al., 2010; Scriber and Cole, 1981; Saxe, 1988; Vossoughi & Gutiérrez, 2014). Increasingly, scholars have conceptualized the routine practices of everyday activity as deeply political and often explicit rather than tacit, examining the resistant, creative, and inventive activities of the everyday lives of nondominant communities (Gutiérrez et al., 2017; Jurow & Shea, 2015; Jurow et al., 2016). Informed by the genetic approach of the learning sciences, these scholars take the practices youth learn and enact in the everyday as potentially transformative across scales (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010). That is, the *microgenetic* or moment-to-moment scale is deeply linked with both *ontogenetic* or developmental lifespan scale and *sociogenetic* or scale of social change. As Zavala and Golden (2016) describe, "micropractices and spaces of everyday" are "constitutive of larger social formation" (p. 216). While learning theorists often attend to transformation as the expansion of possibilities toward justice (Cole, 1996), transformation also has the potential to reproduce or deepen inequities and enclosures (Richardson, 2011). I am interested in how everyday life can be a site to proliferate life otherwise, even as it continually contends with hegemonic domination. I build with these sociocultural and sociopolitical theorists to consider

what everyday practices of livability in the digital life of trans and queer teens made possible downstream. I follow the forms of participation that change the lives of participants in ways that are meaningful to them—forms that deliver moments youth seek to recreate, that open up larger forms of action, and that may seed other formations of social and political life at the micropolitical scale (Tuck & Yang, 2014). I also seek to put everyday practices in relation to literate activities valued by English language arts and social justice education by expanding the paradigm of critical literacies.

Practices of Livability Toward Elsewheres

I theoretically frame my focus on *livability toward elsewheres* by turning to queer and trans studies, capaciously considered, to illuminate how practices developed to survive hegemonic domination may offer windows into possible elsewheres. I pull from interdisciplinary theorizing that considers intersections of gender and sexuality with other axes of power and identities, primarily race, class, dis/ability, coloniality, and Indigeneity. I embrace multiple genealogies of thought (e.g., queer of color critique, decolonial feminism, disability justice) to contend with and subvert the whiteness and compulsory able-bodiedness of 'queer theory' as a disciplinary formation (Hames-García, 2011; Kafer, 2003). My approach also emerges from the recognition that many analytics may be needed to organize toward more just worlds (Tuck & Yang, 2018). These expansive traditions demonstrate the need for marginalized communities to nurture conditions that sustain life across differentially marginalized social positions in the face of systematic social erasure, structural dispossession, and ontological denial (Butler, 2004; Lugones, 1987; Muñoz, 1999; Snorton, 2017). Survival-rich practices (Lugones, 1987) arise out of absolute necessity, yet they offer windows into possible elsewheres—what Ashon Crawley (2017) calls "otherwise possibilities." Elsewheres and otherwise possibilities indicate that

"alternative modes, alternative strategies, alternative ways of life already exist, indeed are violently acted upon in order to produce the coherence of the state" (Crawley, 2017, p. 7). For instance, care webs and mutual aid are survival strategies with deep roots in disabled queer and trans people of color communities that meet people's immediate needs even as they offer experiences of other ways we might organize social systems (Kaba, 2020; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018; Spade, 2020). While elsewhere can serve as an analytic to attend to space and place (Berry et al., 2009), I focus on elsewheres as expansive ways of being and organizing life that may be imagined, embodied, or enacted across space, place, and scale (Crawley, 2017; de Lauretis, 1991; Muñoz, 1999, 2009). As such, elsewheres and otherwises are infinite and simultaneous, occurring alongside and in the face of hegemonic domination.[6] People have always imagined and lived elsewheres, as among transnational migrants who mobilize multiple societal frames to imagine identities beyond nation-based classifications (Lam, personal communication; see Lam & Warriner, 2012). In this section, I will consider the politics of livability, the conditions that sustain life in the face of hegemonic negation, and the ways those conditions can also create elsewheres in the everyday with the potential for transformation across scales.

A politics of livability centers the ways in which marginalized communities survive interlocking forms of hegemony and cultivate conditions that sustain life in the face of domination (Butler, 2009; Gumbs, 2016; Nicolazzo, 2016, 2017; Simpson, 2017; Snorton, 2018). Structurally, a politics of livability is invested in the survival of communities most marginalized by structures of domination that inequitably distribute life chances (Butler, 2009; Spade, 2015). In everyday practice, these politics emerge in the ways marginalized communities strategically

[6] The concept of pluriversality (Escobar, 2020) in Global South epistemologies is also helpful to illustrate the simultaneity and multiplicity of elsewheres.

survive, and create life otherwise, amid hegemonic domination (Lugones, 1987; Muñoz, 1999; Sins Invalid, 2016). Nicolazzo's (2016, 2017) analysis of the daily strategies through which trans* college students survive and negotiate oppressive spaces exemplifies the politics of livability in everyday practice, which, following Spade (2015), she describes as resilience. In her conceptualization, resilience is a verb, a set of context-specific and deeply social practices such as forming trans kinship to "overcome the manifestations of the gender binary discourse" (Nicolazzo, 2016, p. 547). A focus on livability, then, is aligned with politics in Black and Indigenous studies that seek to sustain lifeways that are marginalized, but not destroyed, by interlocking forms of hegemony. In Black studies, the concept of *fugitivity* attends to radical Black life that emerges at the site of disengagement from, and refusal of, state governance (Bey, 2019; Gumbs, 2016). Indigenous politics of *survivance* and *resurgence* enact Indigenous lifeways in the present and toward the future through everyday practices, recognizing that Indigenous lifeways have persisted and continue to exist alongside coloniality (Simpson, 2017; Vizenor, 2008). These political traditions ultimately seek to transform hegemonic structures, yet they begin with a commitment to nurturing life and lifeways that hegemony seeks—and fails—to eradicate. In the turn to livability, other possibilities for organizing life emerge.

Livability informs my look beyond youth resistance, a paradigm that includes tactics that seek to dismantle structures of power and strategies that seek inclusion into these structures. As Tuck and Yang (2014) write, "resistance is happening all the time, and anyone can be called to resistance at any time" (p. 4). And yet, resistance can take many forms and emerge from different sets of politics. Under a politic of inclusion, resistance takes recognition by, and representation within, institutions and systems of power as the goal of social activism (Coulthard, 2014; Snorton, 2018; Tourmaline et al., 2017). Arising from anti-normative and anti-

assimilationist politics, resistance to disrupt power seeks to destroy institutions and systems of power and redistribute power more equitably (Ahmed, 2010; Cohen, 1991; Halberstam, 2005, 2011). Though these forms of resistance take different approaches toward different ends, they both begin with structures of power. To begin with domination is also to begin with negation—to begin with social erasure, structural dispossession, and ontological denial. In this way, resistance may cede ground to the world as it is, potentially diminishing the capacity to imagine the world otherwise (Vossoughi, personal communication). In contrast, a politics of livability begins with life, and life otherwise, as it unfolds in the everyday. While I juxtapose resistance and livability for conceptual clarity, I consider these to be complementary and interrelated practices needed in a toolkit for liberation. Resistance can spark imagining anew as people identify and challenge relations of power (Lam, personal communication). Elsewheres can form a necessary base for resistance (hooks, 1991). Given the adaptive nature of hegemonic domination, young people need both resistance to power and practices to create life otherwise. Yet, for marginalized young people who persistently encounter injustice, beginning with livability may offer an important path to engage in struggles for liberation—a path that offers ease, joy, and hope.

Queer and trans studies scholarship that inform my focus on livability has turned away from a politics of inclusion, though it continues to animate some LGBTQ+ activism. Inclusion-based politics that focus on recognition, representation, and visibility inform many forms of social action and civic participation made available to young people, such as activism for school-, local-, and state-based rights and representation. While valuable for securing basic needs like all-gender bathrooms, these forms of advocacy have limited purchase for queer and trans survival and liberation. For trans communities specifically, visibility has co-occurred with, and may fuel, heightened anti-trans violence and attacks on trans civil rights (Fischer, 2019;

Nicolazzo, 2019; Tourmaline et al., 2017). Queer and trans studies scholars have turned away from projects of inclusion for two reasons that I take as salient. One, projects of inclusion are attached to inclusion into, and representation within, hegemonic structures, often leaving the structures intact rather than transformed (Ahmed, 2010, 2012; Duggan, 2002). For instance, Duggan (2002) has theorized *homonormativity* as a politics of assimilation where LGBTQ+ people seek inclusion into, and sustain, heteronormative ideologies, norms, and institutions. Recently, Tourmaline and colleagues (2017) theorized trans visibility as a trap in that it offers trans representation in dominant culture so long as it aligns with dominant norms. Two, for trans and queer youth, particularly BIPOC LGBTQ+ youth, these can be projects of "murderous inclusion" as youth seek to find a place in entrenched structures that create harm (Snorton, 2017, p. 7). Snorton, a Black trans studies scholar, outlines the stakes of "murderous inclusion" by honoring the story of Blake Brockington, a Black trans boy who was the first openly trans high school homecoming king in North Carolina in 2014 and activist for Black Lives Matter and trans rights. Blake died by suicide at the age of 18.

In turning away from "murderous inclusion," a politics of livability begins with strategies to live otherwise, a departure from anti-normative and anti-assimilationist traditions, as well. Many queer and trans studies scholars seek to dwell with the grief of death-dealing social disavowal through a call to refuse and resist structures of power rather than seek happiness within them, "to turn grief into grievance—to address the larger social structure, the regimes of domination, that are the root of such pain" (Love, 2007, p. 151). Anti-normative traditions in queer and trans studies conceptualize queerness itself as counter-hegemonic, oppositional, or resistant through its transgressive qualities and marginality (Ahmed, 2010; Cohen, 1991; Halberstam, 2005, 2011). Some theorists go so far as to figure queerness as anti-social—a form

of resistance to dominant social life and legibility altogether (Bersani, 1987; Edelman, 2004; Halberstam, 2008; Solanas, 1968). These scholars privilege forms of resistance to power, even as these forms may be made legible or illegible as social action through hegemonic ideologies and norms. Snorton (2017) offers another path forward, dwelling with the possibilities of "reviving and inventing strategies for inhabiting unlivable worlds" (Snorton, 2017, p. 7). In *Black on Both Sides,* Snorton traces historical Black trans life amid interlocking structures of power, a process fraught by the violence and erasures of the archive. In a similar historical meditation on Black life, Black literary scholar Saidiya Hartman (2019) uplifts the insurgent life of young Black women and Black queer women in the early twentieth century, using the creative technique of critical fabulation to imagine life otherwise beyond the limits of the archive. Dwelling with grief and dwelling with life share a politics of refusal—refusal of the institutions, systems, and structures that manifest and reproduce relations of power, inequitably distributing life chances (Simpson, 2014; Love, 2007; Spade, 2015). Yet, by dwelling with life, a politics of livability arises from the need to nurture life and lifeways in the face of entrenched structures of power.

Livability, then, is also in relationship with queer and trans scholarship on ordinariness that complicates anti-normative politics and privilege the spaces of everyday life (Cavalcante, 2018; Chu & Drager, 2019; Griffin, 2017; Namaste, 2000). As the tradition of queer theory emerged, Biddy Martin (1996) lambasted the field's "fear of ordinariness," arguing that it "results in superficial accounts of the complex imbrication of sexuality with other aspects of social and psychic life, and in far too little attention to the dilemmas of the average people that we also are" (p. 70). Trans studies scholar Viviane Namaste (2000, 2009) has critiqued the ways in which feminist and queer theorists have constructed post-structural theories of gender through analysis of trans bodies, arguing that scholarship should instead center and serve the everyday

lives of trans people, lives "constituted in the mundane and the uneventful" (pg. 1). Recently, Andrea Long Chu and Emmett Harsin Drager (2019) have called for trans studies to forgo the anti-normative and post-structural impulses of queer studies, arguing for "something slower, smaller, more tuned to the ways in which ordinary life fails to measure up to the political analyses we thrust upon it" (p. 113). The shift from overly determined "political analyses" to the mundane surprises of ordinary life might be especially important in attending to the lives of trans and queer young people, who negotiate persistent encounters with injustice in myriad ways.

In trans and queer media studies, Cavalcante (2018) and Griffin (2017) have similarly considered everyday media practices oriented toward feeling normal, arguing for attention to ordinariness in everyday life. Cavalcante (2018) argues poignantly, "Critical, cultural scholarship has yet to come to terms—in any serious or sustained way—with why so many queer and transgender identifying people desire aspects of ordinary, orderly life" (p. 20). Cavalcante (2018) considers why trans viewers seek ordinariness through practices of media consumption, theorizing resilient reception through which trans viewers "rebound and rebuild their sense of self that popular discourses threaten to erode" (p. 128). Writing more squarely within queer media studies, Hollis Griffin (2017) makes a related point, namely that gay and lesbian viewers value media for how it allows them to "'feel normal,' in ways that are often simultaneously emancipatory and repressive" (p. 13). Cavalcante (2018) and Griffin (2017) contend with the ways ordinariness and normalcy can serve projects of inclusion, yet they also trace how these practices can inspire new forms of queer and trans life.

I employ the language of *livability* rather than ordinariness to honor that young people learn and enact practices to not only survive interlocking oppressions but also to create ways of life that may lay the foundation for liberatory social and political formations. Cavalcante (2018)

and Griffin (2017) have shown how ordinariness and normalcy can create conditions that sustain life by mitigating perceptions of deviance, situating queerness and transness within dominant regimes of meaning, and creating felt belonging in dominant culture. I, too, complicate anti-normative impulses that frame resistance as the paradigmatic expression of agency. Yet, I seek to understand everyday practices through which trans and queer youth not only create life but also create life otherwise. With Lugones (2010) and Collins (1997), I turn to the activities developed within marginalized communities that contend with hegemonic violence and erasure, activities that can create the "peopled ground" for larger social transformation. Though the practices of livability I trace often involve viewing or lurking, sometimes keen maneuvers around digital surveillance, they are deeply social and relational. Within the context of my study, I am particularly interested in strategies of humor, radical joy, and hope in nurturing conditions that sustain life and may gesture toward elsewheres. As queer of color theorist José Esteban Muñoz (1999) has argued, these strategies of survival are "not figured out alone" but rather are "informed by the example of others" and "forged by the pressures of everyday life, forces that shape a subject and call for different tactical responses" (p. 38). I follow the process of learning to imagine and practice elsewheres in everyday life, considering how enactments at the micropolitical scale might gesture toward possibilities for life otherwise.

The everyday, both mundane and subversive, is first and foremost a site of routine practices and repetition through which we "become who we are" and organize social worlds (Felski, 2000, p. 84). The everyday is a site of potential, a "bloom space," that may give rise to myriad forms of social and political reproduction and change across scales (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 9). Many of the everyday digital activities I consider create ease and connection, offering a kind of virtual home or refuge. Historically, white male theorists of everyday life such

as Fiske (1992), Lefebvre (1984), and de Certeau (1984) have diminished the home as unchanging—a site of social reproduction, not change (Felski, 2000; hooks, 1990). The home is the space of familiarity, even as it provides a space for reflection, and these theorists argue change requires defamiliarization, figured as the *flâneur* or city walker (Felski, 2000). However, scholars have also argued that everyday comfort, often centered in the home, is not in opposition to transformation but rather may create the necessary conditions for change (Cavalcante, 2018; Felski, 2000). Indeed, feminist approaches to the study of everyday life reclaim the revolutionary capacity of the home. As Felski writes, "Like everyday life itself, home constitutes a base, a taken-for-granted grounding, which allows us to make forays into other worlds" (p. 85). Black feminist scholars have theorized the home as a site of care, social connection, strength, and potential transformation (hooks, 1990; Lorde, 1984; Smith, 1983). hooks (1990) conceptualizes *homeplace* as an elsewhere in the everyday fostered by Black women, a site of renewal, wholeness, and resistance where "black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination" (p. 384). Through these lenses, more expansive and just ways of organizing social and political life are already here, seeded in the rich grounds of everyday life. Life otherwise enacts or prefigures the future in the present (Yates, 2014); it manifests the ends of political struggle in the means (Combahee River Collective, 1974). Routine practices of livability toward elsewhere, then, create the conditions for life amid interlocking structures of power and, in so doing, organize life otherwise. Through repetition, these everyday practices may bloom into social transformation.

Literature Review: Critical, Digital, & Queer Literacies

Through attending to practices of livability that gesture toward elsewheres in trans and queer digital life, I draw on and contribute to studies of literacy learning in three primary areas:

Critical literacies, digital literacies, and queer literacies. In this section, I offer an intellectual genealogy and thematic review of these three bodies of literature that draws out connections among the scholarship. In many ways, all of the scholarship I review could be construed as critical. As Lynn Mario Menezes de Souza (2007) argues, if we conceptualize literacy as "a socio-culturally situated practice involving the ongoing negotiation of meaning in continuously contested sites of meaning construction, then all literacy in a certain sense ought to be 'critical'" (p. 4). I first review critical literacies, a body of scholarship that primarily emerges through critical pedagogy traditions (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Giroux et al., 1996) and has increasingly turned to liberatory traditions of thought and everyday practices that break open the genealogies and literacies under the 'critical' umbrella (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016; Thomas et al., 2020; Yoon, 2021). I then review scholarship on digital literacies with emphasis on the relationship between everyday digital literacies and English language arts (Alvermann et al., 2018; Hull & Schultz, 2001), as well as the emerging fields of critical media, data, and digital literacies (Ávila & Pandya, 2013; Garcia, 2017; Kelly, 2018; Pandya & Golden, 2017). Finally, I review scholarship on queer and trans literacies across digital and physical, formal and informal contexts with a focus on how scholars have conceptualized the literacies LGBTQ+ youth develop to position identity (Blackburn, 2002; Wargo, 2015a) communicate and interpret gender and sexuality (van Leent & Mills, 2018), resist interlocking normativities (Blackburn, 2002; Cruz, 2013), and create livable queer and trans social worlds (Nicolazzo et al., 2022; Pritchard, 2017). Though I weave my departures and contributions through the review, I conclude with a reflection on how I extend the scholarship by forwarding livability toward elsewheres in critical digital literacies of trans and queer youth.

(New) Critical Literacies

Critical literacy scholarship and practice primarily emerged from critical pedagogy traditions that view literacy as fundamentally linked to questions of social reproduction or transformation (Freire, 1972; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; Luke, 2012; McLaren, 2000). Critical pedagogy introduces the guiding premise that literacy is a key site of political and ethical struggle, commonly marked by the divide between traditional and critical notions of literacy (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Traditional notions of literacy focus on rote skills for reading and writing, often reifying deficit and cultural deprivation ideologies that frame marginalized communities as illiterate. In this deficitizing approach, illiteracy is an ideological tool to mark difference from hegemonic beliefs and norms (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 4). In contrast, critical or radical notions of literacy rooted in critical pedagogy advance practices to analyze historically situated relations of power and begin to see oneself as a subject of history and an agent of historical change (Kincheloe, 2008; Giroux, 2020). Through developing critical literacy, people begin to understand the relationship between everyday life and their social, cultural, historical, and political context. In this way, critical literacy requires critical consciousness, or c*onscientização* in Portuguese, the ability to see, understand, and act against systems of oppression (Freire, 1972). For these critical pedagogues, language remains at the heart of critical literacy practices. Because language reflects and shapes the social world, it "constitutes both a terrain of domination and field of possibility" (Freire & Macedo, p. 8). Through reading the 'word and the world,' people can perceive, interpret, and *rewrite* the world (Freire & Macedo, p. 36). The process of rewriting the world is an ongoing practice rooted in social critique and imagination. Though interested in both critique and imagination, critical pedagogy primarily hinges on a Marxist or dialectical theory of change in which marginalized communities must

dismantle relations of power in order to imagine the new world to come. To be critically literate "is *not* to be free; it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history, and future" (Freire & Macedo, p. 11). In critical pedagogy, more just formations of social and political life follow revolutionary action. In attending to practices of livability, I am interested instead in the space between everyday life and revolution.

With influence from situated approaches of New Literacy Studies (NLS) and multiliteracies, critical literacy has increasingly oriented toward ways of myriad "being and doing" that examine relations of power toward transformation of specific social, political, and ideological contexts (Comber & Simpson, 2001; Luke, 2012; New London Group 1996; Street, 1998). If critical pedagogy arises from a dialectical theory of change that seeks societal revolution, NLS and multiliteracies seek context-specific forms of transformation. NLS conceptualizes literacy as communicative and discursive practices that make meaning with a range of semiotic modes (e.g., visual, textual, aural) (Street, 1998; Gee, 2015, 2005). The related area of multiliteracies foregrounds the role of cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as digital technologies, in literate practices (New London Group, 1996). NLS and multiliteracies situate literacies in sociocultural contexts, moreover focusing on the political and ideological nature of contexts and possibilities for social transformation. The New London Group (1996) forwarded the core assumption that learners are "designers of meaning" and thereby "designers of social futures" (p. 5). Through these lenses, a growing area of literacy scholarship frames critical literacy as ways of "being and doing" that interrogate structures of power toward context-dependent visions of justice (Vasquez et al., 2019, p. 300). Critical ways of being and doing will look different in each context but retain an overall interest in critical analysis and redesign of the social world with a focus on language and semiotic resources. As Luke (2012) writes, "Critical

literacy approaches view language, texts, and their discourse structures as principal means for representing and reshaping possible worlds" (p. 7-8). That is, critical practices analyze the ways in which relations of power undergird language and texts as they work to rewrite and reshape the relationship between language and power. Critical literacy, then, is not a subject area or set of analytical skills to be covered in curricula. Critical literacies, plural, are embedded in and move across all areas of learning and everyday life (Pandya & Ávila, 2013; Vasquez et al., 2019).

Though critical pedagogies, NLS, and multiliteracies orient toward possible futures (McLaren, 1991; New London Group, 1996; Vossoughi & Gutiérrez, 2016), research and teaching in English language arts tend to think about critical literacies as resistant. Here, resistance often involves practices to analyze, critique, counternarrate, and act against relations of power in specific sets of texts and contexts (Comber & Simpson, 2001; Janks, 2010; Luke & Woods, 2009). Given the focus on ELA settings, scholarly interest often remains on textual or multimodal media analysis and production (Ávila & Pandya, 2013; Luke & Woods, 2009; Morgan, 1997). As Ávila and Pandya (2013) have described, critical literacies support students to "investigate manifestations of power relations in texts, and to design, and in some cases redesign, text in ways that serve other, less powerful interests" (p. 2). Literacy scholars also attend to links between analysis and production of texts and other forms of transformative social action (Campano et al., 2013; Morrell, 2008; Rosario-Ramos & Johnson, 2013). This scholarship importantly follows a model of resistance grounded in anti-assimilationist and anti-normative politics that aim to identify and refuse dehumanization and dismantle systems of power (Giroux et al., 1996; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). While these practices are necessary to negotiate and dismantle relations of power, they may have limited purchase to imagine and create liberatory social and political formations. Resistance foregrounds social critique, or critical analysis of texts

and the social world. Critical literacies need complementary attention to social and cultural practices that create life amid domination.

Recently, literacy scholars have begun to expand the critical literacies conversation with attention to marginalized and global traditions of thought and activism that foreground the need to create life alongside and imagine beyond structures of power (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016; Gutiérrez et al., 2017; Pandya et al., 2021; Reese, 2018; Thomas et al., 2020; Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016; Zavala & Golden, 2016). Critical literacies are a capacious set of literate practices that are not only critical *of* relations of power but are also critical *to* creating life otherwise. In this way, this line of inquiry extends traditions of multiliteracies and counternarrative that seek to critically analyze and redesign the social world (e.g., New London Group, 1996; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Recent scholarship seeks to reinvigorate the field of critical literacies by looking beyond the canonical works in critical pedagogy and critical literacies, which tend to be Eurocentric and written by white men (Pandya et al., 2021). Indeed, critical pedagogy has long been critiqued for its white, masculine, able-bodied politics and focus on class oppression above race, gender, or dis/ability (Ellsworth, 1989; Gabel, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1997). Taking a more expansive approach to critical literacies informed by a turn toward a heterogeneity of sociopolitical contexts and traditions, Pandya, Mora, Alford, Golden, and Santiago de Roock (2021) define critical literacies as "literate practices individuals need in order to survive and thrive in the world" with an orientation to the political, powered nature of texts and the social world (p. 3). Many of the contexts and traditions in which these "new" critical literacies emerge, such as Black community education models, precede and grew alongside Freirean critical pedagogy approaches (Luke, 2012; Luke & Woods, 2009). Thomas, Beans-Folkes, and Coleman (2020) restory critical literacies to place Black and Indigenous

traditions of thought and activism in a genealogy of critical literacy that pre-dates Freirean critical pedagogy approaches. In contrast to the focus on social critique in critical literacies research and practice in ELA settings, they foreground the emancipatory potential of practices, often now enacted in digital cultures, that create new stories and imagine the world anew (Thomas et al., 2020).

By rethinking and expanding beyond critical pedagogy traditions, a small but growing number of scholars spark directions for critical literacies that balance social critique with practices of freedom, community, and imagination (Muhammad, 2012; Toliver, 2020; Griffin & Turner, 2021; Pritchard, 2017). Similar to Thomas and colleagues' (2020) turn to Black and Indigenous traditions of thought to restory the critical literacy genealogy, a number of scholars consider historical models to explicate practices of freedom (Muhammad, 2012; Pritchard, 2017). In the design of a writing institute for Black adolescent girls, Muhammad (2012) drew on the ways of being and doing in historic Black women's literary societies to foreground expression, reflection, and liberation of self and community. Pritchard (2017), then, analyzes life stories of 60 Black LGBTQ+ people alongside historical documents to theorize *restorative literacies*, literate practices of "self-definition, self-care, and self-determination" through which Black queer and trans communities survive interlocking oppressions (p. 24). Other scholars rethink critical literacy through a turn to speculative futures (Coleman, 2021; Mirra & Garcia, 2020; Toliver, 2020, 2021; Thomas, 2019). For example, Toliver (2020) underlines the need for Black girls to envision other possible worlds against a world that is "bent on the castigation and obliteration of Black girls' pasts, presents, and futures" (p. 2). Speculation disrupts relations of power and insistently imagines beyond the enclosures of the present. In a deeply intertwined move, scholars interested in identity and power in critical literacies are also turning to literacies

of love as a form of resistance to power (Pritchard, 2017; Griffin & Turner, 2021). Griffin and Turner (2021) theorize a *Black livingness pedagogy* that centers the ways Black students envision joyful futures grounded in Black life and love. Through turning to practices of livability that gesture toward elsewheres, I build with this growing body of scholarship attuned to practices through which marginalized youth create life and imagine futures in the face of domination.

(Critical) Digital Literacies

Within literacy studies and English Language Arts, the study of digital literacies explicates diverse forms of situated social practice mediated by digital technologies and cultures (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011, 2019; Mills, 2010). Following the sociocultural turn in literacy studies (Gee, 2015; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Street, 1995), scholars moved away from digital literacy, a singular label variously used to standardize specific skills and tasks required to be digitally literate (Gilster, 1997), and towards digital litera*cies*, plural (Hull, 2004; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Nichols & Stornaiuolo 2019). Digital literacies are social practices to communicate to, participate in, and transform wide-ranging digitally mediated contexts (Lankshear, 1987; Street, 1998; Gee, 2010). While this body of work also engages scholarship on digital and new media literacies that attend to core competencies with technologies (Jenkins, 2006), it ultimately seeks to situate practices in sociocultural and political contexts with the recognition that practices, activities, and contexts are undergoing continual change (Kim, 2016; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Nichols & Stornaiuolo 2019). The shift from digital literacy to digital literacies radically expands how scholars and educators might understand and mobilize practices with digital media and technologies. As Lankshear & Knobel (2008) argue, "Approaching digital literacy from the standpoint of digital literacies can open us up to making potentially illuminating connections between literacy, learning, meaning (semantic as well as

existential), and experiences of agency, efficacy, and pleasure that we might not otherwise make" (p. 9). That is, digital literacies include not only practices through which youth communicate with or analyze digital media and technologies, but also practices to use digital tools toward expansive ends—ends salient to my dissertation study, such as creating felt relations in digital communities or curating digital artifacts for moments of laughter.

Since this turn toward multiplicity of practices with technologies, scholarship on digital literacies has become central to literacy studies, often tracing informal digital activities in everyday life (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; Mills, 2010; Mills & Unsworth, 2017). The growth of participatory cultures in which youth are active participants and producers of media rather than passive consumers of media content has shaped a focus on everyday digital activities in the field (Jenkins, 2009; Jenkins et al., 2017). In a review of 90 articles that reflect the 'digital turn' in NLS, Mills (2010) finds that much of the literature examines youth digital media production and composition to conduct "detailed accounts of digital practices using the encoded word in culturally specific locales" (p. 248). Mills argues that the study of everyday literacy practices such as collaborative digital compositions and multilingual text design remain important precisely because school-based measures obscure these rich practices in participatory cultures (p. 262). Scholars examine these everyday literate practices with digital media and technologies in far-reaching informal contexts of learning, from video gaming (Gee, 2012; Steinkuehler, 2010) to fanfiction websites (Black, 2008; Curwood, 2013; Lammers, 2013; Magnifico, 2012; Matthews, 2018) to transnational digital communities (Christiansen & Lam, forthcoming; Kim, 2016; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009). Many scholars in this area study participatory cultures as both culture and cultural artifact with a focus on literate activities that respond to cultural products in online fan communities (Lammers, 2013; Black, 2009; Kim, 2016; Matthews, 2016).

For instance, Kim (2016) theorizes “transcultural digital literacies” enacted and multicultural identities fashioned in an online forum devoted to Korean dramas. I build on the study of everyday digital activities in seeking to understand the dynamic literate activities in trans and queer digital life, which often arise and unfold in LGBTQ+ digital cultures and as youth respond to cultural artifacts such as memes and videos.

In tracing situated digital literacies, many scholars specifically seek to understand multimodality, or meaning making with multiple semiotic modes afforded by digital technologies and cultures (Hull & Nelson, 2005; Mills & Unsworth, 2017; Turner, 2011; Vasudevan et al., 2010). Building on multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) and social semiotics (Kress, 2010) frameworks, some scholars analyze youth-produced artifacts to trace how youth employ a range of semiotic modes to design meaning and social futures in response to ideologies of power (Domingo 2011; Halverson, 2010; Lam et al., 2021; Shrodes, 2021; Smirnov & Lam, 2019). For instance, Domingo (2011) analyzed digital, multimodal artifacts from a three-year connective ethnography of six Filipino British urban youth, exploring how they draw on a wide range of linguistic and cultural repertoires of practices and semiotic resources in the artifacts to “navigate their social worlds” (2012, p. 6). Through a virtual ethnography of LGBTQ+ YouTube (Shrodes, 2021), I followed a similar approach, conducting a multimodal discourse analysis of three LGBTQ+ reaction videos to explicate how reaction video makers draw on multiple modes to construct slips of humor, compose multimodal parodies, and create satires that critique dominant ideologies and imagine new ways of being in the world. Literacy scholars who draw on connective ethnography (Lam, 2009, 2014; Wargo, 2017b, 2018) typically pair analysis of digital compositions with observational and interview data. For instance, Lam (2009) examines instant messaging compositions, observations, and interviews from one migrant

youth of Chinese descent with a focus on how the youth's messages arose through dialogue with her instant messaging partners and with influence from transnational contexts. In the dissertation study, I build on a connective line of inquiry in multimodal digital literacies, tracing multimodal choreographies of response to LGBTQ+ reaction videos in Chapter 5.

While digital literacies scholarship tends to observe either classrooms *or* everyday digital activities, scholars have increasingly argued for connections between, rather than binaries of, in-school and out-of-school learning environments (Alvermann, 2008; Morrell, 2004; Philip & Garcia, 2013; Vossoughi & Gutiérrez, 2014). Many scholars have lauded the promise of participatory cultures as democratizing tools to promote digital literacies in school and have often sought to bridge everyday digital activities to classroom pedagogies, curriculum, and technologies (Alvermann et al., 2018; Jocson, 2018; Hull & Schultz, 2001; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008). These scholars build on scholarship in funds of knowledge and cultural modeling that bridge everyday and disciplinary knowledges and practices (Moll et al., 1992; Gonzalez, 2005; Lee, 2001; 2007; Rosebery et al., 2010), underscoring the potential of media-rich learning to promote equitable education (Morrell et al., 2013; Mills & Stornaiuolo, 2018; Mirra et al., 2018). Jocson, Rosa, and Curwood (2015) argue for the need to observe how nondominant youth draw on a range of languages and repertoires of communicative practice "across physical and virtual borders," and to observe the implications of these everyday repertoires to "reinforce and challenge hegemonic school norms" (p. 374, 373). Similarly, Garcia and Morrell (2013) take up the promise of equity in participatory media, articulating the need to develop school-based pedagogies that draw on understandings of youth participatory cultures: "As we better understand how culture happens among young people, an understanding of how to develop new technologies emerges" (p. 126). By eschewing the in-school/out-of-school binary and seeking

connections among contexts, research on literate activities in youth digital cultures can inform design for teaching and learning with digital media and technologies across settings. I follow scholars who approach everyday digital activities as meaningful contexts for literacy learning that can inform design for more equitable education with digital media, particularly in English language arts (Alvermann, 2008; Garcia & Morrell, 2013; Morrell, 2004; Hull & Schultz, 2001). In particular, I seek to expand how educators see, support, and design for practices of *critical* digital literacies through which marginalized young people subvert hegemony and create more expansive forms of life.

Critical digital literacies is a growing area of study that examines practices that employ digital technologies to engage in social critique and imagination, as well as practices that critically analyze media and technologies as sites of interlocking structures of power (Ávila & Pandya 2013; Bacalja et al., 2021; see also Shrodes, Forthcoming). Critical digital literacies can be distinguished from digital literacies, more broadly, through their explicit attention to relations of power and possibilities for transformation with digital activities and tools (Jocson, 2018; McArthur, 2016; Price-Dennis & Carrion, 2017). One line of inquiry in critical digital literacies explicates how youth engage in critical analysis and production of digital media and technologies within formal and informal learning environments (Cruz, 2013; Jocson, 2018). Another area explicates how youth learn to identify, disrupt, and transform the hegemonic ideologies such as white supremacy and heteronormativity that undergird digital media and technologies (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Kellner & Share, 2005; Golden, 2017; Shrodes, 2021). Finally, a growing number of scholars analyze how young people use digital tools to resist injustice and participate in struggles for liberation (de los Ríos 2018; Kelly 2018; Kwon & de los Ríos, 2019; Lam et al., 2021; McArthur 2016; Smirnov & Lam, 2019; Wargo 2017). Across these

intertwined areas of study, a number of specific critical digital literacies have been named (e.g., critical media literacy, critical data literacy, critical computational literacy, etc.). For instance, scholarship in critical computational and data literacies considers how young people analyze, design, and code computational and data-based projects that intervene in social injustice (Lee & Soep, 2016; Nichols et al., 2021; Stornaiuolo, 2020).

Building with these areas of study, I seek to expand the forms of critical digital literacies scholars and educators notice and construe as valuable with a particular focus on the meanings of viewership and critical practices through which youth achieve invisibility online. Though an expansive approach to digital literacies opens up a focus on social practices with digital technologies, much of the literature focuses on media analysis and production (Ávila & Pandya, 2013; Stornaiuolo, 2020). Many of the scholars of everyday critical digital literacies with social media upon whom I build focus on resistant digital activities rendered visible on digital platforms, such as forms of making and posting digital content that challenges oppression (de los Ríos 2018; Jocson 2018; Kelly 2018; Wargo, 2018). For instance, Lauren Leigh Kelly (2018) examined how seven Black girl high school students used Snapchat to engage in everyday activism that documented and disrupted intersecting racial and gendered oppressions in a predominately white high school. These studies powerfully demonstrate that practices of critical digital literacies analyze and mobilize multiple modalities embedded in new media, including image and sound, in the process of "naming and renaming the world" (Luke, 2012, p. 9). Yet less is known about the meanings of viewership, scrolling, or digital lurking, which may account for the majority of youth activity on social media (Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit). Moreover, visibility can introduce forms of precarity for LGBTQ+ users, particularly youth of color and trans youth, who develop keen awareness of, and practices to elude, digital surveillance (Cho,

2018; Nicolazzo, 2020; Nicolazzo et al., 2022). As Christina Cedillo (2020) has argued with attention to disability and undocumented status, invisibility is a complicated, and often compelled, rhetorical strategy to negotiate and challenge powered conditions of disbelonging. In addition to forwarding practices of livability toward elsewhere that complement a focus on resistance to power, my dissertation is particularly attentive to the role of lurking, viewing, and invisibility in creating conditions that sustain life otherwise. Playing with Scott's (1990) interest in off-stage practices or the hidden transcripts of resistance, I consider how these incognito off-stage practices—practices to lurk and elude digital surveillance in constructing life otherwise—extend knowledge of critical digital literacies.

Queer Literacies

Emerging under the sociocultural study of literacies and queer studies in education, queer literacies attend to situated practices of meaning making that foreground issues of power, identity, and representation at the intersection of gender and sexuality. As an expansive repertoire of social practices, queer literacies uplifts ways through which LGBTQ+ youth and communities interpret, negotiate, change, and create the social world. As a body of scholarship, queer literacies seeks to understand these dynamic practices in order to inform design of social justice-centered education and affirm LGBTQ+ youth in educational settings, including schools, after-school programs, and community-based programs. Here, I locate the scholarly field of queer literacies and review queer literacies as social practices to analyze hegemonic norms, resist interlocking normativities, and create more just worlds. These three approaches to queer literacies are deeply imbricated, with an overarching interest in how queer and trans ways of knowing, being, and doing, constructed in response to hegemonic domination, may lead to more just worlds.

Queer literacies emerged as an area of scholarship in the 1990s at the nexus of the sociocultural study of literacies and queer studies in education. The sociocultural turn in literacy studies launched an interest in literacies as complex social practices dynamically situated in sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts (Gee, 2015; Street, 1995). Through literate practices, people make meaning of, contest, and transform their social worlds. Beginning in the 1990s, queer studies in education sought to represent LGBTQ+ identities and histories in curricula, as well as transform educational structures, pedagogies, and practices to be queer and LGBTQ+-inclusive (Britzman, 1995; Bryson & De Castell, 1993; Kumashiro, 1999, 2000; Luhmann, 1998; Pinar, 1998; Rodriguez, 1998; see also Mayo, 2007 and Ingrey, 2018). Drawing sociocultural literacy studies and queer studies in education together, scholars established an early focus on social practices through which LGBTQ+ youth construct identities, perform selves, and negotiate interlocking dominant discourses (Alexander, 2002, 2008; Blackburn, 2003, 2005). As queer literacies developed, scholars have often explicated how practices to understand, represent, and analyze gender, sexuality, and LGBTQ+ identities and histories can shape formal and informal curriculum and pedagogies (Blackburn & McCready, 2009; Meyer, 2010; Pennell, 2013; Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018; Suárez et al., 2019). I follow these scholars in seeking to understand how everyday practices through which trans and queer youth negotiate hegemonic domination and create life otherwise can inform equitable education.

In contributing to queer literacies, I build with scholars who take an intersectional approach to power, identity, and social justice. Queer studies in education broadly has tended to focus on gender and sexuality above or in exclusion to other axes of power, particularly race and coloniality. The field therefore contends with what is often described as the ‘whiteness of queerness’ (Dhairyam, 1994), or the color-evasive ways queer research and theory neglects to

analyze race or racism while privileging white LGBTQ+ identities, labels, and histories (see Annamma et al., 2015 for more on the term color-evasive). Yet, queer literacies has a genealogy of scholarship that explicates intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality, often through lenses of women of color feminism and queer of color critique (Blackburn, 2003, 2005; Rodriguez, 1998; Cruz, 2001; Kumashiro, 1999, 2000). Within queer studies in education, scholars including Ed Brockenbrough and Lance McCready have advanced the study of BIPOC queer and trans experiences, foregrounding analytical frames in queer of color critique and queer of color analysis to center queer and trans of color ways of being, knowing, and doing in knowledge production (Brockenbrough, 2013, 2015; McCready, 2019).[7] In my dissertation, I seek to build with scholarship that attends to intersections of identity and power as it explicates practices to position identities, 'read' dominant norms, resist interlocking normativities, and build more just formations of social and political life (Blackburn, 2003; Cruz, 2011; Wargo, 2017a, 2017b). Queer literacies has, can, and must explicate practices through which youth perform multiple social identities, disrupt interlocking axes of power, and create more just worlds.

