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Adolescent Literate Identity Online: Individuals and the Discourse of a Class Wiki

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to examine students' representations of their literate identities in what Gee (2008) calls Discourse that developed among 105 high school students—103 10th-grade and two 11th-grade students—using a wiki for class work, collaboration, and social interaction. The theoretical frame for the present study was drawn from of four bodies of literature. Through a reciprocal process of positioning self and others (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999), individuals come to form and display their literate identity (Heath, 1991) within a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Their interactions reflect norms, values, and accepted ways of being within the Discourses to which they belong (Gee, 2008). Data analysis procedures employed in this study were similar to those commonly associated with qualitative data analysis. I used a recursive process of coding and searching for patterns and themes to analyze students' writing on the class wiki. Analysis of the wiki posts revealed that students employed 18 written devices within the Discourse of the wiki. In addition, within the online Discourse that emerged on the wiki, students occupied nine positions in relation to the others in the community. Findings of this study suggest that students developed a community of practice where norms for participation in the Discourse of the wiki were constructed by its members. Students represented their academic and social literate identities online through the combination of devices they used and the positions they enacted in the Discourse of the wiki.

Keywords: Adolescence, Communities of Practice, Discourse, Literate Identity, New Literacies, Positioning Theory, Wiki

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Identity is the essence of who we are and how we want others to see us. This perception of self is the lens through which we view the world. Identity influences our interpretation of our life's experiences and of the world as a whole. In turn, identity is the lens through which other people view us as individuals. Thus, people are understood by other people and respond to one another based on perceived identities (McCarthey & Moje, 2002).

It has long been understood that, in large measure, a person's identity is formed during the crucial adolescent period of life (Erikson, 1950). Thus, adolescence is a particularly important time in the development of identity. As in any developmental period, adolescents' identities are shaped not in isolation. Rather, adolescents are influenced by the environments, or the social context, in which they live (Nakkula, 2003).

In our society, community members are immersed in verbal and graphic information. Being able to understand and use that information to accomplish tasks is a fundamental expectation of all persons. As a result, a primary academic focus of schooling is the task of becoming literate (Moje, 2008). School, then, is one of the central environments of ongoing literacy development for adolescents. This means that within schools, teachers must attend to both visible and invisible aspects of literacy instruction. Teachers must explicitly teach the visible components of reading and writing such as decoding and questioning. However, even when teachers and students are not directly focused on literacy development, it is the invisible undercurrent of all that takes place in school (Vacca, 2002). This is because learning in schools takes place through literacy practices. These practices include not only reading, but also other forms of communication such as writing, discussing, and viewing (Bean, 2000; Vacca, 2002).

Literacy serves as a gateway between individuals and the communities in which they live, including schools. In this way, identity is intricately tied to literacy. In a world where individuals are immersed in information, both verbal and graphic, Heath (1991, p. 3) argues that in large part, identity hinges on a "sense of being literate" since literacy is necessary in order to participate within that community. Further, she asserts that in such a community, "the ability to exhibit literate behaviors" that span beyond reading and writing to include interpretation, communication, and reflection are essential skills for membership (Heath, 1991, p. 3).The view of oneself as a literate individual, sometimes called *literate identity*, is a sense of self as positioned within a literate society.

The critical nature of adolescent literate identity development is only made more urgent by technological advances, which are changing the ways people communicate and disseminate information (Vacca, 2002). In this technological age, many of the literacies in adolescents' lives are electronically based. Students comfortably navigate technology to socially network and represent themselves (Bean, Bean, & Bean, 1999). For example, through social networking websites such as Facebook and Myspace, students interact as they post pictures, share and comment on personal stories, make social plans, play games, find friends and meet new people, and converse online. As teachers strive to reach students, they must access the literacies of the societies in which students live.

As an English teacher of 10th-grade students, I strove to engage students in instruction that would address these complex and far-reaching needs. Thus, I employed an innovative instructional strategy—a class wiki.

Definition of Wikis

Wikis are websites where users can create and manipulate content in pages that resemble word processing documents. These documents are organized in files in a similar fashion to the way people file documents on their personal computers. Everyone with access to the website can also access the documents. Wikis are maintained through the collaborative effort of website members. Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia and the world's largest wiki, is an excellent example of a wiki in which people worldwide collaborate for a common purpose (Wiki, 2009).

Prior Experience with Wikis

In 2008, I attended an hour-long professional development class on using wikis in the English classroom. By the time the class was over, I had set up a wiki and viewed several teachers' successful wikis. When I enthusiastically shared the wiki with my students, they were full of questions. Despite their relative familiarity with online technology, wikis were a foreign concept for most of my students. I challenged them to get online and give the resource a try.

That weekend my students spent hours on the wiki. Some posted stories and novels they were writing. Others read the stories and commented on them. A heated discussion on the upcoming presidential elections started on another page. One student successfully initiated an interactive story she called a "role play." These and other online interactions far exceeded my expectations for the wiki. Online, hidden behind pseudonyms, students were developing a literacy-rich discourse. My students' representations of their evolving literate identities emerged as they interacted with their peers through the wiki.

Statement of the Problem

As a teacher, my initial experience with class wikis suggested that teachers can capitalize on online literacies students already possess and can use them in an academic, online

environment. The wiki presented itself as a rich context for the development of students' literate identities in the context of the classes I taught.

Much of the existing research on adolescents' use of technology, including wikis, focuses on how adolescents use tools to perform tasks. However, little research exists on how adolescents use technology to construct their identities. There is a need to conduct research at the intersection of literacy development, identity development, and technology in adolescents' lives (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003). Thus, teacher-researchers need to examine the ways students develop their online identities (Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009).

As a researcher, it was clear to me that the wiki was a promising pedagogical tool, one I wanted to systematically examine. Lewis and Fabos (2005) assert that because digital media are key texts for today's adolescents, researchers must consider how these texts influence students' identity development. I determined that a wiki would be an ideal place to study students' literate identity development because it is a new literacy where students choose how they portray themselves and choose their level of involvement.

Statement of Purpose

In response to a call for research on adolescents' online identities from Greenhow et al. (2009), and recognizing the need to conduct a systematic examination of the individuals and the Discourse (Gee, 2008) of the wiki as they develop their identities through learning and exploration, I designed the present study. This study occurred during the second year of implementation of a class wiki. The purpose of this study was to examine students' representations of their literate identities in the Discourse that developed among 10th-grade students using a wiki for class work, collaboration, and social interaction.

Research Questions

The overarching question for this study was, “What are adolescents’ literate identities online as revealed through a class wiki?” In order to address this overarching question I posed three questions: (a) What written devices do individuals use to represent themselves as a certain kind of person? (b) What positions do individuals occupy in the Discourse of the class wiki? and (c) Within the context of the online Discourse where students’ faces are hidden, who do individuals represent themselves to be?

Theoretical Frame

The theoretical frame for this study incorporates four distinct bodies of research (i.e., literate identity, communities of practice, Discourse, and positioning theory). Students’ literate identities (Heath, 1991) reflect who they take themselves to be within a literate society. These identities are formed within communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). In those communities, students enact a Discourse (Gee, 2008). Because of the social nature of Discourses, students are positioned and position others in relation to one another (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). These bodies of work will be discussed in the review of the literature in chapter two.

Limitations

This study contained inherent limitations. First, my position as a teacher and researcher had the potential to create conflicts between the dual roles I assumed during this study. As a teacher I felt an obligation to help my students shape their identities through the experiences they have in my class. This obligation not only influenced my instructional practices but also may have colored my interpretation of data with regards to students’ developing identities. I knew the students in the study personally and had access to the students’ real names throughout the study.

In an effort to minimize bias in my interpretation of the data, however, I did not associate wikinames with students' offline identities until data analysis was complete.

Second, the use of an Internet based tool—namely a class wiki—had the potential to skew the data because of the limited access for some members of the research population. Students who had Internet access at home had more opportunities to interact on the wiki than students who did not have such access. However, all of my students had Internet access at school, and they could use the wiki during class time in the computer lab or before and after school in one of two available computer labs.

Third, the element of student choice had the potential to skew the population and results of the study. By design, all students used the wiki for class assignments. Because participation beyond class assignments was optional, there were some students who completed assignments on the wiki but chose not to use the wiki for personal activities. The Discourse that evolved on the wiki then reflected only certain aspects of some students' literate identities online.

Finally, students on the wiki used pseudonyms both to preserve anonymity and enable naturally shy students to participate more fully without fear. This perceived anonymity was hindered when students chose to disclose their pseudonym, found and published the pseudonym of a classmate, or discussed wiki identities with classmates. As a result, membership in offline peer groups impacted the Discourse that developed online.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The review of literature related to the present study will be presented in two sections. First, the theoretical frame for the study will be outlined in detail. This frame consists of four major bodies of literature: literate identity (Heath, 1991), communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), Discourse (Gee, 2008), and positioning theory (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Second, this chapter will examine the new literacies in which adolescents negotiate their literate identities.

Theoretical Frame

Literate identity. Identity and literacy connect in significant ways (McCarthey & Moje, 2002). The intersection of these two concepts can be called *literate identity*. Young and Beach (1997) define literate identity as "a notion of our own set of literate attributes, including our competence, our roles as literate individuals within our social worlds, and our relationships with others in a literate society" (p. 297).

Many factors contribute to the development of literate identity. Material resources, life experiences, and future possibilities play important roles (Johnson & Cowles, 2009). For example, being bilingual or bicultural influences literate identity because these factors require that people negotiate literacy among the norms of two languages or cultures (Jiménez, 2000).

The development of literate identity is a lifelong endeavor (Johnson & Cowles, 2009; Moje & Luke, 2009; Rogers, 2002). Because youth live in the balance between many worlds—in particular, they live on the divide of childhood and adulthood, dependence and independence, as well as school and work (McCarthey & Moje, 2002)—adolescence is a unique time for identity

development, especially literate identity. Adolescents have more freedom for exploration with literacy practices and different identities than children and, in many cases, even adults.

Literacy and identity develop alongside each other, yet the two also merge into literate identity. At the same time youth are developing their identities, they are also becoming literate individuals. The process of becoming literate emerges from increases in a person's ability to interact with texts in meaningful ways (Kist, 2000). These texts—whether they are traditional print sources, digital media, or life experiences—are fundamental features of the environments in which students live (Freire, 1983).

As people explore texts so central to their environment, they also have the privilege of exploring their place in the world. Individuals may employ literate practices to experiment with and represent distinct identities (Lewis & Fabos, 2005; McCarthey & Moje, 2002). The texts an individual consumes and produces during this exploration influence the type of literate identity he or she begins to shape. Thus, it is through interaction with texts that individuals begin to negotiate their literate identity (Moje & Luke, 2009; Puckett, 1992).

The ability to interact with texts of all kinds paves the way for adolescents to interact with other people in literate ways. Thus, texts mediate their relationships and serve as representations to others of who they take themselves to be. In many ways, adolescents' literate identity may develop unconsciously. However, there are also far more conscious ways in which youth chose to represent themselves to others in their interactions (McCarthey & Moje, 2002).

A person's literate identity is not a single fixed entity. Different contexts can evoke variations of a person's literate identity (Lewis & Fabos, 2005; Rogers, 2002). In an ethnographic study of June Treader's literate life, for example, Rogers (2002) identified three distinct manifestations of June's literate identity. Within the context of the adult education

classes, June lacked confidence in her literate abilities but sought to better them. Within the context of her home and community life, June confidently navigated the literacy demands of mothering, petitions, and legal documents. Within the context of a meeting to determine her daughter's placement in special education, June acknowledged her literary deficits and submitted her will to authority figures. Because June was positioned differently in each context, different aspects of her literate identity manifested themselves.

Because literate identity is not fixed, it may appear that people simply have inconsistent identities. However, literate identity is complex and hybrid; it can shift as people move between communities (McCarthey & Moje, 2002; Moje et al., 2004). In many instances, shifts in literate identity are far more subtle than those in the Rogers' (2002) study. For example, Lewis and Fabos (2005) noted that people can enact multiple identities online. The adolescents in the Lewis and Fabos study made subtle shifts in the ways they characterized their identity when participating in online communication such as instant messaging, raising questions about what it means for a writer to have an authentic or personal voice. Yet even with these shifts, the adolescents' overall identity remained fairly constant. The changes the adolescents did make helped them meet the needs of the specific conversations in which they engaged. Findings of studies such as these suggest that variations in a person's literate identity are reflective of the social situations in which the person is participating and that literate identity is a social construct that shifts to meet the demands of varying contexts (Moje & Luke 2009).

It may be difficult for teachers to understand their students' literate identities because teachers and students often have greatly varying literate identities. Even when they rely on the same literacies, such as technological devices, teachers and students' experiences in using them may be drastically different (Williams, 2005). While students and teachers have distinct literate

identities, students' literate identities may vary based on classroom communities. Johnston, Woodside-Jiron, and Day (2001) studied the literate practices of two different teachers' classrooms. In one class, students' "literate identities included a sense of belonging to a literate community," whereas for students from another class, students' "individualism was a prevalent aspect of literate identity" (p. 230). The distinct classroom contexts significantly impacted students' literate identity development.

Communities of practice. The social nature of identity development is crucial to the understanding of literate identity. Identity hinges upon "negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities. The concept of identity serves as a pivot between the social and the individual, so that each can be talked about in terms of the other" (Wenger, 1998, p. 145). Wenger calls these social communities *communities of practice*. Rather than asserting a dichotomous relationship between the self and others, Wenger proposes a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the community of practice within which he or she operates.

As individuals seek to build their identity, they also help construct a community of practice if they are members of groups of people interacting to fulfill a common purpose. A community of practice is more than a group, such as a class of adolescents, that shares connections. Instead, according to Wenger (2006), communities of practice can be defined by three characteristics: domain, community, and practice.

A community of practice must share a *domain* of interest. Often, community members have varying competencies in this domain, so community members learn from one another (Wenger, 2006). A typical class of adolescents would not necessarily share a domain of interest, and thus would not be considered a community of interest. However, if students all chose to take

an elective course, such as a creative writing class, they could share a domain of interest in writing creative fiction.

Wenger (2006) further explains that while pursuing a domain of interest, members of a community become a *community* as they participate in activities and conversations that help them build relationships and learn from one another. Thus, a classroom is not a community of practice until these activities occur. In a creative writing classroom, this could occur through students sharing their writing pieces and helping one another to revise work.

Finally, a community of practice is founded on more than common interests. The notion of a community of practice suggests that members must share a common set of practices (e.g., experiences, tools, ways of accomplishing a task). With sustained interactions, practitioners can develop shared resources to influence their practice (Wenger, 2006). In the example of a creative writing classroom, this could be stories about successes or tools to help one another in the writing process. As domain, community, and practice come together, members of a community of practice fulfill common purposes.

Within the community the members pursue their shared purpose and attend to social relationships simultaneously (Wenger, 1998). The shared purposes bind the communities together. At the same time, social relationships afford members of the community of practice the opportunity to negotiate their identity.

As literate beings, adolescents can build their identity through the culture, values, and beliefs their literacy grants them (Johnston et al., 2001). This is a continual process that is influenced by all the communities of practice to which an adolescent belongs (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003). As people actively participate in communities of practice, they mold identities in relation to the communities (Wenger, 1998).

Big D Discourse. Like Wenger, Gee (2001, 2008) has studied the environments in which identities are shaped. He asserts that an individual's literate identity is intricately tied to the experiences of the *Discourses* to which he or she belongs. While people typically think of discourse as conversation, Gee's notion of "'Big D' Discourse" is much more expansive (Gee, 2005, p. 26). Gee capitalizes the "D" in Discourses to indicate that the term represents more than the language people use; the term also represents one's values and the way people think, dress, and interact.

Gee asserts that each Discourse is an "'identity kit' which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act and talk so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize" (1989, p. 18). According to Gee (2008), "Discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted as groups" (p. 3). These aspects of each Discourse comprise the culture of the community.

Gee (2008) also asserts that language and literacy are dependent on the Discourses to which people belong. Within Discourses, the accepted ways of being play out in socially situated language use. Moreover, as an individual moves between Discourses, from school to home for example, that individual's literacy will manifest itself in distinct ways because of the unique demands of each Discourse. Thus, community cultures set norms or expectations for literacy practices (Gee, 2008). It is important to examine how Discourses shape not only students' identity but also their literacy.

In one such study, Puckett (1992) studied the literate lives of a rural community in eastern Kentucky. In this community, people believed literacy was part of women's nature. This created a dichotomy where women used literate practices to negotiate their identity while the men

exhibited non-literate behavior in the traditional sense. Both men and women in the community felt tension between their community norms and the literate norms of the nearby city. Even within the same community, different subpopulations adhered to distinct literate norms.

In another study, MacGillivray and Curwen (2007) examined the literate practices of taggers—individuals who write in highly stylized scripts on public places such as walls and freeway overpasses—in Los Angeles, California. Within the tagging culture, individuals enact accepted norms for tagging and helped one another develop their abilities in this writing system. These norms were the foundation for the taggers' literate community. The Discourses of rural Kentucky and Los Angeles are distinct, but within each there exists expectations for members' reading and writing practices.

In the present study, Gee's (1989; 2008) notion of Discourse is a key element of the theoretical frame. It provides a lens for examining the literate identities of adolescents, specifically the norms, expectations, practices, and values that prevail among the literate individuals who share membership in a particular community of practice—a class wiki.

Positioning theory. A possible cause for distinct literate identities that develop within each classroom is the way a teacher and students are positioned in relation to each other. Positioning theory (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999) asserts that no person has a fixed role within a community. Instead, individuals' identities are reflections of the way they position themselves and are positioned by others. In a reciprocal relationship, social forces influence individuals' positioning while positions alter the social forces in a conversation. Thus, students' literate identities are formed in relation to other people's perceptions of the individual (McCarthey & Moje, 2002; Moje & Luke, 2009). This concept suggests that one's literate identity within a Discourse is not fixed, but it is in constant flux through interactions with others in the Discourse.

In conversations within a Discourse, some form of positioning always exists. As van Langenhove and Harré (1999) assert, such conversations have storylines, and as individuals take up the storyline they establish a position in the conversation. The opening speaker in the conversation positions himself or herself as well as those he or she is addressing. However, through the course of the conversation individuals' positions may shift as players in the conversation reposition themselves and others. Further, van Langenhove and Harré claim that an individual's position in a conversation is reflective of his or her person's moral and personal attributes.

The four bodies of literature reviewed in this section of this chapter frame the present study. Through a recursive process of positioning self and others, individuals come to form and display a sense of self as literate beings within the communities of practice. Their interactions reflect norms, values, and accepted ways of being within the Discourses to which they belong.

