Digital Spaces & Literacy: LGBTQ Students and Equitable Social Spaces

Frankie W. Huff
Doctoral Candidate
Frankie.Huff@ucf.edu
“55.5% of LGBT students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and 37.8% because of their gender,” making these students...

- three times as likely to have missed school in the past month
- earn lower GPAs than their peers
- have lower self-esteem and higher levels of depression (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2013)
“Young transgender students are disproportionately likely to face harassment in school” (Bauer, 2002)
• More than 90% of transgender students reported verbal harassment in school
• 25% of transgender students suffered physical assault in school
• More than half of all transgender students skip school because they felt unwelcomed and unsafe
  (Rands, 2009)
Education and literacy often take the backseat for oppressed youth.

“All oppressed people suffer some inhibition of their ability to develop and exercise their capacities and express their needs, thoughts, and feelings” (Brooks-Young, 1990, p. 40).
According to GLSEN (2013), 28% of LGBTQ students in the USA drop out of high school.

Frankie W. Huff, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida USA
Today’s Literacy

Literacy is “a practice that takes its shapes and meanings from the ways it is situated within the other things people are doing with one another...literate texts don’t mean completely independently; they don’t act in isolation” (Bomer, 2012).

Street (2003) asserts that literacy doesn’t mean that we are acquiring new skills, but rather that literacy is “a social practice” (p. 77).
The Digital Is blogger Antero Garcia offers the following definition for digital literacy:

“Cognitive skills that are used in executing tasks in the digital environments.”

We do not write to share it on the Internet, rather to and for the Internet, thus “meaning occurs when we understand the media as well as the message” (McLuhan, 2011).

Frankie W. Huff, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida USA
“The advent of digital technology enabled, appropriately, the advent of virtual realities and virtual geographies, and the ability of those geographies to mimic physical geography is increasing rapidly. Physical terrain seems more “real,” and indeed does appeal to more senses than virtual terrain is currently capable of, yet both are encountered and become meaningful by virtue of their interaction with the human mind – in fact, given the narrative importance of the events that often occur within digital landscapes (we often go to them to witness extreme instances of comedy, drama, etc.), it is no surprise that entire communities spring up from shared digital environments” (Schanuel).

Frankie W. Huff, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida USA
“Queer folk are significantly mobilized by a desire to belong to a community that feels familiar and to construct an identification that can circulate as recognizable, and valuable social currency, rather than the always-already ‘spoiled identity’ that is unwanted offspring of homophobia and heterosexism” (Bryson, 2006, p.116).

In President Obama’s address to the students of the nation, he said all students should be made to feel safe and to “fit in” (Ronga, 2011, p.1).
This interaction in digital spaces not only provides the kind of familiarity that fosters a feeling of safety, but also educates all students on ways to express opposing beliefs and ideas without harassing and bullying those who are different.

These youth are learning to negotiate and cross between social worlds- their own and those of potential opposition to their beliefs, values, and even identities (Vivienne & Burgess, 2012, p 366-367).
LGBTQ & Digital Spaces

LGBTQ students are using digital spaces to:
• think critically
• write critically
• publish their work
...all among a diverse population across the globe.

BUT... not always in their classrooms.

Frankie W. Huff, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida USA
LGBTQ & Digital Spaces

- LGBTQ youth use digital spaces “in ways that gesture toward a political vision and narration of the queer self that might differ from older notions of gayness and queer politics” (Alexander, 2006, p. 25)

- “The Internet has become an indispensable social tool...recent developments in so-called “social media” have demonstrated the power of the ubiquitous computer network to have an impact on LGBT mental health and development” (McIntosh, 2011, p. 318).
Opportunities in the Classroom

- Digital Storytelling
- Blogs
- Wikis,
- “Back Channels”
- Social Media Sites
  - Instagram, Tumblr, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook

Frankie W. Huff, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida USA
Digital Storytelling

- Using computer-based tools to tell stories.
- The art of telling stories through multimedia, including graphics, audio, video, and Web publishing.

In the classroom, we can use the stories of others to promote understanding and acceptance and allow our students to tell their stories that have often been ‘unwanted’ or ‘ignored’ by others.

Jimmy’s Story
Digital Writing 101

Frankie W. Huff, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida USA
Blogs and Vlogs

Blog (n.)—a journal or diary that is on the Internet.

Blogger (n.)—a person who writes a blog.

Blog (v.)—to write a blog.

Bloggig (v.)—action of writing a blog.

Vlog (n.)—a video blog.

Edublogs
Simply Aubree

Frankie W. Huff, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida USA
Classroom Facebook Pages
99 Ways You Should Be Using Facebook In Your Classroom

Most of today’s students have been using Facebook since they were in middle school. Using this space for the classroom only makes sense.
Using Twitter for Research

Find information shared on Twitter using hashtags #

Frankie W. Huff, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida USA
Connecting to Authors on Twitter
Tweek The Tweet- This activity requires students to correct the grammar and mechanics of Tweets. One method uses the Tweets of famous people.

Twihaiku- Poetry written for Twitter. 140 characters is all you have!

Re-Tweeting the Masters- Students tweet famous quotes using “TwitterSpeak”
Students can upload videos to YouTube both publically and privately. These videos can be used for projects relating to almost anything. And, many students have video capabilities on their phones and tablets.

The Fault in Our Stars

Frankie W. Huff, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida USA
“If the role of education is to prepare students for a democratic and just society, then educators must make every attempt to respond to the needs of all students in a just and equitable manner” (Lopez, p. 269).
References


Frankie W. Huff, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida USA
References