For many scholars, queer literacies involve practices to understand and analyze social constructions of dominant norms and difference (Govender, 2018; Miller, 2015; van Leent &

[7] As an interdisciplinary tradition of thought, queer of color (QOC) critique explicates the social and historical construction of domination that subordinates queer people of color, uplifting strategies of resistance in communities marginalized by race, class, gender, and sexuality (Cohen, 1997; Ferguson, 2004; Johnson, 2001; see also Brockenbrough, 2015). In building theories that account for queer of color subjectivity, QOC critique draws on and critiques other fields of thought, including queer theory, women of color feminism, and historical materialism (Cohen, 1997; Ferguson, 2004; Muñoz 1999). Recently, educational scholars have used the term "queer of color analysis" to center queer of color epistemologies or ways of knowing in knowledge production (McCready, 2019).

Mills, 2018). Often named as a form of critical literacy, this approach foregrounds critical analysis of dominant gender and sexual norms such as the hierarchical gender binary of man/woman that are circulated, reproduced, or challenged in cultural representations and everyday interactions (Ashcraft, 2012; Govender, 2018, 2019; Miller, 2015; Paré, 2021; Sandretto, 2018; van Leent & Mills, 2018). Understanding dominant norms can also lead to critical self-reflection and identity work, as students begin to understand themselves in relation to hegemonic normativities (Govender & Andrews, 2021; Miller, 2015; van Leent & Mills, 2018). sj Miller (2015) argues that one of the goals of queer literacy is gender and sexual self-determination toward justice, or the ability for students to determine and express their gender and sexual identities "without redress of social, institutional, or political violence" (p. 38).

Within English language arts and English education, queer literacies often focuses on discussion and critical analysis of textual and media representations (Blackburn & Clark, 2011; Govender & Andrews, 2021; van Leent & Mills, 2017). Most scholars foreground critique of gender and sexual norms reproduced in children's and young adult literature (Hartman, 2018; Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2016; Sandretto, 2018). For instance, children's literature tends to reproduce heteronormativity and cisnormativity by predominantly featuring heteronormative families and children who align with feminine and masculine gender norms. Some scholarship and practice have also disrupted racism and transphobia within LGBTQ+ literacy spaces and book discussions (Blackburn, 2003; Clark & Blackburn, 2003; Hermann-Wilmarth, 2020; Jiménez, 2017; Schey, 2020). Blackburn and colleagues have explicitly focused on reading and analysis of LGBTQ+ young adult literature, examining how book discussions can participate in a complex set of discourses that have potential for liberatory or oppressive ends (Blackburn & Buckley, 2005; Blackburn & Clark, 2011; Blackburn & Smith, 2011). This line of inquiry and

practice delineates how forms of LGBTQ+ representation, and discussion of these texts, reproduce or challenge dominant norms of race, gender, and sexuality.

Despite attention to intersections of race, gender, and sexuality in some scholarship, queer literacies as analyzing norms tends to focus on heteronormativity, or the construction and regulation of heterosexuality as a social norm, occluding attention to interlocking norms. Few scholars in literacy studies have focused on trans literacies or the experiences of trans students specifically, with the exception of scholarship from Jacob McWilliams (2015) and sj Miller (2015, 2016, 2020) that challenges the gender binary toward gender diversity and self-determination. Moreover, few scholars have sought to analyze how gender and sexuality are constructed in relation to structures of race, class, coloniality, and dis/ability (Govender & Andrews, 2021). Govender and Andrews (2021) emphasize that norms of gender and sexuality must be examined with other norms: "What it means to be regulated by gender and sexuality norms is therefore also deeply connected to the norms that regulate race, ethnicity, nationality or citizenship, (de)coloniality, the environment, [I]ndigeneity, and more" (p. 83). Broadly, too few studies in queer literacies, conceived as critical analysis of normativity, extensively engage with race, coloniality, or Indigeneity in tracing how youth come to question social norms. Even fewer focus specifically on how BIPOC trans youth negotiate norms, though trans studies in education outside of literacy studies offer paths forward (Suárez, 2019; Nicolazzo, 2017; Jones, 2020).[8] In Chapter 5, I build on this area of work by demonstrating how trans and queer youth of color perform multimodal critiques of interlocking social norms of cisnormativity, heteronormativity, white normativity, and anti-Blackness, as mediated by anti-hate LGBTQ+ reaction videos.

[8] Trans studies in education is a small but growing field with interests in curriculum, pedagogy, and policy in K-12 education and higher education (e.g., Catalano, 2017; Jourian, 2017; Kean, 2020; Keenan, 2017; Nicolazzo, 2017; Suárez, 2019).

In another line of inquiry, scholars frame queer literacies as practices to interpret, contest, and act against social injustice and refuse the oppressive identity positionings of race, gender, and sexuality in dominant culture (Blackburn, 2003, 2004; Cruz, 2011; Wargo, 2018). Whereas the prior approach foregrounds critical analysis of gender and sexual norms as social constructs, queer literacies as resistance to interlocking structures of power foregrounds action against injustice. Social action may take myriad forms, from embodied resistance against surveillance (Cruz, 2011) to using digital media technologies to document and disrupt oppression (Wargo, 2018). It may also involve resisting and revising oppressive subject positionings of race, coloniality, dis/ability, gender, and sexuality to create new ways of being (Blackburn, 2002; McCready, 2010). Many scholars who study queer literacies examine the ways in which LGBTQ+ youth resist interlocking structures of power reproduced in schooling (Johnson, 2017; Mayo & Blackburn, 2020). Queer literacies may also involve activism to improve experiences in schools for marginalized students (Wargo, 2018).

Queer literacies scholars often employ lenses in queer of color critique and analysis, queer theories, Black feminist thought, and women of color feminism to examine counter-hegemonic and anti-oppressive practices of resistance in LGBTQ+ communities (Aguilar-Hernández & Cruz, 2020; Brockenbrough, 2015; Cruz, 2011; Duran et al., 2020; Keenan & Hot Mess, 2021; McCready, 2019).[9] Brockenbrough (2015) underlines that frameworks in queer of color critique can disrupt the dominant victimization narrative in educational research that frame queer youth of color as 'at risk' or 'in crisis' by foregrounding creativity, ingenuity, and resistance in the face of power. For instance, Cruz (2011) draws on Lugones' theory of

[9] For many scholars, the category of 'queer' itself is counter-hegemonic through its transgressive qualities (Kean, 2020; McWilliams, 2016; Pennell, 2016; Uttamchandani, 2021).

"resistance in tight spaces" to notice the embodied resistance of LGBTQ+ youth of color against criminalizing and damage-based narratives. In another example, Blackburn (2003, 2005, 2011) draws on queer theory of gender performativity, the heterosexual matrix (e.g., Butler, 1990), critical feminist theory (e.g., Anzaldúa, 1981) and critical race theory in education (e.g., Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) to analyze Black youth agency in and against dominant discourses around race, gender, and sexuality. A focus on resistance becomes a strategy to contend with relations of power while uplifting youth agency (Blackburn, 2004; Blackburn & Schey, 2017). By focusing on practices of livability toward elsewheres, I consider youth agency in complementary ways. Specifically, I consider practices through which young people may refuse oppression and create life otherwise in the face of power, even if these practices are not clearly counter-hegemonic.

In literacy studies, scholars often examine practices through which LGBTQ+ people negotiate and resist interlocking hegemonies as they move across, and participate in, multiple discourses and spaces (Blackburn, 2002; Blackburn & Schey, 2017; Cruz, 2011; Johnson, 2017; Lizárraga & Cortez, 2020; Wargo, 2018). A need to develop literacies across contexts is especially true for queer and trans youth who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color and disabled. Black queer and Black trans youth may participate in and create Black LGBTQ+ community spaces, as well as contest racism, white normativity, and transphobia in other queer spaces (Johnson, 2017; Love, 2017). Scholars have also examined how queer activities of resistance move across digital and physical spaces. For instance, José Ramón Lizárraga and Arturo Cortez (2020) followed the public pedagogies of queer Latinx drag queens online and offline to argue the queens enacted playful, gritty cyborg jotería pedagogies that gesture toward a more just future as they cross boundaries of race, gender, sexuality, and digital realms. In another example, Jon Wargo (2018) considered how a 17-year-old queer Latina lesbian used multimodal

digital technologies to interrogate and write against the sensory experiences and felt dimensions of hate by constructing a sound map of oppression.

Though most queer literacies research focus on social critique and action, an increasing number of literacy scholars consider practices through which LGBTQ+ youth and communities grow queer social life amid and alongside systems of oppression. This work attunes scholarship and practice to the relationship between everyday queer ways of being, knowing, and doing and liberatory ways of organizing life (Coleman, 2021; Davis, 2018; Johnson, 2017; Pritchard, 2017; Reid, 2021). That is, enactments of queer and trans knowledges and practices at the micropolitical scale may grow into sociopolitical formations at the macropolitical scale. For instance, creating queer chosen family in everyday life has the potential to reorganize valued formations of kinship at the societal scale. By tracing creative practices oriented toward building more just futures, this line of inquiry extends queer scholarship on how LGBTQ+ youth construct identities as they negotiate dominant discourses, shifting from an interest in queer selves to interests in queer collectives (Blackburn, 2002; Davis, 2019; Nicolazzo, 2016; Reid, 2021; Wargo, 2015a). Across both lines of inquiry, new ways of knowing, being, and doing can proliferate new social worlds.

This scholarship meaningfully foregrounds how practices to make relations and sustain social life–particularly as youth and communities encounter and challenge oppression–are valued forms of queer literacy. All queer literacies are deeply relational practices that arise and unfold through social contexts (Johnson, 2017; Lizárraga & Cortez, 2020; Mayo & Blackburn, 2020). Yet, attention to conditions that sustain life, and life otherwise, attunes scholarship to the need not only for practices of critical analysis and social action but also for practices to form relations, kinship, and community (Johnson, 2017; Davis, 2019; Reid, 2021; Uttamchandani, 2021).

Coleman (2021), for instance, traces how queer ancestors serve as resources to speculate a happy future that challenges the trope of unhappy endings. Similar to this line of inquiry in literacy studies, a growing body of work in queer studies in education attends to the ways in which queer and trans youth make relations and sustain social life as they encounter and challenge cisheteronormativity (Nicolazzo, 2017; Uttamchandani, 2021). Suraj Uttamchandani (2021) developed the notion of educational intimacy–"the kinds of relationships built among people who are working together toward a shared social vision, particularly when that relationship allows for inclusive advancement of group-level goals" (p. 53)–to describe how youth supported collaborative decision-making and building a more just future according to how they hope to be treated. Like mutual aid, queer relations more broadly often meet immediate needs for belonging, support, and resources even as they offer experiences of other ways people might organize social life. I contribute new insights to this line of inquiry by tracing how trans and queer youth compose felt relations in LGBTQ+ digital cultures and learn new ways of feeling about injustice through viewing a "relatable" reaction video.

Importantly, this line of inquiry does not bifurcate resistance to hegemony and creating LGBTQ+ forms of collective life, but rather considers them as complementary facets of struggles for justice. In many ways, queer community is needed to support ongoing forms of social activism against oppression (Cruz, 2011). And critical analysis may give rise to forms of community as people work together to identify and challenge relations of power (Blackburn, 2002; Johnson, 2017). For instance, Pritchard (2017) and Johnson's (2017) scholarship on *restorative literacies* trace the ways Black queer youth and communities challenge hegemonic discourses, construct viable identities, and form collective life through literacies. In a related move, Davis (2018) explicates *fierce literacies*, such as practices to throw shade, through which

Black queer people survive white supremacist cisheteropatriarchy–a sociopolitical hierarchy based on the supremacy of cisgender and straight men and people, and create Black queer communities. This scholarship foregrounds how LGBTQ+ youth and communities confront the enclosures of the past and present in order to imagine a better future, putting social critique and imagination in relation. I build with this scholarship by considering how trans and queer youth negotiate hegemonies of race, coloniality, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability as they learn practices to create livable lives that gesture toward elsewheres through participation in digital cultures.

Conclusion: Nurturing Marginalized Lifeways Amid and Beyond Domination

As a conceptual framework, practices of livability toward elsewheres begins with life and life otherwise as a path to spark and sustain struggles for liberation. Marginalized young people need to be able to understand and resist relations of power in texts, technologies, and the social world. Yet, my research suggests resistance alone is insufficient for youth struggling amid persistent encounters with injustice. To start with resistance is to begin with domination, including hegemonic domination that operates through impossibility, erasure, stigma, and other forms of negation. Marginalized young people also need to nurture livability in the face of domination. Here, I consider how youth need humor, joy, and hope. In attending to livability, I do not seek to create new binaries (e.g., resistance/livability, negation/life) but rather to extend the toolkit for educators and scholars invested in projects to support youth in the everyday work of dreaming and enacting futures that refuse social injustice. Just as there is a multiplicity of elsewheres, there is a multiplicity of paths and practices that may lead to liberation.

Practices of livability toward elsewheres considered within trans and queer digital life contribute new expertise to studies of critical, digital, and queer literacies by explicating the

survival-rich practices through which trans and queer youth create livable lives in unlivable worlds with the potential to enact elsewheres in the everyday. As educators and scholars invested in practices through which youth survive and thrive in a world shaped by inequities, we need to expand the contexts, traditions, and scales in which we locate critical, digital, and queer literacies (Pandya et al., 2021, p. 3). By turning to trans and queer digital life and engaging capaciously with queer and trans studies, I have contributed new ways of thinking about literacies that are valuable and even necessary in projects of liberation. Specifically, I have contributed a framework and set of findings that invite scholars to support practices that create conditions to sustain life—practices such as curating funny digital artifacts, satirically reacting to hateful media, or composing felt relations in communities through scrolling meme pages. These micropractices, often enacted through lurking, are not necessarily legible as resistant or even as literacies, but that nevertheless lay the 'peopled ground' for broader forms of action and transformation. My dissertation findings enter a stream of knowledge around practices to nurture marginalized forms of life amid and beyond hegemonic domination, building with scholars who attend to resistance in tight spaces (Cruz, 2011), restorative literacies (Pritchard, 2017; Johnson, 2018), fierce literacies (Davis, 2018), elastic literacies (Wargo, 2018), and pedagogies of Black livingness (Griffin & Turner, 2021), among others.

Through the framework, I turn to forms of possibility that emerge in the everyday and may give rise to formations across scales (Yoon, 2021). These practices may not be legible through the lenses of resistance, digital production, or counter-hegemonic action that tend to shape literacy scholarship with which I build. Yet, the framework can further attune scholarship to how marginalized young people learn to sense possibility, feel belonging, and subvert the hate they encounter through humor, joy, and hope in everyday digital activities. Practices of

elsewheres in the everyday to create livable lives have the potential to lead to new ways of being and forms of social and political life, as micropractices constitute larger formations across scales (Zavala & Golden, 2017). In the space between everyday life and revolution, quotidian movements and moments can grow into larger formations (Yoon, 2021). Ultimately, I seek to explicate how everyday digital practices can inform theory and practice for more equitable design of learning environments and learning with new media.

Chapter 3.
Research Design and Methods

In the study, I employed a humanizing qualitative research design to examine how 21 trans and queer youth learned to negotiate social injustice through everyday activities on social media (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Paris & Winn, 2014; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017). I initiated the cross-platform project with broad interest in how social media supports critical, digital, and queer literacies among trans and queer youth. My research questions have evolved in relation with youth stories, the literature, and the sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). As research unfolded, I read widely in queer studies in dialogue with youth stories and assembled a conceptual framework for knowledge production with the ultimate goal to support clarity, healing, and liberatory practice for the participants with whom I create meaning (hooks, 1991). In alignment with my conceptual framework, the dissertation study is animated by two questions:

- How, and in what ways, did 21 trans and queer teens learn practices to create livable lives in unlivable worlds through everyday digital media activities?
- How did these practices of livability gesture toward elsewheres?

I do not fully answer these questions within the scope of the dissertation. Rather, I answer a set of research questions with three analyses that focus on the role of humor, radical joy, and hope in practices of livability toward elsewheres.

In analysis of 37 semi-structured interviews, I ask:

- In what ways did teens describe the role of humor in routine digital practices that foster livability?
- How did teens narrate the meanings of humor in these practices?

In analysis of an illustrative event from media reactions with eight youth of color, I ask:

- How did focal participant Helia take up and transform radical joy as a way of feeling through patterned combinations of communicative modes in her reaction to Mac's video?

Finally, in analysis of stories four focal participants constructed with digital artifacts to represent the past, present, and future in June-July 2020, I ask:

- How did four teens narrate desired futures?
- How are these narratives mediated by digital artifacts (e.g., images, videos, posts)?
- And, in these narratives, how did teens theorize the relation between disability and desired futures?

In this chapter, I articulate the study design and provide a description of the research context and participants. I begin by elaborating on the methodology of humanizing qualitative research and reflect on how my positionality and political commitments shaped the study. I then turn to the context in which this research is situated and participants with whom I constructed knowledge. I continue by describing the methods of data collection and the analytical methods I employed to construct patterns across the data corpus. I conclude by outlining the analytic approaches I employed to construct findings that address the questions for each findings chapter, which I will further describe in subsequent chapters, with a focus on how these methods complement each other in telling a larger story.

Methodology

I framed this research through a humanizing qualitative design with a focus on youth storying (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Paris & Winn, 2014; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017). Qualitative design employs a range of interconnected interpretive practices to understand and construct knowledge of situated activities and the meanings these activities have to participants

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2017, p. 10). Each interpretive practice, such as interviews and artifact collection, offers a different way to understand the social context and situated activity at hand. Knowledge constructed through these tools of inquiry is additionally refracted through the researcher's own positionality, personal history, theoretical lenses, and political commitments. I bring a humanizing stance to qualitative research, which animates my focus on co-constructing knowledge oriented toward critical understanding and social action with and alongside youth participants (Paris & Winn, 2014; Blackburn, 2014). Through the concept of "dialogic consciousness raising," humanizing approaches center relations of care, reciprocity, and respect among researcher and participants in knowledge production and uplift knowledge that inspires action toward justice (Paris & Winn, 2014, p. xvi; Blackburn, 2014). Guided by these approaches, I employed interview and visual participatory methods as interpretive practices across three phases of research to invite participants to share practices that matter to them, participate in data construction, and theorize, through storytelling, why they matter (Halbritter & Lindquist, 2012; Weiss, 1994; Switzer, 2019). My research methodology and stance build on the fundamental premises that young people are the experts of their own lives (Cammarota & Fine, 2010) and that they make meaning through stories (Cruz, 2011).

In a focus on youth stories, I have sought to advance desire-based narratives that eschew framings of youth as victims of oppression and instead surface a "more complex and dynamic understanding of what one, or a community, comes to know in (a) lived life" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 231; see also Tuck, 2009). Tuck (2009) and Tuck and Yang (2014) argue against damage-oriented research that communicate stories of pain, loss, and trauma in order to emphasize the weight or toll of oppressive systems on marginalized communities. They argue that researchers must "learn from and respect the wisdom and desires in the stories that we

(over)hear, while refusing to portray/betray them to the spectacle of the colonial gaze" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 223). The turn away from damage-based narratives and toward desire-based narratives does not mean silencing the stories of pain that participants share. And, as I elaborate in Chapter 6, it cannot mean framing physical or mental disability as damage, even when disability emerges through trauma. Rather this turn means co-constructing understandings of the resistance, resilience, and ingenuity that arise as youth disrupt damage-based narratives that seek to enclose their lives (Cruz, 2011). It also means writing toward the complexity of personhood with the recognition that participants can hold multiple and even competing desires as they navigate and transcend normative discourses.

Locating the Researcher

My own positionality as a queer, disabled, low-income white and multiracial cisgender femme influenced the study in a number of ways. During the study, I explicitly spoke about my social identities to model the practice of constructing knowledge through storying lived experience and to signal openness in talking about experiences that may be stigmatized. Telling my own stories became a relational practice that led young people to share in return. Sharing my lived experiences also shaped relationship building and the development of rapport with participants, both because I fostered mutual vulnerability and because it enabled me to establish shared points of reference. For instance, I tended to establish strong rapport with participants who were femme, disabled, from poor single-parent families and/or who had extended families who were anti-LGBTQ+, as I do.[10] Because of these similar life experiences, participants perhaps anticipated that I could understand and relate to their stories in deeper ways. Likewise, I connected with participants over shared experiences of queerness and membership in the

[10] In Chapter 6, I write further on the ways in which my disability shaped the study and analysis.

LGBTQ+ community. Relatedly, my identities as cisgender and white and multiracial undoubtably limited the research in important ways. If shared experiences fostered relationships, this difference in gender identity and, for Black and Latinx participants, racial identity, may have curbed participants' comfort with, and connection to, me as a researcher. In navigating similarities and differences in positionality, I work from a stance of solidarity and critical reflection on my role in research that attends to intersecting oppressions that include race, class, coloniality, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability (Cruz, 2011).

In relation to my positionality, my political commitments to trans liberation and racial justice informed actions to position youth as knowledge producers on trans experience and to invite critical reflection on racism and racialization, including whiteness. Throughout the study, I continuously checked in with youth participants to ensure my interpretations aligned with their experiences and meanings. By revoicing their contributions and inviting them into the construction of patterns, member checks became routine features in all sessions. I took particular care to theorize with youth and foreground their meanings in constructing interpretations of trans identity, experience, culture, and politics. In this way, I sought to pedagogically facilitate and share knowledge youth produced in dialogue with me, rather than authorize youth experience (Vossoughi & Zavala, 2020). I also guided youth participants to reflect on questions of racism and racialization, from the lack of trans of color vloggers on YouTube to experiences on Tumblr through which white trans participants learned to question white privilege. In the second stage of the study, I explicitly chose videos that contest and reproduce antiblackness and asked every participant to reflect on these moments in the videos, as I describe further below. I began the third stage with interviews to inquire how focal participants were experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matters uprisings against antiblack police brutality. Across these

stages, I sought to uplift the knowledges and practices of participants of color in negotiating interlocking oppressions of race, coloniality, gender, and sexuality; I also sought to guide white participants to reflect on their own relationship to race and racism.

In studying social media, the generational difference between myself and participants also became salient. As a Millennial who did not have reliable social media or internet access when I was a teenager, I did not have access to the trans and queer digital worlds that the Gen Z participants in this study make, occupy, and transform. Although I now participate in many of these intergenerational social media communities as an adult, the teens in this study often explicitly explain trans and queer digital spaces and culture in terms of youth or Gen Z culture (i.e., "Gen Z humor" or "Gen Z video culture"). Throughout research, I found myself balancing the need to signal shared experience in digital spaces and position myself as a generational (and, often, gender) outsider who is interested in listening and learning. To navigate this balance, most often I mentioned my familiarity with a term, space, or creator (i.e. "You mentioned the term *cringe culture,* which I've heard, and I kind of know what you mean") and asked participants to describe what it means to them (i.e. "But can you talk about what that means, and how that's become associated with non-binary folks in the YouTube discourse?").

Contextualizing the Research Partnership

To conduct this study, I developed a research partnership through an interdisciplinary gender program in a pediatric medical center in a large, Midwestern city that provides wraparound services to trans children, adolescents, and young adults. My research partners in the gender program, Dr. Claire Coyne and Dr. Diane Chen, are behavioral health clinicians and researchers interested in resilience. I emailed Dr. Coyne and Dr. Chen in September 2018 and met with them to discuss opportunities to collaborate around research on the role of social media

in the lives of trans teenagers. They were immediately interested to collaborate with a focus on social media, largely because adolescents in the gender program discuss social media with considerable frequency. Dr. Coyne and Dr. Chen saw social media as an area of great significance for adolescents that is under-researched and often misunderstood by parents, providers, and educators. We began collaborating in the 2018-2019 academic year to design and plan a multi-method study on the role social media plays in learning, identity, and resilience for trans teens ages 13-19. They saw potential for the findings to shape clinical care and group programs at the gender program, as well as to inform the program's new education program that supports changes in procedures and practices for gender inclusion in schools and advocates for changes to state-level and public policy. We thus share the goals to better understand the role of social media in the lives of trans teens and use this understanding to improve care and educational experiences.

The partnership offered the unique opportunity to conduct research with trans teens from a wide range of social positions in an out-of-school context that extends resources, care, and support. I initially sought to partner with the gender program because I understood it to be an affirming and trusted space for trans teens. The program offers a range of services and support, including a trans mentorship program and group programs for teens and families. The program works with young people who identify beyond the binary (e.g., gender-questioning or non-binary youth) and accepts state-based health insurance plans such as Medicaid and CHIP. The outpatient gender program is housed on two floors of a recently renovated loft-style building that has facilities and decoration that signal inclusion for trans clients, including all-gender bathrooms, artwork with trans and LGBTQ+ pride colors, and a range of books in the lobby on trans and LGBTQ+ issues. All of the teens that I spoke with described the program and the

clinicians in positive terms and demonstrated trust, comfort, and feelings of safety in the building. For instance, multiple youth wore trans pride and LGBTQ+ pride bracelets and clothing to sessions at the clinic that they described being unable to wear at school or in other cisheteronormative spaces for fear of bullying.

Collaborating with Dr. Coyne and Dr. Chen enabled me to take ethical steps in providing teens with free support and resources, as appropriate and requested. Research on social media activities often involves recruiting participants directly from social media, which may limit the resources the researcher can immediately provide to youth who may be experiencing a crisis. Through this research partnership, I worked closely with Dr. Coyne during research phases one and two to ensure youth would have access to free mental health counseling upon request in case participants brought up an experience that called for immediate support. Because I conducted research in the evenings and on weekends, often Dr. Coyne herself would serve as the on-call counselor. During research phase III, conducted virtually, we created a resource list to make available to participants upon request that also included mutual aid and material support during COVID-19. Dr. Coyne also made herself available remotely or by referral to connect with youth.

Participants

In partnership with Dr. Coyne, I recruited 21 teen participants who identify within the trans umbrella and regularly use at least three forms of social media. To begin recruitment, I placed flyers throughout the clinic in June 2019 and worked with Dr. Coyne and medical records staff at the program to obtain the contact information (name of record; email, if provided; phone number; and address) and demographic backgrounds (age, racial identity, and gender) of clients currently ages 13-19 who had visited the gender program for any reason the last five years. Because minors who receive services at the gender program must have parental consent and list

the parent's contact information in the medical record, parents I contacted were aware their child had been seen at the program in some capacity. I recruited participants primarily via email, flyers in the clinic, and clinician referral. Because white clients are overrepresented in the gender program, I overrecruited participants from Latinx, Black, Asian American, and Indigenous communities by additionally sending mailers to home addresses of record (addressed to *Last Name Family* in case the teen's first name was not up to date in the medical record) and calling phone numbers of record. Thirty-three teens expressed interest in the study via email, text, or phone call, reflecting approximately a 22-percent response rate to outreach. From those whose expressed interest, 24 teens completed a phone screening call with me to confirm interest and eligibility. Of the teens who completed the phone screening call, 21 teens participated in the first session in July-October 2019.

The 21 participants in this study speak from a wide range of social positions at the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, social class, and disability. I characterize participants at the individual (see Table 3.1) and group level by drawing on self-reported identities on demographic surveys. To inquire with respect to the complexity of social positions and identities, I provided extensive lists of racial and ethnic identities, gender identities, and sexual orientations on the survey and allowed participants to choose more than one in each category and write in any identities that were not listed. Where salient, I have also noted social identities named in the interviews within individual descriptions. At the group level, I describe participants with racial identities they selected in the survey (e.g., Latinx, white, multiracial). Individual descriptions reflect greater specificity of racial identity where it emerged, using the racial and ethnicity identity labels participants wrote in the survey or described in interviews (e.g., Puerto Rican, Mexican, Quechua). Broadly, eleven are white, four are biracial or multiracial, three are Latinx,

two are Latinx and Indigenous, and one is African American, specifically. Thirteen participants are trans men, five identify within the nonbinary umbrella, and three are trans women or femmes. All participants but one are queer. Participants' parents have a range of educational levels, which I have used as an imperfect proxy for socioeconomic class, varying from both parents with partial high school education to both parents with graduate degrees. Nuanced understandings of social class and disability emerged through interviews. Participants live in mostly urban and suburban locations, but four participants live in small towns or rural areas. At each phase, I selected focal participants based on attention to intersections of identity across race, class, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability and by theoretical sampling to pursue both literal replication of emergent findings and theoretical replication by pursuing divergent patterns that substantiate theoretical claims (Yin, 2013, p. 47).

Table 3.1. Descriptions of participants based on identities self-reported in the interviews and survey, ordered first by age at the time of interview #1 (13-19) and then alphabetically.

Pseud.	Age	Gender identity	Gender pronouns	Salient social identities	Highest level of parental education	Living in...	Research phases
Stevie	13	Non-binary kid	They /them	Latinx, Mexican, questioning	High school graduate	Small town or rural area	1-2
Noah	14	Trans boy	he/him	white, gay	Graduate degree	Urban area	1-3
Rowan	14	Trans boy	he/him	white, gay	Graduate degree	Suburban area	1-2

Helia	15	Trans girl	she/her	Latinx, Indigenous, Mexican, Puerto Rican, pansexual, bilingual	Partial college	Suburban area	1-2
Kingsley	15	Trans boy	he/him	African American, sexually fluid	Graduate degree	Urban area	1-2
Mateo	15	Trans boy	he/him	Latinx, Puerto Rican, bisexual, mostly gay, questioning	Partial high school	Urban area	1-3
Jacob	16	Trans boy	he/him	biracial, Latinx, Afro-Puerto Rican and white, gay (homoflexible), disabled	High school graduate	Small town or rural area	1-3
Lith	16	Genderqueer, non-binary kid	They /them	white, bisexual	Graduate degree	Urban area	1
Niko	16	Demiboy	he/him	biracial, Asian American and white, asexual	Undergrad college	Suburban area	1
October	16	Trans woman, genderqueer, non-binary, femme	she/her	white, lesbian	Undergrad college	Suburban area	1-2

Adrian	17	Trans boy	he/him	Latinx, white, "mix," gay, adopted	Undergrad college	Small town or rural area	1-2
Bailey	17	Trans girl	she/her	white, lesbian, questioning	Graduate degree	Urban area	1-3
Dominic	17	Trans man, gender non-conforming	he/him	white, bisexual, asexual	High school graduate	Urban area	1
Eric	17	Trans boy	he/him	Latinx, Mexican, gay	High school graduate	Urban area	1-2
Indigo	17	Genderfluid, genderqueer, non-binary	They /them	multiracial, Latinx, Indigenous South American (Quechua), white, queer, gay, bisexual, pansexual, lesbian, demisexual	Undergrad college	Suburban area	1
Isaiah	17	Trans boy	he/him	biracial, white, Latinx, Puerto Rican, gay	Undergrad college	Small town or rural area	1-2
Archer	18	Trans man	he/him	white, straight	Partial college	Suburban area	1
Harlow	18	Trans man	he/him	white, Jewish, bisexual	Graduate degree	Suburban area	1-2
Cassidy	19	Genderqueer, non-binary	They /them	white, queer, lesbian, gay	Graduate degree	Suburban area	1

Curtis	19	Trans man	he/him	white, Jewish, gay	Graduate degree	Urban area	1-2
Kieran	19	Trans man	he/him	white, queer, bisexual, gay	Undergrad college	Urban area	1-2

Though participants speak from a wide range of social positions, I do not understand participants to reflect the range of trans subjectivity. Notably, only one study participant identifies as African American and no participants identify as Black trans women or Black gender-expansive teens. I understand the racial and gender identities of study participants in relation to the gender program's context in a medical center, rather than as reflective of regional or national trans communities. Medical institutions broadly and gender clinics specifically reproduce structures of power that center whiteness and marginalize Black communities (Gill-Peterson, 2018). Historically, the first gender clinics to treat transgender patients in the 20th century (at Johns Hopkins Medicine and the University of California Los Angeles) routinely denied care to Black transgender and gender-expansive children and teens, "dismissing their self-knowledge of gender as delusion or homosexuality" (Gill-Peterson, 2018, p. 4). These processes of racialized exclusion from care, alongside the development of the medical model of binary gender transition, have shaped a dominant narrative of gender-affirming care that reifies the gender binary and is racialized as white. Gill-Peterson (2018), citing Travers (2018), argues that "the meticulously medicalized narrative of trans childhood is massively *un*representative, displacing low-income, nonbinary, and trans children of color from ostensibly trans-affirmative discourse, when in reality they probably constitute by far the demographic majority of trans children" (Gill-Peterson, 2018, p. 198). While the gender program does not, to my knowledge, participate in racialized gatekeeping and does serve low-income, non-binary, and trans teens of color, white clients are overrepresented and Black clients are underrepresented in the program–

patterns that must be understood in this broader context of the racialization of transgender medicine. Given this historical and discursive context, participants who identify as white, within the gender binary, or both white and within the binary, may be overrepresented in the study.

Research Contexts and Data Collection

This three-phase dissertation study spans multiple physical and virtual contexts as I follow digital activities across contexts and scales. The first two research phases in June 2019-January 2020 took place in an interview room at the gender program. In the final phase, the research context shifts to participants' homes (Lam, 2009; Wargo, 2018). While I intended to conduct artifact-based interviews during home visits, I effectively shifted to video-conferencing calls in response to COVID-19 because participants were comfortable with video calls based on their digital activities, and because we had already developed a relationship through in-person sessions. Physical contexts extend to virtual sites on social media such as YouTube, Instagram, and Discord (Leander & McKim, 2003). Across phases, I employed interview and visual participatory methods to theorize with and alongside youth through storytelling and to understand how youth construct narratives with, and in response to, digital artifacts such as memes, videos, and posts (Gubrium et al., 2015; Halbritter & Lindquist, 2012; Jourian & Nicolazzo, 2016; Weiss, 1994; Switzer, 2019).

In the study, I have collected seven primary forms of data:

1. **Interview Data** in the form of 37 semi-structured, in-depth audio-taped interviews, which total 32 hours of audio data and 820 single-spaced pages of transcripts.
2. **Survey Data** from 21 19-page surveys.
3. **Media Reaction Data** from 16 video-taped media reactions, totaling 19 hours of video.
4. **Digital Artifacts** from 182 participant-selected artifacts from four focal participants.

5. **Digital Artifact Interview Data** from audio- and video-recorded virtual sessions with four focal participants via video-conferencing software, totaling 4.3 hours of video data.
6. **Participant Observation Data** from 20 audio- and video-recorded participant observations with four focal participants conducted via video-conferencing software; participant observations of digital activities ranged from 30-120 minutes each.
7. **Co-created Digital Life Narratives** from audio- and video-recorded virtual sessions with four focal participants via video-conferencing software, totaling 5.5 hours of video.

In the dissertation, I construct findings through analysis of interview data, media reaction data, and digital artifact interview data. In future work, which I describe further in the dissertation conclusion, I will construct additional findings through analysis of the digital artifacts, participant observation data, and co-created digital life narratives. I am also collaborating with the research partner to develop secondary manuscripts through analysis of the survey, interview, and media reaction data. Below, I describe the study phases and data collection in more depth.

Phase I: Semi-structured Interviews and Surveys

I conducted approximately 90-minute sessions with 21 participants in the gender program clinic from July to October 2019. With the exception of Jon Wargo's (2017a, 2017b, 2018) scholarship, few learning or literacy scholars have examined the digital lives of trans and queer teenagers, so I used this first phase to broadly map the digital activities that are meaningful to participants as they negotiate social injustice. The sessions featured two primary parts. First, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews to understand participants' digital activities and observe how they make meaning of the activities through stories (Weiss, 1994; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). Interviews ranged from 60-81 minutes long and explored everyday social media activities relevant to gender and sexuality at the intersection of other social identities and

structures of power. The interviews ended with artifact-based questions asking participants to demonstrate the channels and accounts they use regularly and find meaningful. In conducting the interviews, I positioned myself as a listener and participant in a dialogical conversation meant to elicit, and support the construction of, stories and meanings of everyday activities on social media (Vossoughi & Zavala, 2020; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017).

Second, I administered a 19-page paper survey that included questions around demographics and social media use, a validated scale of online social connectedness (Cingel et al., 2019), and a validated scale of gender minority stress and resilience (Testa et al., 2015). In the dissertation, I have primarily used the survey to characterize the participant group and individual participants, as well as inform recruitment and protocols for subsequent research phases. Occasionally, I have used the survey to inform understandings of youth social media use, such as the earliest age participants began to use social media. Participants in phase I received $20 Amazon gift cards for their time.

Phase II: Follow-Up Interviews and Media Reactions

From October 2019 to January 2020, I conducted 90-minute follow-up sessions in the clinic with 16 participants selected from those who completed the first session. This second session again featured two parts. First, I conducted an audiotaped semi-structured interview with follow-up questions I developed from initial coding of phase I interview transcripts and in dialogue with my emerging conceptual frames. These interviews ranged from 25-40 minutes and featured three focused topics for inquiry, considering the role of social media in 1) expanding possibilities; 2) examining systems of belief, value, and representation; 3) learning to disrupt anti-LGBTQ and anti-trans hate.

Second, I conducted videotaped structured, standardized media reactions that asked participants to talk through how they make sense of, think with, and feel in response to three short YouTube video clips I chose to elicit the social practices teens use in watching the videos. A form of visual participatory method that engages youth in knowledge construction with visual tools, the media reactions ranged from 50-75 minutes (Gubrium et al., 2015; Halbritter & Lindquist, 2012; Switzer, 2019). In developing the media reaction protocol, I chose two types of videos through which I could explore teen sensemaking and meaning-making around two core phenomena that emerged as salient through initial coding of interview transcripts from phase I. Cassidy, a 19-year-old white non-binary person who identified as queer and lesbian, succinctly described these phenomena to me at the end of the first interview, after I asked if there was anything else they wanted to share:

> One thing I noticed was that a lot of…. There are two kinds of criticism that you could get for being queer on the internet, in my experience. You could get outside of the community hate, which would mostly just be, cisgender or straight people just sort of like, almost like walking by and then be like, "Oh, you suck." Or something like that. It would be like in passing, it would never be really something that, I at least, would engage with. Because… That's just the straights being the straights or something, versus intra-community criticism or hatred or bigotry, which often took a much more serious blow, and would be extremely debilitating. Because it's coming from a place of shared identity, at least a little bit. And so like, how did you come from that same experience and walk away with something different? What changed and what made you become that negative? And, often, it would be like what hurt so much more because you weren't expecting it. You were expecting to be appreciated or to have a place in the community.

Following Cassidy's description, I aimed to select video clips that enabled me to better understand 1) how participants navigate experiences with hegemonic ideologies from outside trans and LGBTQ+ communities and 2) how participants navigate experiences with hegemonic ideologies reproduced within trans and LGBTQ+ communities. In this inquiry, I understand hegemonic ideologies of race, gender, and sexuality to be interlocking in nature.

To explore the first phenomenon, I chose to include reaction videos in which trans and gay video makers react to oppressive media with the goal to understand how funny reactions to anti-LGBTQ and anti-trans content mediates sensemaking, affect, and thinking about hegemonic ideologies such as heteronormativity (Warner, 1991), compulsory cisgenderism (Nicolazzo, 2017), and antiblackness (Dumas, 2016). The decision to take up reaction videos was informed by the interviews and survey results from phase I. On the survey, I explicitly asked participants how frequently they "watch reaction videos in which YouTubers react to transphobic and homophobic media" (a frequency scale of "never" to "several times a day"). Of the 21 participants, 19 watch reaction videos and seven watch these videos at least daily, which I interpreted to mean that reaction videos are consequential activities for a large number of the participants and a fruitful phenomenon to explore. I selected two four- to five-minute reaction video clips by YouTubers MacDoesIt or Mac Kahey, who identifies as a Black cisgender gay man, and Sam Collins, who identifies as a white straight trans man. While Mac Kahey does not identify as trans, I included Mac because he has a YouTube series dedicated to reacting to anti-LGBTQ media, which was named and described as meaningful by many participants in both phase I and phase II interviews.