New Literacies

Virtual space. In an ever increasingly technological world, the communities of practice and Discourses to which adolescents belong are frequently digitally mediated. Through the Internet, connected gaming systems, cellular phones, and other technologically based media, adolescents construct their identity through joint activities in a broad range of online and print media (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Wenger, 1998). Guzzetti and Gamboa (2004, 2005) examined adolescents' writing experiences in the form of zines (self produced magazines) and online journaling in two related studies. Corgan, a student in both studies, engaged in both forms of writing and used the texts to shape and project her identity. Corgan and her fellow collaborators on the zine were motivated to share their viewpoints because they were writing to a peer audience (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004). In doing so, they used joint activities to construct

their identities. Additionally, Janice, a student in the online journaling study, used her blogging to form and represent her identity while simultaneously forming and fortifying other people's perceptions of her identity (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2005).

Corgan and Janice constricted their literate identities, in part, in what Moje et al. (2004) call "third space" (p. 41). According to these researchers, *third space* is the place where the first space of peoples' homes, communities, and social networks meets the second space of formal Discourses such as school, church, and work. Within third space, "what seem to be oppositional categories can actually work together to generate new knowledges, new Discourses, and new forms of literacy" (p. 42).

One such third space can be the Internet. When students mentor each other in online contexts, "classrooms may become communities of practice where digital tools are used to pursue common objects such as the development of academic literacy and the construction of new identities" (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003, p. 382). People from diverse nations and cultures meet in virtual spaces on the Internet to follow common interests (Coiro, 2003; Wenger, 1998). Online, adolescents can communicate with their next-door neighbor or someone from another country. This opens them up to a myriad of interpretations of their literate identities (Williams, 2008).

In a time where schools are seeking ways to engage students, the third space afforded by the Internet opens the door to many possibilities for student success. Leu (2006) affirms that "the Internet is this generation's defining technology for literacy and learning" (p. 2). Online, students have virtually unlimited potential for creating knowledge, remixing existing materials into something new, connecting with others on a global scale, promoting their work, and critiquing others (Greenhow et al., 2009).

Adolescents can employ technological tools to change the way they construct their identities (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Williams, 2005). For example, through instant message technology, adolescents can enact multiple identities at the same time because their physical body is not visible. As a result they have freedom to change their word choice, tone, or topics of conversation to manipulate or obscure their offline identities (Lewis & Fabos, 2005). The virtual space of instant messaging is just one online tool students can use to construct literate identities.

Wikis. Wikis afford an excellent space for students to engage in the benefits of the Internet. Because wikis can be edited by anyone allowed access to them, they facilitate cooperative learning (McPherson, Wang, Hsu, & Tsuei, 2007). Through a wiki, students can work on a joint product, seek feedback on a project, and or assist others revising their work. Adolescent learners in this generation often expect to have their work evaluated and evaluate the work of others. They are also accustomed to asserting their identity online. By working on a wiki, students can benefit from learning ecology—learning through relationships in physical or virtual spaces (Greenhow et al., 2009).

As students participate in these online communities, researchers acknowledge the need to "inquire into young people's participation patterns and creative acts with newer web technologies in formal and informal learning environments" (Greenhow et al., 2009, p. 249). However, few studies have examined wikis as a virtual space. In four such studies, Engstrom and Jewett (2005) implemented a wiki for inquiry-based learning, Luce-Kapler (2007) studied students' visual literacy skills when using a wiki, Mak and Coniam (2008) used a wiki to provide English Language Learners an authentic writing activity, and Sheehy (2008) used a wiki to create a community of practice for educators.

While these studies consider the surface of wikis' use in education, there are many facets of the use of such technologies in educational settings that have yet to be explored. Particularly, there is a need to study the merger of identity and literacy on a class wiki. The current study examines 10th-grade students' literate identities as represented in the Discourse developed in class wiki.

Chapter 3

Methods

This descriptive study employed qualitative data and analysis procedures to examine students' representations of their literate identities in the Discourse that developed among 10th-grade students using a wiki for class work, collaboration, and social interaction.

Adolescents' literate identities online are at the forefront of this study. The overarching question for this study was, "What are adolescents' literate identities online as revealed through a class wiki?" This larger question encompasses several guiding questions: What written devices do individuals use to represent themselves as a certain kind of person? What positions do individuals occupy in the Discourse of the class wiki? Within the context of the online Discourse where students' faces are hidden, who do individuals represent themselves to be?

Context of the Study

The study took place in a suburban community located within forty miles of three universities. The community in which this study took place provides public Internet access in at least four sites. This is significant to the study because students needed Internet access to participate on the wiki. The majority of the students in Adams High School (pseudonym), where the study was conducted, came from conservative, middle class family backgrounds. At Adams High School, 18.57% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch; 91.77% of the students are Caucasian, 5.77% of the students are Hispanic, and the remaining 2.46% of students are from varied racial backgrounds.

Participants

Adams High School has 1750 students. Of those, 103 students from six 10th-grade English classes—three regular English classes and three honors English classes—were

participants in the study. The curriculum for the classes followed the state 10th-grade language arts core curriculum. During the semester when this study took place, the English classes focused on the core requirements for narrative and persuasive writing. All students in the class wrote, critiqued, collaborated, and revised class work on the class wiki, but data were only collected for the 103 students who agreed, and received parental permission, to be study participants. (See Appendix A for participant consent and assent forms.)

In addition, 11 students who were key participants in the wiki during the previous school year requested permission to continue using the wiki the next school year. Among teachers in the school district where this study took place, it is a common practice to allow students continued access to class wikis after completing a course. However, by the beginning of the study, only four former students returned letters of consent and assent. Of those four, only two of these former students actually participated in the class wiki after summer vacation. These two students, in combination with the 103 10th- grade students, comprised the 105 participants of this study.

Data Sources

The format and implementation of the class wiki allowed me to collect various forms of data. Pbworks.com, the wiki site I employed in the study, archives all written artifacts produced on it and allows me to download all the data from the class wiki. The electronic data collected for this study were stored on a password protected computer. In addition, a backup copy of electronic data was archived on a CD. There were four types of data sources.

Original posts. The first source of data was students' original posts on the wiki. (See Appendix B for a sample wiki page.) Original posts are the entries on the wiki that people use to begin a new wiki page. Because the purpose of this study was to examine adolescents' literate

identities as revealed through the Discourse of a class wiki, these written artifacts were essential to the findings of the study.

Edits to original posts. Changes to students' online writing also served as windows to students' evolving thought processes. Students could change any written work on the wiki at any time, so I used automatic hourly email notifications of changes to track who made changes and what changes they made. The emails contained both the old and new text of altered writings. These emails were automatically archived in my email account's filing system where I could review them as needed. In addition, pbworks.com allows users to view and compare different versions of a page by clicking on the "page history" button in the upper, right-hand corner of each page and selecting revisions of the page to view. These changes were the second primary source of data.

Comments. In addition to writing in and editing the text of a wiki page, students could leave comments in a box at the bottom of each wiki page. The third data source, then, was the comments students posted on the wiki. Frequently, the comments were an extended conversation about the topic presented in the original posts and edits to the original post.

Journal log. The fourth data source was my typed, dated journal log. This log contained my anecdotal notes on oral conversations I had with students about the wiki. It also contained my observations of students' experiences on the wiki when students were working on the wiki during class. The journal log was a place for recording my pertinent thoughts, as teacher and researcher, about the Discourse and the literate identities of my students. The log was also a place to record experiences that were not preserved in written artifacts on the wiki or in emails.

Procedures

Setting up the wiki. Because minors used the class wiki in a school setting, they needed protection when working online. Despite the perceived anonymity of the class wiki, it contained identifying information such as the real name of Adams High School and a link to Adams High School's website. It also contained information about students' lives outside of school. These facts were enough to jeopardize students' offline lives by making them potential victims of online predators. Pbworks.com provides advanced security features with a paid upgrade. I used that option to ensure that only people I selected, namely my students, had an account on the class wiki. The accounts allowed students to view and edit the wiki, but third parties could not see the content of the website. This protected the students' personal information and work from public access.

Further, for the sake of online security and anonymity, students selected pseudonyms, known as wikinames, to use on the wiki. I used those pseudonyms to create student accounts. Students are identified in this thesis by their wikinames; the wikinames are *italicized* to identify them as names since they do not adhere to standard naming conventions. I have also maintained students' original spelling and capitalization within their wikinames.

Pbworks.com allowed me, as the administrator of the wiki, the ability to grant users varying levels of authorization for editing the site. The highest level of authorization is an administrator who can change any page on the website, alter security features, and add new users; the lowest level of security is a reader who can view the website but cannot change anything. Writers, the mid-level authorization my students had, "can edit pages and revert pages to previous versions. They can also upload new files and create new pages. Writers cannot perform any action that cannot be undone" (Inviting Users, 2009).

Introducing the wiki. During the second week of school, I took students to the computer lab where I gave them a lesson on using a wiki as a new text. Students learned how to navigate the wiki, create and edit a wiki page, upload documents to the wiki, and leave comments. Students then had the remainder of the class period to explore the wiki while I monitored students' ability to use the new technology and resolve any student concerns.

Using the wiki. After the initial class period, students received periodic assignments to be completed on the wiki, but they were also welcome to use the wiki for any purpose they chose. For example, students could collaborate on stories, socialize through online discussions, seek homework help, and request input on personal writing projects.

I posted assignments on the wiki; otherwise I did not participate on the wiki and remained an observer. My reason for doing this is that if I participated in the Discourse as it evolved on the wiki, I would likely have been perceived as an authority figure and leader. In distancing myself, I sought to allow students more freedom to assert their identities among a community of peers. My class disclosure document outlined general guidelines for appropriate behavior on the wiki (see Appendix C).

Although students used the class wiki for an entire academic year, this study covers only the first four months of the year. During that time period, student posted information to the wiki a total of 1075 times. Each participant posted an average of 10.24 times. The least prolific student only wrote on the wiki once, and the most prolific student posted information on the wiki 43 times.

Data Analysis

Data analysis procedures were similar to those commonly associated with qualitative data analysis. I used a recursive process of coding and searching for patterns and themes to analyze

students' work on the class wiki (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Huberman and Miles, 1994). In this study, data were organized using categories that emerged from the data.

Data for this study were collected over a four month time period. After data collection was complete, I compiled the work students submitted to the wiki and organized the data into one document. Students' work was divided by posting sessions. A posting session was the writing student put on a new wiki page, the edits a student made to an existing wiki page, or a comment on an existing wiki page. As I read through students' posts, I paid particular attention to the written devices students used and the positions students occupied in the wiki.

After coding the data into initial categories, I implemented a recursive process defined by Huberman and Miles (1994) as a cycle of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In this iterative process, the initial categories led to the creation of smaller, more specific categories.

The initial categories used in data analysis were closely related to the overarching research questions. One group of categories was tied to the written devices students used. After I coded my data according to the list of written devices, another teacher, who is studying to obtain her master's degree and has been teaching for 4 years, and I coded the contents of one wiki page together. Afterward, I gave her copies of ten wiki pages, which we coded for devices independently of one another. Then we compared our coding to establish inter-rater reliability. She and I coded the devices with 85.98 percent inter-rater reliability. The disagreement between codes was addressed by better defining the codes for written devices. Upon further discussion of the terms and their implications, we agreed on 18 codes and definitions for the written devices students used. These devices, in alphabetical order, were (a) answer, (b) assistance, (c) boast, (d) censorship, (e) complaint, (f) contemplation, (g) defiance, (h) encouragement, (i) humor,

(j) insult, (k) irrelevance, (l) narrative, (m) praise, (n) question, (o) request, (p) revision, (q) validation, and (r) vandalism. This list of codes guided my coding of the rest of the data set.

To address the second research question, a second group of categories was derived from the data. These categories consisted of individual positions students enacted in the wiki. After coding the entire data set for written devices employed by the students, I repeated the process, of creating categories and coding the data. This time I focused my attention on the positions students occupied in the Discourse of the wiki. The initial categories for positions were informed by my prior analysis identifying the written devices students employed. Again, I used a recursive process to code for these positions, refining the list and definitions of the positions students enacted within the wiki. This process yielded a list of nine positions that characterized students' relationships to one another: (a) antagonist, (b) aspiring author, (c) bystander, (d) comedian, (e) follower, (f) leader, (g) lurker, (h) motivator, and (i) outsider. Finally, I coded the entire data set using this list of nine positions.

To address the third research question, I selected three individuals for in-depth analysis of their literate identities online. My selection of students was based upon their presence in the wiki and the unique contributions they made to the wiki. One was a natural leader, one was a prolific poster, and one was an outsider to the community. My analysis of data from these three individuals included a compilation of the devices they employed during the course of the study and the positions they occupied in relation to other participants on the wiki. I looked for patterns in an effort to understand who the students represented themselves to be within the Discourse of the wiki.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine students' representations of their literate identities in the Discourse that developed among students using a wiki for class work, collaboration, and social interaction. This chapter will present the results of this study of 105 students—103 10th-grade and two 11th-grade language arts students—as they represented their literate identities online through participation in a class wiki. I will first provide general descriptions of students' interactions on the class wiki. The three research questions will frame the remaining sections of the findings. To address the first question, I will report the analysis of the 18 written devices the students employed on the wiki, which served as windows into the ways in which the students represented themselves to others. I then will turn to the nine positions students played in the conversations on the wiki to address the second question. Building on these findings, I will finally address the third research question by presenting descriptions of the ways three individuals represented themselves as literate individuals within the Discourse of the wiki.

Description of Wiki Interactions

Wikinames. On the first day of class, students were asked to select pseudonyms to use on the class wiki. From that point on, we always referred to the pseudonyms as *wikinames*. In keeping with a standard convention regarding online usernames, all students except one, *Relaji*, chose not to capitalize their wikinames. As a researcher, I want to remain true to the students' writing forms. Therefore, in this thesis, except when beginning a sentence, students' wikinames are not capitalized. Just as students' wikinames did not adhere to standard name conventions, students' writing on the wiki did not always adhere to standard writing conventions. Instead,

students sometimes wrote in all lowercase letters, misspelled words, or used extra punctuation marks. In order to maintain the integrity of students' writing style, I reproduced their work in this study as originally posted.

I chose to let students know when I, as the teacher, was writing on the class wiki. My writing followed standard conventions, and my wikiname was simply *Miss McCollum*. This is reflective of the fact that I chose to position myself as an outsider to the students' Discourse.

The logic behind students' self-selected wikinames varies, but most represent some aspect of the students' offline lives that they brought into the online Discourse of the wiki. Many reflect extracurricular interests, such as *futbol7*, *profisher*, and *softball7820*. Others reflect places students have lived outside the community where the study took place, such as *colombosoccer*, *idahoboy69*, and *mexicocity*. Some students chose language arts related names, most likely because they anticipated using them in an English class: *bookwizard*, *harrypotter*, and *love2write*. One student admitted that he selected his username based solely on the fact that I gave him a green marker to use in class on the day we chose our names: *greenmarker44*. Another student could not decide what to choose for his pseudonym, so his wikiname was *username*. When conversing with *Relaji* in person, I learned the reason for her chosen wikiname: Relaji is the name of the main character in a novel she is writing. While the logic of each wikiname is not fully clear to others, students understood the background of their individual wikinames and used them to identify themselves online for the duration of the school year.

Structure of wiki posts. Students could participate in the online conversations on the wiki in one of three ways. First, they could begin a new wiki page. Students typically used new wiki pages to initiate conversations or post original writing. Second, students could edit the content of an already existing wiki page. Edits were usually employed to fix conventional errors,

adjust word choice, or contribute to add-on stories. Finally, students could respond to the material on a wiki page in a comment box located at the bottom of the page. The majority of students' contributions to wiki conversations took place through comments.

For the purpose of reporting data in this study, wiki members' contributions are labeled by the type of participation: original, edit, or comment. In addition, wiki members' contributions are labeled with the week of the study to identify timing.

The work on the wiki can be divided into two distinct categories: assignments and voluntary work. Assignment pages are ones I, as the teacher, initiated. Each was directly tied to a specific class assignment with the exception of daily logs that served as running records of every class activity we completed. On the other hand, voluntary work was student initiated. This work usually took the form of a wiki page that one student started and upon which multiple students edited or commented. The page was not directed by me and typically was not related to the content we were studying in class.

Nature of wiki conversations. The nature of students' conversations on assignment and voluntary wiki pages varied greatly. The conversations on assignment pages, for the most, were flat. Students fulfilled the exact requirements that I posted, but they rarely ventured beyond them. Thus, the conversations were stilted since there was little back and forth exchange in the comments. In contrast, students' conversations on voluntary wiki pages were dynamic. Students responded to one another's ideas, contributed thoughts to push the conversations in new directions, and even made connections between different wiki pages at times. Thus, students revealed more of their identities in the dynamic, voluntary wiki pages than the stilted, assignment wiki pages.

In addition, the nature of online conversation in the wiki was not serial. In a typical face-to-face conversation, the conversationalists make a remark, listen to the other person's remark, and respond. The thread of the conversation, then, is somewhat continuous. This was not the nature of the conversations within the wiki's Discourse. Instead, conversation on this wiki often took a circuitous route with themes or threads winding throughout. For example, a student might ask a question on a wiki page, several other students could post other information, and then the student's question might get answered. In this study, online conversations did go back and forth in threads that wove throughout one, or sometimes several, wiki pages.

Written Devices for Revealing Identity

Addressing research question one, I examined the written devices students used in their online conversations. Analysis of the wiki posts revealed that students employed 18 written devices within the Discourse of the wiki. Some wiki posts were representative of more than one written device. These written devices were tools students used to represent themselves as a certain kind of person. The frequency count of the written devices, as represented in Table 1, is not wholly indicative of the impact written devices had on the Discourse of the wiki. In ordering the devices in this chapter, I began with the order of frequency. However, I later reordered the devices presented in this chapter to reflect conceptually related groups (i.e., question and answer, praise and insult, request and assistance) and aid in the flow of reporting findings. Thus, the devices in the following section are presented only generally in order of their prominence in the Discourse of the wiki.

Question and answer. Two of the most prominent written devices on the wiki were questions and answers. Students' engagement in the conversations surrounding these devices varied depending on the type of wiki page-voluntary or assigned-to which they were posting.

Table 1

Frequency of Written Devices Employed on the Wiki

Device	Context			Total
	Original	Edit	Comment	
Answer	1	3	399	403
Assistance	0	1	9	10
Boast	1	0	6	7
Censorship	1	3	5	9
Complaint	1	0	24	25
Contemplation	7	1	295	303
Defiance	2	0	4	6
Encouragement	3	3	13	19
Humor	6	10	45	61
Insult	0	0	15	15
Irrelevance	0	1	19	20
Narrative	14	36	11	61
Praise	0	1	51	52
Question	25	15	31	71
Request	3	2	8	13
Revision	0	76	364	440
Validation	0	0	136	136
Vandalism	0	2	0	2
Total	64	154	1435	1653[a]

Note. Devices in the table are listed in alphabetical order.

