CHAPTER 7

Location and Memory

Storying the Self, Making the Self

Identity was key in these videos; certainly, for the children concerned in both schools this was a high-stakes activity, learning how to make something that represented them in a short space of time and then exhibit it to their peers, family, and the wider community. In school A, leaving and moving to secondary school was an imperative, and so they were making something to record relationships, memories, and spaces. For the children in school B, the focus was again about leaving school (for some) and connecting with a community in which they were marginalized (for those who were staying).

The children in school A certainly had “memories” in mind throughout the project. In addition to the videos, the children were also making personal sculptures, decorating shoeboxes into which they were placing objects of significance to them from their years at school. This was a physical metaphor for their virtual experience (and one that contributed to the eventual theoretical formulation of curatorship as a literacy practice). In school B, the shoeboxes were replaced by the idea of bringing in physical resources from home for filming—media resources (such as songs of significance, etc.)—and contributing to the shaping of the packaging for the resource, their own customized cover designs.

Some of theories of identity provide ways of thinking about the processes, which the children underwent, as well as suggesting ways of looking at the artifacts they made in the schools. To begin with, we have seen throughout the videos that the children used a variety of “symbolic resources for
constructing or expressing their own identities” (Buckingham 2008, p. 5) and how in many productions these were layered, to a greater or lesser extent successfully, intertextually in production. The resources included objects from home (Raymond and Keiron’s car, Hattie and Siobhan’s Chuckie doll, Kyle’s fake teeth, and Annie’s football), which were used to generate narrative meaning across modes, echoing the storytelling in media found by other researchers who have worked with the use of physical artifacts in this way (Pahl 2003). These kinds of objects ended up in the shoeboxes too (see fig. 7.1), indicating a physical resource, akin to those used with much younger learners to manipulate and construct narrative forms from play artifacts in small worlds in boxes (Bromley 2007).

The organization of content for these boxes was significant in focusing the children on real artifacts, which were of cultural significance as markers of both “anchored” and “transient” aspects of identity (Merchant 2006); the fixed aspects and the transient affiliations that are employed as different markers through time.

In the memory boxes pictured, action figures, Pokémon, and football cards sit alongside rings, trophies, awards, and so on. The intention in the project was to place hard copies of the videos, on disc or tape, alongside these objects in the boxes, for the children literally to leave school with all of these markers of self-representation, with narratives made across all the different modalities. This aspect of construction and performance ran in parallel throughout the second half of that final summer term in school A. Thus, in the boxes, the contemporary memes of the Matrix, the England football team, Scooby Doo, and the Hulk sit alongside more personal, anchored objects, and these memetic objects and resources are echoed through the productions in the arrangements of clips from the Matrix, from footballing, and from play fighting in, for example, Raymond and Keiron’s video.

Some of the theory introduced in chapter 3, notably from Bruner (Bruner 1987), posits the idea that, in their videos, the children were “making the self” at the same time as “storying the self,” collecting and assembling visual

Figure 7.1  A selection of memory boxes.