To explore the second phenomenon, I chose to include a clip from a video maker participants often described as 'controversial' in order to understand how participants are making

sense of dominant and non-dominant discourses around gender, sexuality, and race, particularly as video creators employ these discourses to create and maintain boundaries. Specifically, I selected a four-minute clip of a 'ranking' video in which YouTuber Blaire White, who describes herself as conservative, ranks other LGBTQ+ video makers as the "worst" social justice warriors or "SJWs," a term most often used pejoratively for people with socially progressive beliefs and perspectives. I was familiar with the 'controversial,' socially conservative trans YouTubers as a member of the LGBTQ+ community and an ongoing participant in trans and queer YouTube channels. That said, I watched around 20 hours of YouTube videos from a handful of YouTubers to select this YouTuber and this clip specifically.

In selecting these video creators and video clips, I employed four primary criteria. First, I aimed for each video maker to reflect a different social location or set of identities around race, gender, and sexuality. Given that the majority of trans and non-binary YouTubers have been and continue to identify as white men (Raun, 2016), I chose Mac as a video maker who identifies as a Black gay man and Blaire as a video maker who identifies as a trans straight woman. Second, I chose video makers and types of videos whom participants named often in the interviews and survey, and who had large participatory communities, with the goal to choose video makers and clips that most, if not all, participants were familiar with already. Third, I chose video clips that explicitly address interlocking ideologies around race, gender, and sexuality. Specifically, each of the three clips I chose feature moments in which the video makers react to or, in Blaire's case, reproduce antiblackness (Dumas, 2016; Dumas & ross, 2016). I was interested to see if and how participants would respond to and make connections between these moments across the media reaction. I was also interested to see if and how the first and second moments that Mac and Sam explicitly name as racist and ahistorical would mediate subsequent sensemaking as participants

watched the third moment in Blaire's video. Finally, I considered the ways in which the clips may *feel* to watch for participants (Fawaz, 2016). I avoided clips that could trigger experiences with trauma or cause undue discomfort, even if some participants described watching the types of clips routinely. But I did want to foster compassionate engagements with the harder parts of YouTube that Cassidy and many other participants described. Given that these types of videos are significant to participants' descriptions of everyday life on YouTube, I drew on Ramzi Fawaz's concept of *affective curation* to consider the ways I might take participants' feelings seriously and hold space for "emotional responses toward a range of ideas, objects, and realities" as a way of understanding their sensemaking and meaning-making processes (2016, p. 760).

In conducting the media reaction, I positioned myself as a co-viewer of the videos who is interested to learn about how participants engage with YouTube videos described often in the interviews. I was primarily interested in eliciting participant sensemaking and meaning making as they watched the videos in ways that felt humanizing (Paris & Winn, 2014). With this in mind, I spoke and reacted in ways to elicit, affirm, and compassionately inquire about participant engagement with the videos, rather than to insert my own thoughts or feelings. Beyond asking questions to elicit participant sensemaking and meaning making (e.g., "How are you thinking and feeling about Mac's reaction?"), I also asked pointed questions about the three moments of antiblackness in the video to pedagogically assist participants in attending to moments that otherwise might go unaddressed (e.g., "What are you thinking about Blaire's comments about the 'Linda lady'"?) (Zavala & Vossoughi, 2020). Given the limits of the small interview room and the recording equipment, video recordings feature participants and the YouTube clips on the computer screen; I am out of the shot. In transcriptions of video data, I transcribe my talk and

nonverbal sounds (e.g., laughter). Participants received $40 Amazon gift cards upon completion of session two, for a total compensation of $60 per participant who completed phases I and II.

Phase III: Visual Participatory Methods Anchored by Five Virtual Sessions

In the third and final stage from June-September 2020, I conducted visual participatory research anchored by five virtual sessions and participant-generated data with four focal participants: Noah, a 15-year-old white gay trans boy; Mateo, a 16-year-old Puerto Rican bisexual trans boy; Jacob, a 17-year-old Afro- Puerto Rican and white gay trans and gender nonconforming boy living with disabilities; and Bailey, an 18-year-old white lesbian trans girl.[11] Based on interviews, Noah and Bailey are both from middle to upper-middle class families; Mateo and Jacob are from low-income, working-class families. Following my focal participant selection strategy, I focused on these four young people for two main reasons. First, Noah, Mateo, Jacob, and Bailey routinely participated in digital activities that allowed me to further understand critical digital literacies of interest in the broader study. Second, they occupied a range of social locations at the intersection of race, class, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability. Virtual sessions ranged from 120-190 minutes and were video recorded and screen captured.

To examine how Noah, Mateo, Jacob, and Bailey made sense of social injustice amid COVID-19 and uprisings against antiblack police brutality, I began the first virtual session with a semi-structured interview (Weiss, 1994). In the second half of the first session, I co-constructed meaning with participants through artifact-based interviews in which they theorized their past, present, and future by narrating digital artifacts selected in advance (Gubrium et al., 2015; Halbritter & Lindquist, 2012; Switzer, 2019). The interviews ranged from 47 minutes to 1 hour

[11] Here, I report their age at the time of the virtual sessions; because the virtual sessions occurred around a year after the initial interviews, these four participants are a year older than described in Table 3.1.

and 22 minutes, totaling 4.3 hours of video data. I elaborate on the artifact-based interviews and analysis in Chapter 6.

In between subsequent sessions, focal participants constructed data by selecting and uploading around 10 digital artifacts (e.g., meme, Tweet, smartphone footage, image) every other week for eight weeks, or 40-50 artifacts each. I asked participants to choose artifacts that were meaningful to them in some significant way, and I further explored the meanings with youth in virtual sessions. I also gave participants a list of questions to consider in selecting artifacts, which I developed in relation to the focused coding scheme and emerging analytical directions. These questions were: What has made you feel hopeful this week? What made you feel joyful or happy? What made you laugh? What made you feel okay? What has changed how you think about possibilities for social change or social justice? What on social media has made you think or felt thought-provoking? What discourse or debates have you encountered that were interesting, or challenging? How have you represented your identities on social media? How have you talked to others or been a part of a social community? What media (e.g., videos, image) have you made or posted that felt meaningful to you? Guided by these questions, focal participants uploaded a total of 182 artifacts as files to Box, a secure encrypted platform. Jacob also sent me emails with links and screenshots with written explanations of why he chose particular artifacts.

In virtual sessions 2-5, I focused on co-constructing data and patterns with participants by conducting participant observations. I began participant observations by inviting participants to tell me the story behind each artifact they uploaded between sessions. I asked follow-up questions to further inquire about the meaning of the artifact, what they were thinking and feeling when they selected it, and how participants engage with, use, or share the artifact in

digital activities. Then, I conducted participant observations of digital activities (e.g., watching funny political videos on TikTok), selecting activities based on the focused coding scheme and directions participants raised (Lam, 2009; Leander & McKim, 2003; Wargo, 2018). I developed and printed a unique protocol to guide each virtual session that included a table with activity categories, the digital spaces and tools that participants named as relevant to the activity within interviews or previous virtual sessions, details that indexed particular digital places or practices to explore together, and specific questions to raise. Please see Table 3.2 for an example. I also included questions on the protocol to guide new areas of exploration (e.g., can you show me an experience that recently made you laugh? Are there any other posts on social media you'd want me to see?). In conducting the participant observations, I routinely asked participants to explain their activities and tools, and the meanings these activities and tools have for them. To complement the participant observations, I also conducted virtual observations to characterize digital spaces participants frequented, such as "gay TikTok." I only viewed participants' own social media pages alongside them, an ethical move to learn *with* them about their digital life.

Table 3.2: Example row from table to guide participant observation #2 with Bailey.

Activity Category	Spaces / Tools	Details to Guide Participant Observation	Questions
Learning to hope in the everyday	Tik Tok, Twitter	Digital routines, watching everyday trans and gay content creators, Tweet stories of trans and gay life (Capsule 169)	I was really moved by the tweet stories by trans and gay creators that you described, including those by Capsule 169. Do you still follow those kinds of story Twitter accounts? Can you show me? What stories have you noticed recently? What stories draw your eye as you review the page?

In order to further theorize with participants, I concluded the fifth session by collaboratively composing *digital life narratives* that theorize patterns about the participant's digital life and desired futures by visually narrating digital artifacts they selected throughout the

summer. I developed protocols to guide the collaborative composition with each participant, framing the narrative as an opportunity for me to better understand how each participant perceived and made meaning of their everyday social media activities by reviewing the digital artifacts they have submitted and creating a narrative that tells a story about everyday digital life. Once I introduced participants to the goals of the collaborative composition, we first reviewed and discussed digital artifacts the participant submitted over the course of the summer, beginning to categorize, make sense of, and order the digital artifacts to construct patterns and compose a narrative arc. In advance, I also developed a list of patterns and storylines I noticed for each participant (e.g., using random humor for everyday joy, speculating on possibilities for a better world) to prompt co-thinking and reflect on how my interpretations engaged participant meanings. Once we constructed patterns, we then represented the patterns in a digital narrative form with illustrative and representative images and videos that participants chose. I offered several ways we could compose multimodal narratives, including iMovie, Google Slides, to Google Draw. All participants chose to use Google Slides or Google Draw to collaboratively compose a multimodal narrative through visual representation, text, and emoji. Participants emphasized the interconnectedness of patterns and activities, using visualizations such as Venn diagrams and crossword puzzles to articulate the relations they experience. Lastly, we reviewed and revised the narrative to best reflect a story of the participant's everyday life on social media. I downloaded and uploaded the narrative to a private, encrypted Box folder accessible to me and each participant, respectively.

Participants were compensated for their time via electronic Amazon gift cards. Participants were compensated $30 at the end of each virtual session. All participants

participated in the digital video project and were compensated an additional $20. For digital uploads, participants were compensated $40 for their time after the fourth upload.

Methods of Data Analysis

During data collection, I employed a range of tools to organize the large, multi-year data set and guide analytical directions that advance my conceptual framework and animate other lines of inquiry. Below, I provide an overview of these methods of data analysis and refer to specific chapters for elaboration on the methods and tools used in analysis. In the chapter conclusion, I will outline the three analytical approaches I subsequently employed to construct findings for Chapters 4-6 and describe the relationship of these approaches.

Multiple Reviews and Transcription of Interviews

During data collection phases I-III, I transcribed and reviewed all interviews with youth participants. Because I secured graduate research funding, I was able to pay for an online transcription service for interviews, which greatly facilitated the process and speed of transcription. I uploaded audio files immediately after each session and received complete transcripts back within a few days. Once available, I reviewed, cleaned, and processed the transcripts, which involved listening to the interviews slowly and refining the transcript generated by the service. As Ochs (1979) describes, transcription is a selective process that reflects the researcher's theoretical interests and shapes the social theory the research may generate. In cleaning transcripts, I often included additional non-verbal communication (e.g., laughter) and discourse markers (e.g., "you know," "so," "like") as ways to trace youth meaning making through interaction with me. During the course of analysis, I also reviewed the transcripts multiple times to inform analytic memos and coding. For Chapters 5 and 6, I employed transcription methods from interaction and conversation analysis (Jordan &

Henderson, 1995) and narrative analysis (Gee, 1991), respectively, for video data as part of constructing findings. I describe these transcription methods further in each chapter.

Analytic Memos

Throughout data collection, I wrote analytic memos to document and reflect on my impressions, ideas, questions, and to consider future directions for data collection (Saldaña, 2013). During the first phase of data collection, I wrote analytic memos multiple times a week to reflect on the process of interviewing, construct initial patterns, and note directions in the study. Through these memos, I also further tailored the questions I asked in semi-structured interviews and began to note follow-up prompts that were particularly generative. During initial coding, which I describe below, I developed analytic memos that synthesized my analysis and conceptual categories with examples. During the second phase of data collection, I wrote weekly analytic memos to take note of, and begin to analyze, significant moments that came up in the sessions, as well as the ways I was making sense of and constructing understandings of the interviews and media reactions (Saldaña, 2013). In these memos, I also noted ideas for future data construction and analysis. During the third and final phase of data collection, I wrote analytic memos after each virtual session to index and reflect on artifacts, activities, and interactions within the sessions, and to note emerging theoretical, methodological, and ethical questions. Memos during the summer data collection informed subsequent virtual sessions and guided the analytical direction for Chapter 6.

Multiple Cycles of Coding in Dialogue with Theory and Member Checks

Throughout the study, I systematically analyzed interview and artifact data in the grounded theory tradition through multiple cycles of inductive analysis in dialogue with analytic memos, theory, and member checks (Charmaz, 2014; Heath & Street, 2008). Across cycles, I coded with

particular attention to purpose-driven activities that young people narrated, as well as the meanings they make of these activities (Miles et al., 2019). Sensitizing concepts from my theoretical framework and literature review such as cultural artifacts, everyday life, and consequential learning animated directions in coding (Charmaz, 2003).

In phase I, I conducted initial coding of interview transcripts, coding the activities teens described and the ways they narrated these activities. I used *in vivo* codes to center teens' voices in the study (e.g., 'How can I combat this?', 'Everyday inspiration,' 'Doing all these good things'), *process* codes to center actions (e.g., surviving, advocating, negotiating normalcy), and *emotion* codes to explore emotional experiences and their meanings (e.g., feeling hopeful, feeling powerful, feeling stressed) (Miles et al., 2019). I also coded for social media platforms and LGBTQ+ content creators named in the interviews to understand patterns of engagement. Initial codes stabilized after 15 interviews, and the subsequent six interviews achieved saturation (Small, 2009). I approached some initial codes such as "encountering hate," "people like me," and "feeling hope" as important threads to follow. Other initial codes became kernels of focused coding categories. For instance, the *in vivo* code "everyday inspiration" transformed into the category "learning to hope in the everyday." Some initial codes capture patterns such as "being outed by the algorithm" (see Cho, 2018) that I use to contextualize and nuance findings but did not speak to my questions. I workshopped initial coding with my research partners to refine the directions. The initial codebook and workshop drove the protocol design and selection of focal participants for the follow-up interviews and media reactions.

At the end of data collection phase II, I conducted focused coding of interview transcripts in dialogue with analytic memos and the literature to raise codes to the level of categories and drive analysis of subsequent data. I used NVivo to organize and code all interview data from

phases I-II, which totaled 820 pages of transcripts. Based on my theoretical interest in purpose-driven activities and narratives, I created four activity categories and five narrative categories. The activity categories are: Expanding political horizons; learning to hope in the everyday; composing desired worlds; and making sense of discourse. The narrative categories are: Narrating social languages; narrating socio-political relations; narrating shifts; narrating emotions; and narrating tools. I conducted iterative open and closed coding of 16 follow-up interview transcripts by applying the focused coding scheme and open coding new patterns, practices, and processes as codes and subcodes. I workshopped the focused codebook with my research partners and conducted member checks with study participants to co-create and validate findings (Heath & Street, 2008).

Throughout the final phase of data collection, I conducted iterative open and closed coding of interview transcripts and artifacts by applying the focused coding scheme with categories, codes, and subcodes validated across phases I-II. I used open coding primarily to refine the focused coding scheme to align with participant co-theorizing about valued activities and practices. For instance, it became increasingly clear, in talking with focal participants, that humor played an important role in both disrupting injustice and sustaining hope in the ability to create livable lives. In the final phase of data collection, I regularly conducted member checks with focal participants during virtual sessions to theorize with youth, co-create analytical directions, and construct findings that engage youth meanings.

In Chapter 4, I elaborate on the focused coding of interviews and describe subsequent analysis of semi-structured interviews, which involved iterative bottom-up and top-down analysis to refine the relationship among the categories and codes and construct analytical directions for the dissertation (Erickson, 2004; Sipe & Ghiso, 2004).

Analytic Video Logging

Once I developed the focused coding scheme based on analysis of interview transcripts and artifacts, I then analytically logged video data from media reactions and virtual sessions in spreadsheets with tags from the focused coding scheme (Marin & Bang, 2018). In analytic logs, I logged video data in three-to-five-minute intervals with a) brief description; b) note of artifacts used; c) tags and subtags that correspond to the focused categories and codes; d) data type; e) connection to other data I might use; f) descriptive notes; and g) analytic notes. For instance, in logging the videotaped media reaction with Helia, a 15-year-old Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Native pansexual trans girl, I used the focused codes "building felt relations" and "humor as political possibility" to tag a moment in which Helia heartily laughs along with YouTuber Mac Kahey and describes how she feels the same way that Mac feels when reacting to a right-wing political ad. In Chapter 5 and 6, I elaborate on the role of analytic video logging in the selection and analysis of data from media reactions and the digital artifact-based interviews.

Outlining Analytic Methods to Construct Findings

In each of the findings chapters, the analytic methods that were appropriate to answer my research questions varied, yet they share a common interest in employing stories to understand how youth participate in, and make meaning of, digital activities. In Chapter 4, I employ qualitative procedures in the grounded theory tradition with a focus on youth stories (Charmaz, 2014). The method enabled me to conceptualize youth practices grounded in the interview data through conducting iterative analysis over multiple cycles of coding, bottom-up and top-down analyses, and representational matrices. I began with youth stories of digital activities and their meanings to develop research questions, which drove further analysis. In evidencing these findings, I have strived to maintain the context of youth stories. In Chapter 5, I employ

qualitative analysis (Glasser, 1965) and interactional analysis methodologies (Jordan & Henderson, 1995; Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; Tulbert & Goodwin, 2011) with a narrative approach to analyze video data of media reactions from eight trans and queer youth of color participants and select an illustrative event from Helia, a 15-year-old Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Native pansexual trans girl. This approach facilitated close consideration of how Helia interacted with the video in the context of the media reaction, attuned to coordination of salient communicative modes that included talk, gesture, gaze, and other embodied modes. Whereas grounded theory enabled me to conceptualize literate practices across 37 participant interviews, interactional analysis facilitated sustained consideration of how one participant learned a multimodal choreography through interaction with a reaction video. Finally, in Chapter 6, I employ narrative analysis of stories that four focal youth constructed with digital artifacts to understand how they theorized disability in desired futures (Riessman, 2008; Gee, 1991). A narrative analysis approach allowed me to understand the thematic, structural, and interactional dimensions of youth narratives and how they constructed the narratives through interaction with digital artifacts.

By employing multiple analytic approaches focused on storying, I have constructed three clear interpretive windows into practices of livability toward elsewheres while maintaining a narrative style that invites complexity and positions youth as knowledge producers. One of the strengths of the qualitative study design was employing multiple interpretive practices to understand participants' digital activities, engagement with digital tools, and the meanings these activities and tools hold for youth. In developing empirical research questions and selecting analytic methods, I have chosen to focus on one interpretive practice and source of data per findings chapter. This focus made it possible to develop and demonstrate in-depth knowledge of

three qualitative analytical methods–grounded theory, interactional methodologies, and narrative analysis–in alignment with my research questions. In this way, the dissertation leverages the qualitative research design well, as it opens up different interpretive windows on the phenomena. Yet, the dissertation is also limited by a focus on one data source per chapter. Analyses that draw on multiple data sources would allow for richer descriptions of youth activities and their meaning. In the dissertation conclusion, I will elaborate on how I plan to employ multiple sources of data from the study in future analyses.

Chapter 4.
Learning to Laugh It Off: Humor in Digital Practices of Livability

"So there's this YouTuber" began Adrian, a 17-year-old Latinx and white gay trans boy, in response to a question of how social media has helped him understand his experiences with oppression. "His name is MacDoesIt."

I smiled in recognition, having watched many of Mac's videos on my own and through a virtual ethnography of LGBTQ+ reaction videos on YouTube (Shrodes, 2021). MacDoesIt or Mac Kahey is a Black gay man with more than 1.93 million subscribers and over 204 million video views as of Nov. 2019. He describes himself as a "satirical comedic vlogger." Mac also has a channel dedicated to reacting to anti-LGBTQ+ media. In these reaction videos, Mac watches and comedically reacts to oppressive media clips, like right-wing political advertisements and anti-LGBTQ+ religious media. "Oh yeah, yeah," I chimed in, noting my knowledge of Mac and as a gesture for Adrian to continue.

"Oh my gosh! He is so funny," Adrian responded, and continued. "He made a series of reacting to homophobic commercials because I'm gay, and just seeing his reaction and the commercials… His reactions to it are just like, they're very funny, and they make me laugh, but I also agree with him 100% on like ... his thoughts, because you just can't stop being it."

We laughed together, and I mentioned that I, too, had watched many of Mac's reaction videos, asking Adrian what he thought the humor means and accomplishes. Humor is ubiquitous in digital culture, a common feature in memes, video content, and posts that drives viral sharing and engagement (Nahon & Hemsley, 2013; Warren-Crow, 2016). In prior research, I argued that reaction videos resist dominant ideologies through satire and parody (Shrodes, 2021). The interview with Adrian was my second of 37 semi-structured interviews with 21 trans and queer

teens in a study of how trans and queer teens learn to negotiate social injustice through everyday participation on social media. In both of our interviews, Adrian talked at length about the role of humor in content that helped him get through the day and subvert the hate he encountered at school. I was happily surprised to hear reaction videos come up and was eager to hear from young people what these funny reactions to hate, and other forms of humor on social media, made possible in their lives.

While I was interested to understand the role of humor in counter-hegemonic practices that disrupt dominant ideologies, I quickly began to see that humor saturated numerous routine activities young people described across the interviews—many of which were not legible as resistant. Given my interest in humor and the ways it popped up in response to questions, I asked about and listened intently to the meanings youth narrated around funny digital artifacts and practices, asking follow-up questions like "What does the humor mean?" "Who do you find funny?" and "What does it *feel like* to engage with content that is funny?"

I grew to notice the roles that humor plays in digital practices through which trans and queer young people created livable lives in unlivable worlds–worlds shaped at every turn by interlocking structures of domination that include race, coloniality, class, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability. Humor can create critical distance from stigmatizing, oppressive ideologies to nurture livability (Halberstam, 2011; Muñoz, 1999; Lugones, 1987). It can also deliver moments of joy, ease, and comfort as young people negotiate persistent encounters with injustice. Disruptive forms of humor such as satire and parody may be more legible as forms of resistance and critical analysis. Even so, humor is central to many survival-rich practices that are obscured in some critical projects, practices that can be even more difficult to locate because they are embedded in off-stage processes of scrolling platforms, viewing videos, or lurking in online communities.

Ultimately, youth learned to practice humor to survive an untenable present and imagine a better future, and these practices offer glimpses of possible elsewheres: Expansive ways of being and organizing social life.

In this chapter, I consider humor in practices of livability toward elsewheres youth learn in everyday digital activities through qualitative analysis in the grounded theory tradition (Charmaz, 2014). I take up two research questions: 1) In what ways did teens describe the role of humor in routine digital practices that foster livability? And 2) how did teens narrate the meanings of humor in these practices? Through these questions, I seek to understand the joyful, critical, lighthearted, and ultimately life-affirming practices of humor that participants learned online, and what these practices may open up in their lives. I also examine friction within these activities, from navigating 'bad humor' used to prop up interlocking normativities to negotiating online surveillance and safety.

Conceptual Framings: Humor from Resistance to Livability

Within the orienting theoretical framework of livability toward elsewheres that I assembled in Chapter 2, in this chapter I draw on concepts that explicate the role of humor in queer and trans digital practices to construct livable lives against interlocking structures of hegemonic domination. Scholarship in queer and feminist studies has theorized humor as a tool to interrupt white, colonial, and cisheteronormative hegemony and perform other ways of being in community (Gould, 2009; Muñoz, 1999; Halberstam, 2011; Lugones, 1987). Queer of color critique theorist José Esteban Muñoz (1999) conceptualized humor as a "pedagogical and political project (p. xi). He elaborated, "comedy does not exist independently of rage" (Ibid, p. xi) and can be positioned as "a bid to take space in the social that has been colonized by the logics of white normativity and heteronormativity" (Ibid, p. xii). Queer and queer of color

comedic forms of satire and parody such as camp and *choteo* use humor to rewrite stereotypes, disrupt dominant logics, and enact queer worldmaking while avoiding "direct confrontation with phobic and reactionary ideologies" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 119; see also Muñoz, 1995). Queer and trans theorist Jack Halberstam (2011) considers the counterhegemonic possibilities of play, curiosity, and irreverence that emerge from queer experiences of failure, specifically failure to conform to hegemonic norms. Decolonial feminist Maria Lugones (2003) theorized playfulness among marginalized communities as a creative practice of openness necessary to travel across social worlds—"not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and delight" (p. 17). Across these conceptualizations, humor creates generative distance from hegemonic beliefs and norms to recognize hegemony, rupture consent to domination, and form oppositional communities.

My theorizing of livability with participants shifts the conceptual stream of queer humor from a focus on resistance to livability. Youth routinely named the need to nurture their own sense of possibility, belonging, and subversion through forms of humor as a condition necessary to engage in other forms of social action. Muñoz, Halberstam, and Lugones do consider the salience of humor in surviving interlocking structures of power, creating life across social spaces, and forming oppositional communities. However, they primarily construct humor as resistant—as a tool to rupture consent to domination, disrupt hegemony, and dismantle structures of power. The practices that I analyze in this chapter are not necessarily legible as resistance. Rather, these practices of humor that teens narrate are most concerned with nurturing livability within and beyond resistance. Though I conceptualize livability in Chapter 2, I want to name queer and trans studies scholars Z Nicolazzo and Andre Cavalcante's conceptualizations of resilience in trans communities here as key analytic frames that I employed to make sense of the

interviews. Building with a central tenet of Critical Trans Politics (Spade, 2015), namely trans resilience, Nicolazzo (2016, 2017) examined resilient strategies through which trans* college students survive and negotiate oppressive spaces. She conceptualizes resilience as a verb, a set of context-specific and social practices to persist in the face of gender binary discourse (Nicolazzo, 2016, p. 547). With a focus on media reception, Cavalcante (2018) similarly deploys resilience as a verb, attending to practices of resilient media reception through which trans viewers "rebound and rebuild their sense of self that popular discourses threaten to erode" (p. 128). Neither Nicolazzo nor Cavalcante found humor to be salient in their conceptualizations of resilience. Yet, their attention to resilience in relation to resistance shapes my understanding of how youth nurture livability through everyday digital media activities such as curating funny animal memes to get through the day. In this chapter, I explicate the role of humor in practices of livability as the foundation for projects that may dismantle structures of power and create desired communities. That is, youth routinely named the need to nurture their own sense of everyday possibility through forms of humor as a condition necessary to engage in other forms of social dreaming and activism. Humor has the potential to help youth insist upon futures otherwise, futures that are not determined at every turn by the enclosures of the present.

Analytic Method

I use qualitative procedures in the grounded theory tradition (Charmaz, 2014) to analyze interview data from semi-structured interviews with 21 participants and follow-up interviews with 16 focal participants conducted in research phases I-II from July 2019-January 2020. The interviews focused on everyday learning on social media relevant to gender and sexuality at the intersection of other social identities and structures of power. In conducting the interviews, I positioned myself as a listener and participant in a dialogical conversation meant to elicit, and

support the construction of, stories and meanings of everyday activities on social media (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017; Vossoughi & Zavala, 2020). The semi-structured interviews ranged from 60-75 minutes and follow-up interviews ranged from 25-40 minutes. I audio-recorded and transcribed the interviews, which provided 32 hours of recorded data and 820 single-spaced pages of interview transcripts.

After I developed the focused coding scheme, a process I describe in Chapter 3, I conducted iterative bottom-up and top-down analysis to refine the relationship among the categories and codes and construct analytical directions for the dissertation (Erickson, 2004; Sipe & Ghiso, 2004). In workshopping the focused coding scheme in dialogue with my advisors and research partners, I sensed that the focused categories and codes were fairly high-level. They captured the breadth of the data to guide further analytical directions but did not allow for an in-depth, nuanced analysis of activities and practices within activities. In conducting bottom-up analysis, I noticed that different forms and functions of humor were central across each of the four activity categories. That is, each activity category had a substantial code focused on humor.

In order to analytically and theoretically explicate humor in this chapter, I first developed research questions to focus on the role of humor within and across activities. I then created a new category titled “Mobilizing Humor in Practices of Livability” with the four codes focused on humor to construct findings that answer my research questions. Table 4.1 demonstrates how the four codes became a new focused category. I then re-coded all of the interviews with the category ‘Mobilizing Humor’ and codes in NVivo. As I re-coded, I developed an analytical memo for each participant to note which codes appeared salient in their interviews and how they spoke to, or pushed on, the codes.

Table 4.1. Category and codes focused on humor.

New Category		
Mobilizing humor in practices of livability		
Employing humor to nurture livability, or create livable lives in unlivable worlds. Attuned to how these practices gesture toward other possibilities for personal, social, and political life.		
Former Category	**Code**	**Definition**
Expanding Political Horizons	**Enacting humor as political possibility**	'Laughing off' and performing humorous responses to experiences with oppression, and the political horizons these practices make possible.
Learning to Hope	**Cultivating hope through laughter**	Queuing, bookmarking, or saving funny videos or memes for when they are having a tough time.
Composing Desired Worlds	**Composing felt relations through humor**	Developing a desired sense of emotional connection or felt belonging through funny memes, texts, and linguistic forms seen or exchanged through social media.
Making Sense of Discourse	**Navigating bad humor**	Navigating instances when humor is homophobic, transphobic, and racist, and when creators use humor to be mean, such as when the funny tone of a digital artifact is in bad taste, inappropriate, or mean spirited.

After re-coding the interviews in NVivo, the files coded and reference frequency count were fairly evenly distributed across the interviews, with the category 'Mobilizing Humor' overall coding 31 files with 119 references. However, to center the experiences of Black, Indigenous, people of color, trans women, and non-binary participants, I created three matrices to examine and refine the relationship between the categories, codes, participants, and participant groups marginalized by race or gender. These matrices include files coded 1) across participants; 2) across racial identities; 3) and across gender identities. The matrix helped elucidate whether or not the codes equitably appeared across participant group files. Although 1-4 humor codes appeared for each participant, with an average of three codes used per participant file, I noticed a

few gaps in the interview coding. Specifically, I noticed that I had not used the 'humor as political possibility' code with eight participants who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or Asian American and/or trans women and non-binary—Cassidy, Indigo, Jacob, Lith, Mateo, Niko, October, and Stevie. I decided to re-code these interviews to make sure I did not miss any instances that should be coded and to see if the interviews with these participants can nuance the codes or demonstrate disconfirming evidence. In reviewing interviews from these eight participants with an eye toward humor, I coded a handful of moments in the interviews with greater granularity, adding codes for 'humor as political possibility' and 'bad humor.' In the process, I also memoed around the ways the interviews might demonstrate limits or tensions within the findings more broadly.

Finally, I conducted 'top-down' or whole-to-part analysis of data and wrote analytic memos to explore the nuance, complexity, and variation of practices within the codes (Erickson, 2004). Specifically, I wanted to trace the practices within the activity, as well as the disconfirming evidence or limits of the code. I also wanted to better understand how humor functioned within and across purpose-driven activities. Top-down analysis, which involves "parsing from larger analytic constructs to smaller constituent ones," often in ways that consider lines of contrast or differentiation, and memoing enabled me to trace literate practices, tensions, and functions of humor within the larger category and codes (Erickson, 2004, p. 492). Table 4.2 displays the final frequency of the category and codes across the files and notes the range of practices articulated under the code. The analytic process led me to the three sets of practices and their meanings I discuss in the findings, namely cultivating hope through laughter, composing felt relations, and enacting humor as political possibility. While three of the focused codes

adequately described the findings I forward, I weave practices and meanings coded under 'navigating bad humor' through the findings to nuance the activity.

Table 4.2. Thematic categorization of humor in the interviews.

Category (files, # of instances)	Coding Practices of Humor (files, # of instances)
Mobilizing Humor in Practices of Livability (31 files, 125 instances) *Practices through which teens deploy humor to create livable lives in unlivable worlds, with attunement to how these practices gesture toward other possibilities for organizing personal, social, and political life.*	**Learning to Hope Through Laughter** (24 files, 38 instances) • *Curating funny digital tools to chill out and cheer up.* • *Following funny LGBTQ+ peer-age content creators and role models to foster hope for the present and future.*
	Composing Felt Relations Through Memes (19 files, 41 instances) • *Recognizing identity through shared feelings.* • *Creating belonging through felt relations of humor.* • *Communicating feelings and affirming recognition in community.*
	Enacting Humor as Political Possibility (17 files, 24 instances) • *'Laughing off' encounters with social injustice.* • *Using humor to engage with and understand 'heavy' social justice issues.*
	Navigating Bad Humor (15 files, 20 instances) • *Avoiding anti-LGBTQ+ jokes and appeals to humor.* • *Negotiating making fun of identity within trans communities* • *Resisting over-monetization and professionalization of funny vloggers.*

Findings Overview: Mobilizing Humor in Practices of Livability

In dialogue with my theoretical framework of livability toward elsewheres and conceptual framings of humor, I find that teens enact three primary practices of livability that center humor. First, teens *cultivated hope through laughter* by curating funny digital artifacts (e.g., random memes, animal GIFs, gaming videos) that helped them get through the day and by following comical LGBTQ+ peer-age content creators and older role models through which they survived the present and imagined the future. I will further explicate the role of digital artifacts

and role models in mediating personal and social dreams for the future in Chapter 6. Second, I find teens *composed felt relations* in LGBTQ+ communities through humorous memes that amplified emotion and fostered mutual recognition. Though I explore how teens shared memes to communicate and validate feelings in online communities, I focus on the practices of lurking youth described as meaningful to relate to others and feel recognizable in LGBTQ+ communities through viewing memes. Third, I find that youth learned to *enact humor as political possibility*, demonstrating the role of humor in creating critical distance from oppressive ideologies and nurturing feelings of power, joy, and ease in the face of injustice. By attending to the narrated enactments and meanings of humor as political possibility in the lives of participants, I extend the conceptualization I articulated in my second-year project by emphasizing the role of reaction videos in offering radical joy as a way to *feel* about injustice that nurtures livability against a backdrop of persistent encounters with hate. I will further take up and elucidate radical joy as a political feeling in Chapter 5. Throughout, I examine the tensions that arise within these activities, from navigating 'bad humor' used to prop up interlocking normativities to negotiating online surveillance and safety.

Cultivating Hope Through Laughter

Nurturing hope through laughter—be it hope for the next moment, for trans romance, for life after high school, for a better world—was a routine activity for many participants. Almost all of the teens in the study (17 of 21) narrated the importance of funny posts, videos, and content creators on social media in constructing hope for the everyday and the future. They described the humor relevant to hope with illustrative words like *chill, ridiculous, random, cute, hilarious,* and *happy*. Within the activity, two sets of literate practices became most salient. First, youth narrated practices of curating funny digital artifacts such as random memes, gaming videos, and

animal GIFs on their devices (phones, tablets, laptops) for moments in which they or others needed to decompress or feel better. Second, youth described following funny trans and queer peer-age content creators and older role models on social media to survive the present and imagine the future. These practices are complicated by the need to navigate mean-spirited humor in online communities, as well as by the dominant logics of platforms themselves.

Curating Humor to Cheer Up

Many teens described curating humorous digital artifacts that they could later share and use to laugh, to chill out, or to get through the day. The archives of screenshots, bookmarks, or downloads saved to their devices served as artifacts that they used intentionally to feel better. Mateo, a 15-year-old Puerto Rican bisexual trans boy, shared that he had more than 2,000 screenshots saved to his phone, most of which are "random memes" and "pictures of guinea pigs." He has six pet guinea pigs. In addition to random humor and funny animal content described by Mateo and other participants, some teens described witty gaming videos and content that stirs up feelings of nostalgia. For instance, 15-year-old African American sexually fluid trans boy Kingsley described re-watching YouTube videos about Blockbuster video stores "over and over again" to "bring back good memories." Though the artifacts varied, the practices of archiving media as tools for feeling better and sparking hope remained consistent.

For many teens, the randomness of memes and some video content helped lift their spirits through absurdity and lightheartedness. Indigo, a 17-year-old Quechua and white participant who described their gender and sexuality in multiple ways, including non-binary and queer, described how they began to view random, funny memes in high school, when they encountered heightened cisheteronormativity and white normativity at a small, predominately white private school. They added in funny content on YouTube, where the length of the videos helped to pass

the time and decompress when they were feeling down. They elaborated on the meanings of watching videos with random humor:

> It's kind of a reminder that not everything is such a dire situation and that you can still make light of a lot of things in your life. So kind of... just to make myself realize that I'm being more of a downer on myself than anybody else is, than what the actual situation is.

For Indigo, humor in videos offers moments of ease that lift the heaviness, creating enough distance to approach the situation from a new perspective. Random videos can be a tool to feel lighter, and to "make light" everyday experiences of cisheteronormativity and white normativity. Stevie, a 13-year-old Mexican American questioning non-binary kid, similarly described watching "YouTube, a lot" to feel happy or calm down, with content they followed including animation, music, and "these funny videos that I'm subscribed to," like quirky Brazilian Canadian YouTuber Joana Ceddia's channel. Alongside watching "mostly ridiculous videos" on YouTube, they described saving memes as "things that make me happy."

Curating funny memes, GIFs, and videos of animals came up frequently as teens narrated learning to hope. Funny animal content offered ease and connection with others, as they often exchanged animal GIFs or videos with friends. In response to a question about what made him laugh recently, Kieran, a 19-year-old white gay trans man, described "this really funny video" of a cat loudly yelling, a video that his friend shared with him. He elaborated, "that's kind of where most of my entertainment comes from, it's just cats… I really empathize with cats because cats are kind of this misunderstood animal. Everyone thinks they're evil, they're aloof, or anything. But really, they just have boundaries and enforce them." For Kieran, the process of curating animal videos is deeply social and relational, as the videos become ways to relate to friends and

relate to the cats themselves. Like the guinea pig memes that Mateo curates, Kieran saves funny, cute content from an animal close to his heart.

Some participants explicitly described saving and sharing memes and GIFs of funny animal moments to help them get through the day. This practice is demonstrated vividly by the narrative from Eric, a 17-year-old Mexican American gay trans boy. Eric talked repeatedly about saving funny memes and videos through screenshots and bookmarks on his phone to "cheer myself up or cheer other people up" through sharing the artifact with them. When I asked him to tell me about the last time that he pulled up something funny to cheer himself up, he shared:

> Probably today. I don't know exactly what time, but it was probably at school.... I've been obsessed with this video lately on Twitter that I just can't stop watching, where it's this ferret and someone making it dance to music. They're just kind of cradling it in their hand and making it sway to music. I've been obsessed with that video, so I just always... That's my go to video right now. I'll just go through my bookmarks and watch that video, and I just laugh about it.

Here, Eric describes curating artifacts on social media so that he can return to the moments of joy that they circulate. The dancing ferret video, as his "go to video right now," became a tool to mediate his own emotional experience, delivering a moment of lightness that made persistence possible. He went on to describe that artifacts bookmarked to his phone offer reprieve and hope for the rest of the day: "I always just go through that if I'm ever having a tough time or anything like that. I always go through it and I'm like, 'Oh, I feel better now.'" He elaborated that the practice of bookmarking cheerful artifacts is almost automatic now, saying "I don't even think about it."

Finally, a handful of youth commonly described gaming videos as funny artifacts that they would routinely queue to watch. The interviews with Isaiah, a 17-year-old Puerto Rican and white gay trans guy, elucidates this practice. In both interviews, I asked Isaiah to walk me through something funny. On each occasion, he described gaming videos, specifically from a YouTuber named Call Me Kevin. When I first asked him "What YouTubers do you watch when you're wanting to laugh?" he responded, "When I'm sad, I watch the video game ones to be honest." Against the broader pattern of curating hope through laughter, I read this moment in two ways. First, this moment indicates to me that curating humor to cheer up is an important practice of hope that teens have learned through experiences with sadness and through participation in online communities that construct humor as a response to sadness. Second, I understand from Isaiah's comment that gaming videos have *felt* resonance with teens; watching them accomplishes important emotional work. Isaiah went on to emphasize that funny gaming videos are not only common but often more popular.