[a] The teacher and students posted on the wiki 1129 times. This total reflects the fact that some posts included more than one written device.

Voluntary questions and answers. In voluntary writings, students often asked direct questions. Some of these questions were just for the sake of clarifying information. For example,

ahriahikari asked, “What does AVB stand for?” (Comment, Week 13). The next comment on this wiki page answered *ahriahikari*’s question; *pgub99* stated, “Adams Viking Baseball, come on now not that hard” (Comment, Week 18). No further conversation emerged from the question.

In another instance, *jazzguy* asked *reddevil13* to clarify information on a wiki page titled “Technology poem.” *Jazzguy* asked, “Did you purposely spell rocks wrong? Is it supposed to be that way?” (Comment, Week 9). Two weeks later, *reddevil13* saw the question and changed the spelling in his poem from “rocs” to “rocks” (Edit, Week 11). That confused *incakola4* when she viewed the page yet another two weeks later, so *incakola4* asked, “What are you talking about *jazzguy*? Rocks is right” (Comment, Week 13). Finally, another month later *reddevil13* clarified, “thats cuz i edited it” (Comment, Week 17). In the case of the discussion surrounding the “Technology poem” wiki page, students’ conversation extended well beyond an answer to the first direct question. However, the extension was another direct question and answer. The fact that two months had passed between the beginning and end of the conversation suggests that students were not fully invested in participating in the dialogue.

While direct questions about wiki pages usually elicited only a little conversation, there were other questions that were not intended to be answered at all. Instead, the rhetorical nature of the questions left them unanswered. For example, on a philosophical wiki page titled “A Reason to Live,” *ahriahikari* asked, “Holy crap, are you like spying on me? Thats my life story there!” (Comment, Week 13). The remaining comments failed to answer this question, probably because it was not intended to be answered.

Unlike direct and rhetorical questions in the middle of existing wiki pages, questions were successfully used on multiple occasions to initiate extended conversations on new wiki pages. For example, *orpheus* created a wiki page titled “Who’s Hungry, and What Are You

Hungry For." In his original post *orpheus* began the conversation by asking, "Aren't you sooooo hungry? Even if its for something like revenge- tell me about it." (Original, Week 3). Answers to such questions were direct at first, but then the dialogue tended to revolve around answering the question and responding to other answers. In the case of this wiki page *shamy11* stated, "i want revenge on all the muffins that think their cupcakes. Because we all know that muffins are just ugly cupcakes." (Comment, Week 3) Continuing the conversation, *rustysteel* based his contribution to the conversation on *shamy11*'s comment rather than the initial questions: "Muffins are delicious. Cupcakes are just wanna-be muffins." (Comment, Week 5). Even later, *dancerbabe* followed the line of conversation and answered the original question: "LOL! I agree with rustysteel. Cupcakes are muffins in glorified wrapping paper with frosting on top! :D I like them about the same tho. I am hungry for stuffed french toast!!! :D *Drool*" (Comment Week 5). The back and forth nature of this discussion highlights how a question could serve as a springboard for conversation that could wander naturally, yet the question, still acting as a thread to which the conversation returned, was the initiating tool.

Another instance of a question that successfully used to initiate extended conversations on a new wiki page occurred when *orpheus* created a wiki page titled "What Color is My Underwear." He started the page by posting the following paragraph:

> You don't know do you? I bet you don't know what color your best friend's underwear is either. The point is, everyone has secrets, everyone has something that you don't know about them, so you can't make decisions based on how you feel about them. I can't say, well that guy looks like a blue underwear guy, when actually he has purple ones. Being judgemental hurts people's feelings, and every single one of you knows this. So why hurt people's feelings? Don't. (Original, Week 6)

That same evening *rook56* responded,

> I agree. It is something that you shouldn't do, but another thing that really irritates the people that are judgemental is simply... Don't care. I'm wearing some black ones right now. Do i mind? No. Do i honestly care what you think? If you have something nice to

> say, than sure. If not i won't get offended by what you have to say. I understand what you mean. I despise people that judge, because most of them are hypocritical. I don't belive it is right, and we'll never understand why we do it. So pick up your head and move on. Let them think about what they said wrong. Let them question what makes you so strong as to not care. Thank maybe they'll start judging you in a more respectful way. (Comment, Week 6)

The next day *orpheus* replied, "Yeah, great job. Respect is something we all take for granted, whether it be giving or receiving. Thats great that you are wearing black underwear! lol. I have a blue pair on. BLUE!!!!" (Comment, Week 6). From that point on, the conversation turned to more of a daily accounting of different students' underwear colors, and was less about being nonjudgmental. In this way the conversation diverged from the initial topic, but it still followed a natural conversation pattern where the posts followed a logical order from each previous comment. In this way, students' initial questions served as the catalyst for an extended conversation.

Assigned questions and answers. Just as the students used questions to initiate wiki conversations, questions were one of two key devices I, as the teacher, used. The questions I posed served one of three purposes. My first purpose in posing questions was to attempt to prompt conversation about novels we were reading. For example, while reading *Night*, a World War II memoir by Elie Wiesel, I asked, "What makes Elie Wiesel's story worth telling? How is his story part of the larger human story?" (Original, Week 6). By posting this question, I hoped to initiate a rich dialogue. The conversation parameters stated, "Refer to specific examples from *Night* or to another student's comments to strengthen your response."

This attempt was not always successful because, unlike the questions students posted when they initiated voluntary writing wiki pages, my questions did not inspire rich conversation. Typically, students answered the question as succinctly as possible and did not build on each other's ideas. In one exchange, *reddevil13* was the first person to comment on the discussion and

incakola4 was the second. *Wildchild*, the third commenter, opened her contribution by stating, “i agree with both reddevil13 and incakola4” (Comment, Week 6). *Mexicocity*, the fourth commenter, started his commentary with “I very much agree with incakola4” (Comment, Week 6). After superficially agreeing with other comments, *wildchild* and *mexicocity* continued their contributions with their own commentary, but they failed to refer back to the previous posts at all. Their agreement was simply for the sake of fulfilling assignment requirements.

Occasionally a student did, however, connect the thread further. Later in this discussion *watermelonluvr526* said, “Everyone makes a great point! I love how *fourone* said that it would be disrespectful NOT to remember everything those millions of people went through” (Comment, Week 6). She then expanded her position on the topic. *Watermelonluvr526*’s response connected the question, other comments, and a new idea, which followed the pattern that created strong conversations in voluntary writing. Unfortunately, however, this one exchange is an anomaly, and it did not elicit further conversation about the discussion question. Instead, it stands alone as a sample of one person tying ideas together while the remaining students’ commentaries continue in a disjointed manner.

As the teacher, my second use of questions was to post assignments through indirect questioning. While teaching my students about word choice, I wrote the following indirect question on a new wiki page:

> Please rewrite the following sentence into a showing sentence in a comment box below. If you need a reminder of how to do that, look at the PowerPoint. Each student should rewrite the sentence in his or her unique words. I was miserable after he died. (Original, Week 5)

Once again, it appeared that students answered this question solely because there was a grade attached. The responses to this question required critical thinking due to the nature of the assignment. For example, *1n5alpha2* changed the initial sentence to read, “I was inconsolable as

the man I loved travled into the dark, empty abyss that was once my heart and memory" (Original, Week 5). While student responses answered the question and showed evidence of them understanding the lesson curriculum, there was not a conversation thread on most of these pages.

Occasionally, my questions prompted multiple students to write about common concepts. When students rewrote my sentence "A woman hurried over" (Original, Week 5), four of the 55 responses revolved around the concept of shopping. The concept started with *1canadian*'s sentence, "the woman squealed like a pig as she scurried over to a shop window" (Comment, Week 5). *Misswannabe* expanded *1canadian*'s idea with her sentence: "When Ms. Tilly spotted the 50% off rack in the clothing department she darted as fast as her 78 year old body could" (Comment, Week 5). These students' sentences provide evidence that students were reading each other's work before posting their own. This also demonstrates student investment in the work posted on the wiki, yet there was a lack of conversation, primarily because my questions did not push other wiki users toward dialogue.

My final reason for posing indirect questions on wiki pages was to list homework assignments on the wiki that students were expected to complete offline. Each term I maintained two wiki pages, one for regular 10th-grade English and one for honors 10th-grade English. In these logs, I posted everything we covered in class on a daily basis, links to lesson materials such as PowerPoints and assignment sheets, and homework assignments on them. These pages absorbed the majority of my effort on the wiki. However, these pages did not elicit any conversation because I used the advanced features of the wiki to turn off the ability for students to edit or comment on them.

Reflecting on my choice to disallow students to manipulate the assignment log, I now see evidence of an unwillingness to trust my students not to tamper with the homework assignments at the start of the school year. I did not change the status quo even after I learned to trust them.

The exception to my policy occurred two months into the study, when I had gained confidence that my students were not going to vandalize pages dedicated to specific assignments. I began to allow students to edit or comment on specific pages dedicated to one particular assignment. Initially, that surprised students. On the assignment wiki page titled, "Holocaust Remembrance Project," *sandybird1* asked in the comment's section "you can actually comment on this page?" (Comment, Week 18) to which *drhook* responded, "i guess so... weird" (Comment, Week 18).

After students realized they could comment on some assignment wiki pages, they did, primarily using the comments section to discuss their thoughts on and work on the assignment. For example, on the "Persuasive Essay Contests" page, I assigned students to enter one of several essay contests. In the comments section, students weighed the pros and cons of the different essay choices. *Shamy11* asked, "so who has an idea of which on your going to write about?" (Comment, Week 12). Several students contributed to this questioning thread that stemmed from my original assignment. *Runguy* explained how he would choose which essay to write by eliminating those without cash prizes when he stated simply, "It would be nice getting some cash for doing an essay" (Comment, Week 14). G*enteeblack* stated,

> I like the being an American one. You'd trace a value back through American history, which would actually be interesting. And if you won, you'd get to go to Washington DC with Miss McCollum and earn $5,000. I dunno, maybe I'm just a nerd, but I'm actually excited to get started... (Comment, Week 14).

Other students decided to discuss the formatting particulars of the assignments. *Love2write* asked, "Is this supposed to be in MLA formatting?" (Comment, Week 18). She also posted a

persuasive essay outline for students who might need it. Although individual assignment pages often posed questions for students to answer offline, the ability to discuss the assignments online gave students the opportunity to use the Discourse of the wiki as a support network in their offline world.

In summary, analysis revealed that questions and answers were frequent devices on the wiki. They helped students engaged in the Discourse of the wiki by clarifying information and stimulating conversations. They were also a device that I, as their teacher, used to promote the academic purposes of the wiki.

Narrative. Excluding assignment pages on the wiki, narratives were the second most prominent device used by members of the online community. These narratives included fictional stories, personal narratives, and poetry. Frequently, narratives were prominent devices for original posts on new wiki pages. Each wiki page was created by one wiki user. That so many students were willing to voluntarily share their stories and poems suggests that students were comfortable enough to share personal work with their peers in the Discourse of the wiki.

Fictional stories. Several students chose to post their original fictional stories, apparently with hopes of getting feedback on them. *Love2write* posted two stories: “A Dark Romance” and “Clue.” On “A Dark Romance,” *incakola4* helped *love2write* by proofreading the story and correcting spelling and grammar mistakes. For “Clue,” *whiteman* clarified commonly confused words: “its board game. as in a board. not bored” (Comment, Week 11). Input about both stories was limited to the mechanics of writing, showing that students did not offer advice on the content of the narratives.

Although students did not post advice about the content of the narratives their peers had posted, they were evidently interested in the storylines. In response to “A Dark Romance,”

incakola4 stated, “I finished your story and I must say I enjoyed it. At the end I was very bummed. You should have kept going” (Comment, Week 13). *Mexicocity* felt the same way about “Clue;” he said, “I really like the game clue. You should definately finish it. Try to make more chapters though, don’t just finish the story with few chapters. This is really good, and I am excited to see how it ends. :)” (Comment, Week 5). The lack of further comments suggests that other students had not read the stories or chose not to offer advice. *Love2write* never posted more of either story, so there was nothing else for the interested wiki members to read.

The lack of commentary on *love2write*’s narratives typifies the dearth of responses to the fictional narratives individual students posted on the wiki. *Relaji*, one of the 11th-grade students still participating on the wiki, expressed dissatisfaction with this phenomenon. In response to a lack of commentary on her story “Under the High Talon,” she said, “Goodness. I’ve worked on this for quite a while, yet no one from this year will even so much as make a comment. C’mon peoples. Writing comments to myself about something I wrote is no fun” (Comment, Week 13). Even after her complaint, *Relaji*’s story did not receive any more comments. If students did read the fictional narratives on the wiki, they continued not to edit or comment on them.

While students were not typically responsive to longer narratives on the wiki, one such story, “The Coolest Add-on Story In The World,” was well received. This story was about a woman named Janet Lawrence who worked at a zoo and had strange encounters in her free time. *Dancerbabe* started the story, but in her first post, she invited other students to add to the story. This started in September and remained popular throughout the course of the study. Whereas some stories were never posted on by anyone besides the author, students posted on this wiki page 42 times.

Though this story received ample attention, only nine students contributed to it. Of those, six people wrote 37 of the entries. It turns out these prolific writers were all in the same class period and were friends. The other five posts were from three students that all shared another class period. It may be that the story's success was not completely based on the students' collaboration in an online environment. Instead, it seems likely that the students' offline world influenced their sustained interest in the story, and ultimately the Discourse of the class wiki.

Poetry. Like the fictional stories students posted on the wiki, several students posted original poems on new wiki pages so that other students could read them and comment on them. Of the six poems students posted, four received feedback. *Drhook* posted a rap titled "chicken drumsticks!!!!!!!!" The middle five lines of this nonsensical poem read, "explosion everywere all over my Saran wrap heart/and it hurt like heck, theres a fish named Beck/on my teachers board with a ambilical chord/but its a fish./this has nothing to do with chicken drum sticks!!!" (Original, Week 12). Unlike others, this poem pulled the classroom Discourse into the wiki Discourse. My students had drawn a picture of a fish with an umbilical cord on my white board and named it Beck. *Drhook* found an image of a similar fish and a possum online and posted them on the wiki as illustrations for his rap. That made his the only illustrated poem on the wiki. After posting this illustrated rap, multiple students comment on it. *Ahriahikari* stated, "Wow you guys. That was weird and disturbing. Good luck with your rapping career" (Comment, Week 12). *Reddevil13*, followed *ahriahikari*'s commentary by calling the rap "crap" (Comment, Week 12). Students did not appreciated *drhook*'s work, and they were willing to share that opinion.

While students were quick to express dislike of the rap "chicken drumsticks!!!!!!!!," they were equally quick to praise the other poems on the wiki. *Love2write*, the same student who posted two stories that received little commentary, posted a poem titled "Defying Gravity." On

this poem she received eight comments and posted four comments of her own in response. Some of the comments were fairly simple expressions of satisfaction with the poem. *Cloud92* said, “i love that poem its AMAZING!!!” (Comment, Week 3). Both *reddevil13* and *incakola4* suggested a career in poetry. However, *love2write* responded, “Haha. No I like it to pass the time, but my heart lies with Fictional Fantasy! But I have a poetry book I write in for fun!!!” (Comment, Week 3). Ironically, while *love2write* preferred writing narratives, her poetry attracted more attention on the wiki. This could have been due to time constraints—it took a lot less time to read her poetry than her stories.

Poetry garnered general praise, yet it also was an impetus for rich conversation. Between the praise students offered *love2write* for “Defying Gravity,” students also discussed several other topics. The concept behind the poem was a desire to fly, and three comments reflected this thread. *Rook56* said, “I wish i could fly too. I’d go high over the earth and watch all the people move about with their day” (Comment, Week 6). At the same time, the conversation branched out to discuss the song “Defying Gravity.” *Aziza* started the branch by asking, “Have you ever heard the song Defying Gravity? It is a song from the broadway musical WICKED! it dosen’t really go with your poem but ...” (Comment, Week 3). Students answered *aziza*’s question about the song “Defying Gravity” while still continuing to discuss the *love2write*’s poem, “Defying Gravity.” The conversation wandered considerably, but the uniting thread, or anchor, for the conversation was *love2write’s* poem. In the wiki’s Discourse, lengthy narratives did not stimulate extended conversations. However, the comments poetry wiki pages demonstrate that students could use narratives as a springboard for rich discussions.

Personal narratives. While fictional narratives and poetry were typically used to start conversations, students more commonly used personal narratives to contribute to a conversation.

On a page titled “fishy fishy” a student discussed fishing versus pet fish. After reading the page, *rook56* contributed to the conversation by sharing a story from his life. He said,

> Once i had a fish that i forgot to feed (i was three). The fish ended up eating its mate, and when we put a Beta fish in the tank with the fish you would have never guessed what would have happened. The fish ate the Beta... This fish was like a kissy fish or something....More like a kiss of death if you ask me. (Comment, Week 17)

When *sandybird1* read the *rook56*’s story, it inspired him to contribute one of his own: “My sister had a goldfish and a Beta. she accidentally left them in her car overnight in peanut butter tubs overnight and their water froze. The Beta died, but the 35 cent goldfish revived” (Comment, Week 18). In these comments, students willingly shared their offline lives with the community of the class wiki. Other students then read them in the context of a discussion and used those ideas to further the dialogue.

In summary, as a written device, narratives included fictional stories, personal narratives, and poetry. Students primarily used narratives to begin new wiki pages. However, students also used this device to share part of their lives in the context of a conversation on the wiki. Students’ willingness to voluntarily share their narratives suggests that students were comfortable enough with the Discourse of the wiki to share personal work.

Humor. Humor as a device highlighted one constraint of the wiki’s Discourse. In a three dimensional world, humor is often dependent on the tone of voice or body language of the speaker. Students did not have access to that element of the offline world, so they made adaptations online.

Electronic jargon. Frequently, students accommodated for not having access to the three-dimensional world by using specific electronic jargon. Frequently this jargon included series of letters intended to simulate laughing. For example, after a sarcastic comment, *vsoccer23* said, “haha syke!” (Comment, Week 3). In another instance, a student posted a comic on the wiki,

harleychick said, “like oh my gosh ahhahaha that’s like sooo silly!” (Comment, Week 14). Although these two students used different combinations of letters, both were intended to phonetically produce a laughing sound.

On other occasions, the electronic jargon students used to indicate humor contained abbreviations that have become common online vernacular. At one point *incakola4* made a joke that would not have been clear except she included “JK” (Comment, Week 13) after her statement. JK translates to “just kidding.” Likewise, *dancerbabe* wanted to signify that a playful debate on the wiki made her laugh, so she typed, “LOL!” (Comment, Week 5) LOL translates to laugh out loud. By inserting this electronic jargon, students added a two dimensional accommodation for tone of voice that allowed them to express humor in a Discourse where students cannot hear or see each other.

