



Write4Change: An Online Global Writing Community for Youth
Trang Luu (COL 2019)
Advisor: Amy Stornaiuolo

I had the tremendous pleasure of assisting Dr. Amy Stornaiuolo and her collaborative research team in an ongoing project which aims to examine writing and literacies in transnational and digital contexts. The project centers on Write4Change, an online writing community for adolescents who are interested in creating social impact. The platform is currently in its pilot phase and involves students and teachers from six countries – South Korea, Wales, Canada, Pakistan, India, and the United States. Connected via this global network, the students learn to foster cross-cultural interactions and capitalize on the power of writing to think more broadly about and effect meaningful changes on multiple scales. During the summer, we also expanded the online network to Project Write, a Philadelphia-based writing camp affiliated with the National Writing Project. Combining our research findings and experiences in both the virtual and physical communities, the team explored major themes pertaining to adolescents’ writing and communication practices – for example, how the students fashioned their self-representations in a digital space, whether they adhered to or defied genre conventions, and how their perception of writing oscillated between a private and public act.

Participating in this research project, I had the exciting opportunity to wear more than just one hat. One of my primary tasks was to analyze the data collected online and in the writing camp to derive prominent themes and patterns, which would then contribute to the development of the curriculum for Write4Change. As a field researcher in Project Write, I worked with the two doctoral students of our team to seamlessly bridge the digital and physical spheres and encourage cross-site collaboration. I learned to not only acquire an eye for detail and keen observation skills, but also to look at the given resources from different angles. At the same time, as an active facilitator in the two writing communities, I was, to a certain extent, engaged in the production of the students’ works. I, along with the entire research team, strived to create a safe and supportive environment for the young writers without disrupting their creative processes.

PURM propelled me into a dynamic setting in which I could examine the significance of language and literacy in relation to the learners' lifelong intellectual exploration and the public's social wellbeing. It also cemented my intention to become an English major and pursue a career in education. I am immensely grateful for the academic knowledge and hands-on research experience, as well as the invaluable opportunity to identify my intellectual interests and prepare for my future endeavors.