Following Funny Peers and Role Models to Foster Hope

If curating funny artifacts is a practice to cheer up for the next moment, practices of following funny LGBTQ+ content creators cultivate hope for the future. Some teens followed trans and queer peers their age or slightly older on YouTube and TikTok as they document daily humor, like finding a toad in the yard. As Dominic, a 17-year-old white bisexual gender nonconforming trans boy described of LGBTQ+ creators TikTok, "It's just a lot of random people who are trying their best… It makes me happy to see these people who are LGBTQ just being themselves, being goofy." Other teens described following funny older role models who opened up possible futures and served as beacons for life beyond high school. Across these

examples, teens describe that the content creators' honest portraits of everyday life—their realness—helped mediate hope to survive the present and imagine the future.

Though TikTok was growing in popularity and among LGBTQ+ content creators, at the time of the interviews most teens talked about the amusing "everyday vlogs" on trans YouTube. For instance, multiple trans boys talked specifically about the significance of following Storm Ryan, a trans gay guy YouTuber who was 19 at the time of the interviews, to cultivate hope for the present and near future. Whereas Storm Ryan has been a controversial figure in the trans community because of his normative or trans medicalist views of trans identity, he had recently started to post funny everyday vlogs, to welcome reception. Noah, a 14-year-old white gay trans boy shared, "I didn't follow him when he was very controversial... But he started making kind of just more content with his boyfriend and I find it really funny. They paint or they make a vegan burrito and I'm like, 'Cool. Vegan burritos.'" Adrian similarly narrated his embrace of Storm Ryan's vlogs that highlight quotidian humor. He elaborated, "It's just him dealing with everyday things. And most of the time being trans isn't even the main point of his videos, it's just a fact that he is, and this is what he does in his life."

Teens also described following funny, older LGBTQ+ role models who opened up windows into the future. In analysis, these moments were cross-coded with the code 'anticipating futures,' a code under the broader focused category of 'learning to hope.' A number of teens described role model videos that celebrate life milestones (e.g., gender-confirming surgeries, graduations, engagements, etc.) as significant to help them imagine the future. Here, I focus on teens' discussion of humor in following role models to construct hope for the future. For instance, Helia, a 15-year-old Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Native pansexual trans girl, described following funny, cute love stories from older LGBTQ+ content creators that gave

her hope through shared experience: “Some of the funny things it's like, ‘Oh my God, that is hilarious about LGBTQ.’ Because we do feel like that. And watching the cute stuff, it’s like it gives me some hope about... It gives me even more hope about love and dating. Even if you're LGBTQ.” Watching the funny love stories of LGBTQ+ people ahead of her sparked hope for her own future.

Older teens reflected on the significance of funny, authentic YouTubers in helping their younger selves imagine the future. Nineteen-year-old Cassidy’s story helps to elucidate the power of role models as beacons of possibility. A white non-binary person who identified as queer and lesbian, Cassidy turned to YouTube for queer content as a way to navigate anti-queer and anti-trans humor they encountered at school and across the internet. Cassidy vividly storied the significance of watching a community of “gay vloggers” on YouTube when they were in middle school: “A lot of it was getting to see the lives of older queer people, who are like 20, 25, who have been through extreme bullying in the ‘90s in high school and stuff like that. And they came out of it, and they were okay. They were living their lives.” In contrast to the gay vloggers who were polished or “cultivated,” Cassidy preferred vloggers who were funny, real, and irreverent. Arielle Scarcella, a cis lesbian YouTuber who has since become infamous for transphobic views, stood out against the other YouTubers and mainstream representation of lesbians as “manicured women.” Arielle was “silly,” “weird,” and “funny.” Cassidy described having to watch “so many of her videos” to feel like being lesbian was possible.

Gay vloggers not only helped Cassidy imagine the possibility of being queer; the creators also helped them imagine the future. They theorized:

> They were kind of like my tether that I was holding onto when I was like, "I'm going to survive this horrible, very, very, bad middle school where I get made fun of every single day".... I was like, "Okay I'm holding on to that, I'm going to crawl out of that."

YouTube channels became concrete portals or, in Cassidy's words, "aspiration zones," to a better life. Through routinely watching unpolished portrayals of their everyday lives, Cassidy could begin to imagine beyond the enclosure of an unlivable present, toward a future that felt tangible. The authenticity of the video portrayals facilitated the imaginative leaps Cassidy describes, offering enough specificity such that Cassidy could say, "I'm going to be like *that*, I'm going to be like *that.*" I read Cassidy's repetition of "like that," alongside their story of watching "so many of her videos" to feel like being queer was possible, as an indication that the repetition of routine video viewing was also an important part of developing concrete portals into the future. Through routine watching, and through the funny realness of the videos, they practiced imagining forward.

The potential of video platforms like YouTube to nurture practices of livability is constrained by platform designs, as well as by ongoing dynamics within online communities. Many teens talked about the limits of YouTube as a platform, naming algorithms that suppress, demonetize, and censor trans and queer content (Burgess & Green, 2018). A few teens did not like how corporatized and monetized the platform had become, resisting the rise of professional "YouTubers." Curtis, a 19-year-old white gay trans man, stood out in this regard, describing himself as "anti-YouTuber." Instead, he follows drag queen comedy on YouTube. Cassidy and other teens described limits in YouTube's creator community and their ability to serve as role models, most significantly being that most popular creators continue to be white, and that trans YouTube has increasingly been dominated by mean-spirited 'discourse.' Most trans youth of

color described Instagram and Twitter as platforms with greater queer and trans people of color representation. Some teens, including Cassidy, have moved away from or do not watch trans content on YouTube because of the discourse, while others describe learning to navigate it and the forms of bad humor that can dominate the conversation. Noah and Adrian both emphasized that the tone of the video matters, pointing out that videos that make fun of people or views in rude, aggressive ways are part of the problem. A YouTuber who is funny in one video can be offensive in the next, as the kind of humor and the topic shifts.

Composing Felt Relations

Participants storied the role of memes and other affectively rich forms in composing felt relations—feelings of identification, mutual recognition, belonging, and solidarity in communities. When I asked 18-year-old white Jewish bisexual trans guy Harlow to describe what Twitter conversations look like, he shared, “I mean it’s a lot of just relating back to one another through memes and stuff. It’s very Gen Z.” Other teens similarly described memes as a tool for mutual recognition: To see themselves, to see others, and to be seen in return. Memes tend to be amusing or funny, yet teens emphasized that memes can speak to a wide range of emotions. Harlow, who theorized at length about memes, described the humor of memes as a way “to bring more emotion out of what you’re saying, or just to joke around or make light of something that could be upsetting or frustrating.” He shared that people often use memes ironically, in ways that subvert the ostensible meaning of the meme.

Most teens (17 of 21) broadly described using memes to create felt relations, and the analysis revealed three sets of practices youth narrated within the activity. First, youth narrated practices of perusing memes to recognize their identities through shared feelings. Second, youth described practices to create belonging through humor, often through lurking rather than posting.

Third, teens talked about posting memes to communicate feelings to, and be affirmed by, their virtual communities. For a number of participants, communicating feelings is complicated by their needs to negotiate online surveillance and safety, given experiences of, or fear for, harassment and bullying because of trans or queer identities.

Viewing Emotive Content to Explore and Recognize Identities

In telling me the story of when they first got on social media, often around the age of 10-11, many participants narrated practices of viewing memes to explore and, ultimately, recognize their gender and sexual identities. Adrian emphasized that the process of recognizing himself in the trans community through memes was not the same as seeing himself in a mirror, sharing, "I'm not them; I'm just me. But they're also trans, and their feelings related a lot to mine, especially before I started transitioning and before I really came out." Through the reframing "I'm just me," Adrian shuts down anti-trans narratives that frame social media as a form of "social contagion" for trans identification. I, too, refuse anti-trans narratives, instead seeking to lift up the importance of social media for trans and queer young people to understand who they are in a cisheteronormative context that renders their identities unthinkable and unknowable. Queer media scholar F. Hollis Griffin (2016) makes a related argument about queer identities, emphasizing, "no matter how loving and supportive one's family may be, to experience same-sex desire while growing up in a heteronormative culture is to doubt what you know about yourself" (p. 1). Like many participants, Niko, a 14-year-old Asian American and white asexual demiboy, learned the word 'trans' on social media. He emphasized that he values LGBTQ+ content on social media because "you never really hear about these LGBT topics." He continued, "You don't really learn about it in everyday life. I mean, you could go your whole life without really knowing about these things."

Teens described seeking out anonymous social media platforms like Reddit or Tumblr to better understand who they are and how they feel. Reddit is a public forum site in which any anonymous user can create and host a subreddit; Tumblr is an anonymous microblogging social networking site anchored by visual content. Bailey, a 17-year-old white lesbian trans girl, explained that the anonymity of a site is important: "Instagram and Snapchat, like the rest of my whole school is on there. Everyone I know is on there and I think it would be difficult to stay anonymous." Unlike platforms like Instagram that use algorithms that can 'out' users through suggesting them to others as 'People You May Know,' platforms like Reddit became relatively anonymous spaces to explore feelings. Kieran described checking out profiles, discussions, and funny memes on Tumblr to give shape to his feelings when he was first beginning to explore gender and sexuality:

> They would be like, "This is for people who feel like this." And I'd be like, "Okay, I can vibe with that." But also, I would see things about being bisexual and I'm like, "Okay, I vibe with that, okay. I understand." It was a succession of drawing me first with my sexuality, and then leading, because they had things on there about gender as well, leading into gender.

Kieran's description of 'drawing me' indicates how seeing his own feelings reflected back to him through social media helped him both understand and step into his identity. Memes and visual content on Tumblr help transform amorphous feelings into sketches of self. Seeing his feelings shared by others on social media also helped Kieran feel less alone in his experience: "I can remember what it's like to feel like you're very alone in your experience, and that, yeah, there are other people, but they're halfway across the world, or they're in a city and there's only a couple people. Now, the experience is like, there's trans people everywhere." Despite the potential traps

of trans visibility (Fischer, 2019; Tourmaline et al., 2017; Nicolazzo, 2020), Kieran has been able to move from isolation to community through seeing trans communities on social media.

For Bailey and others, Reddit became the primary site to initially explore her identity. Teens described visiting a handful of subreddits that focus on trans experience broadly, specific trans communities, and stages in trans realization. All of the subreddits that teens described to me are memes pages in which the vast majority of posts are funny, sometimes self-deprecating memes. Bailey described seeing a meme about what it's like to be a trans girl that sparked an important moment of recognition. She elaborated:

> So it started me thinking about what it meant or started with me kind of understanding what being trans meant. It helped me get from not really understanding how I was feeling to being able to recognize it and understand my identity in a much better way and it led to me getting and starting with seeing a therapist and stuff like that.

Memes on trans subreddits became a way to understand her feelings and see them articulated as shared by other trans girls. Bailey went on to describe that, looking back, some of the memes played on stereotypes. She commonly saw "trans girl bingo cards" that would include things like "plays female characters in video games." She described, "I mean, it's stereotypical, but it helped me understand what being trans actually was." For Bailey, the memes and joking content were not communicating factual information but were rather giving shape to shared feelings that helped her understand what being trans *felt* like, and that she was not alone in her feelings. Similar to Kieran, these memes also helped her to recognize that she was not alone in her feelings.

Creating Belonging Through Felt Humor

The practice of relating to others also helped teens create a sense of belonging in LGBTQ+ communities. Many teens described memes as tools to relate to each other—to see others and be seen through processes of mutual recognition. Yet, sometimes mutual recognition was tacit, less an experience of being seen and more an experience of feeling recognizable through seeing others like you. Niko, a quiet teen who did not often post content on social media, began using Reddit and Twitter for the "good memes." As I sought to understand with Niko what made a "good meme" good—and what was good about memes—the focus quickly shifted to the forms of community that memes can foster. He described meme pages and accounts on Reddit and Twitter as valuable digital spaces to see "other people that relate to what you're feeling, because it's not often in middle school or elementary school that you have a bunch of people who relate to you in the same way." Here, *seeing* others who express similar feelings through memes can create the experience of people relating to you—can spark mutual recognition. He went on to add that Reddit and Twitter have "communities of people who are feeling the same thing, and like relating and stuff." Good memes function to bring people together into communities, here LGBTQ+ communities, around felt relations, often through humor. Even though Niko described his participation as mostly lurking, not posting or replying to content, he felt like he was a part of these online communities. He shared, "there are people like you too that are there. It's not just you alone."

Helia and Indigo also described turning to digital spaces filled with memes and other affective images to feel recognizable as part of LGBTQ+ communities in ways that they did not experience in school. For Helia, that meant browsing queer and trans romantic web comics on Web Toons and her LGBTQ+ subscriptions on Snapchat, a video-based instant messaging and stories app. When I asked why these spaces spoke to her, she said, "It's just like … me" and

laughed. I asked her to elaborate on what the platforms *feel* like, which prompted her to theorize that the images foster the possibility of LGBTQ+ recognition against the cisheteronormative erasure in schools:

Helia: It feels like a community that I can actually agree with because... Back where it was just like, 'you're either boy or girl, and you're straight,' basically. That's basically what they all told you. But then, I started learning about this stuff, and I'm just like, 'Yaaasss.' All the other ones are boring.

Addie: It's almost like this dynamic community that you see yourself in? Is that right?

Helia: Yeah. Not that I have a problem with that, but other people who probably go through some experiences just like mine, so I'm just like, 'I see you.'

Addie: Yeah. And, you feel seen by them, too?

Helia: I guess. I might post something, if I ever do.

In this multifaceted interaction, Helia indicates that lurking, paradoxically, sparks a moment of mutual recognition by creating the possibility for her to see herself in others who are trans and queer—a possibility that often does not exist in cisheteronormative schools. The questions I asked in the interviews often privileged legible practices of posting and engagement, which may have shaped how Helia understood my question of feeling seen and response that linked feeling seen with posting. As research unfolded, I have grown to recognize that lurking is also a meaningful practice for young people. By recognizing others, Helia and other teens narrated that they were able to *feel* recognizable in a community. Indigo, for instance, described seeing

LGBTQ+ video memes in Marvel fan culture as meaningful precisely because they "never had role models who were LGBTQ and nobody in my life was." The memes captured funny, awkward, and ultimately relatable moments with a queer twist. Indigo shared, "Because I'm a funny, awkward person too, so it's kind of like, okay, 'I see you,' kind of thing." By seeing people like them positioned within the Marvel LGBTQ+ fan community, they also felt like part of it. The phrase "I see you" indicates a feeling of mutual recognition, without needing to be visible through a post.

Stevie turned to the virtual community app Amino for reasons similar to Niko, Indigo, and Helia: To feel like a part of a community. The content that Stevie and others described was more wide-reaching than memes and included digital art, written posts, or selfies. Yet, these images were affectively rich, mediating felt relations in ways that generatively extend humorous memes. For Stevie as well, participation in digital space was primarily one of viewership. Stevie had recently deleted the Amino app, but they described that the time they spent on the app "kind of impacted me a lot." They shared, "I got to read all of these beautiful posts that were poems, or art, or stories, or coming-out experiences. I just realized, 'Whoa. This [being LGBTQ+] is happy, this is amazing." The range of content not only helped Stevie feel happy; it also brought them into felt relations with the broader LGBTQ+ community. They felt part of a collective sense of joy. Stevie further narrated that scrolling through the content reassured them as they were figuring out their sexual orientation and gender identity. A textual post that read, "You don't have to know who you are overnight" helped them feel more at ease about questioning their gender and sexuality. They recounted that they felt like they could be a part of the community even when they did not have all of the answers.

Using Memes to Share and Validate Feelings

Most teens described lurking on platforms to feel belonging, but a handful of teens narrated practices of posting memes to communicate and be validated in their feelings. Harlow ran a K-pop fandom Twitter account engaged with social issues, such as trans rights, immigration, and the Black Lives Matters movement. He narrated that most of the conversations on Twitter are "relating back to one other through memes." On Twitter, he explained, people post or engage with memes to "validate other users and their feelings." He described that the humor of gender memes is mainly self-deprecating. Even so, Harlow also positioned memes and self-deprecating humor as a Gen Z phenomenon that may arise from a "satiric pessimistic look on life or just the world around them," saying "everybody uses them, no matter what they're going through." Other teens talked about "hilarious" self-deprecation memes across social media platforms. Jacob, a 16-year-old Afro-Puerto Rican and white gay trans boy, described the practice of posting them as "meme venting," explaining "laughing about it helps. It does. It helps me a lot." In a wry turn that followed what he described of Gen Z pessimism, Harlow emphasized the potential drawback of "everyone" using memes and phrases like "mood" or "same" as ways to relate to others: "it's lost so much meaning, it's just like, who actually relates?" Yet, he agreed that it was important for Gen Z to "relate to each other."

While Jacob and Harlow primarily talked about self-deprecating memes to share and laugh about feelings, Cassidy and Rowan used memes and images to share what Cassidy described as "instantaneous feelings"—the everyday range of emotions. Cassidy, who was involved in digital art communities on Tumblr and Instagram, described a practice of posting fan art with captions that communicated feelings in high school. They shared:

> I never really talked about how my day was going, normally, like, to other people. And I was very much an introvert, but on my page I would post a picture of a fan art and

> underneath it I would caption like, 'Oh I had a weird day today, someone said something to me at lunch, and it was really gross, and weird or something,' and then I would hit post.

Fanart memes with captions served as a tool to communicate feelings, often feelings Cassidy could not express elsewhere, and be seen by members of an online community. Cassidy went on to describe that the fan art could be incongruous with the event or feelings described, what Harlow described as using memes in "an opposite way." In fact, Cassidy theorized that mainstream meme culture followed "nerdy culture," such that the ironic use of memes began in fan art communities. Cassidy often used Harry Potter fan art that did not line up with the caption. For them, the Harry Potter fan community became a resource to circulate fan art and be validated in their everyday feelings.

For many teens, being able to share feelings in virtual communities is troubled at every turn by forms of online surveillance increasingly built into platform algorithms, though some teens find ways around the surveillance. As LGBTQ+ communities underwent an exodus from Tumblr as the platform implemented policies against 'adult' content that effectively censored LGBTQ+ content, some teens in the study described using multiple accounts on Instagram for live journaling purposes. Fourteen-year-old white gay trans guy Rowan and other teens described using private "Finsta" or "spam" accounts on Instagram to share everyday feelings with a close community of followers. "It's like where you post rants," Rowan described, adding that his private spam account had a much smaller set of followers than his "Rinsta" (real Instagram) or "main" account. Some of the "rants" reflected happier moments. Rowan elaborated, "Like, yesterday, I just kind of posted, like, 'Not to sound narcissistic, but I kind of popped off today,' because I dressed relatively cute yesterday, and I got my braces off." Rowan has found a way

around Instagram's publicness and can share what Cassidy describes as "instantaneous feelings" with close friends.

For other teens, forms of online surveillance that can lead to harassment have made it difficult to communicate any feelings online. Tumblr made anonymous accounts easy to create and host. Instagram, under the Facebook portfolio, relies on an algorithm that collects data from social networks, online activity, and contacts to recommend "People You May Know." Ostensibly a way to connect users to friends and family, the algorithm serves as a wide-reaching form of social surveillance that effectively outed many of the participants who created anonymous accounts (Cho, 2018). Online surveillance was experienced more tenuously by teens of color in the study, who also navigate racialized surveillance and violence (Benjamin, 2019). Mateo and Kingsley, for instance, both deleted anonymous Instagram accounts they created to connect with trans communities and participate in trans advocacy online because peers at school found the account through the "People You May Know" feature. Kingsley has had to move schools multiple times because of being outed online and experiencing severe bullying. Now, he has deleted everything online that mentions his trans identity, made his account private, and does not use hashtags, include his pronouns in his bio, or any other symbolic resources that might publicly position him as trans. For some youth, practices of livability must involve finding ways to stay anonymous. Indeed, amid systems of surveillance and control, invisibility can be a rhetorical strategy to negotiate and challenge powered conditions of disbelonging (Cedillo, 2020). Kingsley shared that his online trans friends understood his need for safety, but that going private had prevented him from continuing to connect with trans communities online. He added, "I will probably post when I'm out of high school or feel safe to do so."

Enacting Humor as Political Possibility

In youth stories, humor can create critical distance from oppressive ideologies and nurture feelings of power, joy, and lightness in the face of social injustice. Around half of the teens in the study (10 of 21) narrated learning to use humor to interrupt oppression. Elsewhere, I have theorized humor as political possibility through analysis of LGBTQ+ reaction videos (Shrodes, 2021). Here, I trace the ways in which humor sparks political possibility in everyday digital activities and consider how performances of humor offer the specific feeling of radical joy. Radical joy is a willful happiness grounded refusal of dominant ideologies and insistence on trans and queer ways of being (Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit). Youth made explicit that humor as political possibility is a social process—that they learned humor as a practice and radical joy as a feeling by watching reaction videos and participating in online communities that respond to hate through humor. Within the activity, two sets of literate practices became clear. First, teens storied learning to 'laugh off' encounters with oppression through watching LGBTQ+ reaction videos. Second, youth described learning to use humor to understand and discuss their experiences with hate and social justice issues in virtual communities. I also attend to the limitations youth named in these practices, including the need for some youth to more fully make sense of the ideologies that shape phobic encounters and the desire among many for broad-based education and advocacy efforts to confront hegemonic ideologies.

'Laughing off' Encounters with Social Injustice

Teens narrated stories of learning to 'laugh off' encounters with hate and hegemonic ideologies by watching LGBTQ+ reaction videos on YouTube. The form of satirical humor varies by video makers, from subtle sarcasm to expressive performances (see also Shrodes, 2021). Yet, dynamic performances of humor as political possibility sparked realizations for young people and modeled new ways of responding to, and feeling about, encounters with social

injustice. As Noah described of watching a softly whispered autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) reading of hate comments from MacDoesIt, "I found that video, and I was like, "Oh, so we can *joke* about things that we don't like?!" Oh, that's, *yes*." YouTuber and self-described "satirical comedic vlogger" MacDoesIt came up spontaneously in many interviews and was particularly influential for young people. I was struck by how teens described the meaning of Mac's public pedagogy in learning how to laugh off encounters with hate. Helia elucidated the wide resonance of humor in Mac's videos: "Because everyone has a sense of humor, but it's just a matter of how they have it."

Adrian's story of watching Mac's videos powerfully underlines the role of satirical humor in reaction videos in opening up forms of political possibility and radical joy. Adrian attended a predominately white Catholic school in a small Midwest town where he experienced persistent homophobia, transphobia, and racism until his junior year in high school. He then transferred to an alternative school a two-hour bus ride away to finish his diploma. Adrian shared about Mac's videos, "the commercials are pretty much exactly what my school was like. A lot of them are very religious and saying that you need to just stop being gay. His reactions to it are just like, they're funny, and they made me laugh, and I also agree with him 100%."

Adrian went on to vividly describe the meaning of satire in Mac's videos—how it makes him "feel a lot better" through a sense of power and control over his reactions to oppression. He theorized:

> Watching those videos helped me learn to laugh a lot of that stuff off, because back in middle school, when a lot of stuff was being said, I couldn't stop thinking about it. It just made me a very angry and upset person. And being able to see someone be so

> lighthearted throughout all of these videos that are just basically bashing his entire existence was sort of like a, "Wow, like that's really cool how he can do that."

Here, Adrian troubled assumptions that humor might be an innate response to hate, making clear that humor as political possibility is a social process—a practice learned with others and through participation in collective struggles. Adrian went on to narrate with a broad smile how he also learned to use humor to disrupt his experiences with social injustice through watching Mac's videos. These practices helped him take back control over "what gets to you" and open up new avenues for agency. That "made me happy a lot," he added of learning the feeling of radical joy and the practice of mobilizing humor to interrupt oppressive views. Mac's videos offered Adrian a different configuration of emotions to reach for and a new set of practices to enact in negotiating stigmatizing ideologies.

Noah similarly described that Mac's videos and other reaction videos from LGBTQ+ YouTubers helped him learn to laugh off encounters with hate and validated his own use of humor as a coping skill. In our follow-up interview, I returned to an instance Noah had mentioned of watching Mac's ASMR reaction to hate comments video, asking Noah to walk me through "what felt meaningful and made you laugh." Noah animatedly described how Mac's response validated and deepened how he has used humor to respond to transphobic hate comments, like being called "It." He described of watching the video:

> I related to Mac a lot. Part of my reaction was just like, "Oh, this is actually really funny. This is a good idea to react to the hate comments, because it shows that hate comments don't really have any power over you." But it was also like I felt hyped up, because Mac was like, "Those aren't real. Don't take those seriously." And I was like, "*Yeah*, you *shouldn't* take those seriously. *Woo*!"

Mac's response to hate was entertaining. It also guided Noah to laugh off the hate and to reach for the feeling of radical joy in the face of stigmatizing ideologies. Noah continued, "It was very empowering, watching the video." Though Noah noted that "humor is not the *best* coping mechanism," it has been central to his practices of livability. Here, humor, as a response to hate, nurtures livability in the face of interlocking normativities by creating critical distance from harmful beliefs and offering feelings other than shame, sadness, fear, or anger.

For other teens, watching viral reaction videos was a way for them to unlearn oppressive beliefs about gender and sexuality before they came out. Dominic stumbled onto Mac's videos in his YouTube recommendations in freshman year when he was mostly watching straight YouTubers. He explained, "I was like, 'He seems funny.'" Pulled in by the humor, he watched Mac's reaction video series. As Dominic started at a large, diverse urban high school, Mac's videos helped him rethink and unlearn the homophobia he had grown up around. He shared that it was common for his friends at school to begin questioning their beliefs, too, raising questions like "What do you think about gay people?" He shared, "It's interesting to come into a school that's so big and so diverse to be thinking, 'Hold on, let me think about myself real quick. Because, like, am I really supposed to be scared of these people? Am I really supposed to think negatively of these people? Because they seem pretty damn cool." Mac's practice of "bringing down homophobia" through humor "meant a lot" to Dominic because it helped him walk back beliefs that he once thought everyone shared. He now regularly watches Mac's videos and also described learning to laugh off hate: "When you first watch it it's just like, 'Oh, this is hilarious.' Then when you think about it later on you're like, 'You're making a positive out of a negative, and it's just'... I was like, 'This is something that I would like to be able to do. This is awesome.'"

Using Humor to Engage with and Understand 'Heavy' Social Justice Issues

Some teens in the study also described learning to use humor in order to understand and discuss social and political issues in virtual communities. As an extension of 'laughing off' encounters, this practice focuses on the role of humor in making sense of 'heavy' topics like transphobia with which many of the teens have had firsthand experience. Bailey does not watch YouTube much in part because "the algorithm is not geared towards like general LGBTQ or left-leaning content," but she did watch political videos from trans women YouTubers like ContraPoints and Kat Blaque who often use dry, biting humor in long-form videos to discuss political issues at length. Yet, one of her favorite YouTubers to watch was Comrade Cora, a white trans woman who makes short, funny parody videos editing content from right-wing YouTube content like clips from PragerU, a non-profit media company and popular YouTube channel that circulates oppressive views. Comrade Cora videos are often under two minutes long and rely on editing and splicing content to comedically interrupt the "American conservative" perspectives that PragerU circulates. When I asked Bailey about the meaning of the humor in the videos, she shared, "I think it helps because a lot of the time, a lot of the discussion is pretty heavy, and it helps to engage with a lot of this stuff and deal with it through humor. PragerU is dumb, but also, it's really harmful for a lot of people, and having it dumb edits really helps to deal with it I guess." The comical edit videos helped Bailey engage with and understand the dominant ideologies that undergirds the videos. As Bailey sought to make sense of the oppressive views and anticipate her responses, the humor helped her "make it funny instead of feel bad." Bailey went on to describe that humor also makes social media content more shareable, driving engagement and raising awareness of important issues.

Isaiah described learning to "laugh it off" out of necessity, but he also watched reaction videos and clips to which they respond in order to understand and anticipate the oppressive ideologies. Isaiah described that he "felt like he had to" learn to laugh off encounters with hate because "at some point, I couldn't really do anything," narrating that humor fostered agency when he would otherwise feel frozen. Isaiah watched reaction videos to deepen and validate the practice of laughing it off, as Noah described. Isaiah narrated, "It's nice to watch people laugh at that kind of stuff, because it makes me laugh about it." He also turns to reaction videos from trans creators to understand transphobic beliefs, sharing, "I'd be like, 'Oh, this makes more sense now,' seeing someone who actually is reacting to it, other than just the video of some random person saying things that maybe don't make sense." Isaiah described that he often searches up the full clips to which reaction videos respond in order to more fully understand the beliefs they circulate. He explained that reaction videos "cut a lot out, and I want to know everything." Isaiah genuinely wants to know "what people are saying" and understand the logic of their argument. Even as he moves away from humorous reaction media to understand oppressive views, Isaiah described that he brings the practice of laughing it off to oppressive clips because "it feels like I can't really talk them into changing, you know?" He emphasized the need for broader education and advocacy efforts to change oppressive views, saying, "We need a lot more than just me telling people about it."

Eric similarly described valuing reactions, for him subtweets or quote tweets, to help make sense of and learn how to disrupt oppressive views. He described that one of the most challenging parts of social media has been "the amount of hate that relates to trans women." "It just irks me to my soul," he added, "It's very jarring, to see how much people just hate on them. It never fails to upset me or get me." Eric described that, even though it is challenging to see

examples of transmisogyny, he appreciates subtweet reactions that call out the hate and "speak against what they see," often in comedic ways. He explained, "that's mainly how I see people reacting to it, to videos or just posts of people being very hateful." Based on what Eric described, subtweet reactions can make light of hate as they call it out, with reactions like, "Listen to this clown go off about something that she doesn't even know about." The humor in the reactions help to hold and make sense of the hate, which may be a first step to "help people understand." While Eric, too, feels like there is more that needs to be done to educate people who hold harmful views, he sees reactions as an important step. Building with what Bailey shared, funny reactions on Twitter may spread awareness of why transmisogynist beliefs and actions are harmful, facilitating forms of learning and unlearning that Dominic described.

Discussion and Conclusion

The everyday digital practices of trans and queer youth, and the meanings these practices hold for them, illustrate the significant roles of humor in constructing livable lives in unlivable worlds. From youth studies to media studies, most scholarship on humor in practices to negotiate social injustice focus on resistance (Bailey, 2021; Blackburn, 2005; Dávila, 2019; Gallo, 2016; Martínez & Morales, 2014; Schey, 2020; Shrodes, 2021). These scholars often foreground the role of humor in satirical disruption of hegemonic ideologies and forming oppositional consciousness, as I have in prior research (Shrodes, 2021; Shrodes et al., 2021). Guided by my previous research and participation on LGBTQ+ social media, I began interviews with a keen interest in humor. By listening intently with youth, and through systematic analysis in the grounded theory tradition (Charmaz, 2014), I began to understand that humor has wide-ranging roles and meanings to young people. As my analysis illustrates, humor in digital activities shapes the ways in which youth get through the day, create relations, cultivate belonging, and brush off

encounters with hate. The findings have potential not only to expand theoretical frames that shape multiple fields of study but also to inform the design of justice-oriented learning environments that better support marginalized youth in developing critical, digital, and queer literacies.

The stories of youth in the study challenge the theoretical investments in resistance and ordinariness that tend to guide interdisciplinary scholarship in queer and trans studies. As Heather Love (2015) describes, queer studies has "been riven almost from the beginning by gendered debates about the relationship between antinormativity and the ordinary" (p. 91). Most queer studies scholarship sides with anti-normativity, uplifting the resistant practices and oppositional communities that emerge from difference (Ahmed, 2010; Cohen, 1991; Halberstam, 2005, 2011). Undoubtably, resistance is an integral and valuable part of trans and queer life in hegemonic cultural contexts. Yet, youth stories point to another theoretical frame—livability toward elsewheres—through which to make sense of trans and queer life, particularly for young people. These practices of livability that youth enact with humor to survive the present and imagine the future may also gesture to expansive possibilities for social and political life.

As such, the analysis also complicates educational research and practice with LGBTQ+ youth, which often focus on resistance as a strategy to contend with relations of power while uplifting youth agency. With a focus on anti-oppressive knowledge and action, queer studies in education often examines practices through which LGBTQ+ youth resist interlocking structures of power (Brockenbrough, 2015; Cruz, 2011; McCready, 2019; Shrodes, 2021). For many, this means an interest in how youth document and disrupt injustice in schooling (Blackburn & McCready, 2009; Johnson, 2017; Wargo, 2018). Though attention to resistance surfaces youth agency in the midst of constraints, it may limit how researchers and educators see and support

the many ways youth actively negotiate persistent encounters with injustice. In LGBTQ+ media studies, Andre Cavalcante argues for frameworks that consider media reception in "less heroic and congratulatory terms than resistance, while still affirming the activity of viewers in everyday life" (p. 128). Similarly, research and practice with LGBTQ+ youth need frameworks that affirm the wide range of practices through which youth act and assert their dignity amid entrenched and interlocking structures of power. Youth demonstrate agency in practices to sustain life, and life otherwise, on social media–practices to curate funny artifacts to feel better, to compose felt relations through lurking on meme pages, and to laugh off hate through watching reaction videos. The analysis expands ways for educators and practitioners to nurture the practices trans and queer youth may learn online to create and sustain lives that are often rendered unthinkable in dominant culture.

Chapter 5.
"That's My Face Right Now": Multimodal Choreographies of Radical Joy

"Valuuuues," said 17-year-old Mexican American gay trans boy Eric sarcastically, right before he broke into laughter (see Figure 5.1, Image 1). We were watching a reaction video from Black gay YouTuber MacDoesIt, or Mac Kahey, in which Mac comedically watched and reacted to clips of anti-LGBTQ and antiblack media. In this moment, Mac reacted to an anti-gay marriage "Campaign for America" ad from 2012 urging viewers to vote for Mitt Romney as "someone with values." I paused the video to inquire about what Eric was thinking.

"That's my exact same reaction," Eric responded as he looked toward Mac's facial expression on the screen and gestured with his pinky (see Figure 5.1, Image 2). He continued, laughing, "Values?! Like, ohhhh" (see Figure 5.1, Images 3-4). Elaborating, he shared, "My reaction is the same as Mac's, like that's really laughable that those are 'values' to discriminate against someone and not believe that they should have equal rights as you. It's just really laughable." Eric later theorized that Mac's reaction offered a "contagious energy" that inspired viewers to reach for the reaction, giving them "the strength to be like, 'I can brush that off.'"

Figure 5.1. Eric said, "That's my exact same reaction."

As I began conducting media reactions with focal participants, I initially sought to understand how LGBTQ+ reaction videos on YouTube may mediate shifts in thinking or practice with a particular focus on skills to critically analyze media underpinned by interlocking hegemonic ideologies of race, gender, and sexuality (see also Shrodes, 2021). Yet, it quickly became clear that reaction video vloggers not only enact critical practices of humor that mediate the activity of viewers; they also structure and circulate cultural formations of emotion that shape how viewers come to *feel* about injustice. LGBTQ+ experiences have historically been structured by stigmatization and feelings of shame, ambivalence, and invisibility (Gould, 2009). In the reaction video, Mac instead produces and shares the feeling of radical joy–willful and resistant happiness in the face of oppression. As I began to illustrate through analysis of interviews with youth in Chapter 4, radical joy may support young people to resist injustice and negotiate feelings of anger, sadness, and despair that can arise through persistent encounters with interlocking oppressions. The emotions for which young people reach are central to creating conditions that sustain life in the face of domination.

Through ongoing analysis of the media reactions to Mac's video, it became increasingly clear that Mac offered radical joy to viewers through a patterned combination of communicative modes, which I call *multimodal choreographies*. Through combining modes of talk, embodied movements such as gesture and facial expressions, and non-verbal expressions that include laughter, Mac performed evocative choreographies of radical joy such that viewers could say, "That's my exact same reaction." Multiple young people used a phrase similar to that of Eric, pointing to the way Mac's multimodal response shaped and reflected their own feelings. Reaction videos, a hugely popular video from in which vloggers watch and react to clips from other media, *move* viewers through "affectively intense" responses (Warren-Crow, 2016, p.

1113). Specifically, radical joy in Mac's video compelled viewers to reach for and step into the activity through what Eric described as "contagious energy" that gave viewers strength to laugh off the oppressive beliefs, too. By taking up and improvising upon Mac's multimodal choreographies, youth reproduce the feeling of radical joy through patterned coordinations of talks and embodied modes.

In this chapter, I consider how eight trans and queer youth of color focal participants learned multimodal choreographies of radical joy to respond to interlocking forms of hate through interaction with a reaction video. I take up qualitative analysis (Glasser, 1965) and interactional analysis methodologies (Jordan & Henderson, 1995; Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; Tulbert & Goodwin, 2011) with a narrative approach to analyze the corpus of video data and select an illustrative event from Helia, a 15-year-old Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Native pansexual trans girl. I ask: How did all eight participants make meaning of multimodal choreographies of radical joy in the reaction video? And how did Helia take up and transform radical joy as a way of feeling through patterned combinations of communicative modes in her reaction to Mac's video? Through this second question, I seek to understand how Helia learned radical joy as a life-affirming response to hate through reaching for and stepping into the multimodal choreographies Mac performed in his reaction. I knit qualitative analysis from all eight youth participants with in-depth analysis of Helia's reaction to explore narrative alignments and departures across the reactions (Derry et al., 2010, p. 23; Erickson, 2006).

Conceptual Framings: Political Feeling and Multimodal Choreographies of Radical Joy

In this chapter, I think with theories of emotion and embodiment to clarify the ways feelings are practiced and felt in the body, with particular attention to choreographies of radical joy (Enriquez et al., 2016). Elsewhere, I drew on queer and Black feminist theory of emotion to

advance the concept of *political feeling* as cultural formations of emotion that shape how a community comes to feel about injustice, thereby opening or foreclosing particular forms of social action (Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit; see also Cvetkovich, 2003; Muñoz, 1999; Nash, 2011). Queer affect theorizing often considers feelings such as shame, depression, and ambivalence that reflect LGBTQ+ experiences of social disavowal yet have potential to unsettle oppressive ideologies and norms (Berlant, 2011; Crimp, 1989; Cvetkovich, 2003, 2012; Eng, 1999; Love, 2007; Muñoz, 1999, 2006). In contrast, Black feminist thought calls for action, theorizing feelings to mobilize toward particular political and ethical visions (Lindsey, 2015, 2016; Lorde, 1981). To that end, Black feminist writers argue that emotions of anger (hooks, 1995; Lorde, 1981) and love (Jordan, 2003; hooks, 2000; Nash, 2011) meaningfully shape and sustain social action against interlocking oppressions. Drawing these two bodies of thought together in dialogue with comments on LGBTQ+ reaction videos, I conceptualized the political feeling of *radical joy* as willful and anti-oppressive happiness in the face of oppression (Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit). Similar to anger and love, radical joy has the capacity to defuse hatred and nurture felt relations in communities. The political feeling also draws on humor as a tactic to disrupt oppression and nurture belonging (Gould, 2009; Muñoz, 1999; Halberstam, 2011; Lugones, 1987; see also Shrodes, 2021; Shrodes et al., 2021). Yet, radical joy is an expansive, evolving political feeling that is constructed within situated activity–more akin to a politic than a concept (Nash, 2011). In youth meaning making, the feeling of radical joy, commonly indexed through the phrases ‘brushing if off’ or ‘laughing it off,’ fosters agency, lightness, and ease.

I am interested in this chapter to trace how the feeling of radical joy is taken up and transformed in the body. In analyzing comment sections on YouTube, I moved away from affect as bodily intensities to explicate the capacity of emotion to be a structuring force in cultural

practice and political life (Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit). I was particularly interested in the role of media in structuring and circulating feelings in virtual communities that may open up possibilities for political transformation (Herold, 2018). Here, I come back to the body to understand how the political feeling of radical joy compels, and is produced through, embodied performance. In this analysis, I build with sociocultural scholars of learning who understand embodied movements within a repertoire of cultural tools (Keifert & Marin, 2018; Lindberg et al., 2021; Marin et al., 2020; Solomon et al., 2021; Vossoughi et al., 2020). These scholars often draw on interactional analysis methodologies to trace how people act through the use and transformation of resources around them (Goodwin, 2018). Communicative gestures such as a flip of a hand are among those resources that are mediated by prior activity and mediate future activity. In studies of learning, choreography has become a guiding concept to attend to coordination of modes in activity. Eve Tulbert and Marjorie H. Goodwin (2011) first employed the notion of choreography to trace how family members coordinate attention through multiple modes in learning to accomplish daily tasks. Since then, scholars who study dance as a tool for learning have employed choreography to design for and study science and math learning and embodied cognition (Solomon et al., 2021).