Comics. Another way in which students employed humor was by finding comics on the internet and uploading the images onto the wiki. *Memewe* maintained two wiki pages dedicated to comics: “life funnys” and “Weekly Comics.” Of the 11 comics *memewe* posted on these two pages, six were Garfield comics. On the “Weekly Comics” page, *memewe* posted a cartoon strip of Calvin zipping Garfield into an egg costume. Three frames later, Garfield appears to be calling to birds while Calvin wears an upset face. Only one student, reddevil13, responded to the cartoon. He said, i love garfield hes the best so is calvin” (Comment, Week 14). Although *memewe* continued adding images to the wiki page, no one left more comments. The lack of comments on this frequently updated page indicates that even if students did read the comics, they did not respond to them.

Although *memewe* posted fewer images on his page “life funnys,” the ones he posted there generated more conversation. On the day he created the page, *memewe* posted a comic that

depicted one turkey teaching other turkeys how to stuff a human. Students responded almost instantly. *Sandybird1* complained, "#1 is gross" (Comment, Week 12). *Goloms* countered with, "its kinda funny" (Comment, Week 12). *Makitah1993* added, "what the heckk!!!!!!!!!" (Comment, Week 12). *Sandybird1* and *makitah1993* did not like the image, so they stated their opinions but did not do more. However, within five hours of the *memewe* posting the comic, another student deleted it. After that, the discussion on the turkey comic was tabled, but students continued to discuss other comics posted on "life funnys." It seems that once students' attention was drawn to the "life funnys" wiki page, they continued to visit it.

Jokes. Students also told both direct and some indirect jokes on the wiki. One wiki page was titled "Funny little kid jokes!!!" On this page students posted direct jokes. *Softball3* started the wiki page by posting a joke from her younger cousin, "what do skeletons eat for dinner?... Spookghetti!!" (Comment, Week 11) Since the joke was already answered, there was not much opportunity for students to comment specifically on the joke. That meant that comments just contained other jokes. For example, *rook56* contributed, "In honor of the holidays. What do you call a sad cranberry..... A BLUEBERRY!!!!" (Comment, Week 14). Through direct jokes, students contributed to a discussion thread, but they did not carry on a back and forth conversation.

Other pages were not specifically directed at joking, but still contained jokes. *Orpheus* created a page with a riddle on it. After a student solved the riddle, *orpheus* decided to give the winner a prize. He said, "YOU WIN ONE MILLION.... um.... HYDROGEN ATOMS!!! (Take a breath to claim you prize)" (Comment, Week 7). *Orpheus* used humor to give a gift in an online world where he could not present a traditional three-dimensional prize but he could make

someone laugh. Like the direct jokes students posted, indirect jokes were used as a means to create humor.

Humor, then, was a written device that highlighted unique adaptations students had to make to be able to participate in a two-dimensional Discourse. Students did not have access to tone of voice and body language to identify their language as humorous, so they typically used electronic jargon and images to express humor in the Discourse of the wiki.

Praise and insult. Two prominent devices students used to represent themselves to others on the wiki were praise and insults. Through these written devices, students acknowledged their personal preferences.

In total there were 52 instances of praise. Not one of these instances of praise included a specific reason for the complement. Instead, students used general terms. For example, *reddevil13* wrote a poem, "Dan the Man." After reading the poem, *ahriahikari* told *reddevil13*, "Wow very clever. Keep up the good work! ^_^" (Comment, Week 12). Similarly, *ahriahikari* recognized a piece that she appreciated, but did not pinpoint the reasoning behind her satisfaction. In another instance, *memewe* posted a picture of an airplane with a painting of a Santa flattened on the nose of the airplane and gifts trailing the sides of the airplane as if Santa had been hit. *Sandybird1* responded, "I like the flatta santa :)" (Comment, Week 18). In both instances, the students recognized something that appealed to them, but did not express why it pleased them. This was the case in every instance of praise.

In contrast to the 54 instances of praise on the wiki, insults surfaced only occasionally. In total there were only 15 insults, and like the compliments students offered, these insults were also not specific. For example, when *drhook* posted a rap that *ahriahikari* did not like, *ahriahkari*

stated, “That was weird and disturbing” (Comment, Week 12). In her simple complaint about the rap, she never articulated what, in her opinion, made the rap weird or disturbing.

Although students were not specific with their insults, those who chose to insult other students and their work were certainly creative. After *drhook*’s rap piece had been posted, *reddevil13* stated, “that was not so good and rap+c equals crap so i don’t recomend you go into it” (Comment, Week 12). Here he played on the spelling of words to express his insult of the piece. In a separate post, *pgub99* attempted to avoid using the word “God” in his insult. He told another student, “u are a re-tard good ghandi” (Comment, Week 18). While the insults were not specific, they indicated students’ ability to use creative word choice when they so desired.

Complaint. Complaint was another device, somewhat related to insult, that students used to engage in the Discourse of the wiki. Students complained on the wiki a total of 25 times. Some complaints were negative sentiment about assignments. For example, when I assigned students the responsibility of entering a persuasive essay contest, they felt comfortable expressing their dissatisfaction for the assignment. *Greenmarker44* was the first to complain when he said, “ewwwwwwwww i hate essays” (Comment, Week 11). *Harrypotter* concurred by stating, “ew. i haaate these. soooo much” (Comment, Week 16). Other students were more articulate, but stated the same idea. For example, *love2write* complained, “I would like to second that!!!!!! I am so not excited for this!” (Comment, Week 11). One of the things the students’ willingness to complain about an assignment on the wiki indicated was that they did not expect negative retributions from me, as the teacher, for expressing their opinion.

While some complaints about assignments were expressions of general dissatisfaction, most complaints articulated the source of the grievance. On multiple occasions, students complained about the material on the wiki itself. For example, *Relaji* noticed that I did not use

her groups' work as an example on the wiki and said, ":(Aw! My group's isn't up there" (Comment, Week 1). Afterward, she came to me and asked me to scan her group's work and post it on the wiki. On another occasion *rook56* became frustrated with a fellow student who posted comments about a feisty banana on almost every voluntary wiki page. *Rook56* finally said, "Bananas are to eat, not throw around on random web-pages. Please, will you stop writing about the 'fieasty banana'? Just one page free from the fruit would be nice. Thank you" (Comment, Week 14). *Rook56*'s use of censorship was reflective of personal preferences against material that he deemed offensive.

One wiki page was dedicated fully to complaints. Less than a month into the school year, *pglax62* started a wiki page titled "How many people are already bored of school and hate school." This page became host to varied complaints about school. For the most part, students were able, at least partially, to articulate their complaints. For example, *runguy* stated, "Hey, the social stuff is fun. Work is lame" (Comment, Week 5). *Lucazzo2* had a different reason for disliking school; he said, "I hate how school it starts so early and ends 30 minutes laiter than the junior high, thats retarded we should be able to get out early-er! ha" (Comment, Week 5). In the end, multiple students started complaining about all the complaints. *Relaji* stated, "How do you people expect to get through the next two years of school thinking like that? Every single day will drag on and on if you simply look at the clock…. Stupidity is a crime. And you'll pay for it" (Comment, Week 17). While this wiki page did not yield any solutions for students' grievances, it gave them a forum where they could express their opinions.

Encouragement. While some students used complaints to express their grievances, other students chose to be more positive on the wiki. A device students used in the Discourse of the wiki was encouragement. In using this device, students attempted to motivate other wiki

members to act. Encouragement fell into two categories: encouragement to write and encouragement for life.

When encouraging fellow students to write, students used gentle prodding. For example, after *incakola4* read and proofread *love2write*'s story, *incakola4* told *love2write*, "I finished your story and I must say I enjoyed it. At the end I was very bummed. You should have kept going." (Comment, Week 13). Even though this encouragement was very direct, it did not inspire *love2write* to continue her story, so it sat untouched on the wiki.

In another instance, *ahriahikari* wanted to start a role playing game called "Solve it yourself RPG." The purpose of this wiki page was for each student to take a different role in a story and write that character's involvement in the plot. *Ahriahikari* created the wiki page and then offered several encouraging comments on the page. For example, she thought images would be useful in helping students identify each other's characters, so she offered assistance to students who did not know how to upload and post images. *Ahriahikari* said, "Questions on how to post pictures just ask me and I'll tell you. I want to be as helpful as possible guys. ^_^" (Comment, Week 12). After five posts encouraging her peers to engage in her story, no one responded, and eventually *Ahriahikari* stopped posting on that wiki page. Because students' encouragements to write asked other students to produce something to be submitted to the view of the other wiki users, so there was potential to see the impact of that form of encouragement on the wiki. On the other hand, it was difficult to analyze the impact when students encouraged one another for life.

Students' encouragements to each other extended to tasks outside the Discourse of the wiki. Most of the time, this advice was about living life to the fullest. On a page where students

were complaining about school, *giggles28* said, “oh people live in the moment!!” (Comment, Week 3). Three months later, *Relaji* seconded *giggles28*’s opinion:

> Honestly. How do you people expect to get through the next two years of school thinking like that? Every single day will drag on and on if you simply look at the clock. You can either sit there and pout (Which, sadly, many of you seem partial to), or you could actualy do something with your life….Join a club. Get involved. Actualy TRY to enjoy the classes you are in. It’s not that hard. (Comment, Week 17)

While *Relaji* seconded giggles28’s comment with one of her own, there is no way to tell if the comments encouraged any students because the wiki offers no record of the impact on their offline lives. Regardless of the application of any encouragement for life given on the wiki in students’ offline lives, these encouragements stand as a notable device illustrating the intersection of students online and offline lives.

Students used encouragement as a way to motivate their fellow wiki members. When they used encouragement, they represented themselves as certain kinds of people and hoped to prompt other students to also assume that portion of their identity.

Vandalism. As a device for representing the students’ online identity, vandalism was significant simply because it was nearly non-existent in the Discourse of the class wiki. In the entirety of the wiki, only two cases of vandalism exist. In one case, *Bobthetaxidriver* changed the title “Holocaust Remembrance Project” to “Hoocaust Remembrance Project” (Edit, Week 17). The next day *ahriahikari* noticed the change and reversed it. The dispatch with which the vandalism was reversed reveals something of what was valued within the Discourse of the wiki. As soon as a problem arose, a student took the initiative to fix it, and no one countered by reposting the vandal’s words. Students were invested enough in the Discourse of the wiki to not destroy what other students posted.

In the only other case of vandalism, *softball7820* deleted the word “Aren’t” from the question “Aren’t you so hungry?” and replaced the word with a link to the wiki page “Synthesis Question 4” (Edit, Week 12). She corrected the change within eight minutes. In the meantime, she changed the formatting on the wiki page “Xbox Gamertags.” The speed of the correction and her activities in the interim suggested that *softball7820* really was not vandalizing the wiki. Instead, it seems likely that she made changes with the intent of learning how to use advanced editing features, and she reversed her changes once she learned.

The scarcity of vandalism on the class wiki, and the fact that in both instances, the changes were corrected almost immediately, indicates that students took a vested interested in the wiki. Although the wiki provided ample opportunity to destroy each other’s work, students chose not to.

Defiance. Like vandalism, defiance was a device rarely used with the Discourse of the wiki. When students used defiance, they openly broke class wiki rules and guidelines. In all six cases of defiance on the wiki, students revealed their offline identity or the offline identity of a peer. For example, *carrottlover62* created a wiki page titled “Megan (pseudonym) is amazing!” This post alone did not reveal anyone’s offline identity. However, in a later wiki post, *love2write* indicated that she was Megan, thereby confirming the tie between her offline identity and her online identity. After the wiki page had been up three weeks, *love2write* added another comment: “Aren’t we not supposed to know who each other are on here... OOPS!” (Comment, Week 5). *Love2write*’s comment indicates that she and *carrottlover62* had chosen to share their wiki names with one another. In this case, along with the other cases of defiance on the wiki, students were not careful and accidentally revealed the connection between their online and offline

identities on the wiki. The scarcity of defiance on the wiki is an indication that students respected the norms of the Discourse and wanted to protect their offline identities.

Revision. Making revisions was a device I, as the teacher, used with frequency. Most of my revisions were formatting changes. I was concerned with the visual appeal of my work. I also made conventional changes in my revisions. For example, I noticed that I misspelled "Rememberance" and "Wiriting" on an assignment and corrected the spelling (Edit, Week 11). My use of revision as a device highlights the fact that I was not a real member of the Discourse. My revisions were different from the revisions of the students. It seems the students were not as concerned with the fine details that I felt were so important in my posts.

Students also used revisions, and these revisions did include conventional changes, but these were often in response to requests for assistance from other students. After posting her story "A Dark Romance," *love2write* admitted, "I know there are a zillion typos, so if you would please try and fix them... that would be great!" (Comment, Week 4). In five subsequent editing sessions over four days, *incakola4* corrected all of the typos. In another case, when *shea54* posted a story titled "The Life That I Thought I Had Escaped," it was *love2write*'s turn to proofread. Instead of correcting the typos, *love2write* gave *shea54* a list of nine mistakes. For example, one item on the list read, "9 par, 1 line, you have numer and it should be number" (Comment, Week 4). *Shea54* used the list to make the changes in her story so that it adhered to standard conventions.

While students made revisions to conventions, they failed to make many other revisions in their writing. Instead, when students revised their already existing stories, it was to expand them. For example, over the period of a week and a half, *Relaji* revised her story "Under the High Talon." In the course of this time, she added eleven paragraphs to the story. She also

revised three paragraphs to make them longer. While *Relaji*'s changes extended her story, they did not change the plot, characters, setting, or any other story elements. *Shea54* did a similar thing with her story "The Life That I Thought I Had Escaped." In one editing session, *shea54* added 26 paragraphs but did not make any revisions to the existing work. *Shea54* said, "When I was typing it up, I actually did a lot of changes from the original story. It's a lot better than the first draft" (Comment, Week 5). Thus, the number of revisions cannot account for any work *shea54* did offline before posting her story. However, the fact that the first parts of both *Relaji*'s and *shea54*'s stories did not change when the latter parts were added indicated that they did not make any major revisions after posting work to the wiki.

By way of contrast, *Sandybird1*'s writing on "The page of random quotes" was an excellent example of revision that showed a change in his thought pattern. First *sandybird1* posted a question and answer on a new wiki page titled "The page of random quotes." He asked, "Does anybody have any random quotes, last words, or stuff like that. it can be funny too. A general's last words were "Courage, men! They couldn't hit us with a..."" (Original, Week 12). Most wiki pages that students posted followed a pattern that was established (but not specifically defined) on other wiki pages. That is, most wiki pages contained a question, posed in the text section of the page, and peer responses, entered in the comment section of the page. Within three minutes, *sandybird1* realized his new wiki page did not follow the pattern, and he revised the question and deleted the answer. The text of the wiki page then read as follows (with the strikethroughs indicating deleted text): "Does anybody have any random quotes, last words, or stuff like that. it can be funny too. ~~A general's last words were "Courage, men! They couldn't hit us with a..."~~ Jokes work too." (Edit, Week 12). Finally, *sandybird1* placed his original joke in a comment. Other students then followed his example and posted responses in the comments

section. This revision was crucial because it demonstrated that the Discourse had unwritten norms that *sandybird1* understood, and he revised his work to fit them.

Contemplation. In the Discourse of the wiki, students used contemplation to share their thoughtful observations with their peers. Many students were contemplative on the wiki because they were responding to a class assignment. For example, I asked students to respond to the following question in a well developed paragraph. "How do the characters in *Night* adapt to their changing circumstances? (Focus on multiple characters, not just Eliezer.) Why do they change? Are the changes for the better or the worse?" (Original, Week 5). Students' responses to my questions varied, but the nature of the assignment required them to share their thoughts.

Often, students placed markers before the portions of their paragraph responses to signify that they were being contemplative. For example, *dancerbabe* said,

> I also believe everyone has been changing for the worst. They are in such harsh conditions, they are being treated so cruely, and they have no hope, and it definitly shows in their attitudes and countanance. I think the biggest instigator of the change is the cruelty of the concentration camps…. I think that is really what causes the change and causes them to become so harsh and unfeeling. (Comment, Week 5)

The words "I think" and "I believe" acted as *dancerbabe*'s marker that these were her personal thoughts.

The next day, *kirapuppy712* read answers that other students had already posted in response to the assignment. Then she added,

> I agree that the concentration camps were horrible, and what it did to people was horrible. However, I think that there was some good that managed to shine through despite it all…. Though the things that the concentration camp did to him were awful, and were obviously still vivid enough years later to write a book, he had something good and beautiful inside him when he finished, still believed that there was something worth living for. If he had not believed that there was something worth holding on to, he wouldn't be alive today. I think that that is a huge part of this story; even though the world was an endless night, there still had to be at least one star, to take the worst of times, and come through it all, still feeling human. (Comment, Week 5).

For *kirapuppy712*, the works “I agree” and “I think” were sprinkled throughout her response. Like the phrases that *love2write* employed, theses phrases acted as *kirapuppy712*’s marker to indicate when she was sharing personal thoughts.

Some students were willing to be contemplative even when it was not required by an assignment. Frequently, students expressed their thoughts in the form of questions. Three of the poems on the wiki did that. *Reddevil13* questioned, “When will it end/This race to spend/Less of our time on foot” (Original, Week 9). *Drhook* wondered, “is it to early to say i love you?/only if when you say it it’s true/i am not conserned on what to do/but i need to say i love you to” (Original, Week17). Lastly, love2write asked, “I wonder what it would be like to fly?” (Comment, Week 3). By posting their thoughts as questions, these students could shared a portion of their introspection with the Discourse of the wiki without making it a definitive statement. Instead, phrasing thoughts as questions reflected the fact that students were still developing their thoughts and were open to other’s opinions.

When students posted their contemplation on the wiki, they rarely received feedback on it. Members of the wiki commented on all three of the previously mentioned poems, but the comments were about the quality of the poems or students approval of the poems. None of the comments about these poems responded to students’ contemplation.

Occasionally students posted contemplative thoughts in other areas of the wiki. For example, *sandybird1* added “pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanokoniosis” (Comment, Week 7) to the “Cool words” wiki page. Four minutes later he added, “I wonder if the doctors abbreviate the lung disease” (Comment, Week 7). *Sandybird1’*s contemplation could have been answered with a simple yes or no, but nobody answered it. It may be that no student knew the answer to his question, or it may be that they just chose not to answer it. However, this question

is reflective of most of the thoughts students shared on the wiki. While students shared them, other students did not respond to them.

Request and assistance. Students used requests and assistance as written devices on the wiki. Students used these devices to represent their willingness to receive and give help.

