Note on the Text

This book is a synthesis of two years of collaborative ethnographic fieldwork conducted by members of the Leveling Up project, part of the MacArthur Foundation–funded Connected Learning Research Network and headed by Mizuko Ito and Katie Salen at the University of California, Irvine. Members of the Leveling Up research team include Adam Ingram-Goble of MINDBODY, Inc., Ksenia Korobkova of UC Irvine, Yong Ming Kow of City University of Hong Kong, Crystle Martin of El Camino College, Rachel Cody Pfister of UC San Diego, Matthew H. Rafflow of YouTube, Amanda Wortman of UC Irvine, and Timothy Young of Twitch. Members of the Media, Activism, and Participatory Politics (MAPP) project led by Henry Jenkins at the University of Southern California (USC), and part of the Youth and Participatory Politics Research Network (YPP), have also contributed case material. Neta Kligler-Vilenchik of Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Sangita Shresthova of USC represent the MAPP researchers contributing case material.

This book is the result of a collaborative process of joint analysis and writing that built on our earlier experiences in the Digital Youth Project (Ito et al. 2010). Research protocols and codes were coordinated across the diverse case studies, and the insights and themes in this book grew out of iterative shared analysis. Unlike a traditional edited volume in which case studies are broken out chapter by chapter, in this book each chapter includes examples from multiple cases. In other words, it is a co-authored volume to which all authors contributed throughout the book. Each chapter has one or more lead authors who took responsibility for the writing, but every chapter incorporates material and input from a wide range of co-authors and the case studies they represent. Individual researchers who led on specific case studies have written brief case overviews and learner stories that are broken out from the main text. The full range of people who have contributed to this project and this book are mentioned in the acknowledgments. The case studies interspersed through the book are presented in a more
traditional single-author format, written by the authors who led on the fieldwork for the case.

The case studies and approaches that the co-authors brought to the writing have been diverse, but we have agreed on certain conventions to provide some consistency:

- Chapter 1 provides background on how the project was organized and an overview of the cases. More detailed case reports on the five individual research studies conducted by members of the Leveling Up team between the years 2011 and 2013 are provided online at http://clalliance.org/publications/.
- The case studies were conducted using different data collection methodologies, and we have varying degrees of contextual information about our participants. In every case, if we know the information, then we have indicated age, gender, location, and what each participant self-identified as his or her racial or ethnic identity. If this information is not indicated, it means that we did not know the information for this participant because of the constraints of the particular case study. For example, in some of the studies that focus on online affinity networks, interviews were conducted over the phone or through online chat. In most cases, we derived this information from self-reports in background questionnaires we administered after most of our formal interviews. Although race is not always an analytic category relevant to our description, we thought that if racial or ethnic identity were to be mentioned for some number of participants, then we needed to be consistent in our treatment and indicate racial identity for all respondents for whom we did have this information.
- In referring to the online affinity networks studied, we have chosen to use the real names of the communities, except in instances in which the communities were relatively small and identifying the community would increase the likelihood of participants being identified, such as in the cases of the Wrestling Boards and Sackboy Planet.
- We have used pseudonyms in most cases when referring to our research participants. In some cases, our participants chose these pseudonyms. For adult participants, we offered the option of using their screen names or their real-life names. We believe that giving participants this choice allows for public recognition and honors the positive reputations that they have developed through their online affinity networks. When real names or screen names are used, we indicate this by notes to the text.