Extending sociocultural theories of learning, I draw from framings in queer and feminist performance studies (Muñoz, 1999; Recollet, 2016, Rivera-Servera, 2012) to study multimodal choreographies as patterned combinations of communicative modes, including talk and embodied movements, in social interaction and performance. In contrast to studies of dance and learning that have tended to focus on choreography that is explicitly designed or directed, queer performance studies helpfully situate feelings in relation with choreography by emphasizing the spontaneous, affectively intense, and impulsive nature of social configurations of movement. In

Ramón Rivera-Servera's (2012) theorization of choreographies of resistance in queer Latinidad club dance, feelings of "community and agency" motivate subjects toward performance of choreographies, which then reproduce such feelings (p. 134). Performance can also modify or re-construct feelings, in that it does not require "absolute fidelity to an anchoring script" (Rivera-Servera, 2012, p. 20). Feelings compel performances, which then reproduce or modify the feelings. Drawing together sociocultural theory and performance studies, I am interested in how the 'affectively intense' nature of reaction videos may urge viewers to reach for, step into, and improvise upon the multimodal choreographies of radical joy in response. I specifically trace how a focal participant used and modified multimodal choreographies of radical joy from a reaction video in responding to hate. Vloggers assemble and enact configurations of multiple modes in performance. Viewers, in turn, adapt these combinations of modes in watching and performatively responding to the videos. By attending to multimodal choreographies in digitally mediated activities, we can understand how youth learn and produce radical joy as a political feeling through embodied modes.

Analytic Method

For this chapter, my data sources are video-taped media reactions conducted during research stage two (Oct. 2019-Jan. 2020) in which focal participants watched and responded to YouTube video clips that I chose based on initial coding of interviews in phase I. Media reactions are a form of visual participatory method that engages youth in knowledge construction with visual tools (Gubrium et al., 2015; Halbritter & Lindquist, 2012; Switzer, 2019). In these reactions, youth and I sat together one-on-one to watch and react to clips from three reaction videos made by queer and trans vloggers. I joked with participants that we were making reaction videos about reaction videos. In this process, I primarily inquired about their thoughts and

feelings in response to the video, withholding my own commentary, as I sought to understand how participants make sense of, think with, and feel in response to the video clips. I did, however, pedagogically guide them to moments in the videos that contended with antiblack racism, specifically (Dumas & ross, 2016). At the end of watching the clips, I asked participants to reflect on what they remember themself thinking while they watched each video and recall the most revealing moment of each video, the moment that stood out the most. The video data primarily document youth participants interacting with the reaction clips on my laptop; I am just out of the frame, but my talk and nonverbal expressions (e.g., laughter) are recorded via audio. I describe the method of media reactions further in Chapter 3.

In this analysis, I focus on a corpus of video data from eight participants who are trans and queer youth of color to attend to their experiences of racialization and racism and consider the role of reaction videos in sustaining life amid interlocking racial, gender, and sexual oppressions. These participants are:

- Stevie, a 13-year-old Mexican American questioning non-binary kid
- Helia, a 15-year-old Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Native pansexual trans girl
- Kingsley, a 15-year-old African American sexually fluid trans guy
- Mateo, a 15-year-old Puerto Rican bisexual trans boy
- Jacob, a 16-year-old biracial Afro-Puerto Rican and white gay disabled trans boy
- Adrian, a 17-year-old biracial Latinx and white gay trans guy
- Eric, a 17-year-old Mexican American gay trans guy
- Isaiah, a 17-year-old biracial Puerto Rican and white gay trans boy

Reactions from these study participants totaled 8.6 hours of video data, with media reactions ranging from 50 minutes to 100 minutes long.

I primarily drew on interactional analysis methodologies (Jordan & Henderson, 1995; Goodwin & Heritage, 1990) with a narrative approach to construct findings. Arising from multiple traditions of sociocultural research, including ethnography and conversation analysis, interactional analysis methodologies view knowledge and practices as mediated by social relations and cultural artifacts in dynamic contexts of use (Jordan & Henderson, 1995). The fundamental goal of the method, then, is "to identify regularities in the ways in which participants use the resources of the complex social and material world of actors and objects within which they operate" (Jordan & Henderson, 1995, p. 41). These resources include substrates of prior activity, what Charles Goodwin (2018) describes as "the local, public configuration of action and semiotic resources" (p. 32). Substrates are one way of tracing the social nature of learning by sketching how "we inhabit each other's actions, including those of no longer present predecessors" (Goodwin, 2018, p. 31). As part of substrates, embodied movements, such as coordination of hands as learners work together to accomplish a task, serve as resources that actors re-use and modify as activity unfolds (Keifert & Marin, 2018; Vossoughi et al., 2020). To understand how people interact with others and tools in social contexts, the method involves close analysis of selected video-recorded interaction events with systematic attention to coordination of salient communicative modes, which may include talk, gesture, gaze, posture, and other embodied modes (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990; Jordan & Henderson, 1995)

To guide selection and close analysis of video, I began by analytically logging the corpus of video data and engaging in co-viewing (Marin & Bang, 2018; Jordan & Henderson, 1995). I analytically logged the corpus of video data in three-to-five-minute intervals with a) brief description; b) note of artifacts used; c) tags and subtags that correspond to the focused categories and codes; d) data type; e) connection to other data I might use; f) descriptive notes;

and g) analytic notes (Marin & Bang, 2018). Through tags and subtags within the logs, I indexed data with categories and codes relevant to radical joy for further analysis (e.g., humor as political possibility, laughing off encounters with social injustice). I used the analytic notes to reflect on and further develop the construct of radical joy in dialogue with youth reactions. For instance, a note in Eric's video log elaborates on how radical joy may be about feeling comfort and ease in the face of injustice and may not require overt joking or laughter. During the process of video logging, I also engaged in group co-viewing and analysis in a structured workshop with fellow learning sciences doctoral students engaged in justice-oriented video research to begin to surface significant practices enacted and communicative modes enacted by youth participants (Jordan & Henderson, 1995). Co-viewing animated an interest in the role of gesture and other embodied modes in meaning-making, which I further developed through analytic notes in the video logs.

Once I defined my interest in multimodal choreographies, I then drew on qualitative analysis to consider how all eight participants narrated meanings of choreographies of radical joy in the reaction video (Glasser, 1965). I first re-watched the videos from all eight youth multiple times, attuned to moments tagged with categories and codes relevant to radical joy, and wrote short analytic memos around how youth made meaning of and interacted with the video. I transcribed the talk from those moments for further analysis with notes on the tone and speed of talk as well as facets of embodiment such as posture, gaze, and gesture. I then descriptively coded the transcripts to construct patterns around how youth narrated meanings of choreographies of radical joy in Mac's video, namely 1) lightens experiences with injustice; 2) supports understanding of hegemonic beliefs; 3) motivates felt relations; 4) compels viewers to join; and 5) unfolds in relational activity. Finally, I wrote an extended memo with excerpts from

transcripts of talk attending to interactions that demonstrate these five meanings. I re-watched the videos to compose and refine salient descriptions of talk and embodiment.

Guided by analytic logging, co-viewing, and qualitative analysis, I selected a 5-minute illustrative event (minutes 6:02-11:07 of the 50.18-minute video) from focal participant Helia for close analysis. There are multiple approaches to data selection and analysis in the tradition of interaction analysis (Derry et al., 2010). Because the study is invested in storying, I took a narrative approach to video analysis, selecting the event with regard to meaning and illustration within a narrative that answers the research question and is guided by theory (Derry et al., 2010, p. 14). This event from Helia has meaning and is illustrative for three primary reasons: 1) She responded to the video in ways that re-mediated her own experiences of racialization and racism; 2) her reaction to the YouTube video demonstrated a range of multimodal choreographies of radical joy youth may enact; and 3) the event was a "hot spot" within the data (Jordan & Henderson, 1995)–that is, the event was a site of affective intensity, modal density, and multiplicity of meaning. Ultimately, the event illustrates the "interactional phenomenon under study" and tells a story that speaks to broader patterns in the data (Goldman et al., 2007, p. 19). The story I tell through analysis of this event with Helia aligns with, though does not seek to represent, the multimodal reactions of other participants. I weave qualitative analysis of reactions from all eight trans and queer youth of color participants through an in-depth analysis of Helia's multimodal performance to provide textured examples of the video data with a sense of how they relate to the larger video corpus (Derry et al., 2010, p. 23; Erickson, 2006).

In the video event, Helia reacted to a clip from Mac Kahey's nine-minute video "REACTING TO ANTI-GAY COMMERCIALS BECAUSE I'M GAY." We watched and reacted to the first 3.5 minutes of the video, which featured Mac's reaction to three anti-LGBTQ

and antiblack clips. I chose this video from Mac because he came up in almost all of the initial interviews with 21 participants and has a channel dedicated to reactions to anti-LGBTQ media. His nearly ubiquitous presence in the social media lives of trans and queer teens in the study follows his enormous popularity; Mac has more than 1.93 million subscribers and over 204 million video views as of Nov. 2019, numbers which have continued to grow since. Many young people who participated in the media reactions, including Helia, had seen this particular video before, perhaps not surprising since the video had almost 13.5 million views as of Nov. 2019. I bounded the event in relation to the reaction video we viewed; the event begins as Mac initiated a response to a clip from Jehovah's Witness animated children's show and ends as his response, and Helia's reaction to his response concluded. I elaborate on the significance of this particular clip from Mac's video at the beginning of the findings section.

After selecting the illustrative video event from Helia, I transcribed the event through conversation analysis conventions with attention to multiple communicative modes that Mac and Helia coordinate, namely talk, embodied movements (e.g., gesture, facial expressions, gaze), and non-verbal expressions (Tulbert & Goodwin, 2011; see Appendix A). I include my talk and non-verbal gestures in the transcript, as well. In transcripts, I used a table with two primary columns to transcribe overlapping activity in Mac's reaction video (left column) side-by-side with in-person activity (right column); when Helia or I paused the reaction video, the transcript is presented on a single table column. In the transcription of Mac's reaction video, transcribed talk and sounds from the Jehovah's Witness clip is displayed within an in-set gray box. I then conducted interaction analysis of these episodes and transcripts with a focus on storying patterned combinations of talk, embodied movements, and non-verbal expressions through a series of transcript excerpts and narrative vignettes with line-by-line analysis (Goldman et al.,

2007, p. 17). I pair the written narrative and excerpts with visual illustrations of embodied movements when it is salient to support the analysis (Vossoughi et al., 2020). I created the visual illustrations by applying filters to video stills that serve to anonymize the participant, remove identifying information, and dynamically emphasize expression and movement.

Findings Overview: Learning Multimodal Choreographies of Radical Joy

In the event that narratively anchors this chapter, Helia reacted to a moment in Mac's video in which he comedically responds to a clip from a Jehovah's Witness animated children's show underpinned by hegemonic ideologies and norms, including cisheteronormativity and antiblackness (Dumas & ross, 2016; Warner, 1996; see also Jackson et al., 2021; Medina, 2021). In the media clip to which Mac reacts, two perceivably white animated characters, a mother and daughter, discuss the belief of marriage between 'one man, one woman.' They employ a simile to describe being gay as baggage to check before getting on an airplane, or going to heavenly paradise. In response, Mac performs a multimodal choreography of radical joy, coordinating talk, embodied movements, and non-verbal expressions such as laughter to enact willful, anti-oppressive happiness in response to the hegemonic video. Through a 'drop the bag' choreographic form that plays on the video, Mac also draws attention to intersections of sexual and racial identity and oppression. In prior research, I found this moment in Mac's video to be particularly resonant for viewers; an analysis of 2,461 comments (sampled from 75,610 total comments) on the video surfaced that around 30 percent of commenters responded to this moment, richly elaborating on Mac's playful disruption of leaving your sexual and racial identities in a bag before a metal detector (Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit). This moment also resonated with participants in the media reactions.

Seven of the eight youth of color recalled the 'drop the bag' moment as the most revealing of Mac's clip, the moment that stood out the most to them. Stevie, shared, "I really do love the 'bag analogy.'" These young people emphasized that Mac's insistent laughter in the face of interlocking oppressions made experiences of social injustice easier. This was especially true for Isaiah, Kingsley, Jacob, and Adrian, participants who described personal experiences with religious discrimination in response to the video. Kingsley and Jacob both narrated the experience of friends and family members severing relationships specifically because of Jehovah's Witness beliefs. Kingsley's aunt had stopped talking to him because he is trans, and Jacob was "forced to leave" the Jehovah's Witness church he grew up in, losing his friends and community. For them, radical joy lightened the blow of these harmful beliefs. Kingsley narrated about the video, "It's just funny to get your mind off of what they are thinking in terms of being gay and things like that." I asked him to tell me more about what he meant by "funny to get your mind off," and Kingsley described:

> It just kind of hits hard a little bit because her religion is kind of why my aunt doesn't talk to me anymore. But it's kind of funny just looking at how he tries to turn it into something that is not so serious I guess, so. Yeah. I'm just glad that he makes it a little less serious, I guess. It's lighthearted when he's talking.

For Kingsley and other youth, Mac's performance serves as a form of public pedagogy to create critical distance from and make light of hegemonic beliefs that have led to deeply hurtful experiences of loss. Mac's affective intensity also positively mediated their own felt experience; as Kingsley said, "It's lighthearted when he's talking." Radical joy offers ease and lightness that nurtures livability amid persistent encounters with injustice.

This moment also stood out to youth in the study because Mac disrupted both cisheteronormativity and racism, bringing his whole self as a Black gay man to the reaction. Jacob narrated that this moment was the most revealing because Mac comedically disrupts intersecting oppressions of sexuality and race. He described, "It was both things; with both things [individually] it could be quite oppressive, but both at the same time, you know, it could be a lot worse for someone." While Jacob appreciated how Mac calls out multiple, interlocking forms of oppression in this moment of the video, Eric called attention to the ways Mac showed up as his full self to laugh off the hate. Eric shared:

> He knows what his identity is, and he owns it and it's a part of him, and he's not afraid to let people know who he is, and I feel like that's really helpful and just the way that he reacts to it doesn't let it bother him. Like obviously it's like, it's laughable, cause he's like, 'screw all of that because I know who I am and I'm proud of that. I can laugh it off because I love myself,' pretty much.

For Eric, this moment illustrated Mac's keen ability to refuse harmful hegemonic ideologies by insisting on happiness and self-love as a Black gay man. This moment stood out to Helia for similar reasons–that Mac named intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and sexuality, and that Mac insisted on being his full self in the face of hate. In her reaction, she takes up and adapts Mac's multimodal choreography of radical joy to speak to her positionality as a Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Native pansexual trans woman who navigates oppressions of race, coloniality, gender, and sexuality.

Throughout the event, it was as if Mac was with us in the room, offering configurations of modes in action that Helia reached for, stepped into, and improvised upon. A short, slight girl with sharp eyebrows and long black hair pulled loosely into a ponytail, Helia was expressively

talkative yet typically moved her body with quiet confidence. During interviews, she often sat with her fingers interlaced on the table. As we began the clip, Mac's video promptly moved Helia with laughter. She frequently hunched over expressively to lay her head on her right forearm and raised her left hand up to emphasize wide-mouth laughs. Notably, she addressed Mac directly, speaking, laughing, and moving *with* him as we watched the video. Helia had watched this video within the last 6 months, and she described that she remembered the video well. Her prior viewing and familiarity with the video became salient in her reaction. In reaching for and modifying Mac's patterned combination of modes, Helia was right behind him. She took up and altered elements of his talk, facial expressions, and embodied movements seconds later in overlapping activity, or assembled multiple modes in an extended performance after she paused the video.

Reaching for Mac's Patterned Coordination of Communicative Modes

The pattern of Helia reaching for Mac's multimodal choreography through overlapping duet and solo performance is illustrated vividly early in the event by Excerpt 5.1. In the Jehovah's Witness clip to which Mac responds, the young daughter has returned from school and grapples with how to make sense of a classmate drawing queer mothers. The child revoices an inclusive understanding of family offered by the teacher, one with which Mac and Helia both agree. But the mother in the clip quickly narrows to a heteronormative ideology of marriage and family. In reaction, Mac and Helia perform shock and horror to laugh off the media through coordinating patterns of talk, embodied movements, and non-verbal expressions.

Excerpt 5.1 ((6:02-6:38. Helia reached for Mac's coordination of modes in reaction))

ll.	Viewed Media	ll.	Reaction to Viewing
1a 2a 3a	**JW daughter:** Carrie drew two mommies. My teacher says that all that matters is that people love each other and that they're happy.		
4a	**Mac:** (nods head) True:.	4b	**Helia:** (nods head)
5a 6a 7a 8a 9a 10a 11a	**JW mother:** People have their own ideas about what is right and wrong. But what matters is how Jehovah feels. He wants us to be hap–	**Mac:** (Raises head to look across the camera; leans into the camera with wide eyes and raised eyebrows; looks across camera and then back at screen with tight lips as if to subdue laughter)	5b (1.0) 6b That's true. 9b **Helia:** (eyes widen, 10 mouth drops open; 11b quickly pauses video) [See Figure 5.2]
12 13	**Helia:** (raises both hands to her head as if in shock and slams them on the table; purses lips) **N**o<. Ha. No<.		
14	**Addie:** (laughs gently)		
15 16 17	**Helia:** (leans into the screen with hands flat on the table, then raises her hands to her mouth) >**N**o<. (covers mouth with both hands) Oooo, gir:l. (shakes head left and right in coordination with her talk). Ooo, ooh.		
18	**Addie:** Mm-hmm (laughs gently)		
19 20 21 22 23	**Helia:** (claps hands together as if in prayer and looks up) ((parody of voice in the clip)) What matters is what Jehovah– NO::. (pushes hands down to her sides in emphatic fists; pushes play with right hand) (begins to laugh, and raises left hand to cover mouth if in gest). Mmm.		
24	**Addie:** (laughs) °Gut reactions°		
25a 26a 27a 28a 29a 30a 31a 32a	**JW mother:** –py, and he knows how we can be happiest. That's why he invented marriage the way he did.	**Mac:** (Looks at the screen with eyes wide and lips tight.) (Presses pause and looks up to the camera with a stern look.) (Looks away, takes a breath, and scratches his head) (2.0) WH**OA!**	26b **Helia:** (Bursts into 27b laughter) ((To Mac)) 28b Yeah: (raises left hand 29b to cover her mouth 30b dramatically) me too::, 31b (tilts head right to the 32b screen and points to
33a 34a 35a	**Mac:** >I'm not even a minute into this video and we're already deep ass into some religious shit. I am too: pressed::<		33b screen with right hand) 34b I know whatchu mean. 35b (leans back and laughs, 36b raising her clenched 37b hands to her mouth)

In lines 4b-6b and 9b-11b of Excerpt 5.1, Helia closely followed Mac's reaction in overlapping multimodal response, reaching for the coordination of modes as a resource to use and modify in her own activity. That is, Helia acted through the use and transformation of Mac's choreography of radical joy. This swift appropriation of modes unfolded first through coordination of gesture and talk, as Helia nodded her head with Mac and revoiced "that's true" in agreement with Mac one second later (lines 4b-6b). As the video continued, Mac's reaction became increasingly animated; he mobilized facial expressions of wide eyes, raised eyebrows, and tightened lips to communicate shock (lines 5a-11a). His gaze moved dramatically back and forth from the camera–a look toward viewers–to the screen with the religious clip–an intent gaze at the offending media. I interpret this oscillating gaze as a gesture to invite his viewers into the scene of response (lines 8a-11a). Helia quickly takes up Mac's invitation. In my reading of lines 9b-11b, Helia reached for Mac's communicative modes as she gazed at the screen by beginning to take up the facial expressions of widened eyes and pursed lips in overlapping activity, similar to Mac's expressions (see Figure 5.2). She modified Mac's talk and facial expressions through covering her tightened lips, pursed expressively into the word "no." As if addressing Mac, she elaborated, "Oooo, gi<u>r</u>:l.," shaking her head left and right in coordination with the exclamations "Ooo, ooh" (lines 15-17). While I interpret this moment to be an address of Mac, I also consider it salient that Helia was performing with and for me; my affirmation and laughter (lines 14, 18, and 24) seems to have encouraged her to continue her embodied, comedic response.

Figure 5.2. Helia used and modified Mac's facial expressions in response to the video.

In lines 19-23, Helia coordinated multiple modes in a relatively brief solo performance of radical joy. In a reaction that comedically rejects the Jehovah's Witness clip, Helia parodied the character of the video by re-voicing of the offending talk with exaggeration and coordinated the gesture of raising her hands and eyes together in prayer to amplify the parody (lines 19-21). Lest there be any confusion about her stance in relation to the video, she emphatically communicated refusal of this hegemonic ideology by coordinating resistant talk and gesture (line 21). Helia then laughed briefly at her own multimodal choreography, a fleeting moment I interpret as an enactment of radical joy that willfully insists on joy in the face of hegemonic erasure (lines 21-22). While her multimodal choreography departed from that of Mac here, Helia modified the practice and feeling of radical joy to suit her own emphatic ends. Based on her continual repetition of the word "no" and her emphatic gestures, my reading suggests that Helia enacted a solo performance to expressly communicate her refusal of this ideology, and her insistence on queer and trans ways of being otherwise.

The final lines of overlapping activity in Excerpt 5.1 again brings to life the possibilities of pedagogical digital assistance, here Mac's video, to open up new coordinations of resources for viewers. Mac's multimodal choreography of talk, tone, facial expressions, gaze, gesture, and pauses in reaction to the clip offered a compelling coordination of resources for radical joy (lines 25a-35a). Mac's response *affect*ively moved Helia, guiding her to swiftly reach for his response through overlapping activity, Helia one short step behind Mac (lines 27b-35b). Helia burst into laughter in response to Mac's response and immediately noted that she, too, shared the feelings that Mac structured and circulated in the reaction (lines 27b-37b). The gesture and phrase "I know whatchu mean" (line 34b) is telling, in that I take it to communicate not only an ideological agreement with Mac but also a keen alignment with the feelings Mac communicated through his reaction. Notably, Helia addressed Mac and interacted with the video through talk and gesture directed at the screen. Interaction analysis of shifts in embodied movements is typically reserved for in-person interactions among people, often with a focus on pedagogical assistance (Vossoughi et al., 2020; Lindberg & Marin, 2020; Marin et al., 2020; Solomon et al., 2021). Here, we see that the digital public pedagogy of Mac's reaction video offers dynamic choreographies of multiple modes to enact humor as a response to oppression and produce the feeling of radical joy. These choreographies serve as forms of pedagogical assistance for his viewers, many of whom may be younger and relative novices to radical joy as a response to hate. Mateo, for instance, emphasized that the videos can mediate how viewers feel: "being serious kind of brings the mood down, it makes people more furious. But if you put some comedy in it, you know, it makes people laugh and not think about the bad things." Mac's laughter makes viewers laugh as they find new ways to feel about injustice, ways that may lead to greater livability. Putting comedy into the performance shifts how viewers feel and think about

oppression. Here, I notice Helia took up these resources from the video as she reached for the feeling or radical joy.

As the video event unfolded, Helia continued to take up Mac's multimodal choreography of radical joy in overlapping duet and solo performance. She also continued to address Mac with statements of agreement and affirmation (e.g., "I know, right?!"). When I paused the video and asked Helia to reflect explicitly on Mac's reaction, she chimed in without a beat, "His reaction is the same as mine– 'Jehovah made men and women, and marriage should be that way'… What?!" She then launched into a 39-second movement-filled performance, coordinating talk, gaze, facial expression, and hand gestures from the video that comedically disrupted the Jehovah's Witness clip by pointing out the contradiction between the belief that "God made everyone perfect" and LGBTQ+ people needing to stop being who they are. Multiple times, Helia leaned into the screen to speak directly to the Jehovah's Witness clip, a coordination of posture, gaze, and address similar to that which Mac offered in his reaction. Helia punctuated the reaction at the end with an emphatic, "Noooo." Affirming her own reaction and connecting it with that of Mac, I responded lightheartedly, "I feel like you should make reaction videos," and added, "But it sounds like Mac's reaction resonates with you." Helia hunched forward with laughter and, sitting up, paused for a moment to gaze at the screen. She responded as she pointed at Mac's face on the screen, "That's my face right now. Like ooooo, my god" (see Figure 5.3). Helia took up the feeling of radical joy, which Mac produced here through coordination of multiple modes, including his facial expressions. Mac's affectively intense and expressive performances of radical joy moved viewers to align with and relate to him, a pattern that unfolded in other reactions, too. All eight participants described Mac as "relatable." And Helia, Eric, and Adrian each explicitly pointed to Mac's reaction as similar to, or the same as, their own. By offering the

feeling of radical joy, Mac motivated viewers to watch, relate with, and, sometimes, to step into his (re)actions.

Figure 5.3. Helia said, "That's my face right now."

Stepping Into the Multimodal 'Drop the Bag' Choreography

Excerpt 5.2, which represents the next 50 seconds of the video event, beautifully demonstrates these patterns of reaching for radical joy in overlapping activity, expressions of alignment, and pausing to step into the multimodal choreography. In the Jehovah's Witness clip to which Mac responds in the excerpt, the mother employed the 'metal detector' simile to explain the need to stop being gay before entering heavenly paradise. Mac responded with comedic questioning and performed a multimodal reaction of radical joy that satirically participated in the logic of the normative clip to demonstrate its absurdity. This 'drop the bag' choreography became a recurrent coordination of modes for the remainder of the event, appearing frequently in the media reactions of other participants, as well. Through interaction with the video, Helia reaches for and steps into Mac's comedic response.

Excerpt 5.2 ((8:31-9:23. Helia steps into the multimodal reaction))

ll.	Viewed Media	ll.	Reaction to Viewing
1a 2a 3a 4a 5a	**JW mother:** If someone wanted to bring something on the plane that wasn't allowed. (Metal detector alarm goes off) **JW daughter:** They couldn't go on the trip. **JW mother:** It's the same with Jehovah.		
6a 7a 8a 9a	**Mac:** Wait a minute. (squints confusedly at the screen) What. (circles hand) What kind of simile. (looks down with scrunched brow, circles hand) So wait. Okay. Hold up. So were the gays the bag?	8b 9b	**Helia:** (scrunches brow and tilts head)
10a 11a	**JW mother:** And live in paradise forever. To get there, Jehovah says we have to leave some things behind.–	10b 11b	How does that work? No. Wait. (laughs)
12a	**Mac:** (looks to camera) Yep.	12b	**Helia:** That's some,
13a 14a	**JW mother:** That means anything Jehovah does not approve of.	13b 14b	hmmm (pursing lips, shaking head)
15a 16a 17a 18a 19a 20a 21a 22a 23a 24a 25a	**Mac:** (looks to camera) True. Moral of the story, if you gay leave it behind. (looks up and cups hand around his mouth to amplify whisper) ((whispers)) >That's really what this video is saying, I swear to god, I swear to god.< **Mac:** (looks to camera) ((exagerrated parody of voice from clip)) If you wanna go down the road to paradise, just drop your gay right before the metal detector. (gestures to mime stuffing clothing in a bag) Just put it all in a bag. (gestures to mime dropping bag) And then just drop it. Problem solved (gestures hands wide). Gay free.	15b 16b 17b 18b 19b 20b 21b 22b 23b 24b 25b	**Helia:** (laughs loudly) Exactly (leans forward with laughter, puts left hand over mouth, then gestures to screen with left hand twice) Exactly. **Helia:** (pauses video)
26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33	**Helia:** Easy, oh my god, I'm transgender. (gestures to self by putting both hands on her chest) Screw it. Gotta be that boy, and >drop that bag.< (mimes picking up a bag from her hand and dropping it with her right hand) Let's leave. (clenches fist and moves arms back and form to mime running) **Addie:** (laughs) **Helia:** Before it catches up. It might have legs. (clenches fists, glances behind her) Leave it. (flicks left hand as if to toss something behind her) Jehovah, I'm tryna' be your best. (raises hands and eyes up before bowing as if in worship) (rolls eyes)		

In lines 1-14, Helia directly followed Mac in overlapping activity as she began to reach for Mac's choreography of radical joy. Mac initiated a multimodal response to interrupt the Jehovah's Witness clip through questioning talk, skeptical facial expressions, and expressive

hand gestures that circle the phobic media (lines 6-9a). Mac's coordination of modes in action served as a resource for Helia moments later. Helia appropriated Mac's skeptical countenance through discourse ("How does that work?", "Wait", lines 10-11b) and facial expressions, scrunching her brow and tilting her head to punctuate her reaction (line 8-9b). Mac then addressed the viewers with a sarcastic "yep" to confirm that the gays were "the bag," a move I also read as an invitation for viewers to join the reaction (line 12a). Helia again accepted the invitation, addressing Mac in her weary response, "that's some, hmmm" as she shook her head and pursed her lips as if frustrated (line 12-13b). Helia was close behind Mac's pedagogical performance, reaching toward him as she observed and participated in the reaction.

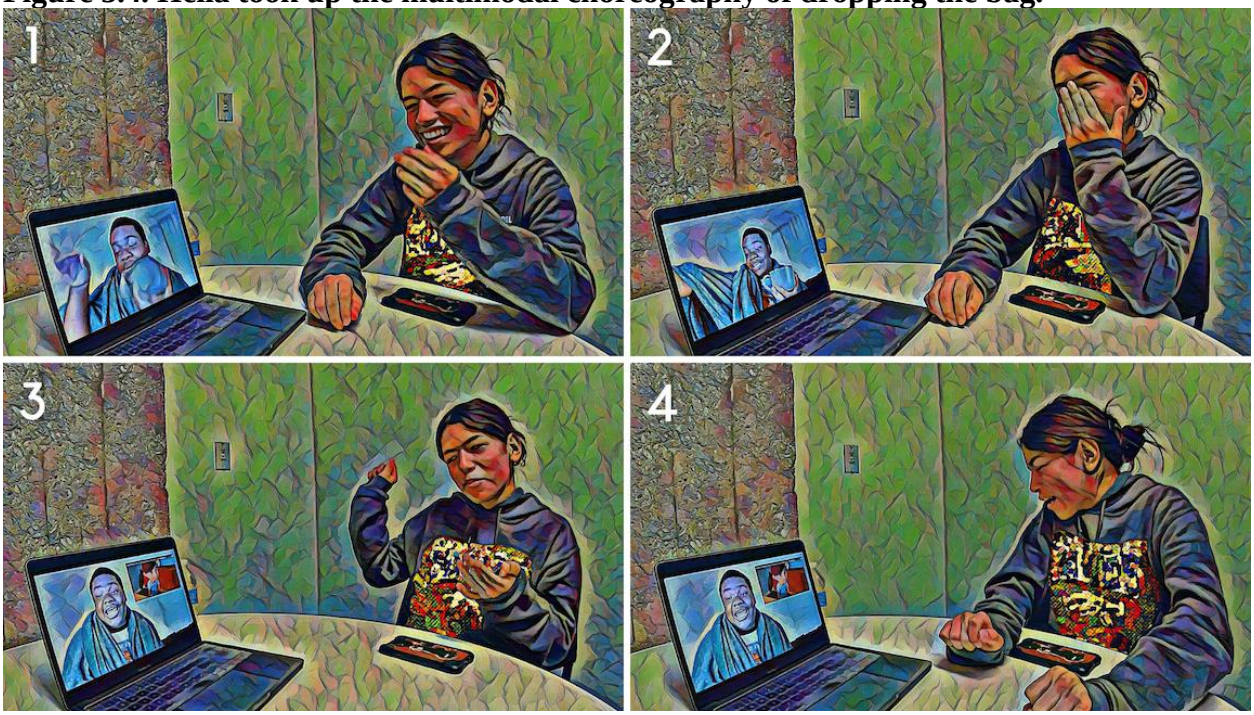
In lines 15-25, Helia affirmed Mac's multimodal response through talk and gesture before stepping into a solo reaction that took up and transformed the multimodal choreography Mac offered to speak to her identity as a trans girl. In the moment that resonated with many young people in the study, Mac paused to perform a multimodal parody that comedically explained and disrupted hegemonic ideologies in the Jehovah's Witness animated media (lines 15-19a). Isaiah, Jacob, Eric, and Stevie expressed appreciation for Mac's deft ability to use humor in analyzing oppressive beliefs circulated by the media in his funny reactions. Stevie theorized that humor "brings a strong point forward" or helps to explain and emphasize the nature of the content. In reflecting on the video Stevie described Mac's reaction as a balance of being funny and serious: "I remember myself thinking, this is pretty funny but in a serious manner that people can understand cause racism and inequality of LGBTQ people were put into that as well." In many ways, radical joy is itself a balance of funny and serious, in that it insists on laughter as it confronts interlocking structures of power. Choreographing radical joy, Mac configured modes of talk, facial expressions, and, significantly, the arm and hand gestures that

mime stuffing clothing into a bag and dropping the bag (lines 20-25a; see Figure 5.4, Images 1-2). During Mac's multimodal response, what I have called the 'drop the bag' choreography, Helia laughed loudly and continuously (lines 16-22b). Through the laughter, she affirmed Mac's response by gazing directly at and gesturing toward the screen, saying "exactly … exactly" (lines 17b and 22b). Helia related with Mac's affectively intense response and aligned with his satirical disruption of the video, his choreography of radical joy.

Seemingly moved by Mac's production of feeling, Helia paused the video to perform her own reaction, all the while gazing between me and the screen as if Mac was a participant in the interaction (lines 25b and lines 26-33). She used and modified Mac's multimodal choreography of radical joy, coordinating her talk with the gesture of dropping the bag as seen in Mac's video (lines 26-29; see Figure 5.4, Images 2 and 3). She then elaborated on Mac's 'drop the bag' choreography with a multimodal joke about needing to flee because her gender might run after her (lines 31-33). Helia's adaptation of the multimodal choreography is similar to discourse patterns in comments on this video, as many youth altered the 'bag analogy' to speak to marginalized identities and playfully elaborated on Mac's talk (Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit). If Helia reaches for radical joy in overlapping activity, this solo performance demonstrates that she is stepping into and improving upon the feeling and the practice of willful, insistent happiness in the face of oppression through multimodal choreography. She begins to inhabit the actions of Mac (Goodwin, 2018). In this short clip, I notice that Helia grew in confidence of her reaction, appropriating and expanding Mac's choreography in her embodied moves. Helia's steady progress to step into the choreography as her comfort and confidence grew aligns with other youth reactions. For instance, Eric theorized that Mac's optimistic energy became contagious and made him feel like he, too, could "brush it off because I know who I am and I'm

proud of who I am." While some focal participants did not take up Mac's embodied moves, all eight young people appropriated Mac's talk and narrated shifts in thinking and feelings aligned with radical joy in reaction to the video.

Figure 5.4. Helia took up the multimodal choreography of dropping the bag.



Improvising Upon the Choreography to Speak to Intersections of Identity and Power

In the third excerpt that concludes the event, Helia expanded her performance further, taking up Mac's multimodal reaction of radical joy to disrupt interlocking oppressions of race, gender, and sexuality. Helia pressed play on the video immediately prior to this excerpt, so the excerpt begins as Mac extended his satirical performance of 'dropping the bag' from sexuality to race. In the Jehovah's Witness clip, the last few seconds to which Mac reacts, the mother guides the child to practice evangelizing to Carrie, the girl at school who has "two mommies." Mac reacted again with affectively intense radical joy, reiterating his multimodal choreography of "just drop the bag" that satirizes the clip.

Excerpt 5.3 ((9:24-11:07. Helia improvises upon Mac's 'drop the bag' choreography))

ll.	Viewed Media	ll.	Reaction to Viewing
1a 2a 3a 4a 5a	**Mac:** Can we do the same with my Blackness? Just like put it in a bag, (gestures to mime stuffing clothing into a bag) drop it off (gesturing to mime dropping a bag), give me privilege (raises both hands up and looks up) (looks at camera with wide eyes)	2b 3b 4b	**Helia:** (leans her head into her right shoulder) (raises head and covers her mouth)
6a 7a 8a 9a	**JW mother:** What can you say to Carrie? **JW daughter:** I can tell her about the paradise, the animals, and the resurrection. **JW mother:** Let's practice!		
10a 11a 12a 13a 14a 15a 16a 17a 18a 19a 20a 21a	**Mac:** (looking at screen) Practice what?! (looking at camera with raised eyebrows and wide eyes, raises cup) Telling the girl that her two mommies need to stop being gay to get to paradise?! **Mac:** Oh I wish you the best of luck with that, honey. (gestures to screen with his cup) (smiles) I am mad. **Mac:** (gesturing to screen with his left hand) Who in their goddamn mind decided to make this video so well animated? (looks to camera) you know, just change it? (raises hands up) You know, just drop the bag (gestures to mimic dropping a bag) Quick fact–	10b 11b 12b 13b 14b 15b 16b 17b 18b	**Helia:** (looking at screen) This ho, what she got to practice? (closes eyes and shakes head left and right) Oooh, ooooh. Mmmm-mm **Helia:** (laughs) (leans back, raises hands, and points to screen with both hands) Exactly, you want her to!
22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42	**Helia:** (Pauses video and leans forward laughing) (laughing) Just drop the bag. (gestures to mimic dropping a bag) No, yo mommies need to mm-mm skkkrt skrrt. (gestures to screen) They gonna need to find some mmmm some boys (clasps hands and raises them up as she leans back) because apparently mmm that can't happen. (gestures to screen) **Addie:** (Laughs) **Helia:** (scratches nose) Oh my god. No wonder Jehovah's Witnesses are so scary. Ha ha (sticks out tongue). **Addie:** And what are you thinking, like what are you thinking or feeling about Mac's reaction here? **Helia:** (gestures to screen) I feel like everything he does and says is basically how I feel. 'Cause, it's like, exactly, (raises both palms up as if point is self-evidentiary) you just want us to put everything in there (gestures to mime stuffing clothing into bag) and >drop a bag.< (gestures to mime dropping a bag) **Addie:** Mm-hm **Helia:** (clenches fists and crosses arms into her chest) I mean if we all did that, if Mexicans did that, maybe Trump wouldn't build that wall. Mm. Yeah, (looks to camera) let me just drop my Mexican in here (gestures to mime stuffing clothing into a bag and dropping the bag). There, happy? (looks, gestures to camera) ((exaggerated parody of voice		

43	from clip)) Oh yes, cross the border now. (mimics a gesture of welcoming)
44	(rolls eyes and gestures upwards with both hands as if to dismiss the idea)
	[See Figure 5.4]
45	**Addie:** So you're thinking about the ways in which he was also referencing his
46	own Blackness and the ways that's part of coming into this experience as a
47	Black gay man?
48	**Helia:** (stretches hands behind her head back and forth) Yeah, because it's not
49	only about actually (0.5), um, (looks up and purses lips) mmm, sexualities
50	or genders, it's also about race at the same time. (looks down)
51	So, Jehovah is kind of stupid. ((sarcastically)) °Oops° (covers mouth)
52	**Addie:** (laughs gently) I hear you.