Oftentimes, requests and assistance were paired together within conversations on the wiki pages. Sometimes these requests were due to assignments. For example, after I, as the teacher, posted information to help students in a writing assignment, *ahriahikari* posted, "Ms. McCollum the .pfd files aren't working..." (Comment, Week 19). When I found her request three days later, I responded,

> I checked the .pdf files on my computer, and they were working. Try again. You may need to update Adobe Reader on your computer. Also, in the top right hand corner of this page, there is a link titled "Pages & Files." You should be able to access the files from there. Please email me…if that doesn't work. :) (Comment, Week 19)

Ahriahikari's was posted during a school vacation. However, because of the wiki I was able to provide assistance despite not being able to talk to her face to face.

Ahriahikari's request was atypical because it was directed at me. Most students' requests were directed toward their peers. For example, *Relaji* started a role playing story that *austivol* wanted to join, but he did not know how to do so. On the story's page, he asked, "I would like to do a intro, but I'm not exactly sure what would be needed/ preferred in it. I've never really done an RP before, but a plain fact by fact list is too boring for me" (Comment, Week 9). A week later *Relaji* left detailed instructions in another comment that explained that "Intros are done just like how you'd start a book" (Comment, Week 10). The next month *austivol* joined the story, yet he ended up ignoring *Relaji*'s assistance and doing a list after all. *Relaji* had offered useful assistance, but *austivol* decided to conform to the norms of the Discourse and make his introduction a list like all of the other participants had done.

While most cases of requests and assistance were paired, that was not always the case. For example, after *shea54* received feedback on a story and expanded it, she wrote: “I have added more. Comments would be wonderful to go off of! Thank you for the comments so far! :D” (Comment, Week 7). This request was never answered, and that was not unusual for the Discourse of the wiki. While most requests were answered by other wiki members, narratives received few, if any, comments even when students asked for them.

Just as some requests stood alone, occasionally students posted information to assist other wiki members even if it was not requested. For example, on the “Persuasive Essay Contests” wiki page, *love2write* posted a persuasive essay outline. Underneath the outline she explained her reasoning: “I don’t know if this will help anyone, but it helped me so yeah! :D” (Comment, Week 16). Although this assistance was unbidden, it was something that could help all of the members of the Discourse of the wiki.

Requests and assistance were important written devices in the Discourse of the wiki. Students were willing to ask for help, and others were willing to provide it. That suggests that the members of the Discourse felt a sense of community.

Validation. Students employed validation as a written device to confirm other students’ previous activities. As a written device, validation was important in building the Discourse on the wiki because it afforded students the opportunity to connect on shared ideas.

On voluntary wiki pages students were animated when they validated one another. Often students used repetition to emphasize their validation. For example, *love2write* included extra punctuation, “I would like to second that!!!!!!” (Comment, Week 11). *Austivol* repeated his introductory work to stress his opinion: “True true, *shamy11*. I agree.” (Comment, Week 11). Students repetition stressed their agreement with peers in the Discourse of the wiki.

Typically, students used informal language to connect with their peers while validating them on voluntary wiki pages. For example, after reading *vikings25*'s longing for summer vacation, *pglax64* offered, "Ya no kidding" (Comment, Week 3). *Cloud92* read about *animalgirl5183*'s love of pickles and stated, "i so agree with ya *animalgirl5183*!" (Comment, Week 5). When both students validated their peers, it was because they were connecting on a shared idea. Thus, they used informal language that was typical in adolescents' vocabulary. Students' language in these examples of validation an acknowledgement of a connection between wiki members.

Unlike the informal language students employed on voluntary wiki pages, students used stilted validations on assignments. Whenever I posted discussion questions on the class wiki, I asked students to refer to another student's response to the question or a quote from the literature to back their answer. Oftentimes, instead of fulfilling that request completely, students just superficially validated one another's work. For example, in a discussion of the memoir *Night*, *kirapuppy712* said, "I agree with *runguy"* (Comment, Week 6), and then wrote her own ideas. *Tennisluvr* did not even validate one student in particular. He simply said, "I agree with what most people have said" (Comment, Week 6). With both students, as well as most students on the wiki, their validation during responses to assignments suggests that they were trying to fulfill an assignment more than confirm other students' ideas.

Whether students' validation was voluntary or part of an assignment, they used it to make connections to other members of the wiki. In that manner, they expressed themselves as certain types of people and connected with others they felt were of similar types of people.

Censorship. Students used censorship as a written device to represent themselves as certain types of people. The censorship students employed was an acknowledgment of material that was personally offensive.

Some of the censorship students employed was preemptive. For example, when *dancerbabe* created an add-on story, her instructions included, “No innapropriate stuff please! That is not cool!” (Original, Week 3). Likewise, *shamy11* posted a poem on a wiki page he had previously started. A month later he added the following caveat under the poem, “Hey guys! feel free to make any comments you want unless your going to swear at me and be evil” (Edit, Week 9). Both of these wiki users indicated that they did not trust their peers to post information that they deemed appropriate. Thus, they issued censorship warnings in hopes that other posts on their pages would meet their approval and standards.

In other cases, students censored other students because they had already posted information that they deemed inappropriate. For example, after multiple students had issued insults on the “life funnys” wiki page, *1n5alpha2* wrote, “Don’t be jerks. If you don’t have anything nice to say, DON’T POST!!!!!!!” (Comment, Week 13). Likewise, when two students started posting back and forth insults on “The page of random quotes,” *sandybird1* responded, “hey! none of that!” (Comment, Week 18). Both of these students did not appreciate other students posting insults, so they used censorship to express their opinions.

The final way students used censorship on the wiki reflected student’s personal preferences. A student decided to post information about a feisty banana on every wiki page. That bothered *rook56,* so he exclaimed, “Bananas are to eat, not throw around on random web-pages. Please, will you stop writing about the “fieasty banana”? Just one page free from the fruit would be nice. Thank you.” (Comment, Week 14). The student posting about the feisty banana

was not doing anything typically deemed offensive. Thus, *rook56*'s use of censorship was reflective of personal preferences.

Censorship was used infrequently. However, students attempted to impose their value systems and preferences, parts of their identities, on the Discourse of the wiki when they did use this written device.

Boast. Boasting as a device was rarely used in the Discourse of the wiki. Most often the boasts were playful in nature. Fore example, on a wiki page titled "Pinatas are Amazing," students were talking about breaking open piñatas and eating all the candy. *Sandybird1* posted two comments within seconds of one another: "i win!" (Comment, Week 7) and "I beat the pin~ata to a pulp" (Comment, Week 7). Because the students were communicating in a two dimensional world, there was no way for anyone to actually win when smashing a piñata. However, by boasting, *sandybird1* declared himself a winner, and no one took issue with his claim. In another instance, students were discussing essay contests. During the conversation, *grass* wrote, "ye cuz im gonna win me some monays" (Comment, Week 14). *Grass* had no way of knowing whether he would win one of the essay contests, but he took the opportunity to boast. Both of these students were playful in their boasting, and none of the students on the wiki used this device in seriousness.

Irrelevance. Occasionally, students posted irrelevant information on a wiki page that did not connect to the other information on the page. For example, multiple students posted random comments on the "Persuasive Essay Contests" wiki page. *Newsman* wrote, "I like having biscuts with essays" (Comment, Week 11). Later, *orpheus* posted, "marmalade" (Comment, Week 14), and *runguy* posted, "orange juice" (Comment, 14). Newsman's comment was completely irrelevant because it did not connect to anything posted on the page. While the other posts were

irrelevant in the context of the conversation about essay contests, they could have connected to *newsman*'s post since they did name foods served with biscuits.

Other irrelevant posts on the wiki were similar to these three, yet they didn't always come in sets. For example, on the "Persuasive Essay Contests" wiki page, *wildchild* posted, "you should all join the chess club" (Comment, Week 14). There was no discussion of chess or clubs on this wiki page, and after wildchild posted her comment, no other student responded to it. This was typical of irrelevant comments. The writing on the wiki rarely reveals students' logic behind their choice to post irrelevant information because the nature of the device is that there are no connections.

Students, as members of a community of practice, used a wide range of written devices on the wiki. Each student selected different devices to use depending on the wiki page where he or she was posting information. This is because the device served a distinct purpose. By implementing written devices as tools on the wiki, individuals represented themselves as certain kinds of people.

Positions within the Wiki

Within the Discourse of the wiki, students occupied various positions in relation to the others in the community. Some students enacted similar positions every time they posted material on the wiki. However, the majority of the students shifted among several positions as they posted information, enacting the Discourse of the class wiki. In the following section, the positions students enacted are reported in groups based on interactions between positions. For example, leaders, followers, and outsiders were relational to one another. Similarly, antagonists and motivators were positioned in opposite ways.

Table 2 lists the percentage of students, in order of frequency, who enacted a position at least once. It also indicates the frequencies with which students enacted positions on the wiki. It was impossible to determine the percentage of students who enacted one of the roles discovered during data analysis—that of lurker. By definition, a lurker is one who read the posts of others, but chooses not to contribute to the wiki, leaving no evidence of his or her presence on the wiki. Thus, information on percentage of students enacting that role is not reflected in the table.

Table 2

Percentage and Frequency of Students Enacting Identified Positions Within the Wiki

Position	Percentage	Frequency
Bystander	98.10	103
Follower	43.30	46
Comedian	20.00	21
Leader	15.24	16
Antagonist	12.38	13
Outsider	10.48	11
Motivator	9.52	10
Aspiring Author	5.71	6

Note. The frequency indicated the number of students, of the 105 in the study, who enacted the given positions.

Leader. Leaders shaped the direction of the wiki by either starting conversations or providing direction to conversations initiated by others. Of the wiki participants, 15.24% were positioned as leaders at least once.

Leaders often took the initiative to start new wiki pages. These wiki pages then provided a forum for conversation as other students took up the topic, adding comments in response to the leader's question. Frequently, the leader continued as a participant in the conversation as well.

A popular wiki page was “The Coolest Add-on Story In The World.” Two weeks into the school year, *dancerbabe* started the page as a place for students to collaborate on a silly story. Her initial directions for the story were simple: “First of all, everyone add one sentence or two onto the story. No innapropriate stuff please! That is not cool! We want to see how long we can keep it going. It will be freaking awesome!!! :D” (Original, Week 3). After her initial post, *dancerbabe* quickly realized that she needed to provide more instructions and in a post just one minute later added, “Change colors every time a new person writes” (Edit, Week 3) Within the hour, students started adding to the story a couple of sentences at a time. Although *dancerbabe* contributed to the story as well, she asserted her position as leader by modifying the instructions as necessary.

Some wiki members were positioned as leaders when they created a wiki page, yet others directed an existing wiki page’s conversation down a new path. *Orpheus* initiated a new wiki page titled “Who’s Hungry, and What Are You Hungry For.” S*hamy11* posted a comment about muffins and cupcakes on the wiki page. He said, “i want revenge on all the muffins that think their cupcakes. Because we all know that muffins are just ugly cupcakes” (Comment, Week 3). *Shamy11’*s comment changed the direction of the conversation. As students responded to his assertion, they positioned him as a leader in the discussion.

Similarly, *cerealman* changed the direction of a conversation. When questioning the appropriateness of an offensive cartoon *memewe* had posted, *cerealman* stated, “what in the heck is this?” (Comment, Week 12). Other students added to *cerealman*’s cry of outrage, and eventually one student deleted the cartoon. By sharing his opinion, *cerealman* became a leader of students’ revolt against explicit cartoons on the wiki. In both instances, students did not have to

initiate conversations to be leaders. They could enact the position of a leader in the Discourse by shaping the direction of already existing conversations.

Follower. While leaders shaped the direction of the conversations, followers were students who posted on the wiki, but they typically agreed with the general consensus of whatever was being posted by others. Even though followers were a contributing tie in the conversations in the Discourse, they responded without directing the flow of the conversation. Of the wiki participants, 43.3% acted as a follower at some time or another.

Followers reflected the prevailing sentiment of the conversations they entered. When the tone of a conversation on a wiki page was positive, followers were positive as well. *Cloud92* exemplified this follower characteristic. At the start of the school year, I posted advice from former students. Most current students mentioned that they were looking forward to my class after reading the advice, and *cloud92* was no different. She wrote, “wow im super excited for english this year now! i just konw im going to love it!” (Comment, Week 2). Similarly, when students were discussing their enjoyment of songs from the Broadway musical *Wicked*, *cloud92* concurred, “i have heard that song! i love it! i also love wicked! its so WICKED!” (Comment, Week 3). *Cloud92* repeated this pattern in numerous conversations on the wiki, and all of her comments were consistently in step with the content and tone of other students’ posts. As a follower, she was an active member of the Discourse community, but her comments simply echoed or reaffirmed what other students already said.

When students were positioned as followers in the Discourse of the wiki, they made what may be considered worthwhile contributions to conversations in that they were positive and encouraging. However, those contributions did not shape the direction of the conversation. One popular wiki page was titled “Cool Emodicons.” An emoticon is a series of characters used to

represent objects, typically faces, online. After viewing several students' emoticons, *watermelonluvr526* contributed one of her own to the conversation: "mustache!!! :{ hehe" (Comment, Week 5). Later, *softball7820* decided to post several of her own. She added, ":) :D :] ;) :{ :/ :P :S" (Comment, 12). *Softball7820* had not completely examined what was already posted because she added the emoticon for a mustached face ":{" that *watermelonluvr526* posted. In both instances, the students added to a growing list of emoticons, but they did not change the direction of the conversation. They assumed the easy position of a follower and posted what everyone else was posting.

Outsider. Sometimes students participated in the wiki but were positioned by others as outsiders, a position they did not set out to occupy. Outsiders were students who were actively involved in the wiki, but they did not seem to belong when they participated in conversations. Sometimes outsiders' contributions were off topic and sometimes other wiki members did not pick up on the comments or posts of an outsider. Of the wiki participants, 10.48% were outsiders at one point or another.

None of the wiki participants was an outsider all of the time. However, when students were positioned as outsiders, they typically stood out. For example, most of the quotes posted on "The page of random quotes" were lighthearted jokes. *Sandybird1* posted the first quote, "A certain general's last words were 'Courage, men! They couldn't hit us with a...'" (Comment, Week 12). After several similar jovial quotes, *soccerasl2* posted, "Never frown, you never know who is falling in love with your smile!" (Comment, Week 12). Among the other lighthearted quotes and jokes, *soccerasl2*'s quote immediately stood out because of its serious tone.

Another example of positioning as an outsider occurred on the same wiki page. Although students had no sanctioned way of identifying each other's gender, *soccerasl2* was the only

female who had posted on “The page of random quotes” wiki page. Another student implied that *soccerasl2* sounded like a girl and therefore positioned her as an outsider on that page. The wiki page continued with more joking quotes. Eventually *kittykat94*, another female, joined the conversation, this time successfully. Gender, then, was not the real requirement for belonging to the conversation. Rather, it was the joking nature of the quotes students posted that marked the positioning of some as insiders, suggesting that the use of humor was a requirement for acceptance. A*hriahikari* confirmed this when she posted, “‘Love is like friendship in bloom’ ♥ Love this quote!” (Comment, Week 13). The other students ignored her quote and continued joking. In both examples, *soccerasl2* and *ahriahikari* did not conform to the norms of “The page of random quotes,” and were consequently positioned as outsiders on those pages.

Just as *soccerasl2* and *ahriahikari* were outsiders because their contributions did not match the tone of a conversation, other students were outsiders because their contributions to a conversation were out of context. On a page titled “Who’s Hungry, and What Are You Hungry For,” students listed food options and ended up debating the merits of muffins versus cupcakes. In the mist of this discussion, *bigd* stated, “i wish lunch was early” (Comment, Week 5). *Bigd*’s response was not too far off topic. However, he revealed himself as an outsider because he did not mention a food item or vote for either cupcakes or muffins. Therefore, *bigd*’s comment was ignored on a wiki page where the other comments all built upon one another. *Bigd* did not fit in the conversation, so he inadvertently was positioned outside the group.

Leaders, followers, and outsiders are all reflections of students’ positions relative to other members of the Discourse of the wiki. Leaders determined the direction of the conversations on the wiki. In contrast, followers were willing to follow the paths the leaders had already

established. Finally, outsiders may have been trying to enact either of the previous two positions but the nature of their contributions left them out of the mainstream conversation.

Motivator. Motivators were students who encouraged or helped other students on the wiki. Of the wiki participants, 9.53% were positioned as a motivator at some time in the course of the study.

Frequently, students assuming the position of motivator encouraged students when the conversation on a wiki page was negative. For example, just a few weeks into the academic year, students started complaining about school on a wiki page titled "How many people are already bored of school and hate school." When *giggles28* read the wiki page, she attempted to change the tone of the conversation. She posted, "i love school!!! (:" (Comment, Week 3). When students persisted in their negativity, *giggles28* added, "oh people live in the moment!!" (Comment, Week 3). *Giggles28* shunned the position of a follower, and instead attempted to motivate students to enjoy school.

Because of the constraints of the wiki, it was not always possible to see whether students succeeded in motivating one another. However, sometimes students' comments indicated that a motivator made a difference for members of the Discourse of the wiki. For example, when I created a new wiki page with an assignment to enter a persuasive essay contest, multiple students posted comments complaining about how much they hate essays. *Shamy11* responded to their negativity with encouragement. He said, "Aw come on guys just write it up, get the grade, and hope you win the prize, and if you dont oh well life will drag on just the same as it always does" (Comment, Week 11). While *shamy11*'s view of essay writing was far from the ideal a teacher would hope for, his intent was to influence his classmates to adopt a better attitude toward the assignment. *Austivol* posted the next comment: "True true, *shamy11*. I agree" (Comment, Week

11). After *austivol*'s comment, the entire conversation on the wiki page changed. Students started discussing which contests to enter and helping each other with formatting. Eventually students' responses shifted to the point that *pglax64* posted, "I'm probably going to do several just to keep me busy during the winter or at least til winter lacrosse starts. This will just give me something to do" (Comment, Week 12). On the persuasive essay contests wiki page, it was possible to see *shamy11* position himself as a motivator and change other students' outlook on an assignment.

Other motivators were more subtle. Their motivation came in the form of helping other students. For example, *incakola4* proofread a story for *love2write*. In doing so, *incakola4* was offering motivation for *love2write* to finish the story. In another instance, *ahriahikari* started a role playing story and offered, "If you desperately want a picture of your character and can't find it post your description and tell me in () want picture and I'll find a good match" (Comment, Week 12). A*hriahikari*'s offer to help other wiki members may have been the final motivation needed to encourage them to become a part of the role playing story. Ultimately, motivators attempted to be positive forces within the Discourse of the wiki.

Antagonist. While motivators were a positive force in the Discourse, antagonists were students whose posts on the wiki carried a negative tone. Antagonists tended to vandalize wiki pages or insult other wiki users. Of the wiki participants, 12.38% assumed the position of an antagonist at some point in the study.

Some antagonists adopted this position only rarely. Most of them did so because something posted on the wiki by another student bothered them. For example, one student used vulgar language on the wiki. In return, *canfieldf1* insisted, "I do not appreciate the crass language. It is offensive to my culture and religion. I demand a written apology. or verbally if it is more convenient" (Comment, Week 18). *Canfieldf1'*s complaint was well founded because the

other student had used vocabulary not allowed in our school building. However, the nature of *canfieldf1*'s response is confrontational and antagonistic. In a similar instance, a male student insulted another student in a comment on the wiki. *Goloms*, a third, uninvolved party, saw the insults and interjected, "don't be so dumb and get a life" (Comment, Week 12). Instead of attempting to resolve the issue or leave it alone, *goloms* decided to antagonize an antagonist.

At times, students took on the position of antagonist without a clear cause. For example, *thedude* did not typically assume the position of antagonist. However, near the end of the study, *thedude* decided that he did not like the work another student posted on the wiki. He wrote, "OMG holy clich stop being such a poser philosopher" (Comment, Week 18). While *thedude* typically assumed other positions on the wiki, in this one instance he positioned himself as an antagonist.

Some students assumed the position of antagonist in the majority of their voluntary writing. One such student was *pgub99*. The majority of *pgub99*'s posts on the wiki were insults towards other students and their writing. For example, after a student posted an introspective piece about his childhood, *pgub99* responded, "whatever you totally are being a sob. That never happened to you" (Comment, Week 12). Only two minutes after posting this comment, *pgub99* viewed a comic another student posted on the wiki and stated, "how is that funny??????" (Comment, Week 12). It appears *pgub99* was roaming the wiki, jabbing others as he went.

Enacting the position of antagonist was not isolated to one day for *pgub99*. *Pgub99* started a new wikipage titled "AVB." The title was unclear, so *ahriahikari* asked, "What does AVB stand for? I'm confused please explain *pgub99*. :/" (Comment, Week 13). *Pgub99* answered her question, but he insulted her in the process, "Adams Viking Baseball, come on now not that hard" (Comment, Week 18). Later that day, on a separate wiki page, *pgub99* told *makitah1993*,

“u are a re-tard good ghandi” (Comment, Week 18). While not all antagonists on the wiki adopted this position consistently, *pgub99* used it in the majority of his discussions within the Discourse.

Motivators and antagonists assumed opposite positions on the wiki. While both positions were enacted when students wanted to influence another wiki member, motivators sought to lift others while antagonists tore them down.

Comedian. Comedian was another frequent position students enacted as a way of revealing their identity online. Students who positioned themselves as comedians were typically lighthearted and attempted to make other students laugh with their posts. Of the wiki participants, 20% were positioned as a comedian at some point in the study.

Oftentimes, students’ comedy revolved around themselves. For example, *makitah1993* found a wiki page where a student’s offline identity was revealed. She deleted the student’s actual name and inserted an abbreviation of her wikiname so that the wiki page then read, “Maka is amazing that is all i have to say!” (Edit, Week 12). One minute later *makitah1993* added a comment to the wiki page: “Yes i am!” (Comment, Week 12). In this manner, *makitah1993* was able to use the position of comedian to correct the problem on the wiki page and made a joke about the issue at the same time.

On other occasions, students’ acted as comedians by poking fun at other people. *Softball3* decided to start a wiki page titled “Weird Names!” In her first entry on the page *softball3* wrote,

> There is this girl my best friend knows and her name is Tyernin. When i heard that name i about peeed my pants!! Doesn’t it sound like T ur urinin on my boots??? well i added the “on my boots” part but it sound about right. Tyernin- “T ur urinin” on my boots. (Original, Week 14)

By adopting the position of a comedian, *softball3* inspired other students to do likewise. Other students followed *softball3*’s lead and started to add weird names that they had heard at some

point. *1n5alpha2* added, “That is weird. My mom worked for a doctor who named his little girls ORANGEJELLO and LEMONJELLO. THe J makes a soft G sound but its still spells a flavor of Jello” (Comment, Week 17). Unfortunately, in order to enact the position of comedian, students sometimes put other people down.

Several students became comedians when others were complaining on the wiki. On a wiki page where students were talking negatively about school, *wildchild* used sarcasm to make light of the situation. She said, “hey you should all join the chess club! i love school! i wish it was on the weekends to!” (Comment, Week 5). While these statements were most likely not *wildchild*’s honest opinions, they shifted the tone of the conversation. On another wiki page, students were grumbling about the need to write an essay for a contest. *Grass* posted, “essays are great guys i just wanna say that im a fellow american and that essays are the foundation of am” (Comment, Week 14). Grass’s sarcastic comment was a way to admit that he would write an essay and poke fun at the assignment at the same time since one contest was titled “Being an American.” These comedians were able to shift the discussion on their respective wiki pages and make them more lighthearted.

While most students shifted positions and only occasionally were positioned as a comedian, one student clearly positioned himself as a comedian in everything he voluntarily posted. Aside from required assignments, *memewe* always adopted this position. Moreover, the way he adopted it was unique. *Memewe* created two wiki pages dedicated to comics. Then, he learned how to upload images to the wiki and used that skill to post comics on the wiki. Aside from assigned work, *memewe* never wrote a word on the wiki. He let the comics speak for themselves. *Memewe* clearly saw his position on the wiki as a comedian and allowed others to carry on the discussions about the humor he provided.

Students chose diverse means to help them assume their positions as comedians. However, the one thing they all had in common was lighthearted posts that had the potential to make other students laugh.

Aspiring author. The least common position evidenced on the wiki was that of an aspiring author. Aspiring authors were students who published their original stories and poems on the wiki. Of the wiki participants, only 5.7%, or six students, were positioned as aspiring authors. In every case, these six students created new wiki pages to highlight their stories. Some of the aspiring authors asked for feedback on their writing. For example, when *shea54* posted her story "The Life That I Thought I Had Escaped," she explained where she got her inspiration for the story and stated, "Hope you enjoy it and if you have any comments or ideas to make it better or to help it move along more smoothly... That would be fantastic! Thanks!" (Original, Week 3). However, the majority of the aspiring authors just posted their work and let it speak for itself.

Some aspiring authors had an apparent awareness of the positions they enacted in the Discourse of the class wiki. *Love2write*'s wikiname identified her as an aspiring author before she ever posted anything on the wiki. She acknowledged her passion for writing when she created her wikiname, and that carried into the positions she assumed on the wiki. *Love2write* was the most prolific aspiring author on the wiki; during the four months of the study, she posted three pieces on the wiki: two stories that were excerpts from books she was writing and one poem.

In discussions on the wiki, most of the aspiring authors acknowledged their love of writing. While discussing her poem, *love2write* recognized that she enjoys writing when she told *reddevil13*, "I had fun with it!" (Comment, Week 3). *Drhook* explained that he wrote his poem over a series of text messages. When he transferred the poem to a new wiki page, *drhook*

prefaced the poem: “it was kind of odd but i do love it” (Original, Week 17). These aspiring authors enjoyed writing and were willing to share that with other wiki members.

In multiple instances, students on the wiki indirectly identified the aspiring authors as such. *Incakola4* read *reddevil13*’s poem titled “Dan the Man.” In her response, *incakola4* told him, “Interesting, I like it. I wish I could write poems like that, or at all even. :-)” (Comment, Week 13). This response to *reddevil13*’s poem revealed two things. First, *incakola4* positioned *reddevil13* as an aspiring author when she complemented his writing. Second, *incakola4* contrasted herself to him, implying that she did not assume the position of an aspiring author herself. This distinction indicates that some students were aware of the different positions students enacted within the Discourse of the wiki.

Bystander. The most frequent position students assumed on the wiki was that of a bystander. Bystanders were students who only participated on the wiki when they were required to do so. Of the wiki participants, 98.1% acted as a bystander at one point or another during the study. The only two who were never positioned as bystanders were the 11th-grade students who were still participating in the class wiki. That was because everything they did on the wiki was voluntary, whereas my current students did voluntary work on the wiki but also had required assignments.

The overwhelming reason that students were positioned as bystanders was their response to assignments posted on the wiki. Analysis of students’ responses to assignments demonstrated that on most assignments students responded only because a response was required. Although 98.1% of students were positioned as bystanders in at least one wiki post, the majority of students assumed multiple positions on the wiki and only became a bystander when required to

do an assignment on the wiki. However, 40.95% of students were identified solely as bystanders. These were students who only chose to write on the wiki when I posted an assignment on it.

Lurker. Lastly, within the wiki's Discourse some students may have positioned themselves as lurkers. The term "lurker" is used in online communities to describe a person who reads discussions but does not participate actively in them. Within the bounds of this study, there was no way to identify which wiki participants assumed this position. However, each time my class worked on computers, students were instructed to use any free time they had at the end of class to read silently or "play on the wiki." As a result, students typically had at least a few free minutes, and most chose to spend their extra time on the wiki, yet the average number of posts in this study does not reflect the frequency with which my class visited the computer lab. This suggests that many students were lurkers, reading material on the wiki without contributing to the discussions.

Within the wiki's Discourse, students positioned themselves and others. While some students were positioned similarly every time they posted on the wiki, students' positions were not stable entities. Instead, students enacted various positions in relation to the others in the community. The positions students assumed and imposed on others revealed, in part, the students' literate identities within the Discourse of the wiki.

Individual Representation of Identity

Each student represented his or her literate identity through the information he or she posted on the wiki. While some students had a minimal presence on the wiki, others made unique contributions to the Discourse. The devices students employed and the positions they enacted revealed who they represented themselves to be within the Discourse of the wiki.

The following three individuals' literate identities online were analyzed across the course of the study. These students were selected for their presence on the wiki and the unique contributions they made to the wiki. As previously stated, *orpheus* was a natural leader. *Sandybird1* was a prolific poster. *Relaji* was an outsider to the community. These students literate identities online were revealed through the devices they employed and the positions they enacted.

Orpheus. The written devices o*rpheus* employed on the wiki positioned him as a leader. Over the four months of the study, *orpheus* created five voluntary wiki pages. On his wiki pages, *orpheus* took everyday questions and added a philosophical twist to them. In an instance, cited earlier, *orpheus* started a wiki page titled "Who's Hungry, and What Are You Hungry For." In his first post on this page, *orpheus* asked, "Aren't you sooooo hungry? Even if its for something like revenge- tell me about it" (Original, Week 3). *Orpheus*'s question invited creative responses, yet most students responded by answering the question literally. Even so, the page was popular enough that students posted on it 33 times during the first three months of the study. In doing so, they positioned Orpheus as a leader in the discussion and positioned themselves as followers.

In another instance described previously in this chapter, *orpheus* began a new wiki page titled "What Color is My Underwear." In his first post on this page, *orpheus* question revealed his contemplation. He asked,

> You don't know do you? I bet you don't know what color your best friend's underwear is either. The point is, everyone has secrets, everyone has something that you don't know about them, so you can't make decisions based on how you feel about them. (Original, Week 6)

Because of the humorous nature of this wiki page's title, students were drawn into the discussion. Many students responded to the question in the title with more personal information than was

necessary. However, a rich discussion about being judgmental also ensued from the text of orpheus' post. For example, *rook56* said,

> I despise people that judge, because most of them are hypocritical. I don't belive it is right, and we'll never understand why we do it. So pick up your head and move on. Let them think about what they said wrong. Let them question what makes you so strong as to not care. (Comment, Week 6)

From this comment, many more flowed. Positioning himself as a comedian, *orpheus* camouflaged a serious topic with a lighthearted question, and a rich discussion ensued within the Discourse of the wiki. *Orpheus* posted two comments in response to the discussion that resulted from his post, and then he stepped away and allowed others to carry it on.

On other occasions, *orpheus*'s posts on the wiki were simply intended to be humorous. For example, *orpheus* frequently contributed to "The Coolest Add-on Story In The World." At the point when Janet, the main character, is about to drown in her wish for a gazillion dollars, *orpheus* contributed,

> Then she realized, "Wait, its only a Gagillion Dollars, it has to end sometime..." Then she crossed her leg over the other and sat patiently for several years as her house became gorged and fat with money, and when the storm finally ended, she bought microsoft, and various other companies, Warren Buffet was now her slave, and there was nothing more in life that she could ask for, except for of course... love.... (Comment, Week 17)

In his addition to the story, *orpheus* added a humorous twist. However, he left an opening for the next student who wanted to contribute a few lines. This shows even as *orpheus* shared his humorous ideas, he was aware of other members of the Discourse.

Even as *orpheus* was enacting the role of comedian, his response positioned him as a leader for the add-on story. *Orpheus* stepped into the conversation, cleverly and with humor. As he concluded one episode of the story, *orpheus* also redirected the plotline. With skill, *orpheus* set the stage for another episode, but stepped out of the role of narrator, deferring to and at the

same time positioning another member of the Discourse of the wiki to author the story's next section.

Orpheus's strong voice carried into his responses to some assignments on the wiki. For example, in a lesson on word choice, I asked students to rewrite the following sentence: "The scenery in the mountains was beautiful" (Original, Week 7). Most students' rewrites were one sentence, probably since I, as the teacher, had only written one sentence. However, *orpheus* composed an entire story. He wrote,

> "Wow the scenery in the mountains sure is beautiful." Samuel said peacfully, he breathed in a whiff of fresh air, and then let out a sigh. "Our earth is so beautiful," he whispered to himself. Suddenly, the skies darkened until all he could see was a gigantic desk falling from the sky and crushing all of his hopes and dreams into powder. "Oh no!" He whispered out of sheer horror. It was... dundundun!!!!!!!! MISS MCCOLLUM!!!!!
>
> "I SWEAR! I didnt mean to upset you!" He collapsed onto his hands and knees and kissed the ground before her feet.
>
> "ITS TOO LATE!!! HAHAHAHA!!" She shrieked diabolically. "IT'S TIME!!!!"
>
> Samuel looked up into her omnipotent eyes, "Please! NO!" He begged.
>
> "For school," she finished sweetly.
>
> "but-"
>
> "Its time for school!!!"
>
> "Okay..."
>
> "Say the sentance so that it is interesting, use adjectives, and sensory language, instead of 'The scenery in the mountains was beautiful.'"
>
> "Okay," samuel choked out, he gathered himself for a moment and then said "The mountains never cease to dazzle me, with their beautiful trees, and elegant rock formations, not to mention the snow on top of them, I wish that everything in the world could be as beautiful as the mountains."
>
> "Good job!" she rewarded him with a pat on the head and a dog treat, which when she tossed, he caught ferverently in his mouth. "Keep up the good work!" She smiled, and soon all of the light had returned to normal, and she was gone."
>
> Samuel stood up, gazed on last time at the mountains, and walked home. (Comment, Week 7)

In *orpheus*'s response to the assignment, he actually wrote a fantastical story as a means for completing the task, but he used humor to do so. *Orpheus*'s classmates might have taken an easy route by fulfilling the minimum requirements for the assignment, but he was willing to put in extra effort on an assignment to have fun with it and let his voice be heard.

Interestingly, in his story, *orpheus* identified me, as the teacher, by name. The story also illuminates students' positioning of me, the teacher, as an outsider to the Discourse. In contrast, *orpheus* was careful to select the pseudonym "Samuel" for himself. He was willing to stand out in his response to an assignment, but *orpheus* was still careful to keep his offline identity hidden.

Although *orpheus* was actively involved on the wiki, he did not see himself or any of his classmates as strong writers. Only eleven days after *orpheus* posted this exceptional rewrite of my sentence, he wrote,

> You know what I love about humans? They are always trying to show that they are better than other people, whether it be an election, or a football game, but what I'm inferring specifically, is your writing assignments. EVERYBODY is trying to show off how SUPERB of a writer they are and its ridiculous. NONE OF US ARE GOOD WRITERS!!!!!! No matter how much we want to believe we are, we just aren't. Don't take life so seriously, especially your progress as a writer in high school. (Original, Week 9)

In this post, *orpheus* admited that he had not developed an identity as a good writer. Less than two weeks previously, *orpheus* had the best response on a writing assignment. However, according to this post, he credited that success to wanting to show off and not to any form of talent. Moreover, he challenged any other student's identity as a writer.

While *orpheus* purported not to care about his identity as a writer, *uglymutt* did not believe him. *Uglymutt* said,

> I think that if you wrote this long of a message about that subject your obviously taking it too seriously. I think that there are some good writers And why should it bother anyone when other people try and be good writers it shouldn't it doesnt affect you in anyay. (Comment, Week 12)

On some level, being a good writer must have mattered to *orpheus,* or he would not have put extra effort into his assignments. Furthermore, by criticizing students who did extra when that is exactly what he did, *orpheus* denying his identity by pretending that being a good writer was unimportant. *Rook56* recognized that *orpheus* was trying to protect himself and asked,

“Does it honestly make you think great of yourself when you are dragging other people down to a level of mediacracy?” (Comment, Week 12). Both *uglymutt* and *rook56* understood that the *orpheus* was denying his identity by putting it down.

In the same post where *orpheus* critiqued his writing and his peers’ writing, *orpheus* also explained his philosophy of identity development. *Orpheus* asserted,

> Take it easy, you may not want to, but the easy was is generally the way to go. Of course adjust yourself according to how your life is treating you at the moment... Life has its ups and downs, and my word of advice is to break free of humanity, think OUTSIDE the box, be better than everyone without trying so hard to be. Your time will come, just it isn’t going to be in high school. (Original, Week 9)

Orpheus’s ideas were contradictory in nature. He told students to move with the flow of life and then turned around and told them to break free. Moreover, he saw success as something that happens to a person automatically, or it would be impossible to “be better than everyone without trying so hard to be” (Original, Week 9). While *orpheus* wanted to offer advice, his ideas were still confused.

Orpheus’s comments suggested that he had an apparently conflicted sense of self as a writer. *Orpheus* demonstrated evidence of his confidence in his writing abilities, particularly when using humor as a tool. For example, he wrote a funny short story on an assignment where he had to rewrite a sentence. In contrast, *Orpheus* voiced self-deprecation through his statement about nobody in high school being a “good writer.” That stands in stark contrast to his confident, humorous voice. His willingness to share both his writing and ideas about what makes a “good writer” on the wiki illustrated the tugs and pulls of his developing sense of self as a literate person. The competing voices of competence and self- deprecation reflect a struggle for literate identity.

While o*rpheus* struggled with his literate identity, he still positioned himself as a leader in the wiki through the written devices he employed. When *orpheus* wrote, other students responded. He had the ability to convince students to discuss the topics that interested him. Within those writings, *orpheus* represented himself as a good writer, a humorous person, and a deep thinker.

Sandybird1. *Sandybird1* is a notable member of the wiki because of the prolific nature of his posts. *Sandybird1* posted on the wiki 43 times, or 4.2 times the average student's number of posts. In total, *sandybird1* had 12 more posts on the wiki than *ahriahikari*, the next most prolific writer.