In lines 22-29, Helia drew on the choreography of talk and gesture that Mac offered to enact her own performance of radical joy. She paused the video and leaned forward with laughter, marking her move to take up and extend Mac's choreography in a solo reaction performance (line 22). She then immediately stepped into Mac's prior action by performing the 'drop the bag' choreography, mirroring Mac's response (lines 22-23). After performing Mac's reiterated coordination of modes, Helia then elaborated upon and extended the performance. Maintaining the tone of Mac's reaction, the performance of radical joy, Helia satirically addressed Carrie, the little girl with two mommies, almost as if she was taking the direction of the Jehovah's Witness mother in the clip to "practice" speaking to Carrie (lines 23-26). Helia coordinated talk, gesture, and posture to satirize the oppressive forms of erasure and marginalization that the Jehovah's Witness clip circulates. Helia performed *with* Mac's choreography of radical joy. Yet she also performed *for* me (line 27). As an audience member, I was a participant in the interaction and thereby also mediated Helia's performance. In lines 28-29, Helia paused to comedically comment on her own performance, again improvising upon Mac's defiant performance of laughter in the face of oppression by laughing immediately after calling the religious group scary. This excerpt clarifies how reaching for radical joy through

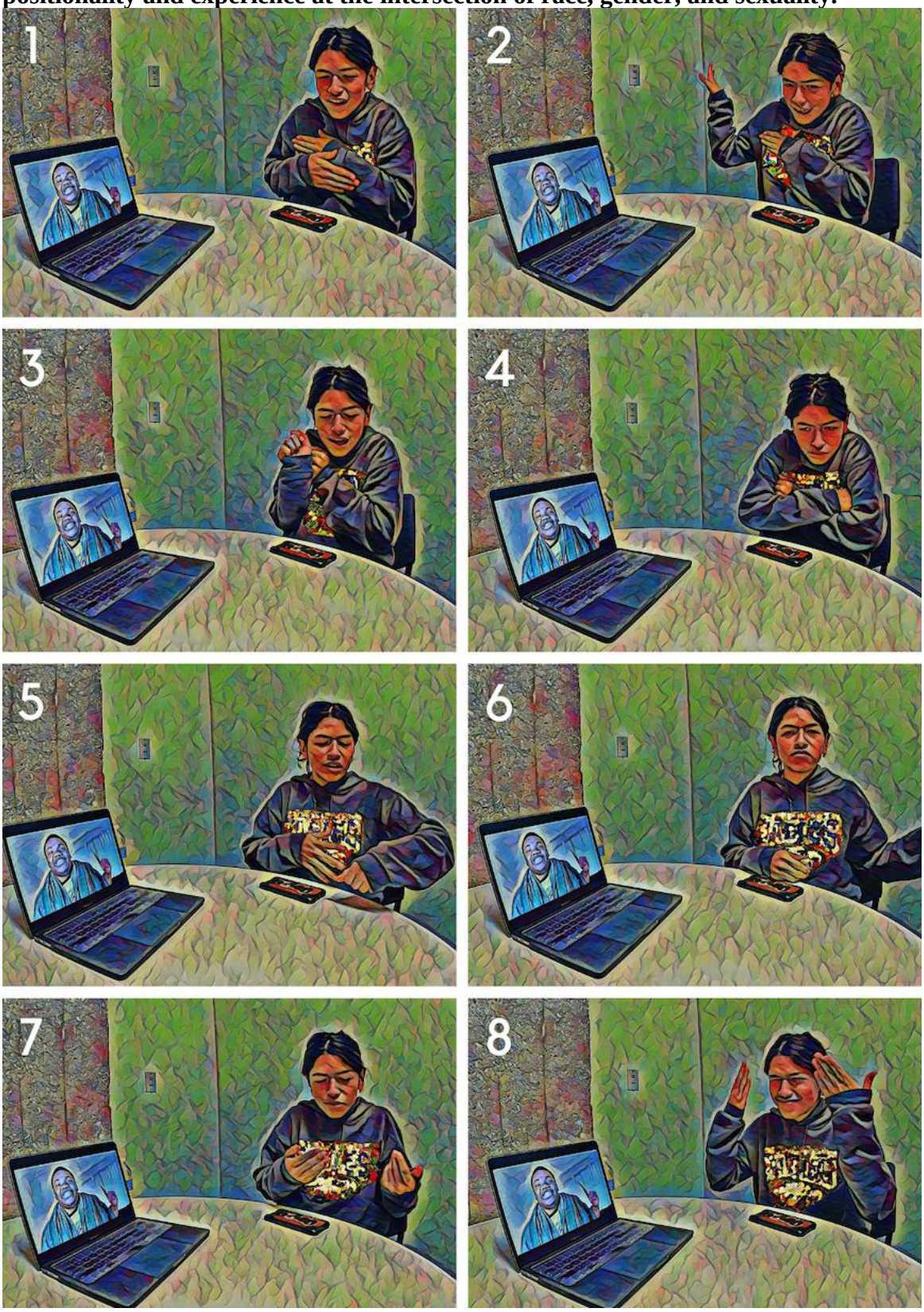
multimodal choreographies in the face of interlocking hegemonic domination is a practice of livability. Radical joy sustains life amid domination and insists on life otherwise.

In lines 30-52, Helia returned to the resource Mac offered to attend to intersections of race and sexuality, taking up and modifying his multimodal choreography of radical joy to explicitly disrupt interlocking structures of race, gender, and sexuality. Though Helia names these three intersections of identity and power, her response also implicated coloniality and racialized anti-immigrant discourses through her attention to the Mexico-United States border. When her performance in line 22-29 came to a natural pause, I prompted Helia to reflect on her thoughts and feelings in response to Mac (lines 30-31). As she reflected, Helia emphasized the resonance of Mac's embodied performance ("everything he does and says," line 32) with her own feelings and experience ("is basically how I feel," line 33). To underscore the point, she performed anew the multimodal choreography of 'dropping the bag,' a coordination of modes that holds both Mac's and Helia's prior action at this point in the activity (lines 32-36; see Figure 5.5, Images 1-2).

Whereas Helia adapted the choreography to speak to gender in Excerpt 5.2, here she extended the satirical analysis to racial and ethnic identity (lines 38-44). Notably, her embodied movement first contracted, reflecting, perhaps, her *felt* experience of navigating systemic racism and deeply phobic, racialized anti-immigrant discourses under Trump (line 38; see Figure 5.5, Images 3-4). As Helia took up and transformed the multimodal choreography of talk, tone, gaze, and gesture, her body expanded and became more confident; she sat up straight, used the expressive gestures of 'dropping the bag' and looked directly at the camera (see Figure 5.5, Images 5-6). In looking at and gesturing toward the camera, she also addressed the viewer ("There, <u>happy</u>?" line 42). I read this moment, this gaze toward the viewer, in two ways. First, it

could be an appropriation of Mac's gaze, his look toward his viewers and an invitation into the actions. And second, it may demonstrate a defiant, direct address of hegemonic structures. Improvising on the 'drop the bag' choreography, Helia then coordinated talk, parodic tone, gesture, and facial expression to identify and disrupt the racialized, colonial, and anti-immigrant oppressions of border policing and immigration policy (lines 42-44, see Figure 5.4, Images 7-8). I sought to further make explicit with Helia how Mac's video mediated her turn to racial identity or served as a resource in her sensemaking of intersections of identity and power (lines 45-47). She explicitly named her own thinking and attention to sexualities, genders, and race, in dialogue with Mac's reaction (lines 48-50). Here again Helia concluded the moment with defiant radical joy (line 51). She acknowledged the interlocking ideologies–and immediately undercut them. In my reading, Helia's move to call Jehovah stupid is one that does not let the ideology define her; she insists on creating life otherwise, amid and alongside structures of power.

Figure 5.5. Helia used and modified the 'drop the bag' choreography to speak to her positionality and experience at the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality.



Multimodal Choreographies of Radical Joy as Social Activities

In the reactions of Helia and others, it became clear that reaching for radical joy through multimodal choreographies is a deeply social activity practiced in relation with others, be they in person or on screen. Helia frequently gazed at and addressed Mac during her reactions, as if he was a participant in the activity. My own presence as a participant was meaningful, as well, in her performance. Though my own comments were minimal, my laughter and talk demonstrated affirmation and curiosity to encourage her reaching for, stepping into, and improvising upon choreographies of radical joy. The relational co-presence offered through in-person and digital activity was fundamental in this practice of livability. Indeed, other participants described the happiness, comfort, lightness, and ease they feel when they watched Mac but emphasized that the feeling is hard to sustain or produce alone, particularly amid an encounter with hate. Practices of livability are social, developed through participation in activity with others, including the digital role models and pedagogues of vloggers on YouTube.

For Adrian, radical joy in Mac's videos had vivid meaning, but he also theorized the difficulty of performing radical joy when alone in the face of injustice. He shared, "When you're *in it,* it's very scary. Because, and I know you're not just one person, like there are other LGBT people at the school. But when you're in there, and you're in class, it's you versus *everyone* else." As he recalled the experiences with discrimination at school, his own body became stoic, unmoving, and he gazed at the wall in front of him. During these experiences, Adrian felt isolated, alone, and scared–feelings that shaped his embodied response. He wondered if Mac felt alone, too. In response to the moment in which Mac reacted to racial and queer oppression with the 'drop the bag' choreography, Adrian noted that Mac is "handling it really well…but I don't know how he handles it behind closed doors," alone at home without his participatory audience.

When I asked Adrian to reflect on Mac's video after we finished watching it, Adrian shared that "his response makes me happy," and shared "I'm glad that he did it." But he speculated that it might have been hard for Mac:

> It probably took a lot for him to make this video…. Like, he's alone in his room, and when the video stops and he stops talking, it's silent, and he's alone. And that can be very scary after having just had these images and thoughts put into your head, and just having to sit.

Mac makes multimodal performance of radical joy look easy, but, as Adrian suggests, it is in fact incredibly challenging to insist on happiness, on joy, in the face of oppression, as a defiant response to domination. For young people, participation with others–be they online or in person–can support and sustain radical joy as a feeling to respond to interlocking hegemonies. By collectively performing and producing radical joy, these practices of livability may create the peopled ground to spark and sustain larger struggles.

Discussion and Conclusion

Amid persistent encounters with injustice, multiply marginalized youth may need to reach for a wide range of emotions to create livable lives in unlivable worlds. Radical joy is a feeling that trans and queer youth of color may learn in order to resist oppression and negotiate feelings of anger, sadness, and despair that arise as they navigate entrenched, intersecting forms of oppression. Through close interaction analysis of Helia's movements to use and modify Mac's multimodal choreographies of radical joy, I have demonstrated that young people can learn to reach for and produce the feeling of radical joy through digital media viewing. Videos on social media, in this way, can serve as powerful forms of public pedagogy to shift the way young people feel and act in response to oppression. Here, Mac enacted joy grounded in the refusal of

hegemonies–a refusal of the logics of oppression that reworks shame, sadness, and fear as feelings that can arise in response to hate. The shifts in feeling and action may nurture livability toward elsewheres, with the potential to give young people the ability to say, in Eric's words, "I can laugh it off because I love myself." The feelings young people learn have the potential to support being in relation with each other, with the world, and within struggles toward liberation. Radical joy nurtures livability as it confronts social disavowal and ontological denial.

Through tracing the relationship of digital media and emotion, I contribute new insights to studies of emotions in learning. Learning sciences research has begun to study the ways young people learn emotional configurations in social activity and consider the ways emotions can open or foreclose subsequent action (Vea, 2020; see also Bang, 2020; Curnow et al., 2021a; Curnow et al., 2021b; Uttamchandani, 2021). Joe Curnow, Tanner Vea and colleagues (2021) argue that "emotionality should be more centrally interrogated in learning sciences research because it shapes what is learned and how learning unfolds, and itself becomes part of learning outcomes" (p. 1). That is, feelings shape the pursuit of learning and may themselves be the goals of learning. To date, most scholarship on emotions in learning focuses on activities of collective action. Vea (2020), for instance, developed the concept of emotional configuration through analysis of learning emotion in animal rights activism. I extend thinking of the sociopolitical contexts of emotional learning from in-person activism to digital media, considering Mac's video as a form of digital emotional pedagogy of how to feel and act toward injustice (see also Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit). Here, I build on television studies scholar Lauren Herold (2018), who argued that LGBTQ+ local broadcast television in the 1980s offered a "televisual emotional pedagogy" by circulating collective feelings that helped the LGBTQ+ community make sense of how to feel about the AIDs crisis and "channel these feelings toward collective action" (p. 4). Similarly,

digital media such as YouTube videos may shift the way young people feel and mediate how they produce these feelings in the body. As digital artifacts that can be circulated widely and replayed again and again, videos may have unique affordances in learning emotional configurations that mediate subsequent activity.

Putting emotion and embodiment in close relation, the analysis of Helia's media reaction may also expand the study of embodied learning. Learning scientists have considered embodied movements to be mediators of learning and a way to see learning unfold moment-to-moment and across time (Keifert & Marin, 2018; Lindberg & Marin, 2020; Marin et al., 2020; Solomon et al., 2021; Vossoughi et al., 2020). This scholarship has tended to theorize the body and learning through analysis of gesture and gaze in pedagogical assistance and the capacity of dance choreography to support STEM thinking. By drawing on queer performance studies that considers embodied movement and choreography to be intimately linked with feelings, I offer a way to consider how feelings may motivate learners to enact configurations of communicative modes, and how learners may then produce feelings through embodied movement. This way of analyzing emotions and embodiment in learning may be useful across contexts of activity. But it is a particularly helpful approach to study the ways young people learn through watching digital media. Humor and other forms of affective intensity spark viral sharing and engagement on social media (Nahon & Hemsley, 2013; Warren-Crow, 2016). Tracing how media draws viewers into activity through feelings, which may then be taken up in the body in multimodal choreographies, may be an important way to consider learning with digital media.

Finally, the analysis contributes to studies of critical digital literacies by underscoring how youth leverage multimodalities in disrupting interlocking structures of power, and by attending to the role of digitally mediated emotion in compelling youth to step into these

choreographies of feeling. By theorizing multimodal choreographies through analysis of Helia's performance with Mac, I seek to develop a new way of noticing the ingenuity of trans and queer youth in creating conditions that sustain life, and life otherwise, amid domination. As I have demonstrated, configurations of modes at the micropolitical scale have the potential to grow movements, both embodied and social, that contest power and insist on possible elsewheres. With repetition, these everyday literacy performances that critique and contest cisnormativity, heteronormativity, white normativity, and antiblackness may remake the social world (Blackburn, 2002; Davis, 2019; Nicolazzo, 2016; Wargo, 2017a). Youth are learning to enact these multimodal performances that produce political feeling through engagement with and responding to digital artifacts in online communities, extending the literature on how youth develop critical digital literacies in participatory cultures (Lammers, 2013; Black, 2009; Kim, 2016; Shrodes, 2021). Ultimately, through this close analysis of multimodal choreographies, I seek to realize the ethical responsibility to notice and support the everyday work towards liberation, or the ways small multimodal movements constitute social transformation (Campano & Low, 2011; Haddix & Sealey-Ruiz, 2012; Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012; Yoon, 2021).

Chapter 6.
"The Word 'Getting Over' is Really Weird": Storying Disability in Trans and Queer Desired Futures

"I think saying the word 'getting over' is really weird," Jacob noted, pausing to calibrate his language in telling a story about digital art on the microblogging site Tumblr that represented trauma recovery and ongoing care for mental disabilities. A 17-year-old Afro-Puerto Rican and white gay trans and gender non-conforming boy living with disabilities, Jacob participates in overlapping recovery and disability communities on social media.[12] He continued carefully:

> Because when most people say 'get over' they don't usually mean forget about it or pretend it didn't happen. I more mean this person has overcome their struggles in whatever way that they were intending to go over it with. And that relates to myself, because of how I am doing in recovery.

For Jacob, the phrase 'getting over' narratively frames disability in the past. In contrast, recovery from trauma and living with mental disabilities are ongoing processes—ways of doing that are specific to each person and unfold in communities. In framing recovery and mental disability care as a way of doing, Jacob writes disability into the present and the future.

Storying Disability Against Narrative Erasures and Enclosures

In shifting his meanings away from the rhetoric of 'getting over,' Jacob resists common narrative framings of disability shaped by compulsory able-bodiedness/able-mindedness (Kafer,

[12] I alternate between identity-first language (e.g., disabled person) and person-first language (e.g., person living with disabilities) to recognize the ongoing dialogue on language within disability communities (Sins Invalid, 2016). I use "dis/ability" in naming the structure of power that organizes ableism, and to indicate the social constructedness and co-constitution of disability and ability (Hernández-Saca et al., 2018). I also use "experiences with disability" for moments when a person has named, narrated, and made meaning with a mental or physical illness but has not self-identified as disabled.

2003; McRuer, 2006). Disability tends to be written out of narratives, figured as 'untellable' at personal and social scales (Kafer, 2013). When it does appear, disability often secures narratives of progress for abled people or into able-bodiedness[13] (Mitchell & Snyder, 2013). That is especially true for disabled youth and children. Disability studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2002) argues that sentimental representations of disabled children figure them as "a problem to solve, an obstacle to eliminate, a challenge to meet" for abled viewers and readers (p. 63). Abled rescuers and 'cured' youth enter a future that is morally superior for having 'solved' disability.

Against these dominant narratives of an abled future, disability justice activists, disabled scholars, and disability studies scholars argue that we need crip ways of narrating desired futures. Disabled, queer, feminist scholar Alison Kafer (2013) writes, "To put it bluntly, I, *we*, need to imagine crip futures because disabled people are continually being written out of the future, rendered as the sign of the future no one wants" (p. 46). Queer disabled femme activist and artist Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha dreams of "revolutionary futures that don't replicate eugenics—where disabled people exist and are thriving" (p. 128). Disability justice futures are not based on models of inclusion into abled norms, models marked by 'getting over.' Rather, they emerge from centering Black, Indigenous, people of color and queer, non-binary, and trans

[13] I primarily use the term "compulsory able-bodiedness" for concision, but I do not intend to focus on the body or physical disability to the exclusion of the mind or mental disability. Most of the disabilities or experiences with disability participants named would be described as mental disabilities, an umbrella, and coalitional, term that encompasses "cognitive, intellectual, and psychiatric disabilities, mental illness, m/Madness and a/Autism, as well as brain injury or psychiatric survivorship" (Price, 2014, p. 13). I follow feminist disability studies in recognizing the inseparability of bodies and minds, also described by the term "bodymind" (Price, 2014; Schalk, 2018). Sami Schalk writes that bodymind, conceptually, "highlights how processes within our being impact one another in such a way that the notion of a physical versus mental process is difficult, if not impossible to clearly discern in most cases" (p. 5).

disabled people who craft disability as "a set of innovative and virtuosic skills" grounded in the commitment to "not leaving each other behind" (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 126). Crip dreams for the future are rooted in collective liberation.

In this chapter, I build with disabled activists, artists, and scholars to consider how disability might enter the imagined futures of young people, as mediated by digital tools. I explore stories that four trans and queer teens constructed with digital artifacts to represent the past, present, and future in the summer of 2020, attuned to the meanings they make of experiences with disability. My inquiry is guided by three questions: 1) How did four teens narrate desired futures? 2) How are these narratives mediated by digital artifacts (e.g., images, videos, posts)? And 3) In these narratives, how did teens theorize the relation between disability and desired futures? Disability justice and crip theory lenses, my relationships with the participants, and my own disability shape my investment in reading moments in which youth narrate illness towards ways disability can be made meaningful and have a desired place in social futures. In doing so, I contribute insights into the roles of storying to contest dominant narratives that undergird curriculum, with a particular focus on telling stories of disability and challenging ableism in narrative composition (Bacon & Lalvani, 2019; Cedillo, 2018; Snyder et al., 2021).

"I, *We*, Need to Imagine Crip Futures"

Alison Kafer's book *Feminist queer crip* was published in 2013, the year I was diagnosed with a degenerative chronic illness. I was exposed to Kafer's work through queer studies as a graduate student in English. As I made sense of my own disability, I poured over Kafer's book, memorizing the lines, "I, *we*, need to imagine crip futures" (p. 46). These seven words were a balm and a call to action—for my own future and for a political identity I was coming to occupy.

Kafer's words gave rise to a question: What futures might be possible if we tell stories of disability and listen to the stories of disabled people?

I turn to my story to consider how my positionality shaped this project and to write toward accountability within critical disability studies (Erevelles et al., 2019). As a poor queer white and multiracial femme with a disability, I am invested in understanding how disability can hold a place in social futures. Having experienced symptoms of chronic illness for 15 years now, I have been engaged in disability justice since I was diagnosed with spondylarthritis in 2013. Reading in critical disability studies helped me make sense of my own story, understand how to participate in disability justice movements that focus on interlocking oppressions and that leave no one behind, and imagine a disabled future. I have found a home in a political-relational model of disability, increasingly moving from isolation into networks of interdependence (Kafer, 2013). My ways of being, knowing, and doing have expanded through my disability, not despite it. I have strived to mobilize these practices, understandings, and meanings in my organizing and activism, recognizing that the work of unlearning ableism and organizing toward futures of disability justice is ongoing. With critical reflection, I seek to build coalitions in fighting to dismantle interlocking oppressions toward liberatory futures (Cruz, 2013).

This chapter reflects a continuous process of bringing my embodied experiences, political commitments, and identity as disabled into scholarly practice. In earlier versions of my analysis, I deliberately set aside moments in which youth mentioned illness or disability to avoid slipping into a pathologizing, damage, or deficit lens. Yet, as I disabled person, I felt at odds with the way that I ascribed damage to youth illness and disability. As I moved through tensions in telling stories of disability that youth shared with me, I also noticed my tendency to set aside disability in telling my own story, particularly in academic spaces. Academia is relentlessly shaped by

interlocking white normativity, cisheteronormativity, and compulsory able-bodiedness/able-mindedness. These norms depend on constructing disability as deviant, a defect to 'get over' or be rendered diminished. I left my graduate program in English, in part, because the stress of navigating an environment that assumed able-bodiedness worsened chronic flares. Since then, I often have not talked about my disability or requested accommodations, in part, because I do not want to be perceived as less capable. Disclosures of disability in higher education involve a "complex calculus" of contextual factors and contingencies (Kerschbaum et al., 2017, p. 2). Yet, the tendencies I noticed in my own practice to set aside disability in stories often arise from dominant narratives that frame disability as damage or a challenge to get over—when it is included at all. Rarely do we uplift the practices, politics, and dreams that emerge with disability.

In learning to listen to stories of youth in the study, and through reflecting on my own story, I noticed that all four youth made meanings of their experiences with disability. That is, they insistently engaged in imagination because of, and with, their illness or disability. I realized that, in setting aside moments that mentioned illness and disability, I was writing disability out of the stories that youth shared. I rendered the meanings youth made with and through disability untellable; I rendered the relationship between their dynamic practices of dreaming in their illness or disability illegible. In this article, I explicitly take up disability justice and crip theory lenses to foreground and make sense of moments I previously set aside. I tell my story and turn to the stories of young people to move toward accountability for the transformative potential of crip narratives.

Conceptual Framings: Thinking with Disability Justice and Crip Theory

I draw on conceptual framings in disability justice and crip theory to imagine crip futures and destabilize interlocking norms of whiteness, cisheteronormativity, and able-bodiedness. As

lenses that emerge in disabled communities and activism, they resist erasure and foreground the ways of being, knowing, and doing that emerge with and through disability as it intersects with racial, gender, and sexual identities. As such, they enable me to consider how youth make meaning with, and develop critical practices through, experiences with disability.

Disability justice situates disability within an intersectional politics and considers how practices in sick, disabled, Deaf, Mad, and neurodivergent communities offer windows into possible elsewheres. The performance art and organizing group Sins Invalid coined the term and founded the movement to dismantle interlocking structures of ableism, coloniality, white supremacy, cisheteropatriarchy, and capitalism that render some bodies "invalid" (Lamm, 2015; Sins Invalid, 2015). Disability justice leader Mia Mingus describes, "Ableism is connected to all of our struggles because it undergirds notions of whose bodies are considered valuable, desirable and disposable" (Mingus, 2011). As a movement led by Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) and queer and trans disabled people, disability justice builds on writers such as Audre Lorde, Cherríe Moraga, and Gloria Anzaldúa who storied illness and spoke against the debilitating nature of oppression. In organizing against structures of power, the movement enacts liberatory forms of life in the everyday, as guided by principles such as interdependence, sustainability, and collective access. For instance, care webs and mutual aid are relational practices with roots in disabled communities that meet immediate needs even as they offer glimpses into how we might better organize social systems (Kaba, 2020; Malatino, 2020; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018; Spade, 2020). A disability justice lens attunes me to the role of disabled communities in dismantling interlocking oppressions and crafting practices needed for more just and ethical ways of being together.

Crip theory expands what disability can come to mean and explicates the ways that white normativity, cisheteronormativity, and abled normativity are co-constituted against deviance. Crip theory, a term coined by Robert McRuer (2006) to put queer theory and disability studies in critical conversation, describes scholarship that travels across disability studies, queer studies, and feminist studies. Crip theory first generatively opens up what can be read under the category of 'disability' and thereby expands the analytic potential of a dis/ability lens (McRuer, 2006; Schalk, 2018). I also draw on crip theory because it generatively unsettles compulsory heterosexuality, compulsory able-bodiedness and, I add, compulsory heterogenderism and white normativity (Rich, 1980; Kafer, 2003; McRuer, 2006; Nicolazzo, 2017). That is, crip theory names able-bodiedness as an oppressive norm intertwined with white normativity and cisheteronormativity. Disability can only be read as deviant, as damage, when we take able-bodiedness as self-evident. By taking a dis/ability lens and denaturalizing interlocking oppressive norms, I seek to expand whose futures, and what kinds of futures, are possible and desirable (cárdenas & Chen, 2019; Kafer, 2013).

Centering Disabled Stories in Curriculum of the Future

Curriculum in the United States and Canada is built upon dominant cultural narratives that uphold oppressive relations of power (Coles, 2021; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Dominant narratives reproduce perspectives of those in power and erase, or frame as deficit, nondominant ways of knowing, being, and doing (Kean, 2020; Coles, 2021; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2006). For instance, dominant curricular narratives silence disability or position disability in ableist frames (Bacon & Lalvani, 2019; Erevelles, 2005; Erevelles et al., 2019). Emily A. Nusbaum and Maya L. Steinborn (2019) employ the concept of *ontological erasure* to name the ways

curriculum goes beyond silence to actively erase "certain body-minds from 'being' in the educational landscape" (p. 24).

Against this backdrop, I build with critical scholars who are interested in the "liberatory and inventive potential" of narrative to transform curriculum from a site of violence to a space of possibility (Cedillo, 2018, n.p.; Bacon & Lalvani, 2019; Saleh, 2021). As a methodology that builds on traditions of storying in Black and Indigenous communities, counter-storytelling uplifts the stories of marginalized communities to challenge dominant racist discourses and strengthen knowledges of survival and resistance (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). Recently, scholars have developed the term 're-storying' to describe practices to unsettle dominant narratives, remember ancestral stories, and create new stories to guide the future (Bang et al., 2014; Saleh, 2021; Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016; Stornaiuolo & Thomas, 2018). In critical disability studies in education, scholars call for curriculum to center the stories, knowledges, and practices of disabled people and communities at the intersections of multiple oppressions, such as those exemplified in disability justice principles (Annamma et al., 2018; Annamma & Handy, 2019; Bacon & Lalvani, 2019; Cedillo, 2018; Cedillo & Bratta, 2018; Erevelles, 2005; Snyder et al., 2019). I take up this call, drawing on scholarship on social imagination to consider the place of crip futures in curriculum studies.

The stories we tell about the future, or social imagination, have unique potential for curricular transformation, since they reflect and shape the forms of life youth imagine to be possible and desirable. I draw on scholarship on social dreaming to consider storying the future beyond the enclosures of the present (Gutiérrez, 2008; Gutiérrez et al., 2019a). Social dreaming has roots in critical pedagogy traditions that advance anti-oppressive praxis through critically analyzing relations of power and developing hope for liberatory futures (Freire & Macedo,

1987). Kris Gutiérrez (2008) and colleagues developed a pedagogy of social dreaming in the Migrant Student Leadership Institute that linked immigrant and migrant students' own stories to a "shared vision for a more just world now and in the future" (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 157; Gutiérrez et al., 2019a). Here, social dreaming is a practice of social imagination that links the past with possible futures through narrative (Gutiérrez, 2008). Though critical pedagogy traditions center nondominant stories, they, too, can occlude disability (Connor, 2012; Gabel, 2002). In dialogue with this scholarship, I am interested to consider the role of disability in practices of imagination at personal and social scales, and how young people narrate disability in desired futures.

In addition to shifting curricular narratives of disability, I join scholars in seeking to crip understandings of narrative composition. Narrative theory is shaped by value-laden notions of linearity, continuity, and coherence that privilege able-bodied and able-minded narrators (Gee, 1991). Many descriptions of 'incompetent' storytellers in studies of narrative turn to deeply ableist depictions of disabled people, such as autistic and chronically ill narrators (Yergeau, 2018). Moreover, narrative composition tends to favor monolingual written or spoken language, constraining the linguistic, embodied, and semiotic modes through which stories might be composed (Cedillo, 2018; Gonzales & Butler, 2020). As Shannon Walters (2014) argues, "Composition can be a normative endeavor, unfriendly to composers who communicate outside of a narrow range of acceptable ways" (p. 174). Scholars in critical disability studies have argued to expand possibilities of narrative form and embrace multimodality as part of accessibility, wherein narrators choose modes to communicate with and for multiple abilities (Cedillo, 2018; Gonzales & Butler, 2020; Walters, 2014; Yergeau et al., 2013). With these scholars, I move storying away from normative assumptions and towards the range of modes youth may compose stories, and the forms those stories may take.

Analytic Method

My analysis focuses on video data from artifact-based interviews in summer 2020 during the first of five virtual sessions conducted with four focal participants: Noah, a 15-year-old white gay trans boy; Mateo, a 16-year-old Puerto Rican bisexual trans boy; Jacob, a 17-year-old Afro-Puerto Rican and white gay trans and gender nonconforming boy living with disabilities; and Bailey, an 18-year-old white lesbian trans girl. All names are pseudonyms. Based on interviews, Noah and Bailey are both from middle to upper-middle class families; Mateo and Jacob are from low-income, working-class families.

Artifact-based interviews, a visual participatory method that engages youth in knowledge construction with visual tools, invited young people to narrate their past, present, and future in dialogue with three digital artifacts they have chosen (Gubrium et al., 2015; Halbritter & Lindquist, 2012; Switzer, 2019). In advance, I asked participants to select three meaningful digital artifacts such as an image, post, video, or conversation thread that represent their past, present, and future. During the interview, I asked them to tell me the story of each artifact in chronological order, asking follow-up questions that guided participants to theorize through story (e.g., "What story does this artifact tell about your past?) and draw connections across the artifacts they chose (e.g., "What storyline do you notice across the three artifacts?"). In speaking with youth about the artifact they chose to represent the future, I was particularly attuned to the relationship between their personal desires for the future and social dreams. I audiotaped, video-taped, and transcribed the interviews, which ranged from 30 minutes to one hour, saving screen captures of artifacts.

Informed by sociocultural theories, I am interested in how youth storying of the future is mediated by cultural artifacts in sociocultural, political, and ideological contexts (Cole, 1996). In

this chapter, I focus on the role of *digital* cultural artifacts, which I approach as simultaneously material and ideal, in mediating how youth imagine the future (Cole, 1996). Building with Espinoza and Vossoughi (2014), I consider how these artifacts reflect an imaginary world that "color our perspective of what is possible in ordinary life": "Neither products of fantasy nor heralds of a more just society, imaginary worlds are grasshopper-scale fragments of the future alive in the present" (Espinoza & Vossoughi, 2014, p. 298). Digital artifacts offer portals into possible futures. I attend to the ways youth narrate the relationship between their own possible futures and the social dreams they hold for the world.

My data analysis process was iterative as I learned to consider and reconsider the data in new ways with and alongside youth. The analysis was shaped by member checks I conducted with participants routinely during the study and during analysis, aiming to ensure that my analytical directions and interpretations engaged with participants' own meanings. As I reviewed the transcripts multiple times and conducted focused coding, I noticed that all four focal participants mentioned illness or disability throughout the interviews. Jacob almost exclusively shared stories of trauma-based mental disabilities and learning about disabilities more broadly throughout the 55-minute interview. I carefully considered whether I should communicate these stories at all, to avoid slipping into damage, deficit, or pathologizing orientations, even as youth talked with openness and ease. I reflected on and engaged in conversations with trusted mentors about the politics and ethics of witnessing youth stories in humanizing and desire-based research (Blackburn, 2014; Paris & Winn, 2014; Tuck, 2009). Through dialogue and critical reflection, it became clear that setting aside moments of youth storying disability would reproduce ableist lenses that frame disability as untellable or a challenge to get over. I took up disability justice

and crip theory lenses to further understand how youth theorized the relation between disability and desired futures.

Once I developed the theoretical framework, I analytically logged the video data (Marin & Bang, 2018) and wrote memos on each interview in dialogue with the theoretical frames. Analytic logging involved slowly watching the video data multiple times in order to log the data in three-to-five-minute intervals with a) brief description; b) note of artifacts used; c) tags and subtags that correspond to the focused categories and codes constructed across research stages one and two (e.g., mobilizing humor in practices of livability; cultivating hope through laughter); d) data type; e) connection to other data I might use; f) descriptive notes (e.g., key quotations, points that build on the description); and g) analytic notes (e.g., analytic interpretations in dialogue with the theoretical framework). The analytic notes in the log and subsequent memos became primary sites to pull out the connections between the data, the focused coding scheme, and disability justice and crip theory frames. I selected excerpts of exemplary video data from each interview guided by my theoretical lenses and research questions, namely: 1) How did four teens narrate desired futures? 2) How are these narratives mediated by digital artifacts (e.g., images, videos, posts)? And 3) In these narratives, how did teens theorize the relation between disability and desired futures?

Finally, I transcribed and analyzed excerpts with narrative analysis methods, drawing on thematic, structural, and interactional analysis to understand how youth construct narratives (Riessman, 2008). Thematically, I traced the content of the story and themes that recur and lend form to the narrative. Structurally, I drew on Gee's (1991) sociolinguistic approach, organizing the story into poetic units based on how the story was spoken to attend to narrative form and the use of metaphors and figurative language (Riessman, 2008). Gee developed the approach to

analyze the construction and meaning of narratives that do not formulaically recollect a past event. Through analysis of a narrative told by a woman living with schizophrenia, Gee (1991) makes clear that the study of narrative form has been shaped by notions of linearity and coherence that arise in compulsory able-bodiedness/able-mindedness. As such, my analysis builds on other scholars in using the approach to analyze stories told by disabled narrators, stories of illness, and stories in future tense, all of which may not have linear forms or clear resolutions (Riessman, 2008). Interactionally, I considered how participants take up content, language, and discursive frames from the digital artifact and the context of the interview in constructing their narrative (Riessman, 2008). In the transcripts, I use italics for emphasis.

Findings Overview: Toward Disability in Desired Futures

Through narratives with digital artifacts, Mateo, Bailey, Noah, and Jacob storied how their experiences with disability including mental illness shaped their practices of imagining the future. The youth complicated narratives of 'getting over' disability by turning to artifacts that position disabled futures or narratively expanding upon artifacts to make meaning with and through experiences with disability. In these stories, disability becomes meaningful in developing practices of social imagination and has a place in desired futures. The stories are also constrained, at moments, by the narrative frames offered by digital and discursive tools.

In presenting youth stories, I focus on patterns in narrative content and form, carefully seeking to understand how Mateo, Bailey, Noah, and Jacob narrated desired social futures with digital artifacts, and the ways they theorized disability in those narratives. Mateo, a 16-year-old Latinx Puerto Rican bisexual trans boy, and Bailey, an 18-year-old white lesbian trans girl, narrated practices of insistent social dreaming for a better future and better world they developed through experiences with depression. The sadness they experience arises within and pushes on the

oppressive enclosures of the present, demanding that a more liberatory world is possible. Noah, 15-year-old white gay trans boy, storied practices to extend an elastic present that resists deferral of wholeness and troubles an attachment to progress narratives (Israeli-Nevo, 2017). Through experiences with anxiety, Noah complicates social dreaming by sitting with the challenges presented by entrenched problems. Jacob, 17-year-old Latinx and white gay trans and gender nonconforming boy living with disabilities, storied coming into care and recovery networks on social media and dreaming of a future where his existence as disabled and trans is not erased. Jacob made clear that a just future for marginalized communities will require listening to stories with care.

Depression and the Willful Practice of Social Dreaming a "Whole New World"

In Mateo and Bailey's stories, they developed practices of radically reimagining what is possible—imaginations built around collective care—through experiences of depression. In theorizing their practices of dreaming, they emphasized connections between personal senses of possibility and the capacity to imagine a better world. The future Mateo imagined with a colorful animated Queer Eye X Lizzo music video released in June 2020 focused on self-love and collective joy for queer and trans people of color. This future, he narrated, is one in which "it doesn't matter how you look, like you should still learn to *love* yourself, you know?" Mateo dreamed of starting a program at his school to encourage BIPOC students to become teachers, and he saw a racially diverse future grounded in love as a foundation for this work. Bailey, then, dreamed of a better world "without capitalism, or racism, or bigotry in general," mediated by funny communist Twitter and Instagram accounts, microblogging and photo/video-sharing social media platforms, respectively. For her, a more just world requires redistribution of resources and new forms of social, political, and economic life "where everyone has access to the things they

need to live and live well." For both Mateo and Bailey, these narrative futures are also afforded and constrained by tools at their reach.

Mateo imagined the future of exuberant love for trans and queer people of color with and through experiences with depression. Mateo picked a Queer Eye X Lizzo video titled *Soulmate* on YouTube, a video-sharing social media platform, to story a future filled with self-love and collective care for queer and trans folks of color. The video is about being your own soulmate "so you should fall in love with yourself because you are beautiful"—a willful task, Mateo named, against interlocking white, abled, cis, straight, and middle class normativities. This imagined future emerges in relationship to his experiences with depression, represented through the past and present artifacts depicting sadness in response to social events and contexts, such as racialized, gendered feelings of self-hate that emerge in response to mean-spirited social media content. For Mateo, depression is a complex set of negative feelings caught up in experiences of social disavowal at the personal and social scales. And yet, he emphasized, depression has informed his willful practice of looking toward a transformative future filled with love, what he described as "this whole new world."

Because Mateo had previously hinted at the connections among the past, present, and future artifacts he had selected, I asked Mateo to elaborate on this point, prompting him to narratively theorize that a better world emerges through difficulty:

> **Addie:** Can you tell me a little bit about the storyline that you see? Because I'm starting to *see* them as really connected, and I'd love to hear how you're thinking about it.
>
> **Mateo:** So like, back in the day, I was like, "Oh, no matter what bad stuff that you think, you're still going to continue in the future. Everything's gonna get better. And then still, like going on to the present, (pause) it's still hard, but it's getting better. You can see

> the light at the end of the tunnel. But in the *future*, you're at that light. Nothing can get better because you're in this whole new world that you see so many new things that, a couple years ago, you knew was coming, but you didn't know how soon it was coming. And now, it's here.

In narrating the connections, Mateo theorized that depression was integrally tied to his practice of imagining a better future. He insists on transformation because of the sadness he faces in the world as it is now. Against oppressive norms, the digital artifact of the Queer Eye X Lizzo video mediated Mateo's anticipation of a better future, one filled with love for trans and queer folks of color. Though Mateo's depression informs his insistence on possibilities for transformation, the discursive tools he reaches for, such as the language of "it gets better," may also narrate disability as remaining in the past. The focus on 'getting better' may too readily slip into 'getting over.'

Yet, Mateo underlined the relation of self-transformation to social transformation, as self-love grows into love, care, and joy in community. Because Mateo expressed excitement for a world of love and joy for queer and trans people of color, mediated by the Queer Eye X Lizzo video, I asked him if he saw himself in the video now or felt that it represented a future he could be a part of some day. Mateo emphasized that "I can see myself being a part of it in the future, but right now, I'm at the beginning, the start of the line." The beginning "feels like I'm more comfortable just being around myself." He theorized that the future he imagines alongside the video "has to start with me, so I can kind of, in a way, spread it to others." Lizzo is a role model who mediates Mateo's imagination of the future; Mateo sees that he, too, could spread love and joy. By listening to Mateo's story of depression, I noticed that the experience of self-love is consequential to feeling other possibilities and moving into forms of collective care. Narratively,

learning to love in a hegemonic culture of hate is distinct from 'getting over.' Though Mateo is at "the beginning" of the journey, Mateo practices imagination toward his growth and participation in communities. Mateo wanted to create an Instagram account to offer community care and teach other trans and queer youth of color self-love as a way of being.

Bailey, too, narrated the meanings that depression had for practices of imagining a better world at the personal and social scales. She began to narrate the meanings of depression in talking about an artifact that represented her present, a Twitter sci-fi micro-story from the account Capsule_169 posted in May 2018 that poetically expressed the realization of being a trans woman and the possible futures this recognition opens up. At the time of the interview, the Tweet had been liked more than 13,000 times. It reads:

> The time traveller appeared at important parts of his life with help and advice. She was so cool and beautiful, and he wished he could be more like her. One day she unlocked his phone, via the fingerprint scanner. He realised who she was, and suddenly the future looked so bright.