For the first month of the study, *sandybird1* only posted on assignment wiki pages. A month into the school year, *sandybird1* read a riddle titled "The Prince's Name" that *orpheus* had posted. *Sandybird1* guessed "Shrek?" (Comment, Week 6). The question mark after *sandybird1*'s guess suggests that he was hesitant to post anything incorrect on voluntary wiki pages at that point. After this one word comment, *sandybird1* did not post anything else for a week.

One week after *sandybird1*'s initial voluntary post, he started posting prolifically. From that point forward, he had a consistent presence on the wiki. Over the course of the study, *sandybird1* wrote on 22 different wiki pages, which meant he posted on 37.93% of the wiki pages.

While *sandybird1* prolifically posted, frequently his posts were not influential. For example, on "jimranor's blog," *sandybird1* simply posted, "Hi?!" (Comment, Week 7). In another instance, students were insulting a story titled, "A Reason to Live," and *sandybird1* responded, "Sad :(" (Comment, Week 19). Several of *sandybird1*'s other posts were similarly

short. In neither of these cases, nor in the others, did the short comments make an impact on the conversation. Instead, they simply floated on the page as quiet whispers of *sandybird1*'s voice.

Although *sandybird1*'s quiet posts did not impact the flow of conversations on the wiki, they did reveal something of his identity. The frequency of s*andybird1*'s posts implied that he was invested in reading the conversations on the wiki and leaving a mark to show that he had.

In the process of reading the wiki conversations, *sandybird1* occasionally left brief opinions of what he read. For example, when he viewed a cartoon that he found offensive, *sandybird1* wrote, "#1 is gross" (Comment, Week 12). A month and a half later, *sandybird1* visited the same page and commented on a comic he liked: "I like the flatta santa :)" (Comment, Week 18). Whether it was positive or negative, *sandybird1* did not hesitate to share his opinion, though the impact on the conversation was small.

As time progressed, *sandybird1* started showing more of his own humor on the wiki. For example, several weeks into the study, students engaged in a joking conversation. Eventually, a student made a joking insult about the person who would make the next comment below him. In the comment space under the playful insult, *sandybird1* wrote, "Where?!" (Comment, Week 7). Thus, he was willing to use humor as a device and make himself the brunt of the jokes on the wiki in an effort to be funny. Later, near the end of the study, *sandybird1* posted jokes of his own. On the "Cool words" wiki page, he wrote, "the longest word in the dictionary is smiles- there's a mile between the two 's's. s mile s Get it?! Hahahahahahaha" (Comment, Week 18). By this time, *sandybird1* had transitioned from being a participant in other's humor to sharing his own.

Because *sandybird1* was involved in so many wiki pages, his posts suggested that he saw himself as an expert in matters related to the wiki. On "new page" a student made a random comment that did not make sense in the context of the discussion. However, *sandybird1* had

already read and commented on another wiki page a week previously that clarified the comment. Thus, he wrote, “see The Prince’s Name for cross reference” (Comment, Week 7). Anyone that followed *sandybird1*’s hint would no longer be confused.

While *sandybird1* was a prolific reader of the wiki, and he was willing to let other wiki members know that, he never saw himself as a writer. All of *sandybird1*’s comments were relatively short. Most of the prolific writers on the wiki posted stories, introspective thoughts, and poetry. However, *sandybird1* never shared any personal writing projects. When students started debating the merits of being a good writer, he admitted, “I’m so happy I’m not a good writer :)” (Comment, Week 12). *Sandybird1* was a consumer of others’ work, but he did not see himself as a producer of his own work.

Sandybird1’s posts were not particularly influential, yet he saw himself as an insider into the Discourse of the wiki. Moreover, *sandybird1* was happy with his position within the Discourse and let everyone know that when he posted, “wiki... good times :P” (Comment, Week 12).

Relaji. *Relaji* was a unique participant in the wiki. She and *tryitesque* were two former students who asked to be members of the wiki for a second year. I agreed, but I did not tell my current students that there were former students participating on the wiki. During the duration of the study, *tryitesque* only posted on the wiki once. *Relaji*, on the other hand, posted on the wiki 23 times during the four months of the study. That means that *Relaji* was my only former student actively participating in the class wiki.

Relaji stood out visually among other wiki users for two reasons. First, *Relaji* had an avatar. An avatar is a pictorial representation of self. *Relaji* chose a black and grey cat’s face with glowing pink eyes. The avatar was intended to be a likeness of the character from *Relaji*’s novel

after which she took her wikiname. Every time *Relaji* posted a comment on the wiki, the avatar appeared next to her wikiname. The 10th-grade students in the study could not have avatars because we used a different registration process during the academic year the study took place to better protect students' identities. *Sandybird1* asked *Relaji*, "How do you get avatarz" (Comment, Week 7). This indicates that some students noticed the difference in *Relaji*'s wiki account. The second reason *Relaji* stood out was that she was the only student on the wiki who chose to capitalize her wiki name. For these two reasons, *Relaji* was visually distinct in the Discourse.

While *Relaji* wanted to be part of the wiki, from the start of the academic year she set herself apart from other students in the Discourse. The first thing students did on the wiki during the new school year was view scanned images of advice my former students had written at the end of the previous school year. I had selectively included the advice, so not every student's work was posted. *Relaji* viewed this page the first week of school and wrote, ":(Aw! My group's isn't up there" (Comment, Week 1). In saying this, *Relaji* identified herself to the other participants as a former student and immediately differentiated herself from other students.

Relaji's posts on the wiki indicate that she saw herself as a leader. On one wiki page, students were debating the need to delete the page because they inadvertently posted information that revealed a student's offline identity. *Relaji* saw the conversation and wrote, "And if you take this page down, what will you be left with? You guys haven't posted anything up yet. Create some more (meaningful) pages before you go demolishing this one" (Comment, Week 3). In this instance, *Relaji* tried to encourage students to write more, but in the process she implied that the students had not written anything meaningful yet. By telling the students what to do, she was positioning herself as a leader.

On another wiki page, *Relaji* attempted to start a role playing story. *Relaji* wanted other students input on the genre and background for the story, so she asked a series of questions. After less than six hours, she gave up on the other students and said, "Then I shall decide for you. . . Fantasy, of course. Plotline, character sheets, setting, and rules will be posted above" (Comment, Week 2). This event occurred only four days into the school year. At that point the students had not even used the wiki during class time; the lesson on how to use the wiki was still two days away. Even after students were familiar with the wiki, six hours was a quick turnaround time for replies to requests. Thus, while *Relaji* implied she wanted participation from other wiki members, she did not allow other students to become immersed in the Discourse before she gave up on them.

Often times, when *Relaji* tried to include other students in the wiki, she adopted a voice that made her sound like a teacher instead of a peer. In some cases, her invitations even resembled assignments. For example, on a page titled "Roleplaying," *Relaji* tried to explain to others how to get started on a story. She said,

> Intros are done just like how you'd start a book, short story, whatever. Give us the setting where your character/characters start out at. What does the place look like? What time of day is it? Whats the season? Keep those in mind as you intro, since it has to relate to the other people. Winter and summer can't happen in the same city at the same time. Have your character/characters be doing something that's worth opening on. Nightmares are one of my favorite ways to open. You can do something totaly outlandish, and still be valid, then just have your character wake up after that, and go about their boring day. Saves you the trouble of finding an interesting action. Once youre character/characters have appeared into your intro, tell us more about them. What do they look like? What does their current actions have to do with who they are? Try going on that. If it doesn't seem clear, I guess I could type up an intro for an example. Just let your words make the story. Don't think too hard, or you might ruin it. (Comment, Week 10)

Few other students volunteered to participate in *Relaji*'s role playing story. By wording the invitation like a checklist of assignment requirements, *Relaji*'s invitation may have put off some interested participants.

Throughout the duration of the study, *Relaji* rarely adopted a voice consistent with the norms of the wiki. The voice *Relaji* used did not signal her as a legitimate member of the wiki community. Rather, her stance, ways of writing and interacting, were not in harmony with those that would identify her as an insider to the Discourse. Instead, she maintained an authoritative tone when talking to the other wiki members. For example, when other students were complaining about school, *Relaji* said,

> Honestly. How do you people expect to get through the next two years of school thinking like that? Every single day will drag on and on if you simply look at the clock. You can either sit there and pout (Which, sadly, many of you seem partial to), or you could actualy do something with your life. Do your work without the thoughts of 'this is stupid' or 'I can't believe I have to do this', or any variation of the sort. Sure, Fridays are something to look forward to, but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy those other neglected days. Join a club. Get involved. Actualy TRY to enjoy the classes you are in. It's not that hard. Stupidity is a crime. And you'll pay for it. (Comment, Week 17)

In this wiki comment, *Relaji*'s illocutionary force was domineering when talking to the wiki members. More than that, she insulted the way some of them chose to live their lives. *Relaji* might have stated her opinion without being condescending. For example, *love2write* posted, "Haha I think school is OK!!! I miss my friends too much during the summer.... But I am defiantly counting down till Christmas break!" (Comment, Week 5). In her post, *love2write* shared an opinion that, like *Relaji*'s opinion, was contrary to the consensus on the wiki page. However, the difference is that she did so in a way that did not distance herself from the other wiki members. *Love2write* used written language to represent herself as part of the wiki Discourse—an individual with her own views and values, but one who could express them in a way that signifies membership in the Discourse of the wiki.

Because it is a common practice among teachers to allow former students to continue working on a class wiki even after they are no longer in the class, I allowed *Relaji* to participate in the wiki a second year. During her second year of participation, *Relaji* contributed several

pieces that revealed her literate identity. However, while *Relaji* was able to interact with my 10th-grade students, she was never one of their peers. *Relaji* consistently attempted to position herself as a leader and motivator so that she could engage other students in the Discourse of the wiki. However, *Relaji* did not enact community norms, so other students positioned her as an outsider. While *Relaji* revealed her literate identity online, her ability to more fully enact it was impacted by the way other students responded to her assertions of her literate identity online.

Summary

Within the Discourse of the wiki, students employed a wide variety of written devices as tools to represent themselves as a certain kind of person and positioned themselves and others in distinct ways within the Discourse of the wiki. The majority of the students adopted various devices and positions in the Discourse. Even when students' faces were hidden in the Discourse of the wiki, the devices they employed and the positions they enacted revealed who they took themselves to be as literate individuals.

Chapter 5:

Discussion

A new wiki is basically a blank slate. The individuals who use the wiki determine what happens in the empty space. Because I, as the teacher, created the wiki that my students used, I set the original parameters as revealed in the class disclosure document: "The wiki's use is not limited to class assignments, and students are welcome to use the wiki to post any school-appropriate content they choose. Because the wiki is a community page, please do not post any hostile, graphic, or otherwise inappropriate material" (see Appendix C). Beyond these brief guidelines, students shaped the development of the class wiki. The students in this study did not immerse themselves in an existing community of practice or an established wiki Discourse. Instead, the students created both.

Nature of the Wiki

Community of practice. Wenger (1998) asserts that communities of practice are founded in part on shared purposes. From the first day that students used the class wiki they began developing shared purposes. *Jazzguy* initiated one of the first wiki conversations on a new page with a simple greeting: "hello people" (Comment, Week 2). While this was by no means a profound statement, it paved the way for more complete purposes. Within days, students created wiki pages dedicated to distinct purposes that ranged from complaining about school on "How many people are already bored of school and hate school" to collaborating on "The Coolest Add-on Story In The World." On each page, students established a purpose which in turn helped establish a community of practice.

An overarching purpose for any community of practice is to negotiate meaning (Wenger, 1998). Students negotiated their own meanings as well as meanings that I influenced as they

participated in the wiki. The conversations therein were ones in which students used language to reach agreements and readjust those agreements about diverse topics. Moreover, as the community of practice developed from its embryonic state, students' social relationships became factors in negotiating meaning (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999; Wenger).

Discourse. Just as participants on the wiki constructed conversations that were meaningful to them, they gradually established socially mediated norms for participating in and belonging to the Discourse of the class wiki. Because the Discourse was formed in an online environment, students could not use clothing, tone of voice, body language, or physical space, all typical elements of a Discourse (Gee, 2008), to aid them in revealing their literate identity and understanding the literate identities of others. Instead, the constraints of the Discourse of the class wiki required students to use a written voice to share their literate identity online. Within the wiki, students did not have access to three-dimensional characteristics of other Discourses, which might have hampered their ability to enact a Discourse. They took the tools the wiki offered them and founded their own Discourse with norms that established "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted as groups" (Gee, 2008, p. 3).

Fairly early in the development of the community on the wiki, students gradually began to establish their unwritten norms. These norms directed the way conversations took place on the wiki. Students almost always posted the introduction to a discussion in the body of a wiki page. Then, students carried out the discussion within the comment sections of the wiki page. *Sandybird1* illustrated the prominence of these unwritten norms when he reorganized his first entry on "The page of random quotes" to align with other wiki pages' formats. Without any

formal written guidelines, students almost always followed these norms. Gee (2008) identifies the silent adherence to community norms as a key component of a Discourse.

Alongside the community norms that expressed how students should interact on the wiki, students communally developed norms that outlined what students valued in the Discourse of the wiki. Students often used written devices identified in the current study to express these values. Censorship, complaints, encouragement, praise, and validation, were all ways for students to establish the beliefs and values that were accepted by the group.

Literate Identity

Representation of literate identity. Students represented their literate identity online through the combination of devices they used and the positions they enacted on the wiki. Those who immersed themselves in the Discourse of the wiki revealed far much about their literate identities online. When students posted on voluntary wiki pages, they shared that information willingly. Therefore, their words were representations of their literate identities online. For the individuals who engaged most fully in the wiki Discourse, the combination of devices and positions students chose to adopt revealed who they considered themselves to be.

Some students only chose to complete assignments on the wiki. Therefore, the only position they enacted was that of a bystander. These students made no significant contributions to the wiki. The fact that they only participated on the wiki when required to earn a grade also suggests that they never saw themselves as members of the Discourse. Through their choice not to immerse themselves in the Discourse of the wiki, they positioned themselves outside the Discourse. As a result, it was impossible to infer much about their online identity.

Academic literate identity. I initiated the class wiki in hopes of providing my students with a virtual medium to become a community of learners. In my mind that meant I would

construct academic experiences, in the form of assignments, which students would engage in online. This study suggests that students did not fully develop that type of community. Consistently, the findings show students offered stilted, forced responses to class assignments that did not yield rich dialogue among the participants of the wiki. The students viewed the assignments I posted as chores to be accomplished and then forgotten. In essence, students rejected an academic literate identity online when they posted on assignments.

In contrast, when offline assignments were posted on the wiki, students did use the comment section of the wiki page to discuss the assignment. For example, on the "Persuasive Essay Contests" wiki page I posted links to help students complete an assignment off of the wiki. On this wiki page, the students demonstrated camaraderie both in complaining about work and buoying one another up in completing the work. Moreover, students were able to use the comments sections as a way to solicit and offer assistance in completing the assignments. These comments suggest that students saw the academic portion of the wiki as a means to an end. It was simply a tool to get help completing assignments. In this manner, the wiki did create a learning community, but it was not entirely an online community. Instead, it extended into students' offline lives.

Limitations of the wiki to foster academic discourse online is further evidenced by the fact that students' writing online did not connect to academic standards upheld in offline writing in their English classes. When writing on the wiki, students' spelling, grammar, and sentence structure were unconventional because the Discourse's norms did not require standard conventions. Students' lack of attention to conventional writing clearly shows that the students did not view their voluntary work on the wiki as an academic exercise.

Occasionally students attempted to use the wiki for activities that on the surface may have appeared to be tied to the academic content of their English class. When students chose to post stories and poems on the wiki, they positioned themselves as aspiring authors and invited academic criticism. However, through the eyes of an English teacher, the assistance offered by other members of the community was minimal. The only help students offered was proofreading for conventional errors. Students' focus on conventions in this context indicates that they understood conventional rules even thought they did not use them in all of their posts on the wiki. Also, students' focus on conventions, while ignoring content, shows that students were willing to help with surface changes in a piece of writing but did not understand or did not want to help with more substantial changes.

While the only help students received was proofreading, they did receive feedback on their stories and poetry. On almost all the work students posted on the wiki, students offered general praise or dissatisfaction. These opinions were not coupled with commentary that provided the aspiring authors with direction for improving their work. However, in-depth criticism may not have been the type of feedback students were seeking. Instead, this praise and dissatisfaction were ways for students to express what was valued in the Discourse of the wiki (Gee, 2008).

Much of this phenomenon may have stemmed from the fact that I positioned myself as an outsider to the Discourse. According to van Langenhove & Harré (1999), positions within a storyline carry a social force. Since I was outside the storyline, my attempts to step into the storyline and position myself as a leader were in vain. Students recognized my offline identity and the weight my position carried as their teacher, so they complied with the academic tasks I presented. However, they never were willing to position me as a leader and take up the

conversations I started. Instead, their terse responses to academic tasks indicate that they were reinforcing my initial position as an outsider to their Discourse. I was not one of them (Gee, 2005), and they substantiated my position as an outsider.

Social literate identity. More than the academic Discourse the wiki was intended to be, the class wiki became a social Discourse where students interacted with one another and built online relationships. Students used the wiki as a means to joke, discuss issues that were relevant in their lives, and complain. In this way, the wiki did provide a medium where students were able to connect to one another through these social activities. It was a means for students to build a community. Ironically, because students used pseudonyms, they were not able to identify one another offline. Thus, while students built a social Discourse online, it did not directly strengthen the academic community in the classroom.

The social norms of the Discourse of the wiki, as well as the positioning engaged in by students, governed which students' voices were accepted and which students' voices were silenced. This is congruent with Gee's (2005) notion that Discourses are comprised of "people like us" and "people like them" (p. 2). Students' acceptance or negation of one another was based on the devices and positions that students adopted as a means of revealing their literate identities online. The wiki community embraced students who positioned themselves within the wiki as followers of these norms (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999).

Some students were included in the Discourse because they were careful to adhere to the norms of the wiki. For example, *sandybird1* fit in with his peers because he followed the norms of the Discourse. His posts followed the already established tone of wiki pages where he commented. In addition, he never said anything that shifted the course of the wiki. In this way, he clearly positioned himself as a follower in the wiki. In one distinct instance, another student

positioned sa*ndybird1* as a comedian when that student joked back and forth with *sandybird1* over several comments. However, other students frequently did not respond to *sandybird1*'s wiki posts at all. Through their silence he was often marginalized.

On the other hand, *orpheus* successfully manipulated the devices he to position himself as a strong voice on the wiki. *Orpheus* used devices such as contemplation, humor, and questions to express his voice. Through his statements, *orpheus* positioned himself in roles such as that of a leader. *Orpheus* did not set out to be a leader by overtly directing others. While his voice was stronger than many wiki members, the way he manipulated written devices and the positions he assumed showed that he was one of the group (Gee, 2005). Other students recognized that *orpheus* was one of them, so they could accept his leadership and positioned him as a leader.

In contrast to *orpheus*, students who were actively involved in the wiki but did not embrace the norms of the wiki were excluded from membership in the Discourse. For instance, *Relaji* was a prominent member, but unlike *orpheus*, *Relaji* used written devices to positioned herself as a leader and authority figure the wiki. In doing so, *Relaji* suffered the same fate as I did—she was positioned as an outsider by the members of the Discourse.

Recommendations for Educators

The purpose of this study was for me as a teacher-researcher to better understand students' literate identity online. However, the wiki gave me only limited insight into students' identities until I began deep analysis of their work on the wiki. Two primary factors in my initial lack of understanding are noteworthy. First, I intentionally did not memorize every student's wikiname. Although I read students' postings on the wiki, at the time, I was unable to identify most students without consulting a chart containing students' real names and wikinames. Thus, my ability to extend my insights into my teaching was limited. Secondly, students produced a

massive amount of text on the wiki. During the data collection period, I read everything students posted on assignment pages and some of what they posted on voluntary pages. However, as a teacher with other responsibilities, it was impossible to regularly keep up with all the text as it was generated. It was only through retrospective analysis of the data that I was able to discover the patterns reported in this thesis. With both these factors in mind, future educators who decide to use a wiki as a way to understand adolescents' literate identity online might elect to follow a few key students with whom they are concerned, rather than attempt to track all students.

At the outset of implementing the wiki, I hoped that students' work on the wiki would reflect an extension of the work we completed in class. That did not happen, so in that way, the wiki did not evolve into the academic online community it might have been. Instead, the wiki was a place for students to build connections to one another in a social community. Students who might have been quiet in face-to-face conversations were able to participate in a social community where their faces were hidden. Moreover, students who were active participants in the Discourse of the wiki were willing to offer assistance on the wiki. This is especially significant because it is indicative of students unsuccessfully trying to pull others into the Discourse. When used for social purposes, a class wiki can be a successful tool.

I learned that a hidden identity was not necessarily something students valued. Several wiki posts indicated that, despite instructions to keep wikinames confidential, students shared their wikinames with their closest friends. As a teacher-researcher, I allowed students to share their wikinames with their classmates after the study was over. Though no formal analysis exists on the change this made to the Discourse of the wiki, anecdotal notes indicate that students began to use the wiki as an academic tool for collaboration on group projects once they could share their wikinames with one another. Though students' faces were unveiled, they still

continued creating and posting on voluntary wiki pages. While wikinames are crucial to protect students' identities from online predators, allowing students to reveal their wikinames to classmates could prove useful in building an academic Discourse offline as well as online.

Implications for Further Research

Not every student who participated in the class wiki provided consent and assent to be part of the study. Of 141 potential 10th-grade participants, only 103 students chose to participate in the study. That meant that 26.24% of the 10th-grade members of the Discourse of the wiki were excluded from the findings of this study. Among those excluded were several key voices in the Discourse that both vividly revealed their literate identity online and shaped the conversations in which other students participated. According to Gee (2008), Discourses are comprised of certain "types of people" (p. 3). The bounds of this study limited insight into all of the individuals that comprised the Discourse. Thus, it is impossible to see a complete account of exactly what types of people formed the community.

Moreover, positioning theory asserts that people are positioned in conversations that are part of a larger storyline (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Key events in the storyline of the wiki and important conversations cannot be explained fully because pieces of the conversation are missing here. Without being able to discuss everyone who participated in the wiki, it is impossible to paint a completely accurate picture of the Discourse as it evolved. Further research in a wiki where the researcher has full access to the members of the Discourse could yield additional, rich findings about the genesis of a Discourse and the literate identities of the members therein.

This study took place in one teacher's classes over the course of half a school year. The findings in this study characterize one group of 105 students. Johnston et al. (2001) assert that

students' literate identities may reflect their classroom environments. In another class, different environmental factors would likely influence the Discourse that could evolve on a wiki. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to other wiki populations. Future studies could investigate other Discourses of class wikis to more fully understand how adolescents reveal their literate identity online.

This study only examined students' literate identity online as revealed through a class wiki. However, adolescents are immersed in a digital world (Bean et al., 1999), and the wiki provided only brief snapshots of three students' literate identities online. Future studies should examine adolescents' literate identity online in Discourses other than class wikis to yield an even richer portrayal of the individual's literate identity online.

Finally, the data collected during this study were analyzed to reveal adolescents' literate identity online. Through further analysis of this data set, further findings will emerge. Potential analysis could reveal the evolution of a wiki from a blank state to a Discourse as students developed and implemented community norms. Through the lens of Discourse analysis (Gee, 2005), researchers could reveal the illocutionary force of students' writing on the wiki. In the field of adolescent literate identity online, teacher-researchers still have myriad unanswered questions that will expand the results of this study.

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Appendix A

Participant Consent and Assent Forms

Adolescents' Literate Identity Online: Individuals and the Discourse of a Class Wiki
Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction
This research study is being conducted by Amanda McCollum a part of her master's thesis work. The purpose of this study is to examine students' representations of their literate identities online. Particularly, the researcher is interested in the nature of interactions that take place on a wiki for class work, collaboration, and socialization. An explanation of the class wiki can be found in the accompanying class disclosure document. Your child was selected to participate in this study because he/she is currently using Miss McCollum's class wiki. All students in Miss McCollum's class will use the class wiki even if they do not participate in this study. The research study will be supervised by Janet R. Young, Associate Chair in the Department of Teacher Education in the David O. McKay School of Education at Brigham Young University.

Procedures
Your child will participate in this research study while he/she uses a class wiki during the 2009-2010 school year. He/she will use the class wiki for class work, to collaborate and interact with his/her classmates, and to access assignments. Your child's written work from the wiki may appear in research publications or presentations. Students' writing created for and used on the wiki will be stored on password protected computers.

Risks/Discomforts
There will be few risks to the participants. Your child may feel uncomfortable having his/her work analyzed and shared in publications and presentations.

Benefits
Your child will not receive any direct benefits for participating in the study. However, it is hoped that through your child's participation the researcher will learn more about adolescents' literate identity and online practices. This will benefit teachers, researchers, and others.

Confidentiality
Pbworks.com, the wiki site used for this class, has security features that block the website from people who do not have accounts. Only students will have an account on the class wiki. These student accounts will allow students to view and edit the content of the wiki. Parents and other people without accounts will be able to see the assignment page but will not be able to see any other content on the website. Students will select a false name to use on the wiki. This will protect the students' personal information and written work. All information will remain confidential and students will not be described by their real name. All information on the class wiki will be kept in on a password protected computer, and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them.

Compensation
Your child will not be paid or otherwise rewarded for his/her participation in this study.

Participation
Participation in this research study is voluntary. Students who choose not to participate in the study will still use the wiki as a regular part of instruction. However, their work will not be analyzed and shared as part of the study. There will be no penalty for choosing not to participate in this research study. You and your child have the right to excuse or withdraw from the study at anytime without affecting your child's class status or grade.

Questions about the Research
If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Amanda McCollum at 801-785-8700 ext. 233, amccollum@alpine.k12.ut.us or Janet R. Young at 801-422-4979, janet_young@byu.edu.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants
If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Christopher Dromey, PhD, IRB Chair, (801) 422-6461, 133 TLRB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, Christopher_Dromey@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will that my child participates in this study.

Child's Name: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name:_____

Signature: _____

Adolescents' Literate Identity Online: Individuals and the Discourse of a Class Wiki
Assent to be a Research Subject

Introduction
This research study is being conducted by Amanda McCollum a part of her master's thesis work. The purpose of this study is to examine students' representations of their literate identities online. Particularly, the researcher is interested in the nature of interactions that take place on a wiki for class work, collaboration, and socialization. An explanation of the class wiki can be found in the accompanying class disclosure document. You were selected to participate in this study because you are currently using Miss McCollum's class wiki. All students in Miss McCollum's class will use the class wiki even if they do not participate in this study. The research study will be supervised by Janet R. Young, Associate Chair in the Department of Teacher Education in the David O. McKay School of Education at Brigham Young University.

Procedures
You will participate in this research study while he/she uses a class wiki during the 2009-2010 school year. You will use the class wiki for class work, to collaborate and interact with your classmates, and to access assignments. Your written work from the wiki may appear in research publications or presentations. Your writing created for and used on the wiki will be stored on password protected computers.

Risks/Discomforts
There will be few risks to the participants. You may feel uncomfortable having your work analyzed and shared in publications and presentations.

Benefits
You will not receive any direct benefits for participating in the study. However, it is hoped that through your participation the researcher will gain an increased understanding of adolescents' literate identity, Discourses, and online practices that will benefit teachers, researchers, and the academic community.

Confidentiality
Pbworks.com, the wiki site used for this class, has security features that block the website from people who do not have accounts. Only students will have an account on the class wiki. The students' accounts will allow students to view and edit the wiki. Parents and other people without accounts will be able to see the assignment page but will not be able to see any other content on the website. This will protect the students' personal information and work. Students will self-select pseudonyms to use on the wiki. All information will remain confidential and students will not be described by name. All information on the class wiki will be kept in on a password protected computer, and only those directly involved with the research will have access to them.

Compensation
You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

Participation
Participation in this research study is voluntary. Students who choose not to participate in the study will still use the wiki as a regular part of instruction. However, their work will not be

analyzed and shared as part of the study. You have the right to excuse or withdraw from the study at anytime without affecting your class status or grade.

Questions about the Research
If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Amanda McCollum at 801-785-8700 ext. 233, amccollum@alpine.k12.ut.us or Janet R. Young at 801-422-4979, janet_young@byu.edu.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants
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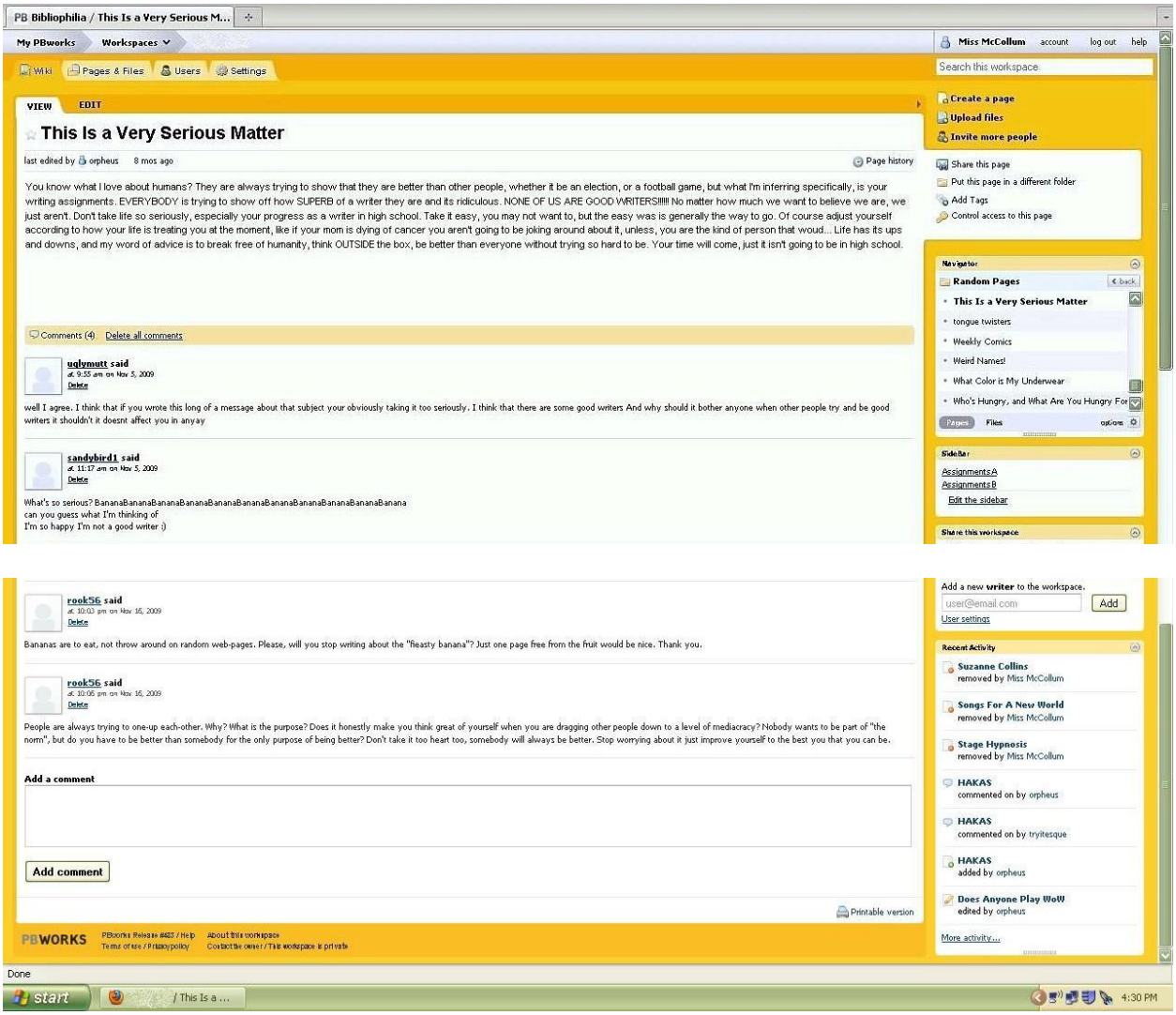
I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above assent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Name: _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Sample Wiki Page



Note. The wiki page is captured in two separate images. Some student comments were deleted from this conversation because the students did not give consent and assent to participate in the study.

Appendix C

Class Disclosure Document

English 10
Classroom Policies and Procedures
Miss McCollum
[redacted]

Philosophy/Course Description

Knowledge is power, and that power comes through the study of language—how words work. It means finding meaning, making personal connections, and creating new knowledge. By reading, writing, listening, viewing, and presenting, each student will have the opportunity to expand viewpoints, share opinions, and develop the critical thinking skills necessary to make sense of our world. *Involvement in class gives the opportunity to transform, broaden thinking, pose questions, debate findings, inquire about possibilities and see with the eyes of another*. Be prepared to think, write, create, and communicate. The tenth grade English core curriculum can be found at [redacted]

Attendance/Participation

In an English class it is critical to students' success that they *attend class every day, prepared to learn*. Habitual tardiness, chronic absence, or failure to participate in class will seriously impact a student's learning and grade. In upholding the standards of [redacted] High School's attendance policy, more than four excused absences, four tardies, or any truancy or unexcused absence will result in having credit withheld (NC=no credit) for the class.

Homework/Makeup Policy

- *Assignments are to be handed in on time*. In the rare instance when work is not completed or turned in on time, you may submit late work, but you will only receive 75% credit for the score you earned.
- *Absence is no excuse*. If a student misses a class period, any papers or projects due that day must be turned in to Miss McCollum's faculty box in the office before the end of the school day. When possible, I will also accept assignments from absent students via e-mail before the end of the school day. If you cannot do such, call or e-mail me the day you are absent and explain the circumstances. Failure to do one of these things will result in a reduced grade.
- It is the student's responsibility to *get missed assignments before returning to class*. For example, if a student misses class on Tuesday, he still should have his work ready to turn in on Thursday with the rest of the class. Otherwise, assignments will still be considered late and the above policy will apply.
- Students and parents can access the majority of class assignments on the assignment page of the class website [redacted]. If there are any questions about assignments, please talk to Miss McCollum before school, during advisory, or after school.
- Missed tests/quizzes must be made up immediately upon the student's return. Please schedule time before or after school to take these tests. They must be completed no later than a week after your return. A missed appointment will result in a zero.

Class Website/Wiki

Students will use a class wiki [redacted] to access and complete class assignments. The wiki's use is not limited to class assignments, and students are welcome to use the wiki to post any school-appropriate content they choose. Because the wiki is a community page, please do not post any hostile, graphic, or otherwise inappropriate material.

Each student will self select a username and password to use on the wiki. By accessing the wiki via their username and password, students' online identities will be protected. The assignments page [redacted] is the only page people can access without a username and password. Parents are encouraged to check this page often to help their students be successful in English class.

Materials

Students need to be prepared with the following items. If you cannot provide them, please speak to Miss McCollum privately.

- Composition Notebook (for Writer's Notebook)
- Pen/Pencil
- College ruled paper

- 3 ring binder
- Pack of 5 dividers (optional)
- Book
- Planner
- Flash drive (optional, but strongly encouraged)

Classroom Expectations

- **Respect**. *Respect yourself, respect other people, and respect property*. If you follow this simple policy, all other classroom expectations will fall into place.
- **Punctuality**. If you are late, you must sign the check-in sheet by the door. Failure to sign in or an incomplete sign-in may result in an unexcused absence.
- **Preparedness**. You must bring class materials every day.
- **Focus**. In keeping with PGHS policies, all cell phones, headphones, pagers, CD players, iPods, palm pilots, and basically anything else that uses a battery needs to be left in lockers. If I see or hear any of these devices, *I will confiscate them*, and you can pick them up in the office at the end of the day. Repeated offences may result in parents having to pick up items or suspension from school.
- **Honesty**. Unless specifically assigned to work collaboratively, students must complete their own work. *Cheating or plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated*. Consequences may include a loss of points, a grade deduction, and/or a conference. Allowing someone to copy your work is also cheating and will result in the same consequences. *Cheating undermines the entire purpose of education because no real learning takes place*.
- **Presence**. Students cannot leave the room once class starts. In an emergency, talk to Miss McCollum.
- **Water**. Bottled water is allowed in class. No other drinks or snacks are permitted.
- **Communication**. *If problems or concerns arise, please talk with Miss McCollum*. My e-mail address and classroom phone number are at the top of this disclosure document. I will be available in my classroom from *2:15-2:45 Tuesday thru Friday*.

Grading

Homework should be graded and in the return basket within a week. Major projects and papers may require more time for grading. *Do not throw away any assignments* until grades are finalized. If there is a dispute over an assignment you must have the assignment to prove your position. Otherwise, the grade on the computer will stand.

I calculate the final grade using weighted point system. The table to the left shows the approximate distribution of points in a quarter. Percentages may vary depending upon the total number of points available in a quarter and the types of assignments. The table to the right determines the final quarter letter grade.

Writer's Notebook	10%
500 Pages of Reading	10%
Major Papers, Projects, and Tests	40%
Daily Work	40%

Students should do their best on every assignment, regardless of its point value. *Homework, in-class activities, note taking, and quizzes help the students attain, assemble, and organize the skills and information they will use for major assignments and exams*.

A	94-100%
A-	90-93%
B+	87-89%
B	84-86%
B-	80-83%
C+	77-79%
C	74-78%
C-	70-73%
D+	67-69%
D	64-66%
D-	50-63%
F/I	<50

Acknowledgement

After reading through this document, please complete the *disclosure acknowledgement* and turn it in during the next class period for a *10 point* grade. Thanks.