Bailey had first seen the Tweet a few years prior and "saved it a couple of times." She added, "I never memorized the whole thing, but I kind of just know what it says, and I think about that sometimes." Bailey had just graduated from high school, where she was not out as a trans woman. She was excited and daunted by the prospect of social transition as she started college in the fall. Like Mateo, Bailey expressed that being able to imagine a better world began with feeling that her future could be bright. She said of why the micro-story stuck with her:

> This is the depression coming through, but I like the idea of knowing that things will get better. And not just in a 'Oh, I'm sure things will be better because things change and

> eventually they'll change for the better,' but just having that reassurance that I know I'll be okay, and I will be the kind of person that I want to be is nice.

Bailey narrated that she has developed an attachment to possibility at the personal scale, the "reassurance that I know I'll be okay," through her experiences with depression. Importantly, Bailey associated the depression she experiences with hiding her trans identity in cisnormative contexts like school. Like Mateo, Bailey draws on the language of 'getting better' that has limits for imagining disability in the future. Yet, she makes clear through her narrative clarification that the language of 'getting better' here communicates the possibility of creating a livable life as a trans woman in the face of normativities that can render that possibility illegible. For both teens, ultimately the world needs to get better. Similar to Mateo, Bailey narrated that once she felt a sense of reassurance that she would be okay, she could then begin to imagine toward the collective. In their stories so far, social transformation begins with the self.

In narrating the artifact that represents her future, Bailey's willful practice of cultivating possibility shifted from the personal to social scale, from self-care to collective care. To represent the future she desired, Bailey chose several Instagram posts that call for re-imagining social systems. Focusing on an Instagram profile called Hello Commie (a play on the Hello Kitty brand) that had recently been censored for copyright infringement, she emphasized that the posts communicate, "We can have a society that's based around helping everyone and making sure everyone's okay, and that's kind of the future I want." She added, "One of my favorite sayings is 'a better world is possible.' I kind of latch on to anything that has that kind of message." Bailey had described becoming a communist through participation in social media communities and emphasized that her politics shaped her investment in redistribution of resources, police and

prison abolition, and forms of collective care. She also linked her attachment to hope for a better world with her depression:

> A lot of these kinds of posts mean a lot to me when they do have that kind of message of hope and 'society can get better.' We need to try because that's really important to me. I really like those kinds of things because I'm depressed already, and if I don't have any hope for the future, then what do I do now, you know?

While discourses of hope have important limits to surface and contend with (Maudlin, 2014; Murad, 2011), hope is an important tool for Bailey to imagine forward.[14] She went on to narrate that in middle school, she "didn't really feel like things would get better." The despair felt untenable. Her experiences of depression guide her practice of hope for herself and hope for a better society. The culturally situated feeling of 'getting better' informs the work of social dreaming when it focuses on the oppressive conditions of the social world getting better, or forms of social transformation.

Anxiety and Extending an Elastic Present

In contrast to Mateo and Bailey's stories of attachment to the future as what Mateo called "this whole new world," Noah named practices of sustaining life in an elastic present that are informed by anxiety. For Mateo and Bailey, feelings of personal possibility amid depression are deeply connected to imagining social transformation. Noah storied his focus on imagining personal possibility in an ongoing present because the thought of a social future—one narratively

[14] Scholars have rightly critiqued discourses of hope within critical pedagogies scholarship as part of a humanist, racial project that reinscribes white moral innocence (Maudlin, 2014; Murad, 2011). In attending to hope that emerges in youth stories, I resist progress narratives that elide moral responsibility for present and past injustice. Simultaneously, I recognize that the attachments and functions of hope in youth stories may differ from that of discourses of hope in institutional and curricular contexts.

marked by climate catastrophe and social irresponsibility—heightened anxiety. The artifacts that Noah picked to represent the past and present reflected his practices of curating funny images and videos to sustain ease, comfort, and joy through the day. He also saved images to share with his friends, explaining, "I want to make people laugh; I want to make them happy." Noah was also engaged with social justice activism in the summer of 2020, specifically the Black Lives Matters movement and anti-Trump antagonism on TikTok, a social media app to watch and share short-form videos. Yet, the artifacts that he chose to represent his past and present spoke to the significance of humor and care in his digital practices. As he shifted to narrating the artifact that represents the future, Noah similarly focused on cute content that helped him feel okay in the moment, content that also deferred questions of what the world would become.

Informed by his experiences with anxiety, Noah narrated a future in which would use social media to post "positive, uplifting things." He shared a screenshot of a meme that featured a "groundhog and squirrel eating out of a little tiny picnic table together" to demonstrate the kind of "wholesome stuff" he wanted to post. His focus on kind, funny content is also a response to the mean-spirited content that Mateo described. Noah shared, "there shouldn't be so much hate on Instagram. I don't want to be on that side because I know that negatively affects me if I'm on that side too long. So, I want to stay on the happy positive side." As Noah's story unfolded through the conversation, it became clear that his focus on content that "makes me feel good" sustained life in the present and postponed larger questions of the future. A focus on positivity and presence are both shaped by his anxiety and practices of mental health care.

Because the image of cute animals eating together seemed to reflect a personal vision of feeling good, I asked Noah to reflect on whether the image also "speaks to the visions for the future you have for society or the world." Given the relationship and rapport we developed over

time and the openness we had established in talking about mental health, Noah felt comfortable to speak back to my interest in a social future. He shared:

> Personally, I don't like thinking about the future too much. It's a big anxiety, like, drawing factor for me. Because, it's uncertainty—I hate uncertainty. Like, 'Nope, that's not it.' So, I am a very thinking-in-the-present person. But when I do think about my future, I kind of think of it like this. I don't know if everyone in the world will be like this. I don't think by the time I'm 25 or 30, everyone will be like, 'Ah, let's respect animals. Let's not kill people.' That would be nice, but I don't think that's what's going to happen, unfortunately. So, I'd say this is like a little perfect world I've built for myself in my head that's like, when I'm feeling stressed, I can look forward to it in a sense. Like one day, I'll be living in the woods with little squirrel picnic tables and it will be so great. Well, I don't know if everyone will be like that, probably not. But, if everyone was, that would be really cool.

Shaped by his experiences with anxiety, Noah extended the present through a focus on a feel-good image, both material and ideal, that is just for him. The practice of "thinking in the present" emerges through a need to sidestep uncertainty and fear for a future marked by climate change and deepening inequities to manage anxiety and feel okay. A focus on the present may be limited by its eschewal of social responsibility, further complicated by Noah's positionality as a white and upper-middle-class young person. Even so, Noah's practice of presence also resists the teleological logic embedded in narratives of 'getting better,' narratives that position the future as the fix for the past. Guided by anxiety and what he has learned around staying away from the "negative side" to manage anxiety, Noah takes time to nurture conditions that sustain everyday life in a world marked by enclosures.

Coming into Collective Care for a Future Where Identities are Not Erased

Jacob storied coming into interdependence and collective care through recovery and disability communities on social media, dreaming of a future where his existence as disabled and trans is not erased. Jacob used artifacts that represent the present to set up the future he imagines. He first described character-based digital art in recovery communities on social media. The digital artist he followed on Tumblr (an account that has since been deactivated) created a character named Ena to represent a journey of recovery from trauma and into taking care of trauma-based mental illness. Jacob specifically storied an image of the character titled 'Still Alive.' In the image, Ena has long black hair with one hair out of place; she stands with her eyes closed, hands outstretched, and tattoos of flowers and black lines visible on her wrists, forearm, and upper thighs. A heart tattoo with the colors of the bisexual pride flag symbolizes her sexuality, which stood out to Jacob.

Jacob narrated that the larger tattoos on the character symbolized "that this person has overcome their struggles in whatever way that they were intending to go over it with"—a narrative calibration from 'getting over.' In Jacob's storying, recovery from trauma is an ongoing activity that involves processing harm and learning to take care of trauma-based mental illness in relation with others, in Ena's case a lesbian character she begins to date. Jacob narrated that he followed the character's story the "whole entire time" and "started to relate to the character." While the digital story has since ended, Jacob described that the artist "still makes drawings of the characters… so she still continues the story outside of the actual story." Jacob continues the story, too, through making fan art in sketchbooks. Through the tattoo symbolization, and drawings the artist and Jacob create, the story of trauma-based mental illness and recovery is made present and ongoing.

As Jacob began to relate with the character's journey through digital art, he also sought to learn about other disabilities through participating in disability communities on social media. The other artifacts he chose to represent the present are YouTube channels in which content creators vlog about their own experiences with mental disability or interview others about experiences of living with disabilities. For instance, he walked me through the recent videos he had watched from DissociaDID, a British YouTuber with 1.2 million subscribers who vlogs about trauma-based mental illness and mental health education. Jacob explained that he appreciated being able to make meaning of trauma, learn about other trauma-based mental illnesses, and watch content that disrupts the stigma around them. He explained, "a lot of these mental health education channels were really important to me." Jacob also named YouTuber Anthony Padilla's channel as one that has been meaningful to him because Padilla interviews people with mental disabilities about their experiences. He explained:

> The way that he interacts with the people who go onto his show is very like, nice. There are a lot of people who just talk about these things and they are not interacting with people who have these quote-on-quote problems. He's very open and lets the other person talk.

Through viewing digital art and videos, Jacob has been able to understand his own experiences and come into forms of community around recovery and mental health. Importantly, these online spaces disrupt stigma that can write disability out of the narrative and re-frame narratives of 'getting over' by storying disability in the past, and into the future.

Informed by the examples of storying and listening to the stories of disabled people through art and videos in social media, the future that Jacob desired both online and in society is one in which his existence as disabled and trans is not up for debate. Rather, he wants others to

truly listen to the stories of people from marginalized social locations. To represent the future, Jacob shared the story behind an uncredited text-based image he had posted to a Discord server he moderated. Discord is a virtual messaging platform on which users create and monitor private communities called servers. In hand-written white text over a black background, the post read:

> When you debate a person about something that affects them more than it affects you, remember that it will take a much greater emotional toll on them than on you. For you it may feel like an academic exercise. For them, it feels like revealing their pain only to have you dismiss their experience and sometimes their humanity. The fact that you might remain more calm under these circumstances is a consequence of your privilege, not increased objectivity on your part. Stay humble.

The image, Jacob storied, emphasized:

> is about how some people when they interact with trans people or people who aren't like them, like have mental illness and other stuff, it may feel like an academic exercise to debate their existence, but for them, it's them talking about things that emotionally affect them in their life.

The future he imagines pushes against the enclosure of the present, in which marginalized folks have to "prove their existence."

In Jacob's desired future, marginalized communities would not have their stories erased or challenged by dominant narratives. He emphasized that the future foregrounds the Black Lives Matters movement, disability justice, and trans justice—reflections of social locations and political commitments that should be taken as real and valuable. This future, Jacob underlined, requires "more education on topics like this and that people are more willing to listen to these people." He described a conversation he had with a cis friend about trans rights as an example of

what it means to be willing to listen, adding, “I think those are good conversations to have, about why people feel they way that they do and how they should actually listen to people who those conversations are about.” As the language of the image underlines, the future requires staying humble and genuinely listening to the perspectives of people marginalized by relations of domination and subordination.

Discussion and Conclusion

Through the lenses of disability justice and crip theory, the narratives of Mateo, Bailey, Noah, and Jacob clarify that experiences with disability give rise to valuable practices of meaning-making and social imagination needed for liberatory futures (Kafer, 2013; Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018). As Kafer (2013) argues, “To eliminate disability is to eliminate the possibility of discovering alternative ways of being in the world, to foreclose the possibility of recognizing and valuing our interdependence” (p. 83). Scholars in critical disability studies in education have argued curriculum must include stories of disability to resist silence on disability as part of human diversity, refuse to erase disabled people from being, and challenge dominant ableist narratives (Bacon & Lalvani, 2019; Erevelles, 2005; Nusbaum & Steinborn, 2019). My analysis makes clear that stories carry and expand practices that emerge with and through disability—practices that move beyond access and toward collective liberation (Mingus, 2011). Disabled stories that attend to interlocking structures of power and imagine disability in desired futures have the potential to transform curriculum and pedagogies.

Stories are also deeply mediated by digital and discursive tools that afford or constrain understandings of disability. Dominant narratives of progress frame disability in the past, as a challenge to ‘get over’ (Mitchell & Snyder, 2013). Yet, even discursive frames of ‘getting better’ risk leaving disability in the past. As educators and scholars seek to realize the potential of

disabled stories to reimagine education, we must consider how the tools we mobilize open or foreclose possibilities to imagine disability in possible and desirable futures. These tools include assumptions of narrative form and the modes through which storying unfolds. The stories we tell—and how we tell them—matter. In this analysis, Mateo, Bailey, Noah, and Jacob theorized the relation between disability and desired futures through storying with artifacts on social media. To story disability in desired social futures, educators and researchers can learn from youth stories, and from the ways youth construct stories with tools they encounter every day.

As disability justice and crip theory lenses helped me consider the stories of focal participants anew, these theories can also advance equitable education for disabled students. In framing disability as innovative practices grounded in interdependence and compulsory able-bodiedness as an interlocking oppressive norm, disability justice and crip theory lenses have the potential to disrupt deficit understandings of disability and ableist practices embedded in education. For instance, Piepzna-Samarasinha's writing on formations of love, care, and shared responsibility can shape the design of classroom communities and collaborative work (Annamma & Handy, 2019). McRuer's (2006) writing on cripping composition theory can resist neoliberal, corporate demands for order and efficiency that reproduce discourses of compulsory able-bodiedness. These lenses explicate the intersections of power and identity that shape education and center the experiences of multiply marginalized BIPOC and LGBTQ+ disabled students (Annamma et al., 2018; Annamma, 2018).

In supporting young people in the everyday work of imagining liberatory futures, educators and scholars would be wise to take up Jacob's advice: Listen with humility to the stories of disabled and otherwise marginalized youth, honoring their identity-based knowledges, practices, values, and dreams. For young people, crafting their story against narrative erasures

and enclosures is not an academic exercise—it is a necessity. Even as educators and scholars seek to mobilize theoretical lenses to analyze entrenched inequities and exclusions, we must continue to listen and learn with care. The stories of marginalized communities can transform curriculum and pedagogies (Bacon & Lalvani, 2019; Saleh, 2021; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Those stories emerge and unfold in the everyday lives of young people.

Chapter 7.
Conclusion: Summary of Findings, Implications, and Future Directions

Across my scholarship and teaching, I seek to answer the guiding question: How do young people, particularly those marginalized by interlocking structures of power, learn to *critically analyze the social world* and *create life otherwise* through digital activities and tools? I consider these digitally mediated practices of social critique and creating life otherwise to be forms of critical digital literacies (Ávila & Pandya, 2013; Bacalja et al., 2021; Golden, 2017). Most work on critical digital literacies primarily attends to the first dimension: Critical analysis and contestation of historically constituted and continually reproduced relations of power with digital technologies (Kelly, 2018; Wargo, 2018). This is an incredibly important and ever-unfolding set of practices. It is also an area of literacy that tends to be valued by English language arts standards and resolutions (see NCTE, 2019). In a prior virtual ethnography of LGBTQ+ YouTube, I focused on these practices of social critique, tracing how a virtual community used humor to identify, challenge, and disrupt dominant ideologies such as homophobia and antiblackness that undergird media forms and technologies (Shrodes, 2021; Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit; Shrodes et al., 2021). In the dissertation, my interest in everyday youth activities and their meanings moved me to consider the second dimension: Practices through which marginalized communities create and grow expansive ways of being and organizing life in the face of power. As I have illustrated, being able to identify and critique the oppressions they encounter everyday was not enough for many youth in the study. They also needed to learn practices to sustain life and, in so doing, support more expansive ways of being in the world.

The dissertation's focus on livability, and its insistence upon possible elsewheres, is intertwined with the study's sociopolitical context. The study emerged and unfolded during the

Trump administration, amid a time of rapidly accelerating antiblackness, anti-immigrant discourses, and anti-trans antagonism. In 2020, it also collided with a world-wide pandemic that further deepened social inequities, and global uprisings against antiblack police brutality following the extrajudicial killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Tony McDade, among other Black people murdered by the police. Trans and queer young people in the study were keenly aware of these discourses and events. Many described their social media engagement with pressing social issues, including police brutality, anti-immigration policy, and anti-trans legislation in dozens of states. They routinely engaged in practices to critically analyze the social world and engage in social action. As I theorized with and alongside them, it also became clear that digital practices to nurture life amid domination were actually among the most important ways they negotiated these entrenched forms of injustice. During a historical moment that felt untenable, one marked by deepening inequities and catastrophic social responses to crises in the United States, youth needed other paths forward.

Through the analysis, I have sought to shed light on potential answers to the questions that animate this dissertation: How, and in what ways, did 21 trans and queer teens learn practices to create livable lives in unlivable worlds through everyday digital media activities? How did these practices of livability gesture toward elsewheres? I have explored the ways youth learned practices of humor, radical joy, and hope that foster senses of possibility, cultivate belonging, and subvert hegemonic domination through participation in digital communities. This social participation often took place through digital lurking and viewing, forms of engagement that are not often valued in literacy and learning studies. From scrolling meme pages to curating archives of animal GIFs on their digital devices, young people in the study actively participated in virtual worlds in ways that preserve anonymity. These practices of invisibility are integral to

livability, in that they enable youth to avoid virtual surveillance that can 'out' them and thereby expose them to increased bullying and harassment. Though youth participation often unfolded through processes of content consumption, they are nevertheless deeply social. Youth positioned images and videos on social media as "aspiration zones" for future trans and queer life. They composed felt relations of belonging and mutual recognition in trans and queer communities through practices of scrolling. And they reached for multimodal choreographies they learned through watching reaction videos as if the vlogger was in the room with us. Participants often described that social media provided forms of LGBTQ+ community–and forms of language, knowledge, and practice that communities steward–that were not present in school or at home. The social and indeed relational dimensions of practices of livability are one of the ways these practices gesture to elsewheres. Through digital activities and tools, youth learned and enacted trans and queer ways of being and ways of being together. Elsewheres foreground the practices and processes of change embedded in everyday life that create the 'peopled ground' for transformation. Over time, these everyday acts and interactions may grow into larger formations.

In this conclusion chapter, I will first summarize key assertions and contributions across the dissertation and from each findings chapter, outlining how I contribute to bodies of scholarship. I will then reflect on the implications of the dissertation study for theory and teaching in education. I consider the ways the study contributes to theoretical reorientations in fields of education and gender and sexuality studies. I also propose three ways the dissertation may shift approaches to teaching in social justice education and equity-oriented English language arts. Then, I will articulate implications for research, describing how I have contributed to research gaps and outline recommendations for further research. Subsequently, I turn toward limitations of the study and describe future directions in my scholarship that will address the

limitations and build on implications for research. In my final words, I reflect on ways educators may mobilize understandings of trans and queer youth digital cultures to design equitable learning environments for LGBTQ+ youth.

Summary of Findings

In the dissertation, I have argued that trans and queer youth learn routine practices on social media to nurture life otherwise across differentially marginalized social positions and in the face of systemic injustice. These survival-rich practices arise out of necessity, yet they offer windows into possible elsewheres—expansive ways of being and organizing life. Through theorizing practices of livability toward elsewheres in the digital lives of trans and queer youth, I intervene in the dominant paradigm of critical digital literacy that shapes multiple fields and build knowledge on how youth learn with digital tools. Most scholarship on critical digital literacies trace youth resistance, considering how young people use digital tools to disrupt injustice or participate in activism for school and state inclusion (Ávila & Pandya, 2013; Kelly, 2018; Wargo, 2018). This has been especially true for literacy research with LGBTQ+ youth, since a focus on resistance and counter-hegemonic action is a key strategy to contend with relations of power while uplifting youth agency (Blackburn, 2004; Brockenbrough, 2015). Yet, as I have illustrated, resistance may be insufficient for trans and queer youth in negotiating injustice amid entrenched and interlocking structures of power. Drawing capaciously on queer and trans studies, I expand the critical literacy paradigm from a focus on resistance to include practices of livability that sustain youth in the face of domination and open up possibilities for life otherwise. Specifically, I explore the roles of humor, radical joy, and hope as conditions that sustain life and proliferate life otherwise. In the analysis, I consider how youth learn these practices through digital activities and tools, from TikTok videos to Twitter threads. By turning

to the everyday digital activities of trans and queer youth, I have contributed new ways of thinking about literacies that are valuable and even necessary in social justice project. In so doing, I make contributions to scholarship on critical, digital, and queer literacies, as well as to methods to study digital learning.

The first article (Chapter 4), developed with an interdisciplinary educational journal in mind, explored how young people nurture life through practices of humor. Specifically, I argue that humor shapes three primary repertoires of practice through which participants curated hope for the present and future, constructed belonging in LGBTQ+ communities, and subverted hate in order to nurture joy. The piece builds on my scholarship on LGBTQ+ reaction videos, published in literacy studies, on the roles of humor in critical media literacy by shifting from an analysis of virtual data to an examination of humor in wide-ranging digital activities and their meanings to youth (Shrodes, 2021; Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit; Shrodes et al., 2021). In focusing on literate practices of livability that employ humor, from curating humorous artifacts to cheer up to composing felt relations through meme scrolling, the article illuminates a consequential repertoire of practices that complement and extend scholarship on critical digital literacies. If we conceptualize critical literacies as the "literate practices individuals need in order to survive and thrive in the world" (Pandya et al., 2021, p. 3), then practices of livability animated by humor in trans and queer youth digital life have an important place in literacy studies. I also expand perspectives on the role of humor in critical literacies by tracing the many functions of humor other than resistance (Blackburn, 2005; Schey, 2020; Shrodes, 2021). Because this article engages multiple subfields of knowledge production, it could also have wide potential reach in an international, interdisciplinary education journal that may reach audiences in learning sciences, literacy studies, social work and counseling, and psychology.

The second article (Chapter 5), developed with a learning sciences journal in mind, considered how a focal participant learned multimodal choreographies of radical joy to negotiate interlocking oppressions through watching a reaction video. Specifically, I argue that Helia learned radical joy as a life-affirming response to interlocking forms of hate through reaching for, stepping into, and improvising upon the multimodal choreographies Mac performed in his reaction video. Radical joy compelled Helia to join the reaction, and she reproduced the political feeling through her performance. By focusing on the nexus of emotion and embodiment in learning, the chapter contributes new insights to studies of how youth learn configurations of emotion and embodied movement through participation in practice (Curnow et al., 2021a; Curnow et al., 2021b; Keifert & Marin, 2018; Lindberg & Marin, 2020; Marin et al., 2020; Solomon et al., 2021; Vossoughi et al., 2020; Vea, 2020; Uttamchandani, 2021). In particular, I offer a way to trace how feelings move learners to reach for embodied configurations, and how learners then produce feelings through movement. Whereas most interactional analysis looks at in-person participation, I offer a method to trace learning through participation in virtual communities with a particular focus on the meanings of viewership. The analysis also contributes to studies of multimodality in digital literacies by tracing the importance of patterned configurations of communicative modes in critical practices (Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012; Lam, 2009, 2014; Wargo, 2017a, 2018; Vasudevan, 2011). Because the article employs and innovates interactional analysis methodologies that are commonly used in sociocultural learning sciences research, I aim to submit this manuscript to a flagship journal in this field, such as *Mind, Culture, and Activity* or *Cognition and Instruction*.

The third article (Chapter 6), developed in the 2021 *Curriculum Inquiry* Writing Fellowship, traces how disability might enter the imagined futures of four focal participants, as

mediated by digital tools. Specifically, I argue that Mateo, Bailey, Noah, and Jacob complicated narratives of 'getting over' disability by turning to digital artifacts that position disabled futures or narratively expanding upon artifacts to make meaning with and through experiences with disability. As described in the chapter, the manuscript contributes to critical curriculum studies by employing storying to contest dominant narratives that undergird curriculum, with a particular focus on telling stories of disability and challenging ableism in narrative composition (Bacon & Lalvani, 2019; Cedillo, 2018; Snyder et al., 2021). The chapter also contributes to literacy studies by attending to how youth engage in dynamic literate activities of storying the future through response to cultural artifacts such as memes and videos in digital cultures (Lammers, 2013; Black, 2009; Kim, 2016). The article is currently under review in *Curriculum Inquiry,* a leading international journal in curriculum studies with a focus on scholarship that "pushes beyond current understandings in educational research, theory, and practice."

Implications for Theory and Teaching

The study suggests implications for theoretical reorientations in multiple fields and teaching in social justice education and English language arts. In this section, I describe these implications and locate the primary scholarly and disciplinary fields of impact.

Implications for Theory

By drawing on queer and trans studies in dialogue with youth activities, I have advanced a conceptual framework with purchase to shift theoretical orientations in social justice education, including critical pedagogies and literacies. Like many critical theories that inform the field, social justice education has tended to privilege resistance as the paradigmatic expression of agency (Adams & Bell, 2016; Kincheloe, 2008; Kumashiro, 2000; Luke, 2012). Resistance offers an important toolkit of social critique and social action to fight and dismantle interlocking

structures of power (Giroux et al., 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Within justice-oriented research that centers LGBTQ+ youth, an interest in resistance is an important way to surface youth agency as they negotiate victimizing forms of injustice (Blackburn, 2004; Brockenbrough, 2015). Yet, in a world marked by entrenched forms of injustice at every turn, the tools of resistance may be insufficient for marginalized youth to survive and thrive. By looking beyond resistance to the everyday practices through which youth create life amid and alongside injustice, the conceptual framework guides social justice education to attend to the myriad ways in which youth negotiate injustice in everyday life. These agential practices of negotiation may include resistance. But, as I found, they may also include practices for youth to get by, to survive the present as they imagine the future. These everyday practices of livability may grow into elsewheres–more just ways of being and organizing life alongside domination that destabilize hegemonic domination and nurture the 'peopled ground' of political struggles.

In tuning to everyday practices of livability, the conceptual framework also contributes to scholarly conversations in queer studies around practices of media reception and audience attachments. Queer studies is often caught between paradigms of resistance and ordinariness in seeking to understand how LGBTQ+ people engage with media (Cavalcante, 2018; Griffin, 2017; Halberstam, 2011; Love, 2015). Whereas resistance seeks to refuse and dismantle structures of power, ordinariness often signals attachment to inclusion within these structures. Mapping onto these paradigms is a similarly polarized scholarly conversation between bad feelings (e.g., mourning) and good feelings (e.g., happiness) that disrupt or bolster hegemonic structures, respectively (Awkward-Rich, 2017; Crimp, 1989; Eng, 1999; Freeman, 2005; Love, 2007; Snediker, 2006). Happiness has been an oft-maligned feeling in queer theorizing of emotion because it can signal and serve attachment to homonormative projects such as inclusion

into, and representation within, oppressive structures (Ahmed, 2010; Duggan, 2002). Through the conceptual framework of livability and writing on radical joy developed with attention to youth digital life, I offer another way to understand how LGBTQ+ audiences use media to negotiate injustice. Practices of livability are expressions of agency that eschew clear boundaries of resistance and ordinariness in everyday media reception. By creating life, youth may also gesture to possible elsewheres that destabilize structures of power. Radical joy, then, bridges bad and good feelings by reworking the meanings of negative objects through practices filled with humor (Shrodes, 2022).

By attending to humor in practices of livability in Chapter 4, I also expand conceptualizations of humor in critical literacies and critical studies of digital media. Humor is incredibly relevant for both social media studies and youth studies (Davis et al., 2018; Dávila, 2019; Gallo, 2016; Martínez & Morales, 2014; Nahon & Hemsley, 2013; Schey, 2020). Humor is nearly ubiquitous on social media and in digital culture, from funny memes to laugh-out-loud TikTok videos. That's no coincidence; humor fuels viral sharing and engagement (Burgess & Green, 2018; Nahon & Hemsley, 2013). Yet, most critical studies of humor on social media have conceptualized humor within the paradigm of resistance (Acevedo-Callejas, 2016; Bailey, 2021; Shrodes, 2021). In the study of marginalized virtual communities, forms of humor such as satire and parody have been found to disrupt dominant ideologies that undergird media forms and technologies (Acevedo-Callejas, 2016; Bailey, 2021; Davis et al., 2018; Shrodes, 2021). In ethnographies of critical literacies in education, scholars have focused on humor as a tool for counter-hegemonic analysis and action, a tool to resist oppression and disrupt relations of power (Blackburn, 2005; Dávila, 2019; Gallo, 2016; Martínez & Morales, 2014). The studies also explore how the potential is fought by the ways counter-hegemonic practices use the tools of

hegemony in their resistance (Schey, 2020). The dissertation study frames humor in distinct yet complementary ways by centering the everyday digital activities of youth participants. Tracing humor as central to cultivating senses of possibility, belonging, and subversion, I rethink the place of being funny in critical approaches to literacy and media studies. In doing so, I also extend an interest in the role of humor in eliciting pleasure, building community, and sustaining solidarity within fights against oppression (Blackburn, 2005; Cho, 2015).

Across the study, I offer approaches to conceptualize learning and literacies that unfold incognito, through the off-stage activities of viewing and lurking on social media. Learning sciences tend to focus on joint or collaborative activity as people work together to make, tinker with, or use technologies (Stornaiuolo, 2020; Taylor et al., 2018; Vossoughi et al., 2020). And literacy studies of social media tend to focus on practices of digital composition, such as social annotation, media production, or commenting (Curwood et al., 2013; Lammers, 2013; Mills, 2010). In the dissertation, I sustain a focus on the dynamic forms of learning that arise and unfold through what the framework of participatory cultures might describe as content consumption (Jenkins, 2006, 2009). Media-rich environments are said to enable new forms of participation in which youth are active participants and producers of media rather than passive consumers of content. Yet, the majority of participation remains relatively invisible, one of the thousands or millions of page views and video views that are publicly posted. My virtual ethnography of LGBTQ+ YouTube found that only around 10 percent of viewers also commented (Shrodes, Revise and Resubmit). The same is true for the youth in my dissertation study; most did not regularly comment on or create content, particularly with public audiences beyond close friends in mind. In fact, many youth explicitly storied their practices of viewership and lurking as ways to preserve anonymity and evade digital surveillance. Yet, these incognito

practices are incredibly meaningful for youth–practices to get through the day at school, to learn to laugh off the hate, to imagine a future of collective care and love. Literacies of invisibility, too, are critical ways for youth to negotiate and push back on conditions of disbelonging and violence (Cedillo, 2018). The study thereby may shift how we conceptualize learning and literacy with digital media, particularly forms of critical digital literacies.

Multimodality became a key way to theorize how youth learn and practice critical digital literacies in the focus on relatively invisible activities of viewing. Though I conducted participant observation of youth digital activities and collected 182 digital artifacts based on what was meaningful to focal youth in summer 2020, almost everything we did and every artifact they submitted was content created and posted by others. I could not lean on analysis of youth digital composition on Twitter or comments on YouTube. In order to understand how and why these activities and artifacts were meaningful to them, I employed participatory visual methods that enabled me to trace how youth enacted reactions and constructed narratives with multiple communicative modes. In Chapter 5, I focused on embodiment and patterned configurations of modes as ways to trace learning political feelings in interaction with a YouTube video. In Chapter 6, I analyzed how youth constructed narratives of the future with digital artifacts that included image, video, and text. The analysis supports expansive conceptualizations of how youth and communities leverage multimodalities in enacting critical digital literacies, drawing together multiple communicative modes or systems of meaning-making to disrupt structures of power and dream liberatory worlds (Campano & Low, 2011; Haddix & Sealey-Ruiz, 2012; Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012). The focus on multimodal practices also supports researchers and educators in noticing the creative tools marginalized youth use in moving past hegemonic enclosures (Richardson, 2011).

Implications for Teaching

The qualitative study of everyday digital activities has numerous possible implications for media-rich teaching in formal and informal settings (Alvermann et al., 2018; Garcia & Morrell, 2013; Morrell, 2004; Hull & Schultz, 2001). Indeed, standardized curriculum and measures often overlook the rich practices that youth learn in digital cultures (Mills, 2010), even as teachers seek to integrate and mobilize technologies for learning and literacy (McBride et al., 2018). Youth in the study often described being able to express themselves and engage in dynamic literate activities on social media in ways they could not at school. As I write additional manuscripts from the dissertation data, I will further explore activities with implications for digital composition and critical analysis of hegemonic ideologies. Here, I propose three primary ways the dissertation can shape design of learning environments: 1) Teaching practices to sustain life otherwise in social justice education; 2) noticing and mobilizing learning with digital artifacts in English language arts; 3) considering the constellation of feelings youth need to participate in struggles for liberation. In exploring these three approaches, I reflect on how the dissertation study has shaped my own curriculum design and pedagogical practice.

Teaching practices to sustain life otherwise. For educators engaged in social justice education, the dissertation suggests ways beginning with life may open up expansive directions for inquiry and action in struggles for liberation. Social justice education often begins with resistance to power and forms of social activism such as protest and advocacy. Particularly in a moment of ongoing and increasing attacks against critical race theory and LGBTQ+ representations in school and against the legal rights of trans youth (among many other issues), social justice educators do need to engage in fights against injustice and advocacy for change in institutions and legal systems. Yet, as I have argued, marginalized youth who persistently

encounter injustice and enclosures in their lives may need other paths to engage in struggles for liberation. The COVID-19 pandemic brought front and center the need for alternative responses to injustice–responses that do not begin with negation. Amid the pandemic, practices of mutual aid and collective care instead meet immediate needs for survival as they begin to organize life otherwise amid and alongside hegemonic domination. Indeed, there is a long history of marginalized communities creating elsewheres, otherwise lifeways, alongside domination to destabilize hegemony and grow other possibilities through each action and interaction (de Lauretis, 1991; Bey, 2019; Glissant, 1989; Simpson, 2017). Young people in the study, too, are engaging in activities to get by and, in so doing, cultivate elsewheres in everyday life.

As an educator, I have often foregrounded inquiry and action against entrenched inequities, yet I have increasingly wondered if growing spaces to nurture life otherwise might be a more effective way to advance liberation. I explored the tension between beginning with resistance and beginning with life in the design of my Gender and Sexuality Studies course, "Everyday Resistance and Reimagination." I designed and taught the course in Spring 2021, the end of the first full pandemic year of teaching. For most of my students, it was the end of a year spent on Zoom and in direct action protest as part of the abolitionist cops off campus movement at Northwestern. Many students were exhausted and genuinely wondered how social transformation happens and whether or not everyday actions can lead to meaningful change. We explored these questions together through queer, trans, and feminist scholarship and creative work on resistance alongside work that sought to reimagine, and recreate, social worlds at the micropolitical scale through ethics of care, love, and joy. Early on, we read Mariame Kaba's (2020) work on abolitionist politics, which guided us to reflect on the need for self-transformation in social transformation and the importance of creating anew as part of

dismantling the old. As Kaba argued, “Changing everything might sound daunting, but it also means there are many places to start, infinite opportunities to collaborate, and endless imaginative interventions and experiments to create” (p. 5). As we read many of the pieces that animate this dissertation study, we enacted these ethics and politics through participation structures, activities, and ways of relating to each other. In final reflections, students often named that they valued how we “practiced what we were learning.” One student reflected that she most valued learning to be a kinder person through understanding how collective care is “necessary for us to build community and solidarity as we fight against the various logics of oppression that actively work against us.” The course indelibly shaped the dissertation direction and implications for teaching.

In the long work of “changing everything,” as Kaba (2020) wrote, the classroom is among the many places to start. Educators can design practices to reimagine and recreate social worlds at the micropolitical scale by beginning with conditions that create life. As in political struggles, the political dimensions of learning in social justice education are nurtured through co-presence, compassion, and feelings of belonging–through relationships (hooks, 1994; NCTE, 2021). Educators may consider incorporating practices that create felt relations among the classroom community and broader social and cultural communities. For instance, incorporating regular opportunities to share felt reactions to media, which may include using media such as memes to express feelings, can be an opportunity to relate to one another and position feelings as a source of knowledge. As I argued in Chapter 4, relating to others through shared feelings, and fostering a sense of humor amid **gestures broadly at everything,** is a powerful way to cultivate belonging. Teachers might also position strategies to create livable lives in unlivable worlds as an area of inquiry (Snorton, 2017). For instance, curriculum could center writing and creative

work that focus on sustaining marginalized lifeways in the face of interlocking hegemonic domination, and assignments might ask students to explore practices of livability within their own familial and cultural histories and communities. Educators may also remember to nurture hope in, and imagination of, better possible futures for BIPOC and disabled queer and trans people, and to practice those futures through everyday experimentation (Kaba, 2020). Educators might also consider inviting students into the choice to begin with life by discussing theories of power and agency that undergird the approach. Young people are already asking questions of how social change happens, and many participate in activist-oriented spaces on social media or in communities. As I have learned, social justice education can be a meaningful site to explicitly explore and enact approaches of both resistance and livability.

Noticing and mobilizing learning with digital artifacts. The dissertation has numerous implications for media-rich learning and digital literacies in English language arts contexts. Most schools and classrooms mobilize limited resources for learning in narrowly construed standards that reproduce hegemonic ideologies and norms. Even justice-oriented English language arts classes tend to focus on practices of critical analysis of texts and media production or digital composition. Yet, there are many ways that youth learn through engagement with digital forms and technologies–most of which may not involve practices of content creation or posting. In particular, I have demonstrated how youth learn through participation in activities mediated by digital artifacts, from curating animal GIFs to cheer up friends, to reaching for multimodal choreographies in reaction videos, to storying futures of disability in dialogue with a post. By mobilizing these everyday activities with digital artifacts as resources for and sites of learning, educators can both meet curriculum standards and expand disciplinary learning (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Lee, 2001, 2007; Rosebery et al., 2010 see also NCTE, 2019). Curriculum and

pedagogy that draw on everyday learning must begin with noticing the ingenuity and consequentiality of the cultural, linguistic, and identity-based knowledges and practices that youth bring into the classroom (Vossoughi & Gutiérrez, 2014, p. 612). While the digital activities, tools, and platforms that youth engage with will change, teachers can maintain a stance of genuine interest and curiosity in social practices that are meaningful to the digitally mediated lives of their students. By inviting students to share, story, and participate in the digital activities that are meaningful to them, as I have done in the dissertation, teachers position youth as knowledge producers and co-designers of curriculum. The goal is not just to expand "what counts" in disciplinary learning (Saxe, 1988, p. 14) but also to challenge traditional design and measures of schooling (Gutiérrez et al., 2017; Warren et al., 2020).

In my own teaching, I often invite students to bring in digital artifacts around key questions as tools for learning and to center students in knowledge production. Inspired by the possibilities of digital artifacts as tools for meaning making in my dissertation research, I regularly invited students to share memes, posts, and videos on Google slides as part of breakout group discussion during weekly discussion sections I taught in the fall of 2020, for Traditions of Feminist Thought. Incorporating digital content became a way to connect feminist theories to students lives and consider discursive connections among course texts and ongoing cultural conversations about feminism and intersecting oppressions, which often play out on social media. We made connections concrete, and opened them up for shared inquiry, through multimodal artifacts. During the week of the 2020 Presidential election, as election recounts unfolded in multiple states, I centered youth-generated digital artifacts as tools to make sense of and construct knowledge around the election results. In particular, I asked students to reflect on structures of power at play in political events, inviting students to share a digital artifact (e.g.,

post, article, image, meme, video) that has helped them reflect on the election, contextualize the results historically, articulate how they feel, and/or imagine next steps from here. By centering digital artifacts, we engaged in robust conversations about white supremacy in electoral politics, the importance of direct action in historical and ongoing struggles against injustice, and discussed humor on social media as a way to bond with others in times of stress. As one student wrote, "memes have helped this generation especially to cope with the world around them. Seeing the humor in bad I think helps make discussing such big topics more accessible and casual." Digital artifacts can serve as tools that may mediate meaning-making and social practices. Youth are already thinking about and with these tools; classrooms can be spaces to deepen and sharpen these practices through collective inquiry and pedagogical assistance from teachers and peers.

English language arts educators can advance digital literacies by cultivating rich forms of engagement with digital tools (NCTE, 2019). In order to foster skills for youth to "participate effectively and critically in a networked world," educators must better understand the digital activities youth participate in and the forms of learning that emerge through participation in these spaces (NCTE, 2019). To do so, educators might invite young people to make meaning with digital tools they encounter, engage in discussions anchored by artifacts they choose, and theorize their digital lives through stories. For instance, teachers might ask youth to compose a digital life narrative, a method I developed in the study, that narrates and analyzes their digital literate activities through a story anchored by digital artifacts. To foster skills to "consume, curate, and create actively across contexts," teachers can invite students to reflect on their practices of media consumption and curation (e.g., bookmarking, screenshotting, sharing), positioning these skills as valuable digital literacies (NCTE, 2019). In engaging with digital

content youth encounter every day, teachers may also guide youth to consider how these tools reproduce or challenge dominant narratives, as I have considered in Chapter 6. For instance, we might ask whether a video positions disability in the past or whether meme use may engage in forms of digital Blackface, when non-Black people use images of Black facial expressions, Black bodies, Black humor, or Black pain to express their thoughts and emotions around events and situations on social media (Fernández, 2020; Sobande, 2021). Through collective inquiry and pedagogical assistance, youth may also be able to develop practices in content creation and digital community moderation, if those are goals they have for digital participation. While educators move youth toward skills in media production and creating global social networks (NCTE, 2019), it remains important to consider practices through which youth remain invisible on social media to negotiate virtual surveillance and disbelonging as forms of digital literacies.

Considering the constellation of feelings youth need. The dissertation also suggests the importance and possibilities of attending to emotional configurations in design for justice-oriented learning (Vea, 2020). Feelings such as joy, hope, fear, and apathy play critical roles in galvanizing–or suppressing–critical analysis, social action, and creating life otherwise. It is increasingly common for educators to consider feelings as resources for personal creativity or interpersonal empathy. Yet, the stories of youth in the dissertation study suggest that feelings can also serve as tools to inform how a community comes to feel about injustice and act toward social change. Youth can learn ways of feeling about oppression that bolster agency and guide collective action. Justice-oriented educators might consider what tools they offer young people seeking to understand how to *feel* about injustice, and how to take action in light of these feelings. Studying hateful representations that operate through stigma might prompt feelings of fear, shame, and sadness. In the face of hate, critical pedagogy approaches often foreground

feelings of anger against injustice as a form of resistance. Anger and resistance are important tools in dismantling oppressive structures (hooks, 1995; Lorde, 1981). Yet, my research suggests marginalized youth may also need other feelings to nurture livability in the face of persistent experiences with hate. Youth stories illustrate that when anger is the primary feeling that guides justice-oriented education, it can overwhelm and lead to burn out. Marginalized young people need to be able to reach for a wider range of feelings to survive oppressive systems, sustain organizing, and build better worlds. Young people also need humor and radical joy. Ultimately, radical joy and other forms of feeling are important because they shape the future we build. The feelings we reach for and mobilize might offer the foundation for more just and expansive forms of social and political life.

I explored the constellation of feelings that youth might need in struggles for liberation through a unit on emotion in my Spring 2021 Everyday Resistance and Reimagination course. We explored the relationship of feelings to social change through materials on anger, sadness, and joy. Like youth in my dissertation study, students in the course thought and felt deeply about emotional responses to injustice and sought opportunities to make explicit, and make meaning of, feelings that come up as they negotiate injustice. In the dissertation study, I quickly learned to ask students about felt experiences and responses in digital activities, questions such as 'How did you think and feel about the post?' I have focused on the feeling of radical joy and humor, and I have strived to put humor and joy in relation to feelings of anger and sadness. Joy might imply happiness without a care, a turning away from injustice and towards assimilation into hegemonic cultures. Yet, I found that radical joy was a way to nurture livability as youth confront social disavowal and ontological denial. My course underscored for me the importance of considering configurations or even constellations of feeling that are needed in projects of liberation. In

signing up for discussion leadership at the beginning of the quarter, the unit on emotion was the most popular, and more students wanted to present on ‘sadness’ than any other day of the syllabus. At the end of the unit, I ask small groups to create visualizations that considered what feelings are needed in projects of liberation. Students created dynamic visualizations with memes, illustrations, and images to depict the need to reach for anger, disgust, sadness, hope, joy, love, frustration, patience, and impatience to fuel change and foster community based on shared feelings in the long work of changing everything.

Educators can turn to feelings as resources for, and sites of, learning. In order to begin reflecting on feelings needed for liberation struggles, it is important to invite students to consider feelings as resources for inquiry, knowledge production, and action. Teachers might invite students to reflect on felt responses or feelings, as I learned to do in my dissertation study and now practice in my own pedagogy. Surfacing feelings in learning can be a pedagogical practice to trace the materials, artifacts, and experiences that move students, with the potential to spark trajectories of learning. Feelings motivate learning by compelling participation in activities, yet youth also learn to reach for and produce feelings through activities, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 5. Making feelings explicit can also be a starting point to learn new felt responses and configurations of feeling that open up possibilities for participation. Teachers might invite students into the questions of what a range of feelings accomplish, and why they are valuable or needed for particular goals. As I have illustrated, humor and radical joy can be important responses to defuse hate, bolster agency, and create felt affinity in the face of injustice. Teachers might make practices of humor such as satire or parody and the political feeling of radical joy explicit as tools for youth to subvert phobic, hateful ideologies and to build the peopled ground in struggles against oppression. If joy has become an exciting orientation to literacy teaching

(Coppola et al., 2022; Dunn & Love, 2020; Muhammad, 2022; Sutton & Slaughter, 2021), teachers must also resist making joy the new benchmark for justice-oriented instruction. Feelings of anger or sadness are important felt responses to injustice and often spark social action. In turning to joy, we need to create space for these heavier feelings that come up as youth negotiate injustice and strive for a better world.

Research Implications, Limitations, and Future Directions

By considering critical digital literacies in the everyday social media activities of trans and queer youth, this study will facilitate future research on how youth learn practices to grow marginalized lifeways over time, and what these practices open up downstream. Since we know very little about the everyday critical digital literacies of trans and queer youth, my primary methodological goal in the dissertation was to theorize literacies with and alongside youth through storying, staying close to the activities and tools that are meaningful to them, and to the meanings youth make of and through social media. A focus on youth descriptions of digital activities, and interaction with digital artifacts, enabled a sustained exploration of the storied meanings of these activities and how you compose stories in dialogue with artifacts. For instance, Chapter 4 contributed new insights into the meanings of lurking and other incognito literacies through a focus on interviews with youth. This exploration also enabled me to develop a conceptual framework that may reorient literacies research and expand the toolkit for justice-oriented educators in supporting youth. I was also able to develop and employ a range of methodological innovations in the participatory visual methods tradition to study how youth learn through moment-to-moment interaction with digital artifacts, from reaching for multimodal choreographies to composing stories with digital tools.

While the dissertation afforded a focus on storying with youth participants, it was limited in three primary ways. First, and as I described in the methods chapter, the context of research enabled a focus on everyday digital activities of youth from a range of backgrounds in a setting that offered resources and support, yet it may have limited the participant group. Participants are more likely to experience family support for trans and queer identities by virtue of seeking services at a gender program as minors. Moreover, white participants and participants who identify within the gender binary may be overrepresented in the study given the history of trans medicine. The study findings are shaped by the positionality and social experience of participants. Second, my focus on storying in interviews and through analysis of moment-to-moment interactions with digital artifacts does not speak to longer trajectories of learning and development. For instance, while I speak to how participants describe and make meaning of learning to laugh off hate through analysis of interviews in Chapter 4, and I analyze how Helia reached for and stepped into choreographies of radical joy in Mac's reaction video in Chapter 5, I did not trace how participants learn these practices over longer stretches of time or how practices intersect with developmental pathways. And third, I primarily examined everyday social media activities, which constrained my ability to understand how these practices may have emerged and changed as youth participate in activities in multiple contexts, or in activities that cross contexts, including classrooms (Gutiérrez, 2008; Gutiérrez et al., 2019b; Lee, 2006). The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a shift from home visits to virtual sessions in the third research phase, which limited my ability to contextualize digital practices in relation to home and communities as social contexts in which youth are also participating.

Additional research is needed on how trans and queer youth, particularly youth who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color, negotiate injustice through critical digital literacies. This

research may be supported by partnerships within a range of contexts, including schools and community-based organizations serving LGBTQ+ youth (Mayo & Blackburn, 2020). In this work, I caution against relying exclusively on school-based gender & sexualities alliances or recruitment for studies on social media. Only one participant in the study described participating in GSA alliances at their high school, and a handful described avoiding these spaces for various reasons, which included circumventing transphobic teachers who ran the program and preventing being outed at school. In an unexpected turn, three of the participants went to the same large public high school, yet none of them described participating in the school's GSA. While recruiting on social media has great potential for expanding research with LGBTQ+ communities, since LGBTQ+ digital communities are robust, there are additional ethical considerations in conducting research with minors (Littler & Joy, 2021). I prioritized a partnership through which I could meet youth and parents in person and connect them with resources and support as requested. Every research project has affordances and constraints in relationship to the research context. Whereas researching through a GSA or community-based organization may enable in-person relationship-building and support, social media recruitment may expand participation from rural communities and from trans youth of color. Ultimately, situated, interpretive studies in multiple contexts are needed to broaden our understanding of LGBTQ+ youth digital life and its implications for education. Ideally, future studies will also take up participatory and collaborative methodologies to construct knowledge with and alongside youth (Jourian & Nicolazzo, 2016).

Future research may address the analytic limitations by examining how practices of livability emerge and unfold in longer time scales and across contexts. More research is needed to understand how young learn practices of livability across longer time scales, which may be

addressed by drawing on multiple forms of data, including interviews and participant observations. By putting youth descriptions of activities and their meanings in dialogue with observations of these activities over time, researchers can trace how these activities emerge, take hold, and change, as well as what they open up for youth participants. For instance, future research may trace how learning to compose felt relations of mutual recognition and belonging through lurking on meme pages may open up other practices of making relations, building community, and forging solidarities in virtual communities. These studies might take up assemblage and affect theories to trace how the relations youth make through digital artifacts spark unexpected trajectories of learning (Ehret & Hollett, 2014; Ehret & Rowsell, 2021; Leander & Boldt, 2013; Lenters, 2016; Wargo, 2015b; Zapata et al., 2018). Subsequent research may also trace how learning unfolds through activities that traverse sociocultural contexts (Gutiérrez et al., 2017; Vossoughi & Gutiérrez, 2014). Eschewing binaries of virtual/physical and everyday/school-based learning, these studies may consider how learning practices to elude surveillance and maintain invisibility in negotiating disbelonging unfolds across virtual, school, and community contexts. These studies might also consider how practices youth learn through interaction with digital artifacts, such as learning to perform choreographies of radical joy in response to hate, shape participation in multiple communities. This work should also consider potential challenges of context transfer, as Adrian alluded to in describing the difficulty of laughing off the hate when confronting injustice at school. Ultimately, these lines of inquiry can complement an interest in youth storying with methods that employ extended ethnographic observation across virtual and physical sites to further situate these activities and meanings in and across contexts of social media, home, community, and school (Lam, 2009; Leander &

McKim, 2003; Leander et al., 2010; Stornaiuolo et al., 2017; Vossoughi & Gutiérrez, 2014; Wargo, 2018).

In future analyses with the dissertation data, I will draw on multiple data sources to analyze learning as shifts in participation over time, thereby addressing one of the limitations of the analysis presented here. I first plan to draw on the data collected over the three study phases to extend my analyses of practices of livability by developing manuscripts that consider the ways in which youth learn these practices through participation in virtual communities over time. For example, I will analyze digital artifacts and video data from participant observations of digital activities to further understand how youth learned to save and share funny images to cheer up in tough moments, a literate practice that I described through analysis of interviews in Chapter 4. In this piece, I would focus on learning literate practices of digital artifact curation, distribution, and meaning making with implications for English language arts education. It would therefore find a potential home in a literacy education journal such as the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*. Additionally, I am interested in developing a book proposal that draws on multiple forms of data to tell a larger story of learning across the data and reach interdisciplinary audiences with a focus on digital practices of livability toward elsewheres. In developing the proposal, each chapter would focus on an activity that cultivates conditions that create life otherwise, drawing on interviews, media reactions, digital artifacts, and video data from participant observations to construct a multidimensional story of how youth learn through participation in the activity, which itself changes. For instance, one chapter would focus on the activity of composing felt relations or senses of belonging in trans and queer virtual communities through scrolling on meme pages.

Additionally, I will develop additional lines of inquiry on other ways that youth in the study negotiated injustice through participation on social media. There are two primary directions in this research so far. First, I am collaborating with my research partners to better understand how teens in the study used social media to navigate and respond to hegemonic ideologies, specifically, and how these activities differed based on age. We are developing a paper based on the interview data that may have interdisciplinary audiences in psychology, human development, social work, media studies, and education in a journal such as *The Journal of LGBT Youth*. I am also collaborating with the partners to develop a paper on social media with implications for clinical practice with trans and queer youth based on responses to an interview question that asked youth to reflect on what advice they would give to other trans teens about social media. Second, I will conduct additional analyses of multiple forms of data to understand how youth in the study learned to create communities and build coalitions on social media. I heard numerous stories from youth about imagining, creating, and sustaining dynamic communities on social media, from participatory communities on Twitter to networked Alternative Reality Games (ARGs) to private Discord servers. Many of these communities built solidarity against interlocking oppressions and sustain coalition across and with attention to difference. I want to further analyze this existing data to understand the critical, imaginative, and relational practices involved in this activity, the meanings they have for young people, and how they learned to enact these practices through participation on social media. These lines of inquiry build on the understandings I have advanced through the dissertation and address limitations by seeking to further situate literate practices in developmental pathways and tracing how youth move from composing *felt* relations to making and sustaining social relations in virtual communities.

In my next research project, I will build on the storied understandings of youth activities and their meanings by conducting a participatory design project complimented by a virtual ethnography to understand how youth learn to imagine coalitional futures through collaborative digital writing in digital cultures and gaming. Specifically, I will focus on Alternate Reality Games (ARGs), or interactive networked multimedia narratives written through collaboration. Multiple youth in the dissertation study participated in ARGs online, and I was compelled by their dynamic practices of collaborative digital writing around questions of social justice. Through composition with global collaborators, youth imagined fantasy worlds that explored power and identity and challenged stereotypes of race, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability. Drawing on critical theories of coalition and literacy learning, I will advance new knowledge on how such collaborative digital composition can support youth to understand interlocking structures of power and design more just worlds with attention to difference. Queer, Black feminist, and critical disability theorists argue that building coalition across, and with attention to, difference is necessary for dismantling complex systems of domination and insisting on better worlds (Lorde, 1984; Sins Invalid, 2016; Muñoz, 2009). While writing studies have extensively explored the potential of composition to construct the self and confront injustice in daily life (Johnson, 2017; Cruz, 2013; Kelly, 2018), little research has explored how youth write to imagine a collective future. To understand how writing can facilitate coalitional politics and design, I turn to collaborative digital composition of ARGs, a process through which writers work together and employ multiple modes (e.g., text, images, computational design) to create multimedia narratives set in alternative worlds (Garcia & Niemeyer, 2017). Collaborative composition requires writers to surface and negotiate perspectives on the world, relations with each other, and practices of meaning making (Blackburn & Schey, 2018). As such, it has the

unique potential to support coalition as an interactional achievement that must be continually negotiated. Grounded in the composition of possible moments in imaginary worlds, ARG writing can also link everyday practices with social formations. Informed by my article on storying disabled futures, the project responds to the need to imagine and enact Black, Indigenous, people of color, and queer and trans disabled futures.

Final Words: Design for LGBTQ+ Youth

Through this research, I have sought to center the inventive digital life of trans and queer youth in order to shift how educators and scholars conceptualize critical digital literacies and shape design of learning environments oriented toward justice. I want to conclude by returning to one of the questions that motivates all of my work: How can educators create equitable learning environments for LGBTQ+ youth? Youth in the study often described schooling in opposition to digital life. School was a space of erasure and enclosure–a space where they did not see themselves or others like them, where they often had to minimize self-expression and be subjected to bullying and harassment, where they made themselves small. Social media, in contrast, offered opportunities for mutual recognition in LGBTQ+ communities, for self-exploration and expression of intersecting identities, and for assertion of agency. Certainly, educators are constrained by institutional contexts of schooling that are often hostile to, and produce senses of disbelonging for, students who are marginalized by structures of race, coloniality, class, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability. And educators need to create room for the ways students step back from, or choose not to fully engage with, the spaces we create in K-12 and higher education institutions as they choose to prioritize participation in other contexts. Yet, we can strive to create learning environments that affirm LGBTQ+ youth, even as we also participate in activism and advocacy to shift harmful institutional contexts. How might

educators, then, seriously consider the ways trans and queer youth in the study crafted the internet in design of humanizing, justice-oriented, and even liberatory learning (Nicolazzo, 2019)?

Firstly, educators should strive to design spaces that affirm LGBTQ+ life at the intersections of race, Indigeneity, and dis/ability through curricular choices that represent the complexity of LGBTQ+ communities. Youth participants described learning about LGBTQ+ identities, histories, and issues on social media because, as Niko said, "you could go your whole life without really knowing about these things." Educators can mobilize and sharpen these knowledges in design for curriculum and classroom learning that better supports LGBTQ+ youth. In this work, it is important to consider how LGBTQ+ curriculum centers or erases discussion of intersecting identities, including race, Indigeneity, and dis/ability. Second, educators can create space for and affirm the ways LGBTQ+ youth are exploring and expressing their gender and sexual identities. In conversations with teachers about serving LGBTQ+ youth, I have heard concerns about getting gender wrong or not knowing enough, which can lead to an urge to remove gender from the classroom–a move that would just reify cisgender identities as the norm. Educators can learn from LGBTQ+ spaces online that position names, gender pronouns, and gender expression as rich tools for youth to explore and communicate who they are with the knowledge that people may use multiple tools and that identities may change. Educators might structure opportunities to learn about gender together and check in on changes in names, pronouns, and identities over time. Third, educators can design classroom learning to uplift and advance LGBTQ+ young people's practices of creating life and life otherwise amid and alongside hegemonic domination. The trans and queer youth in the study entered classrooms already engaged in complex activities to negotiate injustice. Sometimes, they withdrew from

classroom spaces in order to prioritize creating conditions that sustain life. Rather than seeking ways for everyday learning to support disciplinary achievements, educators can design disciplinary learning to position LGBTQ+ students as knowledge producers and support young people in the everyday work of creating the world anew.

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Appendix

Key of conversation analysis transcription conventions

((Minutes in video file. Interactional context))

(0.0)	elapsed time by seconds or tenths of seconds
__	Underscoring indicates some form of stress, via pitch or an amplitude. A short underscore indicates lighter stress than a long underscore.
:	Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. The longer the colon row, the longer the prolongation.
↑↑↓↓	Indicate shifts into especially high or low pitch.
(( ))	Contains transcriber's descriptions of tone, etc (i.e. ((dumb slob voice)).
( )	Contains basic descriptions of gesture and embodied movements, may also cite visual figure.
> <	Bracketing a sentence indicates an utterance or utterance part in bracketed material is speeded up, compared to surrounding talk.
< >	Bracketing a sentence indicates an utterance or utterance part in bracketed material is slowed down, compared to surrounding talk.
–	A dash indicates a cut-off.
°word°	Degree signs bracketing an utterance or utterance part indicates that the sounds are softer than the surrounding talk.
WORD	Upper case indicates especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk
<word	Indicates a hurried start or compressed onset.
word<	Indicates that while a word is fully completed, it seems to stop suddenly.
T, d	A boldface consonant serves as a hardener.

Addie Shrodes

Curriculum Vita

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Northwestern University (June 2022)
Learning Sciences with Certificate in Gender and Sexuality Studies
Dissertation: "Learning practices of livability toward elsewheres: Critical digital literacies in the everyday activities of trans and queer youth"
Committee: Dr. Wan Shun Eva Lam, Dr. Jolie Matthews, Dr. Carol Lee, and Dr. Mollie Blackburn

M.A. University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA) (2015)
English Literature with Certificate in Urban Humanities

B.A. University of Michigan (2012)
English Literature with Highest Distinction and Highest Honors
(Minor in Sociocultural Anthropology)

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENT

June 2022– Postdoctoral Research Associate
University of Colorado Boulder, School of Education, Learning to Transform (LiTT) Video Gaming Lab, Dr. Arturo Cortez and Dr. Tiera Tanksley

PUBLICATIONS

Refereed Journal Articles

1. Coleman, J. , Schey, R., Blackburn, M., Brochin, C., Cooper-Novack, G., Crawley, S., Cruz, C., Dutro, E., Helton, L., Islam, A., Jiménez, I.; Lizárraga, J., **Shrodes, A.**, Simon, R., Wickens, C., & Young, C. (Accepted). Intergenerational Queer Method(ologie)s: Dialogues in Literacy Research. *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*.

2. **Shrodes, A.** (2021). Humor as political possibility: Critical media literacy in LGBTQ+ participatory cultures. *Reading Research Quarterly, 56*(4), 855-876. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/rrq.328

3. Poquiz, J.L., **Shrodes, A.**, Garofalo, R., Chen, D., & Coyne, C.A. (2021). Supporting pride, activism, resiliency, and community (SPARC): A telemedicine-based group for youth with intersecting gender and racial minority identities. *Transgender Health.* Advance online publication. https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/trgh.2020.0152?journalCode=trgh

4. Owens, C., **Shrodes, A.**, Kraus, J., Birnholtz, J., Moskowitz, D. A., & Macapagal, K. (2021). Motivations to start and stop using sexual networking applications among

adolescent sexual minority males. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy.* Advance online publication https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-021-00641-3

Published Conference Proceedings

5. Uttamchandani, S., **Shrodes, A.**, Lizárraga, J. R., Cortez, A., Paré, D., Shanahan, M., Sengupta, P., Bang, M., & Hoadley, C. (2020). Attending to gender and sexuality in learning: Lessons for scholarship by, for, and with LGBTQ+ people. In Gresalfi, M., & Horn, I.S. (Eds.), The Interdisciplinarity of the Learning Sciences, 14th International Conference of the Learning Sciences (ICLS) 2020, Volume 1 (pp. 358-365). International Conference of the Learning Sciences.

6. Yoon, I. H., Buenrostro, P., Chen, G. A., **Shrodes, A.**, Uttamchandani, S., & Jurow, S. (2020). Building Nepantla: Humanizing pedagogies and the learning sciences. In Gresalfi, M., & Horn, I.S. (Eds.), The Interdisciplinarity of the Learning Sciences, 14th International Conference of the Learning Sciences (ICLS) 2020, Volume 4 (pp. 2175-2182). International Conference of the Learning Sciences.

Book Chapters

7. **Shrodes, A.** (Forthcoming). Queer literacies. In M. T. Winn, & L. T. Winn (Eds.), *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Social Justice in Education, Volume 6 (Language, literacy, youth, and culture).* Bloomsbury.

8. **Shrodes, A.** (In Press). Critical digital literacies and LGBTQ+ youth digital culture. In P. A. Pasque (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Qualitative Methods, Critical Qualitative Research and Social Justice Section.* Routledge.

9. **Shrodes, A.** (2021). Disidentification. In Strunk, K., & Shelton, S. (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Queer Studies in Education* (pp. 148-152). Brill.

10. **Shrodes, A.** (2021). Hegemony. In Strunk, K., & Shelton, S. (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Queer Studies in Education* (pp. 244-249). Brill.

11. **Shrodes, A.**, Matthews, J. C., & Lam, W. S. E. (2021). Enacting resistance to intersecting oppressions through satirical digital writing on LGBTQ+ YouTube. In B. J. Guzzetti (Ed.), *Literacies, Genders, and Cultures: Understanding Intersecting Identities.* Routledge.

Reports and Public Writing

12. **Shrodes, A.,** & Paré, D. (2022). Primer: Advancing equitable education with intersectional approaches in queer theory. *Rapid Community Reports, International Society for the Learning Sciences.* https://repository.isls.org/bitstream/1/7667/1/Shrodes%26Pare%CC%81_June2022.pdf

13. **Shrodes, A.** (2021). Humor and oppression: The queer work of radical joy in critical literacy education. *Literacy Today Magazine* (July/August/September 2021 special issue on Joy in Literacy Education).

14. **Shrodes, A.** (2021). Creating room for humor in critical media literacy. International Literacy Association Literacy Now Blog. Retrieved from https://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog/literacy-now/2021/02/05/creating-room-for-humor-in-critical-media-literacy

Manuscripts Under Review or In Revision

15. **Shrodes, A.** (Revise and Resubmit). 'Same Gurl': Political feeling in LGBTQ+ digital composing.

16. **Shrodes, A.** (Under Review). "The word 'getting over' is really weird": Storying disability in desired futures.

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND AWARDS

2021-2022	American Dissertation Fellowship, AAUW
2019-2022	Conference Travel Grants, The Sexualities Project at Northwestern University (totaling $2,560)
2021	Curriculum Inquiry Writing Fellowship, *Curriculum Inquiry* Journal
2020	2020 Best Paper Award, Literacy Research Association, Area 10 (Literacy Technology & Media)
2020	Doctoral Consortium, International Conference of the Learning Sciences
2020	Graduate Engagement Opportunities (GEO) Community Practicum, Center for Civic Engagement, Northwestern University
2020	Robert J. Menges Memorial Award for Graduate Student Professional Development, School of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University ($1,000)
2019-2020	Graduate Research Grants, The Graduate School, Northwestern University ($1,750 and $1,250)
2019-2020	Summer Research Grants, The Sexualities Project at Northwestern University ($2,500 and $2,500)
2019	Outstanding Graduate Student Paper, American Educational Research Association, Writing & Literacies Special Interest Group
2018	Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship (Honorable Mention)
2017	University Fellowship, The Graduate School, Northwestern University

2015 Hatfield Resident Fellowship, Center for Public Service, Portland State University

2014 Graduate Summer Research Mentorship, Graduate Education, University of California—Los Angeles ($6,000)

2012 Wagner Award for Outstanding Thesis of the Year, Department of English, University of Michigan

2012 Virginia Voss Award for Excellence in Senior Academic Writing; Literature, Science, and the Arts College Honors Program; University of Michigan.

INVITED TALKS

2022 "Designing for Trans and Queer Sociality to Support Equitable Learning," Guest lecturer in graduate "Diversity: Power, Equity, and Inclusion." University of Southern California, Rossier School of Education (Dr. Christine Mendoza and Aireale Rodgers)

2021 "Humor as Political Possibility in LGBTQ+ Digital Cultures," guest speaker in graduate "Digital Literacies." University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies of Education (Dr. Cassie Brownell)

2021 "Queering Education," guest speaker in graduate "Learning and Experience," University of Calgary, Werklund School of Education (Dr. Pratim Sengupta)

CONFERENCE ACTIVITY

National and International Conferences

Panels Organized and Chaired

2021 "Digital Queerness: Leveraging Media and Technologies for Literacies of Resistance and Transformation." Presenters: C. Cruz, J.R. Lizárraga & A. Cortez, and A. Shrodes. Discussant: J. M. Wargo. Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA.

2021 "Disrupting Power and Dreaming Liberatory Worlds Through Multimodalities." Presenters: L. Mosely, G.E. Muhammad, C. de los Ríos, T. Lewis Ellison, B. Robinson, T. Qiu, J. Wargo, and A. Shrodes. Discussant: K. Gutiérrez. American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Virtual.

2020 "Tools of Social Critique and Transformation: From YA Literature to Digital

Media in Pursuit of Liberatory Futures." Presenters: D.M. Price-Dennis, D.T. Greene, & A. Shrodes. Discussant: M.V. Blackburn. Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting, Virtual.

2020 "Attending to Gender and Sexuality in Learning: Lessons from Scholarship by, for, and with LGBTQ+ People." Co-chair with S. Uttamchandani. Presenters: J.R. Lizárraga & A. Cortez; D. Paré, M. Shanahan, & P. Sengupta; S. Uttamchandani; and A. Shrodes. Discussants: M. Bang and C. Hoadley. International Society of the Learning Sciences Annual Meeting, Nashville, TN. *Canceled (COVID-19).*

2020 "LGBTQ+ Activities of Resistance and Transformation with Digital Media Technologies." Co-chair with C. Cruz. Presenters: C. Cruz, J.R. Lizárraga & A. Cortez, and A. Shrodes. Discussant: J. Koyama. American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA. *Canceled (COVID-19).*

Papers Presented

2022 "From 'Aspiration Zones' to 'Meme Venting': Trans Teens Narrate Humor in Survival-Rich Digital Practices." American Education Research Association Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

2022 "Toward Crip Ways of Narrating Desired Futures." American Education Research Association Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

2022 "Reaching for Radical Joy: Archives of Anti-Hate Feelings in LGBTQ+ YouTube Reactions." Society of Cinema and Media Studies Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.

2021 "Staging Resistance on YouTube: Considering How Reaction Videos Mediate Choreographies of Trans and Queer Possibility." Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA.

2021 "Performing Intersecting Identities and Resisting Power Through Satirical Digital Composition." Co-author with J. Matthews and W.S.E. Lam. Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA.

2021 "Congruence or Incommensurability? Toward Disability Justice in Queer Futures." In alternative format session titled, *Intergenerational Queer Method: Exploring Inquiries, Epistemologies, and Ontologies in Queer Literacy Research*. Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA.

2021 "Laughter Towards Social Action: Humor in Critical Digital Literacies of Trans and Queer Teens." National Council of Teachers of English Annual Meeting, Louisville, KY.

2021 "Humor, Learning, and Multimodal Choreographies of Political Possibility on YouTube." American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Virtual.

2021 "You're in This Whole New World": Digital Artifacts Mediating Desired Futures for Trans Teens." American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Virtual.

2020 "Trans and Gender-Expansive Teens Narrating Possibilities, Performing Social Futures with Video Texts." Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting, Virtual.

2020 "OOF SAME": Consequential Composing and Felt Relations in LGBTQ+ Participatory Cultures." Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting, Virtual. *Recipient of the 2020 Best Paper Award from the Literacy Research Association, Area 10.*

2020 "Towards Political Feeling: Structures of Feeling and Consequential Writing in LGBTQ+ Reaction Video Channels." International Society of the Learning Sciences Annual Meeting, Nashville, TN. *Canceled (COVID-19).*

2020 "'Oh, So We Can Joke About Things We Don't Like?': Political Pedagogies of Humor in LGBTQ+ Reaction Videos." International Society of the Learning Sciences Annual Meeting, Nashville, TN. *Canceled (COVID-19).*

2020 "'Watching My Freedom': Tracing the Microgenesis of Queer and Trans Critical Literacies on Social Media." American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA. *Canceled (COVID-19).*

2020 "Queering Critical Literacy: Following the Queer 'Cultural Product' On YouTube to Surface LGBTQ+ Ways of Being and Doing." American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA. *Canceled (COVID-19).*

2020 "Pedagogies of Humor and Trans and Gender-expansive Teens Performing Social Futures." Queer Studies SIG Students and Early Career Scholars American Educational Research Association Pre-Conference Event. *Canceled (COVID-19).*

2019 "Transformative Affect: An Exploration of Political Affect in Critical Media Literacy And Collective Identities on LGBTQ+ Response Video Channels." Literacy Research Association Annual Meeting, Tampa, FL.

2019 "Disrupting Ideological Media on YouTube: How Multimodal LGBTQ Response Videos Enact Critical Media Literacies." American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Toronto, ON, Canada. *Recipient of the 2019 Outstanding Graduate Student Paper Award from the AERA Writing & Literacies Special Interest Group.*

Chair and Discussant Roles by Invitation

2022 Chair for session, "Digital Literacies for Equitable Aims," Writing and Literacies SIG, American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

2022 Chair for session, "Queer Social Change: Transformative Actions and Games for Social Change," Queer Studies SIG, American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

2022 Chair for session, "Theories of Media, Culture, and Learning: Past, Current, and Future Directions," Media, Culture, and Learning SIG, American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

2022 Chair for session, "The Struggle Against Oppression and Racial Injustice in Education," Cultural-Historical Research SIG, American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

2022 Discussant for session, "Negotiating and Constructing Identities Across Learning Contexts," Division G (Social Context of Education), Section 2 (Difference and Intersectionalities), American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

University and Graduate Student Conferences

2021 "You're in This Whole New World": Digital Artifacts Mediating Desired Social Futures for Trans and Queer Teens." Presentation at the 2021 Sexualities Project at Northwestern (SPAN) Research Fest, Evanston, IL.

2020 "'Oh, So We Can Joke About Things We Don't Like?!'" Humor, Political Possibility, and Resiliency in Digital Activities of Trans and Gender-Expansive Teens. Presentation at the 2020 Sexualities Project at Northwestern (SPAN) Research Fest, Evanston, IL.

2019 "Critical Action and Interaction on YouTube: Exploring Two Analytical Approaches to Learning in Online Collective Action." Paper presented at the Learning Sciences Graduate Student Conference, Evanston, IL.

2019 "Critical Theories in Research on Learning: Expanding Possibilities to See and Design for Consequential Forms of Learning." Workshop facilitated at the Learning Sciences Graduate Student Conference, Evanston, IL.

2019 "'My Initial Reaction Was YAAASS': Everyday Enactments of Critical Media Literacy in LGBTQ+ YouTube Response Videos." Paper presented at Queertopia 2019: LGBTQ+ Media Cultures, Evanston, IL.

2018 "Critical Media Literacy on YouTube: A Multimodal Analysis of LGBTQ Video

Creators." Paper presented at the 2018 Learning Sciences Graduate Student Conference, Nashville, TN.

2015 "Body/Screen: Mapping Urban Intensity Through Social Media Spectrums." Research map presented at University of California—Los Angeles Urban Humanities Symposium. Los Angeles, CA.

2014 "The Agency of Alterity in Queer of Color Los Angeles Literature: From National Networks to Intimately Global." Paper presented at QGrad Conference 2014: Queers W/O Borders. Los Angeles, CA.

ON-CAMPUS GUEST LECTURES & TALKS

2022 "Visual Participatory Methods in Hybrid Contexts," guest lecture in Undergraduate Ethnography, School of Education and Social Policy (Dr. Wan Shun Eva Lam)

2021 "Questioning the Binary," guest lecture in Language and Gender course, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Northwestern University (Dr. Gregory Ward)

2020 "Trans Feminisms," guest lecture in Traditions in Feminist Thought course, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Northwestern University (Dr. Paula Zamperini)

2020 "Life is Queer: Being Queer in the Workforce, Graduate School, and Life After Undergrad," invited speaker in panel hosted by Rainbow Alliance (Northwestern University's undergraduate LGBTQ+ student group), Northwestern University

2020 "First-Gen and Low-Income Students in Grad School," invited speaker in panel hosted by Undergraduate Leadership and Programming Board, School of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University

2019 "Multimodal Discourse Analysis of LGBTQ+ YouTube Videos," guest lecture in Discourse Analysis course, Learning Sciences, Northwestern University (Dr. Wan Shun Eva Lam)

2019 "In-School Supports and Out-of-School Resistance around Gender and Sexuality," guest lecture in Gender Identity Development, School of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University (Dr. Mollie McQuillan)

2019 "LGBTQ+ Activism through Reaction Videos," guest lecture in Gender, Sexuality, and Popular Culture: Media Activism, Gender, Race, and Sexuality course; Gender and Sexuality Studies, Northwestern University (Dr. Lauren Herold).

UNIVERSITY TEACHING

Instructor and Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University, Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences, Gender and Sexuality Studies program, 2020-2021

2021 Everyday Resistance and Reimagination, Instructor of Record (Spring, upper-level elective)

2021 Language & Gender, TA for Gregory Ward (Winter, introductory survey)

2020 Traditions in Feminist Thought, TA for Paola Zamperini (Fall, introductory survey)

Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University, School of Education & Social Policy, 2018-2020

2020 Methods of Observing Human Behavior [Undergraduate Ethnography], TA for Wan Shun Eva Lam (Winter, introductory required course)

2019 Culture and Cognition, TA for Jolie Matthews (Fall, introductory required course)

2019 Culture, Language, & Identity; TA for Wan Shun Eva Lam (Spring, introductory required course)

2018 Culture and Cognition, TA for Paula Hooper (Fall, introductory required course)

Instructor, Teaching Assistant, and Grader, University of California—Los Angeles, Department of English, 2013-2015

2015 Environmental Justice and Californian Literature [Critical Reading & Writing], Instructor of Record (Spring, introductory required course)

2015 Introduction to Fiction, TA for Justine Pizzo (Winter, introductory survey course)

2014 Space and Place in Los Angeles, TA for Mitchum Huehls (Fall, introductory Service-learning course)

2013 Asian Americans on the Move, grader for King-Kok Cheung (Fall, upper-level elective)

2013 Interracial Encounters in Asian American Fiction, grader for King-Kok Cheung (Fall, upper-level elective)

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2018-2022 **Doctoral Dissertation Research** | Research funded by the American

Fellowship from AAUW and by graduate research grants from The Graduate School, the School of Education and Social Policy, and the Sexualities Project at Northwestern University.

2020 **Graduate Research Assistant** | The Indigenous STEAM Collaborative (NSF #1713368 & #1712796) | PI: Dr. Megan Bang, School of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University.

2018-2019 **Graduate Student Researcher** | IMPACT LGBTQ Health and Development Program | PI: Dr. Kathryn Macapagal, Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Wellbeing (ISGMH), Northwestern University.

2018-2019 **Graduate Research Assistant** | I4all (Interests for All) (NSF #1831685) | PIs: Dr. Nichole Pinkard and Dr. Reed Stevens. School of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University.

2017-2018 **Graduate Student Researcher** | *Equitable Computer Science for All Learning Ecosystems* (NSF # 1838916) | PI: Dr. Nichole Pinkard, School of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University.

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Editorial Review

Reviewer for *Curriculum Inquiry*
Reviewer for *Language Arts*
Reviewer for Routledge

Service to Professional Societies

2020-Present **Proposal Reviewer**, American Educational Research Association.

2021-2022 **Graduate Student Member**, Gender and Sexualities Committee, Literacy Research Association.

2020-2021 **Co-chair**, Graduate Student Committee, Queer Studies Special Interest Group, American Educational Research Association.

2020 **Conference Organizer**, American Educational Research Association Queer Studies Pre-Conference (2020, Embracing queer futures in a time of rupture: Conversations between queer studies faculty and graduate students).

University or Local Service

2021-2022 **Graduate Coordinator**, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program,

Northwestern University.

2019-2021 **Co-Founder and Organizer**, Graduate CoalitionNU, Northwestern University.

2018-2020 **President**, Queer Pride Graduate Student Association (QPGSA), Northwestern University. *QPGSA awarded the Wildcat Excellence Award for Best Student Organization of 2019-20*

2017-2020 **Conference Organizer**, Queertopia Graduate Conference (2018, Queer Community, Queer Care; 2019, LGBTQ+ Media Cultures; 2020, Queer & Trans Politics?), Northwestern University.

2018-2020 **Board Member**, LGBTQ+ Advisory Board, Multicultural Student Affairs, Northwestern University.

2018-2020 **Member**, Video Analysis Group (graduate students who do video-based analysis with a focus on social critique and transformation), Learning Sciences Department, School of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University.

2018-2019 **Task Force Member**; Gender Queer, Non-Binary, and Transgender Task Force; Office of the Provost, Division of Student Affairs, and Office of Human Resources; Northwestern University.

2018 **Peer Mentor**, Learning Sciences Graduate Program, Northwestern University.

2018-2019 **Organizer, Critical Context Graduate Summer Reading Group** (summer 2018 on Critical Studies in Culture and Cognition; summer 2019 on Critical Theories in Educational Research), Northwestern University.

2017-2021 **Member, Critical Context** (interdisciplinary student-led group focused on ideas of social responsibility and critical theory in educational research), School of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University.

2017-2018 **Chair of Service & Activism**, Queer Pride Graduate Student Association, Northwestern University.

2016-2017 **Appointed Committee Member**, Metro Regional Government Public Engagement Review Committee. Portland, OR.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Education Research Association (AERA)

Divisions: C – Learning & Instruction; G – Social Context of Education

Special Interests Groups (SIGs): Critical Educators for Social Justice; Cultural-Historical Research; Learning Sciences; Disability Studies in Education; Media, Culture, and Learning (MCL); Queer Studies; Writing & Literacies

Literacy Research Association (LRA)

International Society of the Learning Sciences (ISLS)

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS)