PRODUCING PUBLICS:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE AND YOUTH
MEDIA PRODUCTION AND MENTORSHIP

by

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ABSTRACT

While youth media production work has increased dramatically over the past two decades, researchers still lack an adequate theorization of how institutionally-mediated youth production programs instigate democratic acts. Central to this deficiency are shortcomings in the two dominant frameworks typically used to conceptualize the democratic potential of young people's media work.

In response to this, I turn to the work of Hannah Arendt and use her conceptualization of public action as framed in relation to a "pedagogy of natality" to assess the relationship between creative youth practice and democracy. While Arendt's framework offers a compelling vision of democratic action, her model is also invaluable for mapping how production work affects adolescents' democratic experience. It focuses the analytic lens on agonistic struggles that expand the way youth register and pay heed to plurality.

I demonstrate this utility through a critical ethnographic study of the Summer Visions Film Institute, an initiative designed around a series of two-week digital video production programs for youth aged 14-19. In examining the Summer Visions program, I address the experience of student video producers but focus close attention on the work and experience of peer-to-peer youth mentors in the program for the following reasons. First, peer education has a role in many youth media programs but there continues to be a dearth of research on peer mentorship in media production settings. Second, while student participants take part in Summer Visions for ten days, the mentors are involved in production work on a daily basis over a seven-week period. Most are also former students of the program and so they offer a more robust set of case studies.

Using Arendt, I demonstrate how media production programs contribute in contradictory but nonetheless important ways to the formation of new publics, not because such work leads to straightforward forms of position taking about specific political projects, but because it leads to forms of thoughtfulness that challenge the lure of oblivion that haunts our lives and prevents us from seeing those who are different and yet part of our worlds.

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support, has been an "uncle" like no other, and has been a friend when I needed someone just to listen and to get me to play hockey again.

Last, to my immediate family, I express my deepest gratitude. Our son, Hamish has grown from an infant into a vibrant, funny, creative, smart and beautiful child during the time it has taken me to write this dissertation. He is our favourite person in the world and if I have missed more than a few bedtimes over the past couple of years, I so look forward to exploring real and imaginary worlds with him in the future. Of all the people who have made sacrifices to help see me through this process, it is to Pennie that I offer my greatest thanks. You have supported me, encouraged my writing, and done the lion's share of work in our family. You have shown me how to move on with things and to look forward to the future. I am forever grateful to you and want you to know how much I love getting old together.

DEDICATION

To Pennie and Hamish, with love and gratitude…

Introduction

In the contemporary globalized period, media and communication technologies occupy a central registry in our lives. This situation is not entirely new but the development and expansion of new media and the rise of information technologies have produced a break from the political, economic and cultural order of an earlier, industrial era. Marking this break is a shift from a culture dominated by print literacies to a culture dominated by the television and newer forms of digital media. There are of course many signs indicating what this change means and how it is impacting the lives of individuals, communities and nations. Given that the focus of this dissertation is on the experiences of young people, however, perhaps the most obvious and immediate indication of a change is evidenced by the amount of electronic media present in the lives of North American youth today.

Beginning in infancy, children learn the language of mass media growing up on a constant diet of screen images, audio messages and text-based communication that compete with schools and families as the primary storytellers and teachers in adolescents' lives. By way of example, most recent studies indicate that the television is on for six-to-seven hours per day in Canadian and American households (Statistics Canada, 2005). Of this time, children and young people spend between two and three hours actually watching TV; the rest of the time, the TV is a background environment, a kind of electronic-scape echoing throughout our days. The radio and other audio electronic resources (i.e., MP3 players, podcasts, etc.) fill another two to three hours while, depending on family income[i], the average North American teenager spends two to four hours per day on the Internet and/or playing computer games (Kline, 2004; Media

Awareness Network, 2000; Castells 1996). In comparison, statistics in the United States suggest the average person spends fourteen minutes per day for "interpersonal interaction in the household" (Castells 1996, p. 333). A study (Livingstone, 2002) of media use in homes in the United Kingdom indicates similar results, noting that "[t]ime spent in mediated, as opposed to personal, communication is at a historical high" (quoted in Kline, 2004, p. 146). Indicative of similar trends, in Canada, 57% of eight to sixteen-year-olds now have a TV in their bedrooms, 39% have a video game console, and 30% have a video or digital video player (Media Awareness Network, 2000).

Adding to this situation, the language of marketing and branding continue to proliferate (Buckingham, 2000b; Kline, 1993). It is estimated, for instance, that the number of advertisements seen daily by young people now averages between 2500 and 3000 (Goodman, B., 2001). No one of course pays attention to all this information[ii] but its very existence is a function of the fact that marketing to children and youth has expanded from a $100 million industry in 1983 to a $12.7 billion enterprise at the start of the new century (McChesney, 2002, p. 28). Advertisers have also become more sophisticated in targeting young people, as evidenced by the development of techniques like cool hunting in the 1990s (Klein, 2000, Goodman, B., 2001) and the expansion of viral marketing (Walker, 2004) in the 2000s. Through these and like developments, the electronic media have become an "almost constant background presence," a fabric thread throughout our lives (Castells 1996, p. 334).

In response to this, media education and youth media production in formal and informal education settings have come to be seen as crucial resources capable of helping young people to shape and influence their lives and the communities in which they exist.

Interest in the transformative possibilities enabled by learning through and about the mass media is not new. Emergent and more sustained forms of media education have in fact been in existence since the earliest days of broadcast media. If this reflects both the anxieties and the sense of opportunity created by the role of media and communication technologies in young people's lives, one result is youth media production work inside and outside formal education contexts has come to be understood in a variety of ways (Charmaraman, 2006).

For example, such work has often been represented as: an intentional process of design using available resources to create meaning (Kress, 2000; New London Group, 2000); a means for developing critical-thinking skills and engaging minority youth (Jernigan, 1998); a tool for fostering student-centred classrooms (Reilly, 1998); a creative act that can build self-esteem (Buckingham, 2000b); a possible site of progressive culture building (Goldfarb, 2002); an occasion for studying cross-cultural communication and audience reception (Buckingham, Niesyto and Fisherkeller, 2003); a positive way to recognize the significance of minority youths' lives (Goodman, 2005, 2003); and, a process for producing multimodal texts that convey meaning through images, music and language (Hull and Nelson, 2005). In addition, for some time, there has also been a strong belief that youth media production has a crucial relationship with young people's democratic practice (Burnett, 1996; Kellner and Share, 2005; Stack and Kelly, 2006, Luke, 2000; Hobbs, 1998b; Morgan, 1998; Giroux, 1994). How this relationship operates, however, continues to be much debated (Sefton-Green, 2006; Burn and Durran, 2006; Burn and Parker, 2003; Buckingham, 2006a, 2006b; Goodman, 2003; Buckingham et al, 1995).

I argue in chapter one in fact that while media production work has itself increased dramatically over the past two decades, we still lack an adequate theorization of how institutionally-mediated youth production programs instigate democratic acts. Central to this deficiency are shortcomings in the two dominant frameworks typically used to conceptualize the democratic potential of young people's media work. On the one hand, the radical emancipatory notions of democratic practice underlying a dominant strain of critical media pedagogy no longer adequately describe how youth media work connects young people with social and political change. On the other hand, liberal conceptions of empowerment and creative voice remain inadequate for conceptualizing the democratic force of young people's participation in the production of culture. In response to these shortfalls, in this study, I have turned to Hannah Arendt and used her conceptualization of public action as framed in relation to a pedagogy of natality to assess the relationship between creative youth practices and democracy.

I find Arendt useful for these purposes because rather than conceptualizing democracy in terms of notions of autonomy and emancipation or the articulation of youthful voices, she offers an alternative framework, one that more helpfully reveals how media programs impact young people. Arendt conceives of public acts as instances of agonistic struggle that preserve freedom by fostering plurality. By this she means democracy is a form of associational political action in which we initiate meaning through experience with others (Isaac, 1994). It is not action based in a set of rights that one possesses; rather, democratic practice is constituted through action that positions one in relationships with others in ways that interrupt discourses of power and processes of habituation which attenuate our sense of reality (Curtis, 1999; Buckler, 2001; Arendt,

1968). Such acts produce a space of communicative plurality because they reveal the contingencies that shape and affect our ability to act in concert with others. Democratic practice is thus about actions that expand our world by bringing us into contact with others in ways that contest and challenge the social nature of meaning. Through such actions, we enter into a state of becoming which affords opportunities for new meanings and new forms of experience to take hold.

Pedagogically, Arendt's model of public experience and democratic practice translates into a pedagogy of natality, or new beginnings (Levinson, 2002; 1997). Essentially, this means pedagogy is about generating agonistic struggle for students. To do this, however involves a paradox. On the one hand, it is about teaching as though the world is "out of joint" (Arendt, 1968, p. 189), as if it were not what it might be because of the way power sediments in discourses, institutions and visual texts. On the other hand, a pedagogy that supports democratic practice among youth must also avoid teaching in an attempt to transform the world on behalf of young people. It can't provide a fully articulated political project which students inherit because when this happens, it appears as though the route toward the resolution of the world's problems were already in place. This, however, removes from students their own future role in the body politic. Teaching for natality or the possibility of new beginnings and new forms of experience is thus about constituting productive forms of uncertainty in the service of future engagement. This means pedagogy supports democratic practice when it helps young people to think with an enlarged *mentalité*, "to care about matters of common concern and to act on this concern with others" (Isaac, 1994, p. 158).

In this dissertation, I use Arendt's work on public experience and its translation into a pedagogy of natality to examine the pedagogical design and the experience of a group of young people involved in a youth media program located in Vancouver, British Columbia. I make the case that while Arendt's framework offers a compelling vision of democratic action, her model is also invaluable for mapping how production work affects adolescents' democratic practice by fostering or negating agonistic struggles that expand the way youth register and pay heed to plurality. I demonstrate this argument through a critical ethnographic study of the Summer Visions Film Institute, an initiative designed around a series of two-week digital video production programs for youth aged 14-19.

Summer Visions is organized through a partnership between Cityschool's Film and Theatre Department and Pacific Cinémathèque, a local film institute. It operates throughout July and August in a converted high school automotive studio and is targeted at low-income or otherwise marginalized youth from across the Lower Mainland region in British Columbia. The program began in 2000 when a teacher at Cityschool, a community media producer and the author worked together to organize the funding, administrative structures and the first iteration of the project's pedagogical design. As I argue in chapters two and four, Summer Visions offers an ideal case study in this dissertation because the program shares many of the aims and objectives of other community-based media projects.

In examining the summer program, I address the experience of student video producers but I focus central attention on the work and experience of peer-to-peer youth mentors in the program. I attend closely to the insights and practices of these youth for two reasons. First, peer education has a role in many youth media programs but there

continues to be a dearth of research on peer mentorship in media production settings (Charmaraman, 2006). Second, while student participants take part in Summer Visions for nine or ten days, the mentors are involved in production work on a daily basis over a seven-week period. Most are also former students of the program and so they offer a more robust example to demonstrate how Arendt's work can help us to make sense of the way creative media work impacts young people's relationships with democratic practice.

Research Objectives of this Study

To document how an Arendtian framework of public action, conceived in terms of a pedagogy of natality, can be used to assess the way democratic practice is and is not fostered through a youth media program, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is Hannah Arendt's understanding of public acts and how is this related to a democratically-oriented pedagogy?

2. In what ways does Arendt's conception of public action as conceived in relation to a pedagogy of natality help us to understand the relationship between democratic practice and (a) Summer Visions' pedagogical design and mentor training program, (b) the production of Summer Visions videos, and (c) the experience of youth production mentors in the program?

3. In what ways does the conceptual focus offered by Arendt's framework help educators, researchers and young people understand and address the forces and tensions that can undermine the role of democratic practice in youth media production programs?

Brief Overview of Chapters

To address these questions, in chapter one I provide a short history of the field of youth media production pedagogies in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. I assess how youth media work has been understood in relation to democratic practice and where limitations and tensions remain in these conceptualizations. I focus on the early development of production work in the UK and then examine how the rise of television in the 1950s and video production technologies and community-based media production in the 1960s and 1970s in the US and Canada shaped debates around youth media. I note how media education and youth media production changed in the 1980s and highlight limitations in critical media literacy projects that evolved during this decade. To set up my turn to Arendt's model of public experience, I show how questions about the relationship between democratic practice and students' media work were complicated in the 1990s and 2000s. David Buckingham's research on young people's media use looms large in this discussion, setting the backdrop for my turn to Arendt.

In chapter two, I introduce Hannah Arendt's model of the public realm and identify how a conception of democratically-oriented pedagogy arises from this work. I differentiate Arendt's position from liberal notions of the public sphere and from Jurgen Habermas' recent work on the public realm. I note that Arendt understands public acts to have a dual function in relation to democratic practice. Such acts resist normalization, domination and alienation, thereby securing the persistence of a common public world. At the same time, Arendt argues these actions simultaneously preserve freedom by bringing into view the socially contingent nature of meaning and our ethical responsibility to this. I then show what a democratically-oriented pedagogy inspired by

Arendt's conception of the public realm would entail. I indicate the similarities and differences between this framework and tendencies within critical media pedagogy and then conclude by suggesting why the Summer Visions Film Institute offers an interesting example to evaluate how youth media production pedagogies impact democratic practice.

In chapter three, I outline the critical ethnographic method used in this study, situate the Summer Visions program in relation to the community and school where it takes place, and describe key participants in the research. I locate myself in relation to the summer program, indicate my data collection resources and procedures, and describe the methods used in my data analysis.

In chapter four, I situate Summer Visions in relation to other youth media programs and examine the program's pedagogical design in relation to the notion of natality. I examine the program coordinators' beliefs about Summer Visions' mission and goals and note tensions and differences in regard to these beliefs. I detail the mentors' preparation and training and examine the pedagogical practices used throughout the production cycle. Throughout, I note how Arendt's conception of public experience and a pedagogy of natality helps to reveal the role of democratic practice in relation to Summer Visions' pedagogical design and mentor training program, thus addressing Research Question #2(a) listed above.

Chapter five examines how a struggle over meaning is enacted in the production of Summer Visions videos. I situate this analysis by summarizing the array of videos produced in the program in 2006, noting common characteristics and features and also pointing out that some have little to do with acts that contest meaning, especially in regard to the way power operates belatedly in discourses and practices. I suggest why this

is the case, especially in regard to challenges faced by youth mentors in the program, and then follow this discussion with an extended analysis of three films made in 2006. Each demonstrates how a struggle over meaning is produced in Summer Visions, thus addressing Research Question #2(b). Not all these videos successfully carry through on this work and so I also use these videos to indicate how practices of sedimentation and conditions of belatedness can limit and undermine agonistic struggles in youth media work. This analysis is meant to contribute to Research Question #3.

Chapter six concludes my analysis. Here, I assess the degree to which participation in the program has fostered an understanding of the ethical and social conditions underlying the production of meaning among a group of peer-to-peer mentors. I focus on this question as a way of demonstrating how an Arendtian conception of public action can be used to understand the relationship between democratic practice and the experience of youth mentors in the program. I draw on extended interviews with a group of mentors and examine their narratives for insights into how Summer Visions has shaped their investment in and responsibility to plurality and the social construction of meaning. Of course how such an investment in public experience arises is not a straightforward process. Nonetheless, the mentors' descriptions offer a telling portrait of the successes and tensions that are part of the way young people become oriented to democratic practice through media production work. In this way, chapter six addresses Research Question #2(c) and Question #3.

In the conclusion, I revisit my research questions and summarize how Arendt's framework of public action conceived in terms of a pedagogy of natality helps to make clear the way the Summer Visions program fosters forms of democratic practice for a

group of young people. I assess the limitations of this study and also indicate future research directions that arise from this work.

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[i] Higher income families tend to spend less time watching TV and more time on the Internet, while the reverse is true for those at the lower end of the income scale (Media Awareness Network, 2000).

[ii] Most estimates suggest we respond positively or negatively to approximately twelve (Neuman, 1991).

Chapter 1

Youth Media Production Pedagogies and Democratic Practice

The past two decades have witnessed a significant growth in youth media production programs in schools and among not-for profit arts organizations and community groups. As these developments have taken shape, young people, teachers, media education professionals, researchers, and activists have argued that there is a vital relationship between practical production work and adolescents' democratic practice (Kellner and Share, 2005; Stack and Kelly, 2006, Luke, 2000; Hobbs, 1998b; Morgan, 1998; Giroux, 1994). Just what this relationship is, however, remains unclear (Sefton-Green, 2006; Burn and Durran, 2006; Burn and Parker, 2003; Buckingham, 2006a, 2006b; Goodman, 2003; Buckingham et al, 1995).

This is hardly a problem unique to those who work, teach and conduct research about youth and media. Long since the publication of Dewey's Experience and Education (1998/1938), educators have struggled to demonstrate how schools and other sites of learning can be laboratories of democracy. Marking the way educator and student-led practices support democratic habits, however, can be tricky (Molnar, 2005; Kelly, 2003; Wilson, 2002). Youth media production has special significance in this regard because the ability to analyze and critically respond to the way influence and power are exercised in an expansive media system is crucial if our visual culture is to be a space of contestation and struggle (Hjarvard, 2003). With this in mind, in this chapter, I provide a short history examining limitations and tensions in the way youth media production pedagogies have been understood in relation to democratic practice in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada.

I begin by focusing on the early development of production work in the UK under the influence of F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, and then examine how the rise of television in the 1950s and portable video production technologies and community-based media production in the 1960s and 1970s in the US and Canada impacted the development of youth media. Throughout, I mark how conceptions of democratic practice are understood.

I turn to the 1980s and note how the field of media education and youth media production changed as a result of economic recession and the influence of British cultural studies as exemplified by the formative work of Len Masterman (1985, 1983b, 1980). I briefly indicate how this work influenced the integration of the key concepts model of media education in secondary school curricula in the UK, Canada, and the US, and also mark parallels between Masterman and the development of critical media pedagogy in the US. I note that a distinguishing feature of this work is a new attention to the potentially critical role popular culture can play in classrooms, particularly when teachers attend to the active relationship audiences have with media texts. I suggest how the critical interrogation of media texts is framed in relation to a radical, utopian notion of democratic practice, especially in the work of Giroux and Aronowitz (1991), and then highlight limitations in this project.

In the 1990s, I note that youth media production began to proliferate in response both to the perceived limitations of "critical consumption" (Willis, 1990) in media education and to the increasing availability of low-cost digital production resources. Community-based, informal education organizations were central to these developments in Canada and the US. I argue that as this work has evolved, there has been an increasing move

away from talk of a relationship between youth media production and notions of emancipatory, radical democracy. As evidence, I indicate that even in a program like the Educational Video Centre in New York, which draws on certain Freirean notions of pedagogy as part of a project geared toward political consciousness-raising, it is increasingly clear that youth media work does not lead to radical democratic practice (Goodman, 2005, 2003). It does, however, further a range of other significant outcomes.

I note that questions about the relationship between democratic practice and youth media production have been complicated in the 1990s and the 2000s by exaggerated claims from mainstream and often commercial sources about the potential for democratizing knowledge offered by new media technologies (Goldfarb, 2002). I indicate why we need to be cautious about such claims and also argue that we need a convincing framework to assess the relationship between youth production pedagogies and democratic practice, particularly in an age when practical work is increasing in both institutionally mediated and more private youth spaces (Sefton-Green, 2006; Buckingham, 2006a). Some, including David Buckingham (2006a, 2003), have urged caution here, worrying that the development of such a framework risks imposing educators' political interests onto students' work. Instead, he argues research is better conceptualized in terms of the way young people use media. I note that this turn to media use in research has born important results, leading to a much deeper understanding of how production work impacts young people. I argue, however, that democratic practice seems to be implicit in much of what we know media production facilitates for youth. Because of this, I propose a turn to Hannah Arendt's work on the public realm. Arendt is not typically thought of in relation to youth or media production, yet her work on public

acts and the notion of natality or new beginnings afford valuable resources for examining how youth media production experiences lead to "outer-regarding norms and actions" that preserve freedom, even if they do not secure autonomy (Trentmann, 2007).

Mapping the Early Influences

The rich history of media production pedagogy is inseparable from the development of media education. In fact today the boundaries between the analytic work of media education and the creative work of media production are porous (Burn and Durran, 2006; Buckingham, 2006b; Goldfarb, 2002; Luke, 2002, 2000).

Media education, like movements in mass literacy, has a long history of concern for questions of democracy. Education about and through the mass media began with the early history of cinema itself, with the development of *actualité* films in the 1890s and the early use of educational films in European, American and Canadian classrooms (Goldfarb, 2002; Swan, 1984). By the 1930s, the first sustained forms of media education would appear, largely in response to the growing power of visual culture, including comic books, the cinema and advertisements (von Feilitzen, 2000). Walter Benjamin's provocative essay, "The Author as Producer,"[i] was among the earliest examples of a pedagogy addressed to new media forms. Other examples – including the work of F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson (1933) in the UK, and Marshall McLuhan (1951) in Canada – were more conservative, aiming to inoculate audiences against the pernicious effects of mass communications. Pedagogically, the ideal was to denigrate popular media as lesser cultural forms while promoting aesthetic productions (from the traditions of literature and visual art, etc.) thought to hold the key to a fuller and richer life. Leavis and Thompson (1933) feared that mass media would lead to the loss of an "organic

community with the living culture it embodied" (p. 1). Among other things, this was thought to pose a threat to the stability of the working class whose mark on political life was increasingly apparent and volatile in the pre-war years.

Perhaps surprisingly, the first school and film club-based production programs started in the UK during this period. Largely developed under the direction of English teachers – influenced by the work of Leavis and the "practical criticism" of I.A. Richards (1929) – this work was driven by a desire to map how the technology operated. As a result, students didn't make complete films but instead were given exercises to explore film grammar. Such activities were derived from the Soviet filmmaker and montage theorist – V.I. Pudovkin (Sefton- Green, 1995; Buckingham et al., 1995). This emergent interest in production pedagogies continued after the war and throughout the 1950s as film education took off in Britain, led by educational initiatives at the British Film Institute (BFI) and the founding of the Society for Film Teachers, later to become the Society for Education in Film and Television (SEFT). Reflecting the ongoing influence of Leavis, work during the decade centred on developing what BFI writer Grace Greiner described as "a critical approach to film, ... to develop standards of taste discrimination" (quoted in Sefton-Green, 1995, p. 79). The creative outlet offered by filmmaking held some appeal, but the real focus was on developing an understanding of film language in order to protect young people against what another writer at the time called, "the moral dangers of the cinema" (Jan Marie Lambert Peters, quoted in Sefton-Green, 1995, p. 80). Production work was not thought to be an outlet for democratic practice, in other words, as much as a useful process that held the potential to protect young people against a commercial media thought responsible for undermining and diminishing democratic life.

In the 1960s, this sentiment continued to carry significant influence but a pedagogical shift changed the debate. A new division among educators interested in youth media production surfaced. Underlying this division was a common concern for how best to involve working class children in schooling. Unlike older cultural forms such as literature, new media, including film, seemed to offer this possibility. In an important way, this assumption reflected a change in attitude about popular culture itself. Suspicion remained in certain quarters about the impact movies could have on youth, but by the 1960s, it was becoming evident that cinema could be tremendously useful in the classroom, particularly where the interests of working class youth were concerned. This notion reflected the influence of writers like Richard Hoggart (Uses of Literacy, 1957) and Raymond Williams (Culture and Society, 1958 and The Long Revolution, 1961), both of whom were critical of Hollywood and early commercial television but were eager to transcend the distinctions between high and low culture that had characterized the cultural criticism of Leavis. Hoggart and Williams argued that culture is best understood to refer to patterns of meaning within everyday life. Making sense of these patterns meant studying popular culture texts, particularly for working class adults and children who were often alienated or excluded from participating in the world of high culture.

Pedagogically, this turn led to a new split among educators. On the one hand, it resulted in a form of snobbery toward production work itself. Paddy Whannel and Peter Harcourt's (1964) edited text, Film Teaching, best represents this position. Here, filmmaking was equated to a form of manual labour, a kind of mundane exercise in skills building. In contrast, attention to the social role of cinema, particularly with the aide of the new science of semiology, was seen to offer "opportunities for the exercise of critical

distinction" (Sefton-Green, 1995, p. 84). Through this, students could learn to appreciate the expressive subtlety of great international film, while simultaneously learning why the products of Hollywood studios or commercial television networks were suspect.

On the other hand, Douglas Lowndes' book, Film Making in Schools (1968), argued that taking film seriously meant learning how "new media in themselves offer new and different ways of seeing" (Sefton-Green, 1995, p. 85). Lowndes argued that this required practical work, which afforded students a wider range of resources to understand their society. He hoped to use film and other forms of art to politicize urban youth. By fusing vision and expression and allowing young people to tell their own stories, Lowndes argued filmmaking offered a form of counter practice to traditional academic work. This was thought promising as a way for working class youth to take control of their lives in ways that would influence their future prospects.

Looking back, it's clear Lowndes' argument reflected the legacy of "the prevailing ideologies of progressiv[ism]" that held court at this time (Sefton-Green, 1995, p. 86). In the end, such progressivism romanticized student creativity and largely served to validate "middle class achievement,... [while] conspiring to fail working class children in whose interests child-centred programs were presumed to operate" (Sefton-Green, 1995, p. 85). At the same time, the Whannel/Harcourt film criticism position failed to escape from a deep-seated suspicion – one that continues to resonate in education circles today – that practical work is limited to the application of analytic knowledge, rather than a resource through which such knowledge can be learned and understood. As the 1970s began then a tension circled around how youth media production was understood in the UK in relation to democratic practice. Those who saw production work as capable of offering expressive

possibilities, especially for people excluded from cultural life and social and political participation, seemed incapable of simultaneously attending to the social and political role of cinema and pedagogy. Meanwhile, those who focused on the analysis of cinema's role as a social and political force seemed unable to combine this position with attention to how production work could alter and expand the lives of young people and others. In North America, the history of youth media production work is somewhat different, and in an important way, developments taking place in the US and Canada during the 1960s and 1970s seemed at least on the surface to offer a way beyond the bind afflicting UK educators.

Television and Youth Media Production in America in the Post-War Years

The arrival of television in North America in the 1950s, unlike in the UK, was greeted with a degree of enthusiasm in education circles. Like film and radio before it and digital media today, initially, television was envisioned (and promoted) as a tool capable of supporting the extension of democratic ways of life (Swan, 1984; Goldfarb, 2002). It seemed to offer educators a means of breaking down the barriers of locality by providing an 'electronic window on the world' that revealed new experiences previously only available to those able to travel to far off places. In the US, interest in the role of television in education was also fueled by Cold War concerns (Goldfarb, 2002). The successful launch of Sputnik in 1957 accentuated a crisis evident in the American public school system throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In response, largely under the leadership of the Ford Foundation and the National Association of Educational Broadcasters, television was proffered as an ideal tool for teaching and indoctrinating urban youth whose schools were plagued by under-funding, teacher shortages, and supply gaps.

Television could reach more children while simultaneously extending the influence of exemplary teachers contracted to deliver lessons.

Not surprisingly, if this rhetoric and practice held up for a time, the results of these early efforts were mixed. Test scores seemed to rise, but evaluation studies demonstrated that "television instruction was most effective in limited doses, and that it should not take up a major portion of any pupil's day" (Goldfarb, 2002, p. 49). Beyond the schoolhouse walls, it was also becoming apparent that "most children's programming was produced with the size of the audience rather than children's education in mind[. As a result,] television [became] the source of anxious discourses about mesmerized children entranced by mindless cartoons, punctuated by messages from paying sponsors" (Kline et al, 2006, p. 132; Kline, 1993). Fueling these concerns among educational progressives was additional research which indicated the effects of commercial media on children's socialization reproduced class divisions. Television, it turned out, "could both support learning and school achievement among brighter middle-class students who were intellectually prepared, but also distract poorer students from reading and homework, leading to a downward spiral of academic achievement" (Kline et al, 2006, p. 132). If the drive toward media education as opposed to education through the media needed a boost, these studies seemed to provide it.

Concerns about children's leisure time were of course not new, but debates about television in the 1950s suggested that older worries about the place of fighting, vulgarity, and sexuality in children's games and pastimes were shifting (Cook, 2001). Now the real question was: what happens when control of childhood itself moves beyond the reach of families and local communities – to film and television studios, boardrooms, and

advertising agencies? The popularity of cultural critics like Vance Packard (The Hidden Persuaders), Marshall McLuhan (The Gutenberg Galaxy, Understanding Media), and later, John Berger (Ways of Seeing) fuelled these debates. Pedagogically at least, one response in the 1960s grew out of developments taking place in the arena of community media production.

The story of local, community-based media initiatives differs depending on national context, but if we begin with the US environment for the moment, it's clear that the development of portable video recorders and cable television distribution systems changed the landscape of advocacy video work during the 1960s (Jankowski, 2002). Community media refers to a wide range of communication forms – including, radio and television, newspapers and magazines, and now, electronic communication networks – which are used in relation to a geographically defined space and a local set of issues and actions. In the latter half of the 1960s, artists like Nam June Paik in the US positioned their work as community resources and experimented with video as a way to document street protests, bystander commentary and civil rights activism, among other public events (Goldfarb, 2002). The success of this work informed other artists and alongside the development of the first 16-millimetre film production workshops for inner city teenagers at Buffalo's Channel of Soul and the Film Club in New York City, significant optimism began to emerge about the role portable and relatively inexpensive video technology could play in effecting social change, particularly for youth (Goodman, 2003).

By the 1970s, this optimism was given further life through the development of community access cable television distribution. Community access became a reality in

the United States through a federal mandate that required the burgeoning cable media system provide access to cable broadcasting for the community. In the early 1970s, this lead activists to launch video collectives and community broadcast centres in rural and urban locales. Aided by newly available government arts funds – provided by organizations like the National Endowment for the Arts, which was created in 1965 – the staff at non-profit video centres and cable access television stations – like Appalshop in Appalachia and Downtown Community Television and the Paper Tiger Television Collective in New York – started to provide production workshops for community members as part of their work. The point here was to serve those "whose interests and views were typically not represented in the mainstream medium, from the networks to public television" (Goldfarb, 2002, p. 67).

At least initially, the idealistic aim of the community video movement was to use video to reconfigure the public sphere. The mobility and access of the portable videotape recorder was envisioned as a resource capable of reclaiming the cultural space dominated by broadcast television. Lili Berko captures this sentiment:

> The coupling of the portable videotape recorder (porta-pak) with the advent of the videocassette offered artists and social activists alike an opportunity to participate in the production of images that were to shape their culture. The most revolutionary aspect of the porta-pak was its mobility. Through video, the mystique of production was shattered and the streets became equally important sites of textual inscription. Video soon became the vehicle through which the social world could be easily documented, the vehicle which would record the voices and the images of the Newark riots, or a Mardi Gras celebration; as such it proclaimed the public sphere to be its own (quoted in Burnett, 1996, p. 292).

Berko nicely captures here the spirit of a left-media critique that was highly influential during this period. The essential argument here – which has a bearing on the division we witnessed in the UK – is that video production can be the very source for a robust and

popularizing critique of the mainstream broadcast media. That is, the US community video movement suggested that artists, activists and students don't need to fear media. Rather, they can become the media and through this, reclaim the public sphere in ways that transform social and political life (Burnett, 1996).

Video education programs grew out of these developments. To begin with, these programs were centred in non-profit organizations or community groups and were driven by a fairly didactic pedagogy. Goldfarb (2002) points to a crucial essay published by James Donald in 1977[ii] in defining this project. Essentially, Donald argued students could be taught analytic skills for critiquing the mainstream media through production experiences. The aim was to teach students to be critical producers and not just consumers. By learning to use video cameras, design interviews, write scripts, and make group editorial decisions, Donald argued, students would learn "the first crucial step of revealing the human construction, the non-naturalness of the products of the media ... [Students would learn] to reveal how the ideological messages of the mass media are put together ..., and to seek effective codes for [their] own messages" (Donald, quoted in Goldfarb, 2002, pp. 68-69). As these developments were taking place, David Trend (1992) has documented how experiments with media production technologies in US schools during the 1970s allowed a brief period of hands-on work where students could investigate how knowledge is produced and reproduced through technological means. This ended in the early 1980s when funding cuts undertaken by the administration of President Ronald Reagan ended most school-based production initiatives (Trend, 1992). The notion of student-as-producer would continue to find resonance in the late 1980s and

1990s, however, especially as technological changes made it increasingly possible for schools and informal education organizations to develop media production programs.

Canada, Media Culture and a Nascent Media Education Movement

In Canada, the genesis of production pedagogies has been equally attuned to issues of media and the democratic participation, but a slightly different set of concerns has driven the agenda. Attention to media culture and media production on this side of the 49th parallel has long been influenced by anxieties about cultural sovereignty and the ability of broadcasters to reflect the country's diverse populations and regions (Druick, 2007; Andersen et al., 2000; Swan, 1984). These issues inspired the development of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in 1936, whose mandate was and is to develop national programming that promotes all things uniquely Canadian[iii]. The National Film Board (NFB) followed in 1939 and under the guiding vision of John Grierson, it dominated Canadian film production for the next two decades, pioneering work in social documentary, animation, documentary drama, and direct cinema. In 1955, in response to the introduction of television three years earlier, the Fowler Commission led to the development of the Canadian Broadcasting Act (1958) and eventually, the Canadian Radio, Television, and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) in 1968. In the mid-1960s, these developments coalesced and contributed to a cultural and educational environment ripe for the growth of early media education and youth media production work.

Operating in partnership with provincial ministries of education and the National Advisory Council of School Broadcasting, CBC Radio began school broadcasts in the 1930s (Swan, 1984). The programming on offer supplemented teachers' curricular

resources and was especially popular in rural communities where education through the media provided access to material and information not otherwise available. In the 1940s and 1950s, the NFB continued the tradition of providing audio-visual resources designed to inform and educate Canadian children and youth about their country through a national school program that offered films addressing curricular areas like geography, history, natural science, art, and health. Much of this work is now remembered for its didactic tone, aesthetic formality and strident commitment to information provision and citizenship building (Druick, 2007). Besides encouraging film use in the classroom, however, the NFB's work in schools fostered important connections and partnerships with the education community. These linkages led teachers to join the NFB education program and also set the ground for a long tradition of collaboration between NFB staff and schools (Swan, 1984). In the 1960s, following an internal study about the use and value of TV in schools, CBC television began twice weekly Canadian School Telecasts. Like the NFB program, this initiative was also intended to teach students about Canada, but it had the added objective of supporting students who were doing poorly in academic subjects like physics and chemistry, English and social studies. CBC's school broadcasts lasted until the end of the 1960s, when changes in federal communications policy allowed the provinces to develop their own educational broadcasters. This led to the creation of TV Ontario, Radio-Quebec and eventually, Access Alberta and the Knowledge Network in British Columbia (Wilson et al., 1984).

Provincial broadcasters would subsequently become crucial providers of audio-visual resources meant to support diverse curricula. At the same time, in the mid-1960s the tradition of using broadcast media in Canadian schools would take a more critical turn.

Up until this point, CBC and NFB media resources had largely been used to enhance student learning by providing education *through* the media. But a burgeoning awareness that popular television and movies were shaping and impacting young people's lives led to the development of film courses in secondary schools in various districts throughout Canada (Andersen et al, 2000, p. 140). These courses would blossom into a "screen education" movement that fostered an early period of growth in media education, which as in the UK, drew inspiration from cultural shifts in the way film was understood. No longer seen simply as forms of entertainment, screen education focused on the way popular, Hollywood movies reflected social and cultural values. Films – and particularly those that addressed social and cultural change in the 1960s, including Easy Rider and Medium Cool – were thought to deserve critical attention in the same way novels and other print-based forms deserved literary attention. This meant teaching students to understand the language of cinema as well as the way movies engage with and shape the prospects for social and political change. A progressive and well-funded Ministry of Education in Ontario was especially noteworthy for supporting this work. Unfortunately, most of these courses were short-lived as budget cutbacks and a shift to "back-to-basics" philosophy effected school curricula in the late 1970s (Andersen et al., 2000). Nonetheless, these developments were significant in breaking down barriers regarding the use of popular culture in schools.

Reconfiguring the relationship between learning and popular media was also influenced by two other developments in Canada during the 1960s. First, as in the US and the UK, Canadian educators in Toronto and Vancouver began experimenting with the development of 8mm and Super 8mm filmmaking classes and student film festivals

during this period (Duncan, personal communication, January 31, 2007). Much of this work centred on the aesthetics of production and the role filmmaking might have in providing students with a voice. Nonetheless, these initiatives, alongside early school-based video production programs, were significant developments that allowed students to engage in hands-on work with newly portable media technologies (Duncan, personal communication, January 31, 2007). If this was important for advancing pedagogies of production in Canada, a more provocative set of developments was simultaneously underway outside the schoolhouse walls.

During the 1960s, film culture in Canada changed. For the first time really, the "glimmerings of a truly Canadian cinema" began to appear (Knelman, 1977, p. 11). But for the NFB and CBC, English Canada had largely been absorbed with images from elsewhere until this period. This began to change however, in the early 1960s. Spurred on by newly available funding from the Canada Council for the Arts (created in 1957) and influenced by successful and innovative work coming from France's New Wave directors, both French and English Canadian cinema showed signs of new ambitions and curiousities[iv]. Coincident with this, the film and video co-operative movement began to develop across the country, providing equipment and community for a range of film and video makers for the first time. Vancouver's Intermedia, a loose collection of artists, filmmakers, poets, and performers was the first group to receive funding support for this kind of work. The collective dissolved in 1972 but a series of media-related organizations developed from its ashes, including: Pacific Cinémathèque, Western Front, Satellite Video Exchange, Video Inn, and the Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution West (now Moving Images Distribution). Other cooperatives developed in cities and communities

across the country, feeding a growing interest in media culture and the role of portable

media technologies in the development of aesthetic and social change.

In the midst of these developments, the NFB initiated a new program in community

media production that would become renowned for its innovative work. Challenge for

Change was created in 1968 and is still considered a model for community participation

in television and film production (Druick, 2007). The inspiration for CitizenShift, the

NFB's current citizenship participation website, Challenge for Change was developed to

document and provide research into the everyday struggles of communities so

governments might address obvious inequities across the country (Burnett, 1996). Born

of a time when growing social unrest and flourishing resistance movements – including

Quebec nationalists, feminists, and those fighting for First Nations sovereignty – were

transforming Canadian society, the program employed "a cinema-verité aesthetic, with

the camera work and direction increasingly taken out of the hands of professional

filmmakers and surrendered to community members themselves" (Hutcheson, 2005).

More than 80 productions were created, and in combination with the burgeoning cultural

nationalism of the era, Challenge for Change broke down barriers between professionals

and amateurs. "The idealism of Challenge for Change was based on notions of

democratic access" (Burnett, 1996, p. 296). It was about giving people the technology to

tell their stories, and in a country that had long struggled to define a cinematic legacy, the

program contributed to an innovative documentary tradition. The NFB's flagship

initiative in community media lasted until 1980. Over its history, work produced included

films on First Nations communities in Alberta, African-Canadian communities in

Halifax, and impoverished people in Montreal, all of which was shown in schools across

the country (Swan, 1984). If this helped to expand the repertoire of films available to Canadian educators, more important for our purposes was the way the program demonstrated how social justice pedagogies could be married to new media technologies to promote social activism and change. In the 1990s, this agenda would be taken up again by not-for profit groups working with Canadian youth, but not before a period of transition in the 1980s, when alternative forms of media production and notions of student-as-producer would wane both in school and informal learning environments.

A New Era: Media Education and Media Production in the 1980s and 1990s

In the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and, eventually, Brian Mulroney led a neo-conservative turn in a period of economic recession in the UK, the US and Canada. Ultimately, these events curtailed the development of production-based youth work for a time. Simultaneously, however, if the implementation of media production programs in schools and among community-based organizations became more difficult, the nascent success of early school-based film education programs in the UK and Canada led ambitious education officials (in London and the province of Ontario) to focus attention on the formalization of media education in elementary and secondary schools. In undertaking these initiatives, the work of Len Masterman (1985, 1983a, 1983b, 1980) would prove to be crucial.

The notion that media literacy is fundamentally a process of fostering conceptual understanding through both analytic and production activities has been at the centre of teachers' pedagogical practices for over two decades. Often called the "key concepts model," a crucial assumption here is that young people's work with certain concepts can lead to empowerment and informed democratic practice in a media saturated society.

Masterman's influential text, <u>Teaching the Media</u> (1985) was really the first comprehensive treatment of this pedagogical method. Using slightly different designations, and drawing from work in political economy, British cultural studies, and semiotics, Masterman argued that media education is about teaching students to engage with issues of production, language, representation, and audiences. By understanding these conceptual frames, young people are enabled to address how meaning operates in the electronic media. These concepts allow one to map mediated experience and are especially important when students create their own texts. Youth production was never Masterman's field of expertise, but he didn't ignore the benefits arising from student-made work. He cautioned that early production projects can imitate the mass media programming children and young people regularly see, or turn media education into an exercise in technical writing. But he also described how this work enables youthful confidence and critical understanding to flourish[v]. When undertaken with a critical lens, then production was thought to be a "necessary means [for] developing an autonomous critical understanding" (Masterman, 1985, p. 27). In this way, Masterman attempted a synthesis of the expressivist traditions in British media literacy alongside the more provocative analysis of media language offered within British cultural studies and semiotics. Literary and ideological forms of deconstruction were at the centre of his framework and were understood to hold the potential to empower students to investigate how hegemony (particularly in relation to class) operates in the mainstream media.

Because media culture is a vernacular in young people's lives, Masterman also argued that teaching critical production literacies must be non-hierarchical. Educators still have a central role in making "problematic what [students] think they know," but

practical work was not understood to be about recuperating students' tastes (Masterman, 1985, p. 28). Rather, it is about opening the curriculum to student interests and concerns, thus changing the learning dynamics characteristic of industrial classroom life (Luke, 2000). Ever suspect of the whims of progressive education, Masterman was equally wary of teaching practices that substitute the views and opinions of educators for those of students. This is another version of what Paulo Freire called, the "banking" concept of education, where "the scope of action allowed to students [extends] only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits [of knowledge]" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). In contrast to this, Masterman (1985) challenged teachers to make media education a dialogic, democratic pedagogy, one which "involves listening carefully and responding directly to what has just been said. It [must] genuinely [be] a group process (rather than something which is engaged in by a number of discrete individuals) in which members recognize the power which can be generated through co-operative learning, group action and reflection" (p. 33). If successful, critical autonomy was thought to be the result. For Masterman (1985), this meant: "The acid test of any media education programme is the extent to which pupils are critical in their own use and understanding of media when the teacher is not there" (pp. 24-25).

With this publication, Masterman's critical pedagogy influenced teachers around the world. His work was formative in shaping media education and production curricula in the UK throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, while also influencing educational publications by organizations like the British Film Institute. In Canada, Masterman's (1985) text was a key resource informing the design of Ontario's secondary school curriculum in 1987[vi]. The media education components of this curriculum, in turn,

influenced the development of media literacy in British Columbia in the mid-1990s and curricula in the remaining provinces and three territories in the 2000s (Media Awareness Network, 2007). Masterman's work was similarly formative in the development of media literacy and production pedagogies in the US (Goodman, 2005, 2003; Kubey, 2003; Hobbs, 1998a, 1998b).

Sefton-Green (1995) has argued that at least one reason for this success is that the literary and ideological forms of deconstruction that are at the centre of Masterman's project lend themselves to assessment in schools. Even when students are producing their own media work, in other words, it is possible to assess whether they are right or wrong in their use of a specific sound design or a genre style. It is also easy to assess for correctness when one is concerned with a student's analysis of an advertisement or their assessment of the lighting and editing techniques used by news broadcasts. Because of this, while Masterman's pedagogical framework was intended to discourage educators from using the key concepts model to support a "one-size-fits-all" curriculum (Morgan, 1998), this has not always happened in practice. In fact, Morgan's (1996) research in Ontario in the 1990s indicated that teachers tend to use deconstruction as part of a fairly traditional pedagogical formula in which students are asked to assess for truth and other non-negotiable outcomes in analyzing the media. Where this was a disappointing result, Masterman's work also posed a larger problem specific to my concern for the relationship between youth media production and democratic practice.

In the context of the 1980s, Masterman attempted to negotiate an important shift in thinking about media education and youth media production. He was especially concerned to move both fields away from evaluative judgments that discriminate against

the mass media as lesser forms of culture. To do this, he emphasized investigation in media education and media production with the aim of having students determine how meaning is constituted and circulated in popular culture. Ideological deconstruction in many ways was and is the central drama in this project. This, however, posed a difficulty for Masterman. On the one hand, his agenda was more nuanced than some (Sefton-Green, 1995; Buckingham, 2003) have argued[vii]. At the same time, Masterman's most important writing was produced in a time when ideological deconstruction meant leading young people toward autonomy relative to the hegemonic conditions operative in media environments. By this I mean media education and youth media production were seen to further democratic practice when they led children and young people to an emancipatory condition in which they are free from the constitutive influences of the mainstream media. Evidence that Masterman conceived of media literacy and democratic acts in this way is apparent when he frames deconstruction as a rational, objective form of analysis that distances students from the media's influence. It is about a process of demystification that politicizes and positions students on the outside of media culture so they can act in ways that lead toward alternative social futures. Or at least that is the hope. The difficulty is research in both classroom settings and informal learning environments has been hard pressed to show such outcomes (Sefton-Green, 1995; Buckingham, 2003, 2000a, 1996; Goldfarb, 2002). Moreover, it is not entirely clear what autonomy vis à vis the mainstream media would mean today. Where this uncertainty was a problem in Masterman's project, it was perhaps a more significant difficulty in the critical media pedagogy that developed in the US during the same period.

Critical media pedagogy (Giroux, 1996, 1994, 1988; Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991; McLaren et al, 1995) also drew on British cultural studies while rejecting modernist and conservative educationalists' claims about the destructive force of "mass culture" on disenfranchised youth. Rather, in a postmodern world where the simulacra and electronic media are everywhere, Giroux, Aronowitz and others argued pop cultural forms are significant sites of confrontation and agency. Movies, television programs, and advertisements, etc. produce "a complex and contradictory sphere in which dominant culture attempts to structure experience through the production of meaning" (Sholle & Denski, 1995, p. 19). Because these forms are always incomplete texts, however, the investments youth make in them mean the popular media also "provide possibilities for more open democratic formations" (Sholle & Denski, 1995, p. 19). Ever concerned to chart the often-brutal effects of economic globalization on minority, working class and even mainstream youth, Giroux and Aronowitz also addressed the rise of neo-liberalism in the US and the dramatic impact these developments have had on the schooling system and on other institutional structures that regulate and produce young people's lives. In response to these forces, they argued young people must engage in active reading and writing to produce critical practices which work as forms of counter memory against current regimes of truth and justice. In this way, Giroux and Aronowitz challenged the intentions of a conservative education system and suggested that classrooms and informal education sites could act as alternative public spheres where possibilities for constructing new identities and imagining new social orders could be explored. The role of youth in this struggle is to produce counter hegemonic acts in "support of the long revolution" (Sholle & Denski, 1995, p. 28).

In articulating this vision, besides making clear the powerful and provocative role popular culture resources can have in classrooms, Giroux and Aronowitz contributed to the development of media literacy by foregrounding the vital work audiences do interpreting texts. By drawing attention to this work, critical media pedagogy has helped to make clear how media use can strengthen community bonds while affirming marginal subject positions, particularly among young people. Additionally, work in this tradition has proved crucial in furthering the development of culturally relevant curricula that is responsive to the analysis of race, class and gender, particularly in North America (Duncan-Andrade, 2006; hooks, 1994, 1996). At the same time, if these contributions have been significant, the problem for critical media pedagogy has continued to be how media literacy or youth media production are understood in relation to democratic practice.

For many progressives it is difficult not to be sympathetic to the ambitions and commitment of critical media pedagogy, particularly as articulated throughout the 1990s and 2000s in the work of Henry Giroux. His relentless attention to the Disneyfiction of children's culture (1999), to the powerful and leading ways race and fear are conjoined in Hollywood cinema (1996), to the place of militarization in youth media (1996), and to the poisonous role of cynicism among intellectuals in the American academy (2001) are vital contributions to our thinking about the way contemporary media operate as forms of public pedagogy. At the same time, underlying this work is a sense that media literacy and youth media production are related to a kind of "militant utopianism" (Giroux, 2001, p. 125; Ellsworth, 1989). That is to say, the role of media pedagogy in relation to democratic practice is conceived as a function of the way media literacy produces

particular kinds of "critically engaged political agents" (Giroux, 2001, p. 125). It is not enough, in other words, that young people learn to conceive of their lives in relation to the social and political conditions that shape and organize their experiences and their work as media producers. Rather, in Giroux' articulation media literacy supports democracy when the critical analysis of media texts fosters forms of utopian thinking and action that lead to the development of "social, political and economic structures [that]… truly turn power over to the people" (Giroux, 2001, p.123). The difficulty is that it is unclear how media education or youth media production might fulfill this ambition.

Goldfarb (2002) and others (Buckingham, 1996) note, for instance, that while critical acts of viewing may help young people to play with and even challenge how meaning is circulated in popular commercial media it is not at all clear that this leads to the kinds of political alliances and actions Giroux (2001) has in mind when he talks about producing "new democratic forms of human association" (p. 120; but also see Giroux, 2007). This is the case because exploiting the openness or incomplete nature of media texts can hardly be *presumed* to lead to forms of counter memory in the service of social justice today. Teaching young people to read media texts "against the grain" is no doubt a useful pedagogical strategy; but in many instances, young people's media texts are now produced on a model of "trans-media intertextuality" (Kinder, 1999, 1991), which is meant to encourage playful and open readings by audiences. This happens because corporate consolidation in both global and national media markets has left fewer and fewer companies in control of the brands, products and programming that are part of young people's lives. One result from this is that many youth-oriented media texts are not characteristically discrete any longer. Instead, they are intentionally meant to be

intertextual. In a sense, they are both individual products and marketing platforms for other corporate goods and programs. As such, they operate as incomplete texts that are open to a variety of readings. The difficulty this poses for critical media pedagogy is that while some of these open readings may involve issues of social and political power, this need not be the case. Educators and others might work with young people to develop such critically informed readings, but the outcomes of this work are hardly guaranteed to lead toward counter hegemonic acts in "support of the long revolution." At best, I suggest they foster an understanding of the plurality and contingency of meaning itself. The upshot of this is the relationship between critical reading strategies and counter hegemonic democratic practice is not straightforward (Ellsworth, 1989).

While helpful for understanding the socio-economic setting in which youth now live, then, critical pedagogy has yet to offer a convincing description of the relationship between youth media production and democratic practice.

Production Pedagogies and the Interpretation of Democratic Acts

This is significant because there has been a renewed focus and interest in production pedagogies within media education since the early 1990s. In the UK, the US and Canada informal education groups – community associations, not-for-profit arts organizations, and university-community partnerships – have played a particularly important role in these developments (Sefton-Green, 2006; Buckingham, 2006a; Goodman, 2003; Harvey et al, 2002; Goldfarb, 2002). More recently, schools have also been significant sites for production courses but in the early 1990s, budget shortages and the association of practical work with vocational training streams discouraged schools from opening new programs (Goldfarb, 2002). In the meantime, informal organizations have tended to

conceive of youth production as the pivot point through which a dialectic of "doing" and "analysis" merge (Buckingham, 2003, p. 133). The effect of this is to render production as praxis, which means young people are afforded opportunities to locate themselves and their work in relation to larger social worlds, not simply by acquiring a set of conceptual tools, but in how they make sense of these tools through creative acts.

As with earlier practices, a great deal of video education work outside of schools has been targeted for at-risk, low-income adolescents (Sefton-Green, 2006; Harvey et al, 2002). The Educational Video Centre (EVC) in New York is a good example of this kind of programming. For our purposes, EVC is of interest because, as Goldfarb (2002) argues, while the program intends to involve young people in public life, the agency characteristic of this work is no longer framed in terms of a utopian emancipatory practice.

As a non-profit media organization, EVC aims to help young people investigate how power relations (especially in regard to race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability) shape community deficits, identity relations and social life (Goodman, 2005, 2003; Goldfarb, 2002). The group's central goal is "to build students' skills in documentary production and media literacy while nurturing their intellectual development and civic engagement" (Goodman, 2005, p. 207). They do this by developing a pedagogy of critical literacy over the course of an 18-week afterschool Documentary Workshop. Students work together researching, shooting and editing a film on a community-based social problem of their choosing. Learning to deconstruct media is a key part of the process so time is given to the analysis of stereotypes in news and youth media and to examining how audio and editing codes, as well as visual, linguistic and spatial conventions produce meaning in

still and moving images (Goodman, 2005). Students make sense of these conceptual

resources by creating videos and applying "the analytic concepts they have ... learned"

(Goodman, 2005, p. 211). In conjunction with this, EVC has also developed a key set of

teaching practices called "continuous inquiry." This approach gives "students the

opportunity to move between the personal and public spheres, starting with the self-

referential and then reaching beyond themselves to study their community at large"

(Goodman, 2005, p. 215). Dialogue-based teaching organized through small group work,

alongside opportunities to pose questions, conduct interviews, and challenge adults in

positions of authority feed students as they learn to imagine how the world might be

otherwise than the way they found it. Clearly student-centred, EVC's production

pedagogy demands reflection through a portfolio assessment and student exhibitions that

"offer a rich portrait of what students are capable of knowing and doing. They give

students an opportunity to publicly show their best work and talk about it with members

of the community, including parents, other students, teachers, principals, researchers,

producers, and artists" (Goodman, 2005, p. 222).

Though related to work in critical media pedagogy and the community video and

video education movements of the 1960s and 1970s, EVC highlights a shift in production

work in the 1990s and 2000s. Goldfarb (2002) captures this when he explains that EVC

and like programs are fundamentally therapeutic. Their objective is "to use video

production to provide a means for working through the social and psychological issues

that play a role in ... students' ability to make it through the school system and life, and

to help students make meaningful connections to their communities through the

production process" (p. 72; also see Goodman, 2003). The excitement young people feel

toward video and other forms of digital media production thus operates in the service of deficit reduction; which is to say, EVC is focused on using video production technologies to provide disenfranchised young people with access to experiences that provide for more equitable opportunity.

I note this, but also add that EVC facilitates civic engagement by showing student videomakers how "to use media as a tool to educate, inform, and make change in the community" (Goodman, 2005, p. 207). This involves the politicization of youth through documentary projects that allow young people to become more fully engaged in their communities. Examples of such engagement include the use of EVC-produced documentaries to facilitate public forums on issues like school funding, neighbourhood violence, and homeless teenagers. The work of EVC students has also reached larger audiences through broadcast on PBS. This, in turn, has helped to open youth-centred issues to debate in communities throughout the United States (Goldfarb, 2002, p. 78). From our perspective, what's important about this work in relation to questions of democratic practice and youth media work is that older rhetorics, such as were evident in the community video movement and video education programs of the 1960s and 1970s have waned. No longer is documentary youth video work envisioned as a means through which youth or other community members might reclaim the public sphere. Nor are notions of radical democratic practice part of EVC's conception of youth video work. Rather, here youth media work operates as a form of capacity building in support of what John Dewey would have understood as "a civically active 'articulate public' that has the intellectual capacity to engage in collective dialogue and inquiry into the most pressing social problems" (Goodman, 2005, p. 226; Dewey quoted).

The work of EVC is significant and yet, I argue there is a need to understand how other forms of youth media production – beyond documentary programs explicitly geared toward "in-depth documentation, research and public discussion of a community problem" (Goodman, 2003, p. 105) – relate to democratic acts. Urgency underlies this project because as technological developments and changes in youth media culture have taken shape over the past decade, there is the sense that young people's media use has become more active, that production has become a characteristic feature of adolescents' everyday media experiences. Increasing attention has thus focused on how this complicates student video making as pedagogical strategy.

At the centre of this discussion is a complex set of tensions produced in conjunction with the development of digital media technologies. The availability of low cost, consumer and semi-professional production and digital editing technologies has been instrumental in the expansion of youth media programs. At the same time, technological change has created opportunities for increasing numbers of children and young people to use media production resources – such as, digital still and video cameras, inexpensive music mixing and web design software, as well as social networking websites – outside of formal and informal learning environments (Buckingham, 2006a, 2006c; Livingstone, 2003; Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2002; Livingstone, 2002; Valentine and Holloway, 2002). A wide variety of new media – for instance, video games, web-surfing on the Internet, and branded toys, like Pokémon and Yu-Gi-Oh! cards, etc. – also involve young people in designing their own solutions, directions and ways of navigating media texts (Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 2003; Luke, 2002, 2000). The result is young audiences now seem to have increasing opportunity to alternate between their roles as media

consumers and media producers because performative relationships are more and more a characteristic feature of adolescent media cultures (Buckingham, 2000a, 2000b; Adams and Hamm, 2000).

One response to this has been a renewed focus on youth "voice," as though digital technologies allow young people both unproblematic and unfettered democratic access. These notions result in part because youth media projects often describe what they do as helping young people to 'find their voice,' or aiding 'silenced voices' by providing teenagers with the skills and access needed to express their stories (Soep, 2006). The celebration of voice, particularly in relation to notions of democracy, however, is hardly trouble free. A number of research reviews tell us that young people do realize emotional and identity benefits when they 'tell their own stories' and 'find their own voices.' At the same time, David Trend (1997) notes that media producers who work with marginalized youth often hold to the modernist assumption that all self-expression is always liberating. Writing from a poststructuralist perspective, Mimi Orner (1992) notes further that "celebrating student voice can backfire, by positing a fully egalitarian environment where none exists, thereby obscuring rather than unsettling uneven distributions of power" (Soep, 2006, p. 201; Buckingham, 1996). Video in particular, is tricky in this light. It holds an appeal as a resource for marginal communities. But in her study of youth video programs, Nicole Fleetwood (2005) cautions that "media projects have a tendency to pursue the fantasy of 'authentic' youth experience, which itself often embodies a sensationalized portrayal of racialized urban youth" (Soep, 2006, p. 201). Fleetwood shows this tends to lead to the reification of inequalities in youth media products and process. Finally, Deirdre Kelly (2006) notes that while digital technologies may facilitate

expressions of youth voice today, it remains the case that: "Young people do not participate equally in the making of culture in the everyday world or in public spheres, which contributes to their subordination. [In fact, there] are few youth-generated self-representations to counter dominant images of children as violent and irresponsible – as brainless consumers of fashion…, not … thinking, contributing citizens" (pp. 35-36).

A related and equally problematic response to the growth of digital technologies has come from those who produce and market media products to children (e.g., the American broadcaster, Nickelodeon and its parent company, Viacom), as well as their cyberguru allies. Both groups are notoriously sanguine about the educational and political possibilities of new digital media and have been quick to pick up and exploit these developments. For instance, they have been at the forefront in promoting the idea of the "N-generation," a group of young people thought to be preternaturally attuned and actively productive with new media (Kline, 2004; Buckingham, 2003, 2000; Tapscott, 1998). This kind of talk has lead to utopian claims about the potential for new media to democratize knowledge (Goldfarb, 2002; Sefton-Green, 2006).

Suspicion that such claims are inflated remains however, not least because research indicates that children's and adolescents' uses of new media is not as revolutionary as is often suggested (Buckingham, 2006a; Buckingham, 2006b; Buckingham, 2006c; Burn and Durran, 2006; Kline, 2004; Valentine and Holloway, 2002; Livingstone, 2003; Livingstone, 2002; Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2002; Kinder, 1999). In regard to recent new media, for instance, there are a number of technologies – Instant Messaging and chat, computer games, and text messaging (SMS) on cell phones – that adolescents tend to make their own. But there are many examples of software more clearly associated with

production activities – such as Web-authoring, graphics, animation, and, most importantly for our purposes, digital video editing software – that young people don't use regularly or intuitively (Burns and Durran, 2006, p. 274). Moreover, Kline's (2004) work in Canada indicates that the kind of "interactivity and connectivity" experienced through technologies like online and console-based video games have not "transformed youthful entertainment cultures" as much as they have supplemented "play options by[, for instance,] building on boys' interest in war and conflict games, sports, and fantasy role-play" (p. 152). Sonia Livingstone's (2002) UK-based research supports these conclusions. While broadcasters like Nickelodeon have been key players in promoting notions about "digital kids," then, much of this "rhetoric of empowerment" is better understood in relation to the production of children as a distinct market niche with their own tastes, concerns and desires (Buckingham, 2000b, p. 96). To the extent that such markets take shape, it then becomes so much easier to target young people with exactly the products and services Viacom and Disney, etc., want to sell (Goodman, B., 2001).

The result of this is that schools and informal education environments remain crucial sites for young people to exploit the possibilities offered by digital media technologies, including video production. The importance of student work with digital media was conveyed to schools as far back as the 1980s when children's early fascination with computers suggested that digital technologies would be ideal for cultivating active learners (Kline et al., 2006). This approach received further impetus through efforts by most Western governments to make digital literacy a national objective during the 1990s (Tapscott, 1998; Kline et al, 2006). As a result, training in digital video and multiple literacies has increasingly come to be understood as a necessary part of preparing all

young people for life in the new information economy (Kline et al, 2006; Luke, 2002, 2000; Goldfarb, 2002; New London Group, 1996). In North America, this has fueled an increase in information technology courses – in graphic design, web-site authoring, and digital video production – in schools (Goodman, 2005; Buckingham, 2006b, 2006c; Livingston, 2002; Luke, 2000). At the same time, it's less clear that the use of digital media technologies in schools has nourished a more democratic student body (Sefton Green, 2006; Gandy, 2002; Goodman, 2003). In fact, while the presence of remarkable teachers means there are always exceptions, digital production in North American schools has thus far largely been about skills development or the development of young people's creative voice via a technology thought to be 'their own'. Numerous technology studies report on "the accessibility of technology but few address the question of how and whether teachers are integrating technology into the classroom in effective ways" (Charmaraman, 2006, p. 4). While the role of digital media in the school curriculum continues to be the site of investigation, then, studies about the relationship of digital video and adolescents' democratic practice have not been forthcoming.

On the other hand, many informal education organizations in North America, the UK and around the world continue to use digital video as a means for engaging with young people (Sefton-Green, 2006; Kinkade and Macy, 2003; Goodman, 2003; Goldfarb, 2002). Here too, though, research remains wanting. The booklet What works in youth media: case studies from around the world (Kindade and Macy, 2003) provides an overview of case studies that emphasize how youth-based media projects provide young people with voice and an audience as well as opportunities for personal and civic engagement. As a promotional tool targeting politicians and policy makers the document is enthusiastic, but

as with most literature in this field to date, it is short on academic rigour in regard to its findings (Sefton-Green, 2006). Just the same, these developments are part of a larger effort to involve youth in media enterprises[viii], an effort exemplified by the development of UNICEF's website, <u>Media Activities and Good Ideas by, with and for Children</u> (MAGIC), which itself is a response to the Oslo Challenge[ix]. The typical aims of youth media organizations include: aiding self-expression, preparing youth for life in a digital world, offering young people healthy recreational activities, preparing youth for careers in the media, and building community bonds (Charmaraman, 2006, p. 43). In Canada, a number of organizations have built on relationships with community media arts, independent film, and film and video cooperative movements from the 1960s and 1970s and have developed youth media programs to serve these ends. Pacific Cinémathèque, for instance, arose out of the Intermedia Group in 1972 and began media education and video production programs under the direction of the author in 1995. Two other successful Vancouver-area programs, the Gulf Islands Film and Television School and Access to Media Education Society, work closely with members of the independent film community and the local filmmakers cooperative.

The history and mandates of these and like groups differ, but of interest for our purposes, this expansion in youth media programs has happened as academic research has moved away from thinking about the relationship between democratic practice and production pedagogies (Alverman, 2004; Buckingham, 2006a; Sefton-Green, 2006). I believe this has occurred because suspicion about the emancipatory claims of critical media pedagogy alongside misgivings about the sufficiency of talk about youth voice in relation to democratic acts has left a void. Research (Buckingham, 2006a, 2006c, 2000a;

Buckingham et al., 2003; Buckingham and Harvey, 2001; Burn and Durran, 2006; Burn and Parker, 2003; Burn et al., 2001; Burn and Reed, 1999; Harvey et al, 2002) from the UK about what young people learn through institutionally mediated production experiences has offered a great deal of insight into creative youth work. David Buckingham's (2006a) recent report on media education and youth media production, for instance, notes that it now appears media production experiences: help students explore their emotional investments in the media as well as the way these investments impact identity formation; provide a safe space for students to explore media-related fantasies; provide opportunities to parody or deconstruct familiar youth genres; improve student understanding of the language of media images; encourage youth to listen to each other's voices; allow for more purposeful collaborative group creation work; allow for a wide variety of publication and distribution formats and contexts; and, impact the pedagogies developed in other classes. They can also encourage educators to turn to students when producing media about risk behaviours for young people (Buckingham, Niesyto & Fisherkeller, 2003; Buckingham and Harvey, 2001).

If this is encouraging, a crucial element is unmarked here. That is, how does this work facilitate democratic practice? I believe this thematic is an *ur-narrative* left unarticulated in what is thought to be significant about the above outcomes. Buckingham (2003) cautions that attempting to articulate this narrative risks imposing educators' interests onto student media work, thereby censoring youthful tastes and predilections. At best, he (2006a) argues: "the experience of media production is valuable ... in its own right, as a means of promoting self-expression and communication skills, and also as a way of developing a more in-depth critical understanding" (p. 44). But if critical understanding is

meant to refer to the way this work helps young people locate themselves in a socio-economic, political and cultural world, I argue we need to clarify what practical youth work means in relation to democratic practice.

With this in mind, I think Hannah Arendt's work on the public realm and her notion of natality can provide valuable resources for examining how media production experiences lead young people to conceive of themselves in terms of "outer-regarding norms and actions" that preserve freedom, even if they do not secure autonomy (Trentmann, 2007). Arendt was also deeply skeptical of radical, utopian claims about public acts and was skeptical of liberal notions of democratic practice. She thus offers us a "third way" to examine what it means to say democratic practice is instigated through practical work. It is to this model then, that I now wish to turn.

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[i] Written as the Address to the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris on April 27, 1934, the essay was intended as an investigation into the ways in which media such as newspapers produce opportunities for new forms of political engagement on the part of audiences (Benjamin, 1986).

[ii] Donald's essay is titled, "Media Studies: Possibilities and Limitations". It was published most recently in the edited collection, Media Education: An Introduction, Eds. Manuel Alvarado and Oliver Boyd Barrett (1992).

[iii] The CBC's mandate was reaffirmed in the Broadcast Act of 1991, which states that all programming should: "be predominantly and distinctly Canadian; reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions; actively contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression; be in English and in French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances of each official language

community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French

linguistic minorities; strive to be of equivalent quality in English and French; contribute

to shared national consciousness and identity; be made available throughout Canada by

the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available for the

purpose; and reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada" (CBC Mandate,

2007)

[iv] Four pioneering features arrived on the scene from Quebec – Gilles Groulx's Le Chat

dans le sac (1964) and Gilles Carle's The Merry World of Leopold Z (1965), produced

inside the NFB, and Claude Jutra's Á Tout prendre (1964) and Michel Brault's Entre la

Mer et l'eau douce (1967), produced outside the Board. These followed on the

remarkable success of Pierre Perrault's Pour la Suite du monde (1963). In English

Canada, Allan King's documentary, Warrendale (1967), about a treatment centre for

emotionally disturbed kids, and Don Shebib's Good Times Bad Times (1969), about

veterans' experiences during the two world wars, challenged the NFB's reputation as the

producer of stodgy documentaries (Knelman, 1977). In the 1970s, this work inspired a

remarkable flourishing of Canadian cinema, evidenced by the arrival of classic works like

Claude Jutra's Mon Oncle Antoine (1971), Don Shebib's Goin' Down the Road (1970),

and Vancouver filmmaker, Zale Dalen's Skip Tracer (1977).

[v] For instance, Masterman (1983) argues his notion of critical reading "needs to be

complemented by practical video work, the production of media materials for students

themselves, and by the use of simulations through which a range of alternative codings

can be explored" (pp. 11-12).

[vi] Ontario's Association for Media Literacy developed their key concepts list to support this implementation process. A similar list was developed in British Columbia in 1994 (Andersen et al., 2000; Media Awareness Network, 2007). Other lists with a significant degree of overlap are used in curriculum documents around the world (Buckingham, 2003).

[vii] For instance, Masterman neither dismissed production work, as Sefton-Green (1995) suggests, nor was he interested in a top-down model of pedagogy, as Buckingham (2003) argues.

[viii] Examples of such programs includes: Cámara! ahi nos vemos in Mexico, the Children's Express young reporters project in the UK, the Little Masters national magazine in China, Trendsetters magazine in Zambia, and the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation, a media youth organization located in the town of Ar-Ram, outside of Bethlehem (Rother, 2006). For an additional cross-section and description of youth media organizations operating around the world, see Mike Jempson's Children and the Media (2007).

[ix] On the 10th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a meeting was held in Oslo (organized by the Norwegian Government and UNICEF) to discuss the development of children's rights and their relation to the media around the world. Out of this came the Oslo Challenge, which stated, in part, that: "the child/media relationship is an entry point into the wide and multifaceted world of children and their rights - to education, freedom of expression, play, identity, health, dignity and self-respect, protection - and that in every aspect of child rights, in every element of the life of a child,

the relationship between children and the media plays a role" (The Oslo Challenge, 2007).

Chapter 2

Hannah Arendt, Democratic Practice and A Pedagogy of Natality

In this chapter, I introduce Hannah Arendt's understanding of the public realm and identify how a conception of democratically-oriented pedagogy arises from this work. I begin by differentiating Arendt's position from liberal notions of public experience. I note that Arendt's concern for the public-political realm arises from her preoccupation with philosophical, technological, and political developments that attenuate a sense of reality. Her fear is that our capacity to act in concert with each other, to form the kinds of engagement that contest the impersonal and alien quality of contemporary society is under threat. Because of this, "the plural heterogeneous quality of experience" is at risk (Curtis, 1999, p. 24). Public acts are those practices which resist these tendencies by furthering the plurality of experience and contestation over meaning. Autonomy is not thereby achieved but the possibility for freedom is preserved.

I note that Arendt understands this to mean public acts have a dual function in relation to democratic practice. Such acts resist normalization, domination and alienation, thereby securing the persistence of a common public world. In accomplishing this, however, Arendt argues these actions simultaneously preserve the possibility of new beginnings. Public acts are thus connected to natality or the promise that things might be different than they are <u>because they bring into view the social nature of meaning and our responsibility to this</u>. In this way, they contribute to democratic practice by producing an enlarged <u>mentalité</u> as regards the construction of meaning itself. I explain that on this point Arendt's understanding of the public realm is to be distinguished from Habermas' recent work on the public sphere. Where Habermas anchors the democratic possibilities

of public acts in conditions underlying the everyday use of language, Arendt argues such possibilities are a function of one's obligation to difference and the social nature of meaning. This obligation, in turn, only arises through public acts that make evident the work of plurality.

I then examine what a democratically-oriented pedagogy inspired by Arendt's conception of the public realm would entail. I draw on Natasha Levinson (2002, 1997) who offers a convincing depiction of a pedagogy of natality, or new beginnings. I show the similarities and differences between this practice and tendencies within critical media pedagogy and then conclude by indicating why the Summer Visions Film Institute offers an interesting example to evaluate how Arendt's work can be used to examine the way youth media production pedagogies impact democratic practice as conceived in relation to natality.

Conjuring Publics and Liberal Notions of Public Experience

In Western democratic theory, the public realm is often thought to be "a theatre … in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk" (Fraser, 1997, p. 70; Calhoun, 1993). This description is perhaps too literal because "argument alone is not evidence of an actualized public sphere … Much of the time [today, in fact,] we are witnesses to what is rightly called a 'pseudo' public sphere, where politicians and docile journalists act out a travesty of democratic debate" (McGuigan, 2005, p. 429). Be that as it may, public experience has long been associated with deliberation and the possibility for change. Publics promise co-presence in ways that are different from a "group," a "crowd" or a "people." They are reflexive by nature. They involve the circulation of meaning in ways that are distinct from the realm of the state, the market and other

institutions like churches, even if they intersect with these organizations and environments. Publics offer an experience of belonging and togetherness based on the ability to create something new without the aid of external supports. This doesn't mean public experience takes place in a social vacuum. On the contrary, it is always mediated by material conditions that limit who is addressed through public discourse. The social basis of public experience, its connection to a specific time and place, however does not negate the fact that it has a certain imaginary quality (Warner, 2002). Deliberation operates in the service of the yet to be achieved.

In liberal conceptions of public experience, the critical work of deliberation is defined in terms of a rational subject. Democratic practice is understood to be a function of private citizens coming together to exercise their rights in a public domain. Here, private persons represent the "proper site of humanity" and rights are not understood as privileges bestowed by legal authority; they are claims all persons can make based on the condition of being human (Warner, 2002, p. 39). The public operates as the space where one defends and negotiates the meaning of these rights. It is "a community with independent existence, even sovereign claims and the ability to resist or change rulers" (Warner, 2002, p. 39). The public operates to protect private individuals and to do the individual's bidding, as long as this is done in a way that is deemed fair and equal.

Questions of legitimacy are at the centre of a liberal public culture. Power is understood to be subject to a form of critical debate. This means: "Whenever anybody questions the legitimacy of another's power, the power holder must respond not by suppressing the questioner but by giving a reason that explains why he [sic] is more entitled to the resource than the questioner is" (Ackerman, quoted in Benhabib, 1992, p.

81). To ensure that the reasons offered and the debate itself are carried out in a manner

that serves the public interests of all, liberals argue certain constraints must exist.

Benhabib (1992) explains:

> The most significant ... constraint in liberalism is *neutrality*, which rules
> that no reason advanced within a discourse of legitimation can be a good
> reason if it requires the power holder to assert that his conception of the
> good is better than that asserted by his fellow citizens, or that regardless of
> his conception of the good, he is intrinsically superior to one or more of
> his fellow citizens (p. 81; emphasis in original).

This position allows liberals to manage questions of public order through the mechanism

of rational debate premised on the weighing of arguments in an unbiased fashion and the

exclusion of particularisms. "To be properly public ... [is to] rise above, or set aside

one's private interests and expressive nature... [What results is] a vision of freedom as

negative liberty inherent in private persons, and a vision of political life as the restraint of

power by a critical public" (Warner, 2002, p. 40).

This conception of democratic practice has obvious benefits, not the least of which

are checks on state power. In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries concern for

equality of opportunity was also conjoined with notions of individual liberty to form the

bedrock of political liberalism. This project can be contrasted with contemporary forms

of neoliberalism, which in fact represent a return to more classical liberal traditions that

preceded the extension of the vote to women and the working class, etc., and the onset of

the welfare state in Western industrialized nations (Warner, 2002; Mitchell, 2004).

Knight Abowitz and Harnish (2006) recently observed that politically liberal models of

citizenship education – as opposed to neoliberal variants – are certainly one of the most

common discourses on citizenship taught in North American schools. Here, individual

liberty and rights are a central focus with special attention given to developing "the skill

and dispositions of cooperation, deliberation, and decision making" (Knight Abowitz and Harnish, 2006, p. 664). This means teaching students "to think critically, listen with discernment, and communicate with power and precision" (Boyer quoted in Knight Abowitz and Harnish, 2006, p. 665).

If this work has benefits, at the same time, liberal notions of democratic practice and public experience have long been plagued by problems of exclusion (Benhabib, 1992; Knight Abowitz and Harnish, 2006). Because of the urge to protect the private lives of citizens, there is a tendency in liberalism to ignore forms of inequity and power that operate in what is purported to be private experience (i.e., the domestic sphere or the market place). Historically, this has been especially problematic for women, the working class, people of colour, and gay, lesbian and trans-gendered communities, etc (Warner, 2002; Fraser, 1992). On the other hand, the inability to account for the way private life is mediated by structures of power has led liberals to articulate naïve notions of democratic practice. We saw a version of this in the last chapter in regard to arguments about youth media production and voice. There it was noted that the celebration of voice is problematic because it tends to deny how power both inhabits and limits youth expressions. The upshot of this is liberal conceptions of public life lead to a truncated version of democratic practice. Hannah Arendt (1998/1958) argues this is a function of the privatization of public experience that results when private persons and rational subjectivity are understood as the "proper site of humanity." In response, Arendt offers a different framework for conceptualizing the public realm and the nature of democratic acts.

Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm

Rather than a rational subject whose actions are premised on rights, Arendt conceives

of democratic practice in terms of actions that inscribe one into the course of events in

ways that change the initial circumstances under which one acts. Arendt focuses on this

form of practice because her concern for the public-political realm begins with "those

developments – philosophical, technological, and political – that [contribute] to an

attenuated sense of reality" (Curtis, 1999, p. 23). At the most general level, she argues the

world making aspects of public acts are undone by the way subjectification or private,

internal life is privileged in Western culture. She (1998/1958) notes this practice in

liberalism but also draws on Nietzsche's critique of subjectivity and contends that this

tendency is the result of major historical ruptures: first, Christianity "with its eternal

private person and devaluation of the public world" (Warner, 2002, p. 59); second, the

rise of Romantic individualism, which leads to thinking about the private not as the

privation of publicness, but as the real locus of human value; and, third, what Arendt calls

"the rise of the social," the development of those practices and institutions in modern

society – including schooling in its industrialized, mass forms (Levinson, 2002, 1997) –

that frame human relations in terms of behaviour and regulation, rather than mutual

understanding (Arendt, 1998/1958, esp. pp. 38-50; Villa, 1997; Curtis, 1999, pp. 75-85;

Benhabib, 1992).

Arendt's essential fear is that our capacity to act in concert with each other, to contest

the impersonal and alien quality of contemporary society is under threat. Because of this,

"the plural heterogenous quality of experience" is at risk (Curtis, 1999, p. 24). The

profound danger this poses is most clearly evident in the figure of Adolph Eichmann, the

Nazi architect of the Holocaust, whose trial for crimes against humanity Arendt famously covered in Israel in 1963. What Arendt (1963b) observed in Eichmann was an acute "remoteness from reality" (p. 288). He was protected by "clichés, stock phrases, adherence to conventional, standardized codes of expression and conduct … against [the real], that is, against the claim on our thinking attention that all events and facts make by virtue of their existence" (Arendt, 1978, p. 4). In the face of this kind of thoughtlessness, Arendt thinks public action is a "lost treasure," a form of engagement where we are forced to experience the undeniable presence of others in the world. With public acts, there is "involvement and commitment, … the hope, not of solving any problems, but of making it possible to live with them without becoming, as Sartre once put it, a *salaud*, a hypocrite" (Arendt, 1968, p. 8).

Arendt is attentive to the fact that our ability to experience the world is always threatened by the way it is managed, conditioned and shaped to prevent us from experiencing the fullness of reality. This concern is noteworthy in relation to youth media production because, as mentioned in chapter one, youth do not have equal access to or control over the articulation of meaning in the media that is part of their lives (Buckingham, 2007; Kelly, 2006; Kline, 2004, 1993). Moreover, actual public spaces for young people, "especially those living in poor, urban communities, are diminishing" (Soep, 2006, p. 36).

> The 'street' remains a potent symbol … [that] young people themselves use in reference to a whole constellation of styles, circumstances, and modes of behaviour that are also often related to questions of class and race. Yet the physical street itself – the paved one young people … walk along and across everyday en route to school, home and other places – is increasingly a site of surveillance and regulation (Soep, 2006, p. 36).

Carmen Luke (2002) has noted the same, arguing that the decline in physical space is one reason why young people have taken so readily to online environments. In certain circumstances, these spaces may offer less monitored and regulated forms of interaction. That itself is tricky though; while the growing interest in the perspectives of online 'citizen journalists' creates "new opportunities for young voices to enter public dialogue [for instance,]..., this ... development ... undeniably raises thorny questions about how credibility and rigour can be assigned to amateur reporters and documentarians" (Soep, 2006, p. 34). In a global media culture, the transnational movement of images, sounds and texts is also a complex and problematic development. Exemplifying this is the fact that young people are the targets of intense marketing programs that sell uniform goods and services in an aggressive global marketplace. One result is "similarities among the world's youth [are becoming] more pronounced" (Brown and Larson, 2002, p. 13). There are also indications that global brands are having detrimental effects on young people's lifestyles and health. Perhaps the most obvious example of these trends of late have to do with the impact fast foods and excessive media consumption – especially in relation to video games – are having on youth's sedentary lives (Kline et al, 2006; Kline, 2004). These and like processes serve to diminish the richness and breadth of reality young people access. In the face of these developments, Arendt posits plurality as a vital resource. Arendt doesn't mean by this that we need more things or that young people simply need to be more visible today. Rather, she is concerned with our ability to act in concert with each other in ways that shape possibilities for a common world.

The Role of Plurality

In Arendt's schema, plurality is "the basic condition of both speech and action" (Arendt, 1998/1958, p. 176). On the one hand, she means we are all inevitably distinct. No two persons are exactly alike. Rather, we all represent a new beginning. "In the birth of each [child], this initial beginning is reaffirmed, because in each instance something new comes into an already existing world which will continue to exist after each individual's death" (Arendt, 1968, p. 166). This newness represents the potential for a richer and more robust reality. On the other hand, in attending to plurality, Arendt, also means to signal "the importance of others in both making our lives and understanding ourselves" (Coulter and Wiens, 2002, p. 17). Whatever forms of singularity each one of us represents, we depend on the presence of others for this difference to become manifest. Arendt conceives of the self that exists outside of our encounters with others as an unstable, virtually unrecognizable being. Here "nothing is real" because we depend on our interaction and appearance with others to give substance and unity to ourselves (Gambetti, 2005, p. 433; Villa, 1997, p. 190). Charles Taylor (1991) makes a similar point when he says: "My discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation but that I negotiate it through dialogue ... My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others" (pp. 47-48). In a very real sense, others pull us out of a state of being into a state of becoming. Through this, we produce the meaning and experience that we then take to be constitutive of ourselves. "Plurality is a blessing in that the perspective of the others not only defines and stabilizes one's own perspective, ... [it] also puts it in relation with the world" (Gambetti, 2005, p. 433). Plurality thus acts as a bulwark against thoughtlessness because it counters a kind of oblivion that can blind us to

the unique reality of others. In this way, it facilitates the possibility for developing a common world.

Arendt recognizes that many forms of activity allow for aspects of human plurality to arise, but she contends it is through public acts that this condition can flourish (Warner, 2002). In the midst of the Cold War, when Arendt originally made this argument (The Human Condition was published in 1958), it struck many as heresy. After all, Arendt is here confronting not only totalitarian forces that attempt to annihilate plurality, to render it superflouous, but also liberalism itself, which envisions private life, the life of the individual as the true expression of humanity's diverse possibilities (Arendt, 1968, p. 184). Against both these tendencies, Arendt argues action in public facilitates democratic habits of mind because we are forced to "visit" with others and thereby enlarge our mentalités. Meeting with those we don't know challenges us because the singularity of others strips us of "all masks – of those which society assigns to its members as well as those which the individual fabricates for himself [sic.] in his psychological reactions against society" (Arendt, 1968, p. 4). Again, Arendt means by this that engaging with others pulls us away from our current situation. As compared to private life, public acts allow for a fuller sense of self to come into view. Used in this way, private and public operate differently than they do in liberalism. For Arendt, private and public are "existential categories, not social descriptions. They are different contexts for personhood" (Warner, 2002, p. 59). This means, as Warner (2002) goes on to note, that the public is "the scene of world making and self-disclosure... It is a political scene ... because the self and the shared world ... emerge in interaction with others" (p. 59).

Conceived in this way, public action is distinguished from labour and work. In Arendt's schema, labour refers to the routine ephemeral behaviour necessary to meet human needs. Work refers to instrumental activity by artists and producers who "build a more permanent artifice within which the world of human affairs can exist and attain relative durability vis-à-vis the relentless appearing and disappearing that characterizes the life process" (Curtis, 1999, p. 43). Action, on the other hand, is the way we achieve freedom through our willingness to "begin something new, a new relation or a new set of circumstances that other actors need subsequently to take into consideration" (Gambetti, 2005, p. 432; Arendt, 1968). Arendt acknowledges that freedom is found in the way labour addresses necessity and in the way work renders things useful and beautiful (1998/1958, p. 208). But she also suggests each of these activity contexts (i.e., labour, work, and action) allow for different degrees of awareness of the world (Curtis, 1999). Animal laborans (labour), homo faber (work), and actor (action) are not so much different classes or even whole persons, in other words; they "are competing, conflicting, and interdependent sensibilities or standpoints within the self toward the world" (Curtis, 1999, p. 41). For our purposes, I take this to mean the kind of "work" involved in producing a video can constitute a public act when the process of creation and the outcome itself produce forms of interaction that bear witness and insert something new into the world. Through this, such work enters into "the merciless brightness of the public realm" (Curtis, 1999, p. 46).

Spaces of Appearance and Transformative Practice

Arendt (1998/1958) calls those contexts where public experience unfolds, "spaces of appearance." They are instances where performance in view of others de-privatizes and

de-individualizes our lives (Arendt, 1998/1958, p. 50). In this sense, spaces of appearance operate as a primordial, associational form of politics. Meaning-creation is a practice of making the self present in ways that produce the beginning of new relationships. Agonism or the struggle to <u>both be with</u> and <u>assert oneself</u> to others is crucial. What Arendt means by this and how this relates to democratic practice are perhaps best exemplified by the way she addresses "what" we are as subjects in the world, as opposed to "who" we are.

When Arendt conceives of transformative potential in public acts, her position is not premised on an idea of an essential human being that underlies actions. Rather, Arendt argues the social forces and conditions we inherit will always shape <u>what</u> we are. Much like Marx, Arendt understands that we are all born into conditions not of our own choosing. We are all subjected beings, defined by attributes, including: personalities, identities, qualities, talents and failings. These in turn are filtered through the contingent structures of gender, race, class and ethnicity, which act as organizing forces that constitute our lives. In youth video production, Nicole Fleetwood (2005) has helpfully documented the challenge posed when the subjected nature of human experience is not adequately addressed. She is especially conscious of this problem in relation to racialized youth working in urban centres in America. Here, she argues the tendency to encourage young people to create "an authentic urban experience" by drawing on their own lives can have unintended consequences (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 156). In particular, this work can stereotype young people, marking racialized youth in ways that entrench forms of exoticism that are ultimately disempowering. This happens because the quest for authenticity tends to leave unchallenged the social forces and cultural conditions that

mark <u>what</u> youth are understood to represent in contemporary North American culture (Fleetwood, 2005).

In response to situations like this, unlike the more utopian strains in the history of Marxism, Arendt is under no illusions that we can ever entirely escape the structures and experiences we inherit. In fact, to do so would be to imagine a condition of subjectivity released from both the limiting and the enabling aspects of the past (Levinson, 1997). For Arendt, this would be to exist nowhere, to be nobody. At the same time, Arendt is not immobilized by the fact that we arrive in the world belatedly. Gambetti (2005) points out that the same cannot be said of poststructuralism, which has offered rather "desperate political recipes" in response to the fact that we are always socially embedded within matrices of power and identity (pp. 426-427).

In contrast, Arendt helps us to understand that the very fact of plurality, the fact that we are all in a sense distinct from each other, means that natality, or new beginnings, are possible. "The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, 'natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted" (Arendt, 1998/1958, p. 247). In practical terms, in youth media production this means Arendt's framework suggests the democratic potential of this work is not a function of practices that aim toward something like authentic expression. It is to be seen in the way such practices that young people out of themselves, into the world. When we act in the world, <u>what</u> we are begins to change because our actions in view of others are always addressed to specific others. Our subjected selves, normally dispersed across the various discourses and practices we inherit, are given a new coherence because we "play to" and always address specific communities. This allows <u>who</u> we are to come

into view in a new way. In this way, agonism enacts a form of singularity, a new self "that bursts open meanings" (Gambetti, 2005, p. 432). Importantly, Arendt (1998/1958) contends these "new meanings" or newly constituted versions of <u>who</u> one is, are not immediately visible to the acting/performing self. Rather, the "'who' which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person himself" (Arendt, 1998/1958, p. 179). This is the case because in the midst of action, it is impossible to simultaneously know what one is disclosing about one's world and one's self. As a result, we depend on others to witness and make sense of that which is a new beginning. It is in fact the possibility of experience with others that brings our selves into view. In this way, Arendt argues public life operates as a form of <u>praxis</u> carried out via struggles to assert oneself in "human togetherness" (Arendt, 1998/1958, p. 180). This is what it means to say agonism is both the being with and the struggle to assert oneself with others. Through such experiences, a process of becoming is enacted and <u>who</u> as opposed to <u>what</u> we are is revealed. Plurality thus plays a crucial role in relation to democratic practice. It is that which we encounter in public life and that which preserves the possibility of freedom. By acknowledging and opening ourselves up to others a fuller sense of humanity is made possible.

In developing this position, at least in part Arendt's model is the Greek *polis*, where engagement with others through public action was understood to allow "the collective, common interest" to be revealed (Smith, 2001, p. 71). Contestation and struggle facilitate recognition, acclaim and the possibility for shared moral and political power. Importantly, agonistic power is used here in distinction from violence or force (Arendt, 1998/1958, pp. 200-204). While violence and force occur in private and public realms,

both are essentially privatizing acts. Violence, for instance, operates through "the language of pain" and is essentially related to our physical bodies (Benhabib, 1992, p. 78). On the other hand, if force has no language, nature remains its archetypical source. "Power, however, is the only force that emanates from action, and it comes from the mutual action of a group of human beings; once in action, one can make things happen" (Benhabib, 1992, p. 78). "Power preserves the public realm ... and as such it is also the lifeblood of human artifice.... [W]ithout power, the space of appearance brought forth through action and speech in public will fade away as rapidly as the living deed and the living word" (Arendt, 1998/1958, p. 204).

Now, by foregrounding this model, Arendt is not yearning for a return to the ancient past, although she has been interpreted in this light[i]. Rather, I read her turn to the *polis* as a thought experiment, occasioned by historically specific concerns about the deterioration of public life. The polis operates for Arendt very much like fragments of reconciliation and understanding do in Walter Benjamin's (1968/1936) work. "Such thought exercises dig under the rubble of history to recover those pearls of past experience, with their sedimented and hidden layers of meaning, so as to cull from them a story that can orient the mind in the future" (Benhabib, 1992, p. 76). This doesn't mean the *polis* is then privileged as idealized form intended to be redeemed from the past and enacted in the present. Rather, in Arendt's work, the polis more closely resembles a genealogical resource capable of informing the present while suggesting possibilities for the future.

Where Arendt's framework does inform our understanding of the present and the future, democratic practice is fundamentally conceived in terms of the preservation of freedom, by which Arendt means the freedom to act in the world with others (Arendt,

1968). Such acts do not produce sovereignty or autonomy. In fact, Arendt (1968) argues: "If men [sic] wish to be free, it is precisely sovereignty they must renounce" (p. 163). She means by this that freedom cannot be equated with autonomy because in a very significant way freedom is relational. "[O]thers [both] constitute the condition of possibility of action and have an effect on the outcome" (Gambetti, 2005, p. 433). For this reason democratic acts are not about creating conditions in which a romantically conceived private self acts autonomously or independently. Rather, democratic acts are about the way people create new possibilities by acting "in concert." Freedom, in this sense, is not freedom of choice, but "the freedom to call something into being which did not exist before" (Arendt, 1968, p. 150). Such acts keep the public realm "in existence" because they involve our own becoming in relation with others (Arendt, 1998/1958, p. 200). Politics is thus understood as a form of agonistic, associational encounter in which we enter into relationships so as to enact something greater in order to produce a vibrant public world.

Public Acts and the Lure of Oblivion

If this is the hope, there are also obvious risks in this conception of democratic practice. Most importantly, in conceiving of public experience in terms of agonism there is a sense in which the public realm has become the domain of an aesthetic experience, where action for action's sake is what really matters (Jay, 2005). Because a premium is placed on the role of agonistic struggle in the context of plurality, Arendt's schema would seem to privilege acting or doing as its own reward. Bernstein (1986) argues one danger that results from this is it would appear democratic practice has become a kind of asocial celebration. Action is formalized and given paramount importance, but it also seems to be

emptied of content (Honig, 1995). Because of this, Martin Jay (2005) notes, Arendt's "work is often taken to be a celebration of freedom in the public sphere, a freedom produced by active political engagement and a concomitant indifference toward the social or economic results of that engagement" (p. 176).

One way to respond to this is to make clear the kinds of public acts Arendt has in mind. Centrally, these practices preserve new beginnings. One helpful interpretation of this is to argue that democratic acts have a crucial role in ensuring that individuals or whole classes of people don't disappear from our social and political radars. Public life is always made precarious by the threat of human superfluousness – as Arendt knew from the devastation unleashed by the Holocaust – and by the threat posed by those forces that attenuate our sense of reality. As such, Arendt's concern for new beginnings can be read as a demand that we contest forms of oblivion that frustrate our ability to see and understand each other's needs. When we take up this demand, we begin to enact the necessary conditions for sharing a common world. Understood in this way, public acts have an ethical dimension. They support, sustain and stimulate "multiple and conflicting voices and strivings. [They are]… not governed by forms of retreat and the practices of oblivion they sustain" (Curtis, 1999, p. 8). Rather, they disrupt the lure of oblivion and complacency, creating an upsurge in human responsiveness. Bonnie Honig (1995) argues such responsiveness includes attending to the way social, political and economic structures shape forms of public engagement. Arendt did not develop the sociological analysis of power necessary to frame how these structures operate in relation to her conception of democratic practice; nonetheless, others have begun to fill this void.

Jeffrey Isaac (1994), for instance, has extracted from Arendt's analysis to explore

what it means in relation to exemplary forms of democratic practice. He suggests that

such practices are not limited to institutional spaces; rather, at root, they are anti-

authoritarian and are contingent on a willingness to contest conformity, "to care about

matters of common concern and to act on this concern in concert with others" (p. 158).

Benhabib (1992) interprets this to mean: "a town hall or a city square where people do

not act in concert is not a public space in [an] Arendtian sense. But a private dining room

in which people gather to hear a *samizdat* or in which dissidents meet with foreigners

become public spaces" (p. 78). What matters are forms of thoughtful and vigilant

resistance to the power of ideology, bureaucracy, and artificiality, acts that address "the

impersonality and routine character of mass society" (Isaac, 1994, p. 159). Such acts have

an ethical component because they contest practices of normalization that cause certain

peoples to disappear or become marginal actors in social and political life. Arendt herself

identifies world historical events as exemplary of such acts. Isaac's (1994) summary

includes: "the French and Danish resistance to the Nazis, the Hungarian workers'

councils set up in 1956, the Israeli *kibbutzim*, and, in America, the Civil Rights

movement, Students for a Democratic Society, and the whole antiwar movement" (p.

163; Arendt, 1968; 1963a). But other, more prosaic actions are also representative. They

include: local civic initiatives; participation in immigrant rights groups; local parent-

teacher associations; social action committees at synagogues, mosques and churches; and,

certain kinds of youth media production programs (Isaac, 1994). While different in many

ways, linking these practices together is a sense of insurgency, a sense that people have a

role in their own governance and in the construction and contestation over the socially

contingent nature of meaning. Politically, this implies a call for the pluralization of public

space through the development of practices and actions that contest a privatized life in

which individuals participate in only marginal ways in public discourse[ii].

Where youth media production is concerned, in chapter one and earlier in this chapter

I indicated some of the processes and concerns that diminish the richness and breadth of

reality young people can access today. Below and in the analysis of the pedagogy

(chapter four), the videos (chapter five), and the mentors' experiences (chapter six)

enacted in the Summer Visions Film Institute, I will take up what democratic initiative

looks like in response to these processes. Here, I note that from an Arendtian perspective,

at root, such initiative is characterized by action that allows us to stay involved with each

other, to pay heed to the forces and structures that organize and limit our lives. For

Arendt, this crucially means public acts have a dual function in relation to democratic

practice.

Because no such acts can represent the breadth of struggle for freedom (but, instead,

are conceived as resources for the preservation of freedom), Arendt argues public actions

are always characterized by partiality. The very plurality of the world that supports such

acts in the first place assures this will be the case. But if this is so, Arendt concludes that

public actions are ultimately not about the consolidation of new truths (Curtis, 1999).

Change and the constitution of new social and political relations are obviously important.

Just as important from Arendt's perspective, however, is the way such acts

simultaneously preserve natality, the possibility of new beginnings. That is, public acts

are related to democracy not only because they challenge the sedimentation of meaning

and power in discourses, institutions and visual texts. They are related to democracy

because they simultaneously make evident the fact that meaning is to be contested, that our dependence on others is the existential condition that allows for transformative power in action (Gambetti, 2005, p. 433). Another way to say this is such acts make clear the social nature of meaning, its relativity and contingency. Of course, as noted earlier, in those moments where one is in the midst of speech and action that contest sedimented forms of power, it can be difficult to stay attuned to such contingency. Nonetheless, Arendt's point is that, over time we alternate between being actors in and witnesses to public acts. As we do, such experiences not only point to the problems and opportunities within the present; they also point to the contingency and possibility that underlines the prospect for change in the future. From Arendt's perspective, plurality is both the basis of public experience and the outcome that serves to sustain future democratic practice. Awareness of the contingency of meaning thus operates as a crucial resource to secure the future of democratic practice. It "sustain[s] and intensif[ies] our awareness of reality... Without such awareness we can neither belong well to a world of others nor care for them well" (Curtis, 1999, p. 19).

Democratic practice is a function of the way one learns to see oneself and one's becoming in the world in terms of one's interaction with others. This means never falling prey to "the temptation to short-circuit public life by asserting absolute truths. As important as mutual understanding is ..., it [remains] crucial that mutual understanding be achieved through processes of communication that are never complete" (Calhoun and McGowan, 1997, p. 8). It is in this sense that democratic practice is a function of one's commitment to an enlarged mentalité. To live and act with such a mentalité is to orient oneself to "the world's particulars..., their pregnancy, their fullness" (Curtis, 1999, p.

11). It is to operate in the realm of thinking, which doesn't mean for Arendt to operate in solitude. Rather, the thinking self is a plural self, one always operating in conversation with others. This is a self "that-is-not-one" (Curtis, 1999, p. 54). It is a self that is involved in the world, a self conceived relationally, "in a space in-between, with others and among others" (Gambetti, 2005, p. 435). It is a self that takes up Arendt's injunction: to act "on behalf of the shared world."

Arendt and Habermas

In an important way this position stands in contrast to Habermas' understanding of the public realm and democratic practice. As is well known, Habermas (1992, 1996a, 1996b) understands democratic practice in terms of procedures for rational-critical debate oriented toward mutual understanding. In his early work (1989/1962), Habermas traced the origins of this discursive form to the structural transformation in conceptions of publicity in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe[iii]. More recently, he has focused on the development of a "procedural concept of the public sphere" (Benhabib, 1992). Here, publicness (or democratic practice) is understood in terms of the participatory conditions implicit to the operation of everyday communication. By framing public engagement at this level, Habermas' intention is to suggest that the possibility for normatively regulated communication always exists.

At root, his argument is that a structure is apparent in the way actors engage in relationships oriented toward achieving understanding. This structure amounts to the necessary conditions implicit in the way we carry out linguistic communication with each other, or with regard to social and cultural objects constituted through embedded social relationships. Such conditions include the validity claims implicitly or explicitly raised

about certain sorts of knowledge that has been exercised and the sort of relationships

between speakers or speakers and cultural texts that arise in this process. Benhabib

(1992) nicely defines what these procedural constraints amount to:

> Each participant must have an equal chance to initiate and to continue
> communication; each must have an equal chance to make assertions,
> recommendations and explanations; all must have equal chances to
> express their wishes, desires, feelings; and finally, within dialogue,
> speakers must be free to thematize those power relations that in ordinary
> contexts would constrain the wholly free articulation of opinions and
> positions (p. 89; also see Habermas, 1990, pp. 87-94).

Habermas is of course aware that these conditions may not be retrieved in interpersonal

communication or in the analysis of cultural texts (such as movies, television or

advertisements, etc.). His point, however, is they are invoked in communication as long

as there is the assumption of responsiveness. Warranties underlie the procedural nature of

this relationship, securing future possibilities for reflexive, democratic communication

(Habermas, 1992).

As an abstraction generated from the structures underlying the reciprocal circulation

of meaning, Habermas is aware that the procedural concept of the public sphere has to be

located historically, in relation to those contexts and associations where meaning is

produced. In his work, this has led to a socio-cultural analysis of system and lifeworld as

action contexts in capitalist societies[iv]. I am not concerned to pursue this line of inquiry

here, except to note that public engagement in this model refers to those instances where

communicatively-achieved understanding is retrieved through acts that problematize

previously unquestioned norms, values and ends. Public dialogue thus operates as a form

of universalizing communication in which conditions are established for producing

consensus about how a democratic future might be achieved.

This universalizing tendency is where Arendt differs from Habermas. Arendt argues that as <u>forms</u> of communication, public actions are never simply an exercise in debate leading toward consensus (Warner, 2002). They are never simply "discourse [that] is understood to be propositionally summarizable" (Warner, 2002, p. 115). In Arendt's view the place of human plurality in the public realm cannot be accounted for under the aegis of an epistemic of legitimacy because "our ability to experience and constitute a world shared in common is utterly dependent on that world appearing to us through the eyes of others. That is appearance through distinction" (Curtis, 1999, p.16). We respond to particular others. Difference is thus a constitutive force. Every performance or action in the world is a manner of showcasing ourselves, but when we do this, we always address specific audiences. We never show our whole selves through spaces of appearance, nor does the full weight of the past appear as part of our engagement with others. Instead, Arendt argues, it is always particular versions or stylizations of our selves that respond to the stimuli offered by others. As such, it is not warranties which secure the possibility of new truths that sustain public life or democratic practice, but an awareness of and an obligation to the socially contingent nature of meaning.

Action in concert is crucial for Arendt but she contends such action is sustained through agonistic encounters that lead to a commitment to diversity and complexity throughout our social, cultural and political lives. If this is so, the question to be explored now is: what is the relationship between pedagogy and the development of a commitment to natality or new beginnings? I explore this question in the next section and then suggest how it can help us to understand the relationship between youth media production and

democratic practice and why the Summer Visions Film Institute offers an interesting example to assess this relationship.

Democratic Practice and a Pedagogy of Natality

One of the difficulties of drawing on Arendt's public realm theory in relation to youth media production is her insistence that politics and education not be conflated[v]. The most common interpretation of this is to assume Arendt wishes to cordon off education from political concerns, as though politics and learning are unrelated. This interpretation, however, misrepresents her argument.

On one level, the idea that education would be entirely distinct from concerns for democratic practice makes no sense in Arendt's schema. She conceives of plurality and natality or the possibility of new beginnings in relation to ontology but she is also aware that once examples of democratic practice are enacted, there are no guarantees that they will be assured in the future. It is with this in mind that she says: "the chances that tomorrow will be like yesterday are always overwhelming" (Arendt, 1968, p. 169). Concern for the disappearance of democratic practices is also evident when she remarks: "the modern age – which began with such an unprecedented and promising outburst of human activity[vi] – may end in the deadliest, most sterile passivity history has ever known" (p. 322). Given these and other laments, the implication is preparation is required to ensure public actions continue. Plurality and natality, the key conditions intrinsic to such actions, are, in this sense, political achievements not just "ontological conditions whose existence is tied to the … fact of human existence" (Levinson, 2002, p. 201). But if this is so, how are we to understand Arendt's insistence that politics and education are not the same?

In response, it is of note that she takes this position not because she wishes to separate politics and education into distinct realms, but because she argues it is not helpful to ask young people "to take responsibility for the world until they have been properly – and carefully exposed to it" (Levinson, 2002, p. 203). As evidenced in her essay, "The Crisis in Education," the target of this attack is very specifically progressive educators who so want to establish conditions of equality in the classroom that they ignore or downplay the need for adult direction. The need for such guidance does not mean teachers should act as authoritarians who impose their will on students. But it also does not mean the educator/student relationship is equal. Education – and here Arendt, like this research study, is concerned with learning designed for children and youth – poses a novel relation to the public realm as compared to politics. To engage in politics, in Arendt's view, is "to act freely amongst equals who are equally capable of free action" (Levinson, 1997, p. 449). To do this is to assume "equal responsibility for the course of the world" (Arendt, 1968, p. 189). Education, on the other hand, is a practice that addresses newcomers. "These newcomers … are not finished but [are] in a state of becoming" (Arendt, 1968, p. 182). We need then, to distinguish between the responsibilities and qualities required of us when we teach from those demanded of us in politics (Levinson, 1997).

A similar point was recently made in the context of debates in media education and youth media production regarding the role educators are to play in challenging students' thinking about the media. Questions about how actively teachers should contest young people's relation to the popular commercial media have been part of media literacy discussions for some time (Masterman, 1985; Buckingham, 2003; Poyntz, 2006; Kline et al, 2006). I addressed Len Masterman's contribution to these discussions in chapter one.

Here I note that David Buckingham (2003) has worried of late that by challenging students to engage in critical discussions of the media, educators risk censoring youthful tastes. The danger is critical media education will become "the land of the hand wringers who decry pleasure and insist on somber mediations on the ideological workings of consumer media" (Stack and Kelly, 2006, p. 13). I think to fall prey to this worry, however, is simplistic. There is no reason why critical analysis need be so disabling. What's more, as Stack and Kelly (2006) go on to argue, educators have a responsibility "to give students the tools to understand both how and why" (p. 13) the media reports on issues in the way they do, and why the latest shows, Internet sites, and computer games are pleasurable. Informing a general audience about such practices may or may not be appropriate; but to avoid these kinds of issues in the context of media education or youth media production is to misunderstand the responsibilities demanded of one when one teaches as compared to when one engages in politics.

Like Stack and Kelly, Arendt's essential concern about the relationship between education and politics is not whether such a relationship does or should exist, but how to properly understand pedagogy in the service of democratic practice. With this in mind, Arendt offers a curious formulation: to teach in the service of democratic agency, she says, means to "preserve newness" (Arendt, 1968, p. 189). The project of education, Arendt argues, is to teach for a world which appears "out of joint". Essentially, she means by this that because the world is ultimately a human creation, it wears down, it becomes entrenched in old patterns and ways of being. "To preserve the world against the mortality of its creators and inhabitants [requires that it] constantly [be] set right" (Arendt, 1968, p. 189). The work of setting things right falls to each new generation.

"Our hope always hangs on the new which every generation brings; but precisely because we can base our hope only on this, we destroy everything if we so try to control the new that we, the old, [try to] dictate how [the new] will look" (Arendt, 1968, p. 189).

What Arendt is getting at here is that a pedagogy that preserves newness must avoid teaching in an attempt to transform the world on behalf of students. Such practices articulate a project for students, as though the route toward the resolution of the world's problems were already in place. The problem is that to teach in this way is to take from students "their own future role in the body politic" (Arendt, quoted in Levinson, 1997, p. 443). Teaching for natality is thus a precarious balancing act between preparing young people for political life or democratic action, as Arendt understands this, without abandoning them to this action prematurely. Education for action means: "to teach in ways that generate the sorts of insights into the world that might turn students into political actors. Such approaches would have to illuminate both the moral consequences of our failure to act on behalf of others as well as attending to the moral possibilities – and pitfalls – of political action" (Levinson, 2002, p. 204).

Natality is central to Arendt's understanding of life because action is about the promise of beginnings, the possibility of the improbable in the context of power formations that might serve to undermine such possibilities. "At the most fundamental level [natality] refers to the fact that humans are constantly born into the world, and are continually in need of introduction to the world and one another" (Levinson, 1997, p. 436). Arendt (1968) uses natality to signal that a sense of belonging to a common world depends on "responsiveness to human particularity" (Curtis, 1999, p. 16). Without responding to particular others, we can neither understand our selves nor affect the

conditions that shape our lives. In this sense, the very plurality of the human condition is cause for hope that public action will continue. To ensure it does, however, democratic practice requires that we learn to visit and carefully listen to the perspectives of those we don't know and by extension, those situations that are unfamiliar to us. This is an essential task of education; helping young people "[t]o think with an enlarged mentalité [by] ... train[ing] one's imagination to go visiting" (Arendt, quoted in Smith, 2001, p. 83).

At the same time, Arendt is highly conscious of the fact that merely introducing young people to the world is not enough. The "essence of education," as Arendt (1968, p. 173) calls it, is in fact the promise of the new. Because of this, teaching for natality, or preserving newness involves a paradox. It means educators "are asked to facilitate [the] emergence [of the new] even though, as Arendt reminds us, ... we can neither predict nor control the forms this newness will take" (Levinson, 1997, p. 438). In this sense, the paradox of natality means: "We are asked to teach the world *as it is* in such a way that we neither endorse it nor seek to direct the course of its transformation" (Levinson, 1997, p. 443).

Of course carrying out this work is mediated by at least two conditions, each of which limits and enables opportunities for new beginnings. On the one hand, because we never experience the world in a wholly new way, belatedness is a characteristic feature to be encountered in any educational setting. We are always inheritors of our identities, our experiences and, I would add, the social, political and economic structures that allow specific subjectivities and experiences to come into being in the first place. "Belatedness orients us to the world that not only precedes us, but constitutes us as particular kinds of

people, positioning us in relation to others, to the past, and to the future in ways we might not have chosen, but into which we are nonetheless thrown. Recognizing the ways in which we are belated is essential to the development of social and self understandings" (Levinson, 1997, p. 440).

In youth media production, it was remarked on earlier what happens when this work is not done in the context of projects designed for urban youth. Given this, the work of preserving newness in youth media programs begins by acknowledging how young people have been represented in the past, including the ways race, class, gender and ethnicity inform these representations. As media educators (New London Group, 1996; Luke, 2000; Buckingham, 2003; Goodman 2003; Masterman 1985; Stack and Kelly, 2006) have long argued, it also includes acknowledging and delineating how particular codes and conventions of story, sound, lighting, editing and spatial and image design operate in multimodal texts[vii]. Further, it involves acknowledging how the production and distribution of youth media is changing in new digital environments, and what role the concentration of mainstream commercial media among fewer and fewer corporations plays in young people's lives. The purpose of this work is not to undermine youthful tastes; it is to provide young people with a sense of what has come before so they can frame their initiatives in relation to those undertaken in the past. This is a necessary step not only to understand the conditions of belatedness under which youth media production operates, but also so young people's work might begin contesting forms of oblivion that threaten their lives and the lives of others who are in danger of disappearing from social, political and cultural landscapes.

But the past can also be a significant resource that opens up novel experiences not yet encountered by students. In this sense, belatedness can be a profoundly enabling force. In youth media production, this is not only apparent when the history of visual representation is sourced for examples of new strategies and new ways youth people can represent their stories, but also when past youth media productions are used to exemplify the potential of young people's work. In chapter four, I note that this is a significant strategy used in the Summer Visions Film Institute. Previously produced student videos are used to prepare youth mentors for their work and to introduce new student filmmakers to the possibilities youth media offer. Beyond showcasing the promise of adolescent's work, the purpose of this practice is to foreground the "youthscape" constituted through the pedagogy and production work in the program. "Youthscape" is a term increasingly used in the field of youth popular culture studies to suggest "a site that is not just geographic or temporal, but social and political as well," a place that is bound up with questions of power, community and possibility (Maira and Soep, 2005, pp. xv-xvi). In chapter four I examine how the pedagogy in the Summer Visions program attempts to constitute such a place. Chapters five and six assess in what ways democratic practice is a characteristic feature of the youthscape produced in the Summer Visions program.

If belatedness is a limiting and an enabling condition within a pedagogy of natality, so too is plurality. It was noted earlier in this chapter how plurality operates as a precondition for the possibility of novel experiences, but plurality can also be a limiting factor. "(O)ur efforts to initiate the new take place always in the midst of other acting beings whose very presence makes it unlikely that our initiatives will come to fruition. This is not to say that our initiatives have no effect; rather it reminds us of the ways in

which the effects of particular acts cannot be predicted in advance" (Levinson, 1997, pp. 437-438; Arendt, 1998/1958, pp. 221-236). In youth media production, this is a particular problem young people can encounter when they work in groups to produce media. As will be apparent in chapter five, while there are many advantages to working in production teams, there are also interesting tensions that arise when compromise and negotiation mute the richness of the story and the video as a whole (Buckingham et al., 1995).

In educational settings, the conditions of belatedness and plurality orient us but also threaten to overwhelm our abilities to bring something new into being. Preserving natality thus depends on a willingness to confront "the social effects of belatedness [and plurality] without resigning ourselves passively to them. Resignation turns away from the promise of natality: the capacity to establish new relations and to generate new social realties through our words and deeds" (Levinson, 1997, p. 437). Natality is action that responds to particular circumstances we want to change. It represents those times in our lives when we take responsibility for our circumstances and refuse to be passive subjects in relation to social forces. Our actions thereby pull us out of our habitual self-understandings, facilitating new beginnings (Arendt, 1998/1958).

The essence of education is thus about constituting productive forms of uncertainty in the service of future engagement. In youth media production programs this means teaching young people to understand their work in relation to the world in such a way that the door is left open for the world and one's place in it to change. This is the "gap between past and future," a gap which "is not the present as we usually understand it but rather a gap in time" kept open by ongoing struggles between the fact of belatedness and

possible futures (Arendt, 1968, pp. 10-14). "To teach in this gap is to commit ourselves to teaching about the past – for understanding and guidance, and for the preservation of memory that underlies both – and to motivate students to try to set things right. At the same time we have to resist the temptation of attempting to determine and control our students' futures" (Levinson, 201, p. 450). This gap is sometimes called a "third space." It is a space where "students encounter themselves as belated, but they also [become] oriented to the future in a way that is neither forgetful of nor fated by the past" (Levinson, 1997, p. 449). It is a space that preserves freedom by orienting young people toward "outer-regarding norms and actions" (Trentmann, 2007).

To 'preserve newness,' means teaching for the possibility of new beginnings, not because one knows what those new beginnings are, but because it is the very possibility that young people will contribute to the construction of a new world that ensures the ongoing possibility of public life. In this sense, Arendt helps us to understand that the relationship between pedagogy and democratic practice is not specifically about developing critically engaged activists. If this happens, that's fine. As importantly, however, pedagogy supports democratic agency when young people come to see themselves in relation to and as part of what Arendt calls, the "web of human relationships." Understanding oneself in this way means conceiving of oneself and one's life in relation to plurality. As a central marker for assessing the relationship between youth media production and democratic practice this is a different and less utopian vision than has traditionally characterized critical media pedagogy. It is not about emancipation. Rather, democratic practice here is understood to be a function of the way adolescents envision their lives in terms of interaction with others. Of course, it is not enough merely

to embrace any action that involves one in dialogue or work with others because democratic acts also have a vital role in contesting the lure of oblivion that threatens to disempower groups of people and attenuate our sense of reality. So there is a fundamentally ethical dimension to the way educational environments like youth media programs produce an investment in action. I believe this means Arendt's framework suggests the democratic potential of such programs is a function of the way they lead youth to think of themselves as plural selves, relational subjects whose lives are connected to contestation over the social nature of meaning and our obligation to this. This requires one to be attentive "to the wonder of human particularity and to the specificity of the world to which it gives birth" (Curtis, 1999, p. 10).

The Summer Visions Film Institute and Democratic Practice

Hannah Arendt offers a powerful theory of the public realm, which leads to a convincing understanding of democratic practice. Such practice is conceived in terms of actions that inscribe one into the course of events in ways that change the initial circumstances under which one acts. This means democratic practice is about acts that challenge the sedimentation of meaning and power in discourses, institutions and visual texts, while simultaneously making evident that our dependence on others is the existential condition that allows for such transformative acts in the first place. The role of pedagogy in this project is to preserve newness. This is made possible through learning strategies that contest and take advantage of the fact that we arrive in the world belatedly. At the same time, such strategies cannot articulate a project for students, as though the route toward resolution of the world's problems were already in place. Instead, they need to facilitate opportunities for young people to confront the plurality of the world and our

responsibility to this. When this happens natality or the potential for new beginnings can result.

This framework offers a novel model for understanding the relationship between youth media production and democratic practice. I use this model to evaluate the practices and experiences of youth involved in the Summer Visions Film Institute. This program offers an important example to assess the relationship between youth media production and democratic practice as conceived in relation to natality because, unlike the Educational Video Centre in New York City (discussed in chapter one), Summer Visions is not focused on the production of documentary videos. At the same time, Summer Visions shares many of the aims and objectives of other community-based, institutionally mediated programs. There is currently no summative study of such initiatives in Canada, but Charmaraman (2006) quotes from a study by Campbell et al. (2001) in the United States, which notes that the mission of youth media programs tends to fall into the following areas: (1) youth voice and social change through creative expression and/or political and social action; (2) career development; (3) positive youth development, including increasing young people's sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and power; (4) media literacy in order to produce critical viewers and producers; (5) academic improvement by focusing on increasing literacy skills, critical thinking and reflection, imagination and problem solving; and (6) narrowing the technological divide for communities who typically lack access to resources (p. 46).

As is evidenced in chapter four, while Summer Visions does not address each of these areas equally, there are a number of ways the objectives of the program intersect with these goals. Summer Visions thus affords an interesting example to assess how Arendt's

work can be used to examine the relationship between youth production and democratic action.

To address this relationship, I draw on a pedagogy of natality as outlined above and use this conceptual framework to examine the teaching practices and mentor training process in Summer Visions. My intention is to assess the degree to which each of these components are designed to "preserve newness" for young people. I then turn in chapter five to assess the way the program provokes agonistic struggles that foster an engagement with plurality by closely analyzing the development of three youth productions made in the summer of 2006. Finally, in chapter six, I examine how and the degree to which youths' experiences in Summer Visions lead to a conception of the socially contingent nature of meaning and our obligation to this. While it is possible to address this outcome in relation to the experience of Summer Visions students, I focus on the way such a conception develops among youth video production mentors in the program.

With this in mind, the questions I address in subsequent chapters are:

1. In what ways does Arendt's conception of public action as conceived in relation to a pedagogy of natality help us to understand the relationship between democratic practice and (a) Summer Visions' pedagogical design and mentor training program, (b) the production of Summer Visions videos, and (c) the experience of youth production mentors in the program?

2. In what ways does the conceptual focus offered by Arendt's framework help educators, researchers and young people understand and address the forces and tensions that can undermine the role of democratic practice in youth media production programs?

[i] See for instance, Kateb, 1983. For interpretations more in line with the argument I am making, see Villa, 1992, 1997; Curtis, 1999; Benhabib, 1992.

[ii] To be clear, Arendt does not mean by this that liberal democratic forms of governance should be dissolved – in fact she is deeply suspicious of all revolutionary movements that imagine a new social order can be produced ex nihilo – but that other forms of action beyond the institutions of mass democracy are necessary to vitalize and even protect such governments (Isaac, 1994, pp. 159-161).

[iii] Prior to the development of the bourgeois concept of the public sphere, a form of representative publicness predominated. The etymological and institutional basis of this concept lies in feudal society. Here, to be public is to perform before the people in some fashion, displaying a "status attribute" to represent the country or serfdom as a whole (Habermas, 1989, pp. 5-12).

[iv] Within this framework, systemically integrated action contexts are those forms of social action set "loose from integration through value consensus and [switched] ... over to purposive rationality steered by media" (Habermas 1984, p. 342). Here, media refer to the instrumental steering capacities of money and power located most importantly in the capitalist enterprise and the bureaucratic state. They allow for "utility-maximizing calculations...[through] the functional interlacing of unintended consequences" (Fraser 1989, p. 117). The lifeworld, on the other hand, is organized through socially integrated action of which two forms can be set out: normatively-secured integration organized around an implicit consensus of norms, values and ends; and communicatively-achieved integration, generated by explicit linguistic interpretation of these norms, values and ends.

[v] In particular, see her essay, "The Crisis in Education," reprinted in Arendt (1968).

[vi] Here she is thinking of the democratic promise represented by both the American and French Revolutions.

[vii] The term, multimodal texts is used to highlight the fact that media resources now integrate a range of elements, including visual, audio and graphic symbols, alphabetic texts, and patterns of gesture and spatial design that operate in a dynamic process of meaning production (New London Group, 1996).

Chapter 3

Critical Ethnography and the Summer Visions Program

The over-arching research objective in this dissertation is to document how an

Arendtian framework of public action conceived in terms of a pedagogy of natality can

be used to assess the way democratic practice is and is not fostered through a youth

media production program. In this chapter I outline the method used in the study, situate

the Summer Visions Film Institute in relation to the community and school where it takes

place, and describe key participants in the research. I also locate myself in relation to the

summer program, indicate my data collection resources and procedures, and describe the

methods used for analyzing data.

Critical Ethnography

Methodologically, this study is located within the tradition of critical ethnography.

Historically, ethnography developed as part of the tradition of Verstehen (to use Wilhelm

Dilthey's term), meaning it is concerned with understanding the expressed meanings and

lived experiences of those one studies. Epistemologically, this involves a commitment "to

explicit and holistic interpretation from a bottom-up perspective" (Schroeder et al., 2003,

p. 64). Media ethnographies, like the one undertaken herein, "focus on media uses as part

of people's everyday lives" and as part of their experiences in institutionally mediated

settings (Schroeder et al., 2003, p. 58). The holistic nature of this research refers to the

fact that while my concern is for the way youth media producers and mentors create

meanings and engage in activities through practical work, I am also concerned with the

relationship between producers and audiences and, beyond this, with "the larger socio-

cultural structures that circumscribe this process" (Schroeder et al., 2003, p. 48). The goal

is to examine how sense-making operates among research participants while, at the same time, attempting to understand "how and why particular actions and articulations come to attain social meaning and significance" (Schroeder et al., 2003, p. 58).

As a method, critical ethnography applies "a subversive world view to more conventional narratives of cultural inquiry. It does not necessarily stand in opposition to conventional ethnography… Rather, it offers a more reflective style of thinking about the relationship between knowledge, society and freedom from unnecessary social domination" (Thomas, 2003, p. 45). Inevitably, the goal is to understand how "the democratic redistribution of power through culture" might be enacted (Brown, 2004, p. 303). For this reason, critical ethnography is ideally suited to a study which examines how a youth media production program nurtures democratic practice by helping young people to think with an enlarged mentalité, "to care about matters of common concern and to act on this concern with others" (Isaac, 1994, p. 158).

Beginning with Paul Willis' groundbreaking text, Learning to Labour (1977), typically, three assumptions have underwritten the critical ethnographer's work. First, it is assumed all cultural groups produce an "intersubjective reality which is both 'inherited' and continually constructed and reconstructed as it is lived or practiced" (Foley, 2002, p. 472). In relation to terms introduced in chapter two, this is to say our experience is always belated. It is shaped by a past that orients us to the world "that not only precedes us, but constitutes us as particular kinds of people" (Levinson, 1997, p. 440). Of course, because the past is always susceptible to change, critical ethnography is also attentive to the ways our intersubjective reality is reconstructed through new experiences. Critical ethnographers are engaged in mapping how "life environments,

institutional and organizational structures, and the social relations of economic

production and consumption shape modes of social reproduction;" but they are also

attentive to the way culture "emerges in new forms through human activity" (Carspecken,

2002, p. 61). In this study, a similar dynamic form of analysis is taken up through an

examination of the way experiences of natality or new beginnings are fostered for youth

through an engagement with the plural and belated conditions that shape their media

production work.

Second, critical ethnographers also assume that "a well-trained, reflexive, investigator

... [is capable of knowing a] historical, socially constructed reality in a partial,

provisional sense through an intensive, experiential encounter with people" (Foley, 2002,

p. 472). To be sure, as noted below, this assumption is much debated today, but at root, a

significant locus of work in critical ethnography remains committed to the real, to the

idea that it is possible to know something meaningful about people's social lives and their

possible futures.

Third, and in fact an extension of the second presumption, it is assumed "a reflexive

investigator, who has experienced [the] ... cultural space [of a group] and has dialogued

with its practitioners, can portray this cultural space and its people in a provisionally

accurate manner" (Foley, 2002, pp. 473). The goal of this work is to find alternative

meanings and to challenge the structures of power as practiced within various institutions

by producing knowledge that preserves freedom (Carspecken, 2002).

Of course drawing on any ethnographic tradition today is complicated. Ethnographers

may say we write about the world from "a bottom-up perspective" (Schroeder et al.,

2003, p. 64), but over the course of its history ethnography has betrayed the trust or

erased the experience of those being studied and as a result, positivist ethnography has been tarnished if not discredited entirely (Brown, 2004). Particular problems within this tradition have included: a tendency to subsume participants' voices in the ethnographer's work; a tendency to hierarchize the interests of the ethnographer over those under study, meaning career aspirations trump ethical and political considerations about participants; a propensity to reinforce negative stereotypes of the exotic Other and through this to replicate "the oppressive effects, if not the material conditions of colonization;" and, a tendency to claim objectivity for one's findings "through the habitual practice of putting the ethnographic Self under erasure" (Brown, 2004, p. 300; but also see, Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fisher, 1986; Marcus, 1994). In addition, because of the ethnographer's need to find order, ethnographic work has tended to present the social world as a far tidier place than what actually exists (Herbert, 2000). Because of this, suspicion has arisen that the whole ethnographic project may be wanting (Horner, 2004; Carspecken, 2002).

In response, awareness of these failures must necessarily inform ethnographic practice today. At the same time, this does not mean ethnography should abandon its commitment to understanding reality (Marcus, 1999; Carspecken, 2002). In fact, critical ethnographers have reclaimed this orientation in their work, following a decade and a half of uncertainty born in large part from engagements with poststructuralist theory (Brown, 2004, Foley, 2002). Early on this engagement seemed to suggest that ethnographies could no longer speak about the real, but perhaps only about the experience of the ethnographer in relation to those under study or in relation to a handful of other cases. Of late, however, a number of researchers (Brown, 2004; Horner, 2004; Schroeder et al., 2003;

Foley 2002; Carspecken, 2002; van Loon, 2001; Gordon et al., 2001; Burowoy, 1998) have argued that this conclusion may be premature.

In particular, what has productively emerged from ethnography's engagement with postmodern and poststructuralist theory is a clearer sense of the role of language and politics in the work ethnographers do. The legacy of postmodern encounters, in other words, would seem to be a keener understanding today of the fact that all knowledge is negotiated and constructed through language, which is to say all knowledge is relational and political. "Knowledge is not only the shadow of a sign, but also dwells in the shadows between signs, dwells in and between and beyond the signifying chains that can only always and forever represent it in its partiality" (Brown, 2004, p. 301). Concluding thus, however, does not discredit the three assumptions central to critical ethnographic practice noted above, as much as it introduces a necessary modesty and attention to ethics and politics in regard to these assumptions (Herbert, 2000).

This really means that epistemologically and ontologically, critical ethnography is less concerned today to arrive at definitive and absolute statements about cultural groups. More valuable is the ability to offer "truthlike" statements in one's research. What makes one's descriptions and analyses "truthlike" has less to do with their mirror-like correspondence to the world, than with "the credibility and usefulness of [one's] findings ... [as] ... decided [on] discursively by the community of scholars and other potential users" of one's research (Schroeder, 2003, p. 47). But if this is so, it is more important than ever that ethnographers now also address the ethics of their practice and the politics it serves. Past errors and exclusions are not to be reproduced. Moreover, if knowledge is always partial and necessarily involved with power, how we interact with and affect those

we study and how our research is construed to serve particular political ends become legitimate questions.

In practice, one way to accommodate this reflexive turn is through what Foley (2002) calls, a theoretically reflexive critical ethnography. Here, our theoretical constructs are understood to evolve in relation to the cultural practices of our subjects. Thus "abstract armchair theorizing about everyday life" is replaced "with an experiential, abductive way of knowing [where the] ethnographer must tack back and forth mentally between her concrete field experience and her abstract theoretical explanations of that experience (Foley, 2002, p. 476). Through this, practitioners question and analyze field experiences while also critically analyzing the disciplinary framework "that shapes them and their interpretations" (Foley, 2002, p. 477). Unlike empirical testing where the goal is to evaluate seemingly 'universal' laws of human behaviour through inductive method, abduction moves "from a conception of something to a different, possibly more developed or deeper conception of it. This happens through our placing and interpreting the original ideas about the phenomenon in the frame of a new set of ideas" (Danermark et al. quoted in Shroeder et al., 2003, p. 46). Multiple dialogues are thus employed "to reach explanations of empirical phenomena ... [We start] out from dialogue ... between observer and participants, [embed] such dialogue within a second dialogue between local processes and extralocal forces that in turn can only be comprehended through a third, expanding dialogue of theory with itself" (Burowoy, 1998, p. 5). In this way, "insight comes from immersion in the data, a sifting and resifting of the evidence until a pattern makes itself known" (MacLeod, 1995, p. 270). This method lends itself to holistic media ethnographies because we begin with the meanings and activities media users (including

youth media producers and mentors) generate. We then attempt to illuminate these by drawing linkages between media users and the discursive practices set in both the organizational contexts of the media and the everyday lives of young people. Finally, in a third dimension, the communication process that leads to the creation of a concrete communication product – i.e., a video – is "understood as being inscribed in larger media-specific as well as socio-cultural processes of … globalization, commercialization, [and] democratization …, etc." (Schroeder et al., 2003, p. 48-49). The result is a dialectic analysis meant to produce increasingly helpful maps of the world.

In this study, such a dialectic analysis operates through a socialization of the methods for data collection, a politicization of the study's objectives, and a personalization of the researcher's voice. In regard to a socialization of methods, this means rather than positioning myself as the so-called Lone Ethnographer at work in a field of foreign relations (Brown, 2004), I worked in a collaborative relationship with youth participants, educators, and community members involved with the Summer Visions Film Institute. The collaboration included inviting students to act as co-designers[i] of the semi-structured interviews held with them beginning in January, 2006. I also asked participating youth to keep personal journals that reflect their understanding of how participation in the program has affected their conceptions of the media (both youth media and mainstream popular culture), their communities and themselves. As it turned out, most youth did not maintain journal reflections, but they did communicate their concerns and points of view to me through email communication, short informal conversations, and longer talks had throughout the summer of 2006. In addition, in the fall of the same year, participating youth were invited to review and critique the researcher's evolving conceptions of young

people's experiences in Summer Visions. This proved to be very helpful and in fact was formative in shaping my understanding of the video production process and the role of both students and peer-to-peer mentors in the program.

The voices of educators and program instructors – both school and community-based – involved in Summer Visions were also solicited throughout the study via semi-structured formal interviews and informal conversations. Where possible, the same group of adults were invited to review, critique and contribute to the researcher's understanding of youths' experiences through interview sessions held near the end of the project's research term. Finally, a wide range of participants – including former mentors and community members who have been involved in Summer Visions over six years – were solicited in order to gain a broad array of spatial and temporal perspectives on the program. As evidenced in subsequent chapters, the views of these people played a sustantive role in shaping my understanding of Summer Visions and my assessment of how the program has impacted young people.

Regarding a politicization of the study's objectives, while this dissertation is clearly located in relation to the history of media literacy and youth media production pedagogies, it is also designed to document how democratic practice is enabled through youth work. As I argued in chapter one, the current media education literature still contains an underdeveloped theorization of this process. In particular, we lack an understanding of how youth media production – beyond documentary programs explicitly geared toward "in-depth documentation, research and public discussion of a community problem" (Goodman, 2003, p. 105) – relates to democracy. In response to this, I have found Hannah Arendt's conception of public action understood in terms of a pedagogy of

natality to be a powerful and novel framework for assessing how democratic practice is nurtured through creative youth work. In line with a reflexive critical ethnographic practice, in chapter four, I use an Arendtian framework to make sense of the mentor training and pedagogical practices characteristic of the Summer Visions program. In chapters five and six, I then address how this framework can be usefully deployed to examine the development of Summer Visions films and to assess peer-to-peer mentors' experiences in the program. Throughout, while beginning from the experiences of youth and adult participants in the program, I embed these experiences in a dialogue about media production practice and young people's everyday lives. I also situate this discussion in relation to socio-cultural processes related to race, class, gender, and practices of commercialization. The purpose of this is to indicate where discursive practices related to these forces undermine the work of natality and democracy in youth media. Through this, I argue this study is designed in a way that supports and extends the political concerns of the critical ethnographic tradition.

Finally, if one purpose of post-structuralist critiques of ethnography was to move the practice away from objective ethnographic accounts, I draw lessons from this critique in two ways. First, in what follows, I note my long history of involvement with the Summer Visions program. In an older positivist ethnographic tradition this might be considered a weakness. Here, however, I draw on my familiarity with the program's history, as well as the histories of the organizations involved to offer the kind of intimate yet rigorous perspective that might not be possible for someone less familiar with this setting. Through this, to use the terms of the day, I "write myself into the story," noting how my own conceptions of each program and of youth media production, more generally, have

taken shape. Second, by drawing on the network of young people, educators and community members involved in these initiatives, I offer a tapestry of voices and experiences representative of the real resources necessary to ensure these programs operate. By this, it is hoped that "situated, embodied, historical selves/characters" emerge in the text, thereby producing a study based in praxis, "one in which the ethnographer is ... reflexive, the process ... dialogic, and the outcomes ... political" (Brown, 2004, p. 302).

Program Setting

The Summer Visions Film Institute is a partnership between Cityschool, a local inner-city high school, and Pacific Cinémathèque, a not-for-profit film centre in Vancouver. During the summer, the program operates out of a converted automotive studio in Cityschool. Pacific Cinémathèque administers the program from its downtown offices during the off-season and recruits interested young people through information sessions held in secondary schools, alternative education programs and community centres. Both Cityschool and the surrounding community are considered part of the inner city in Vancouver, although both are undergoing a process of transition and gentrification (Ley, 1996; Danyluk and Ley, 2007).

Historically, the area known as East Vancouver has been a major working class district in the city. Over the course of the past decade and a half, however, the migration of artists, culture and helping-industry workers, and professionals into the neighbourhood has led to rising real estate values and some out-migration of working-class, lower income peoples (Phillips-Watts et al., 2005; Danyluk and Ley, 2007). The neighbourhood's large stock of cooperative housing has ameliorated this process to an

extent, as revealed in the most recently available census data, which indicates that 37.5% of the population is low-income, as compared to 27% of the population in the City of Vancouver as a whole (Statistics Canada, Census 2001). Nonetheless, the number of families with university degrees in the community increased by more than 25% between 1991 and 2001 (Phillips-Watts et al., 2005). David Ley (1996) argues this is an important sign of gentrification because the arrival of university-educated professionals tends to precede a significant increase in property values and income levels. In the years following 2001, this in fact came to pass as a dramatic increase in the cost of homes in East Vancouver has been evident. Between 2002 and 2007, for instance, the average price for a detached home in the area increased by 104.4% (Multiple Listing Services, October 2007). It is of note that housing costs throughout the region increased at a rate of 102.6% over the same period (Multiple Listing Services, October 2007). This suggests that while a process of gentrification has been underway in East Vancouver over the past five years, at least in part the rising cost of living associated with this development has been symptomatic of the region as a whole.

Perhaps for this reason, cultural, ethnic and even economic diversity continue to be common characteristics of East Vancouver. The area continues to have one of the highest concentrations of non-English speaking communities in the region, with significant representation among people who speak Chinese, Vietnamese and Italian at home (City of Vancouver, 2005). In addition, the average household income continues to be approximately twenty percent less than the average for Vancouver as a whole (City of Vancouver, 2005). There is also a significantly higher percentage of single parent families (26.4%) in the area as compared to the City of Vancouver (17%), and rental

accommodations and apartment-living are much more common features of the community (City of Vancouver, 2005). If these figures indicate the continuing diversity evident in the community, this characteristic is also represented among the student body at Cityschool as well as among young people involved in the Summer Program.

In many ways Cityschool exemplifies a typical high school in East Vancouver. As of 2005, 58% of the students came from homes where English is not the primary language. Of these students, two-thirds speak Chinese or Cantonese with their families (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007). Overall, students at Cityschool speak more than 40 languages and one-third are bilingual. First Nations students make up nearly five percent of the student population, while ten percent of the students are designated as Special Needs (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007). The graduation rate is 93%, which is slightly lower than the provincial average. Even with the recent migration of university-educated professionals into East Vancouver, the educational attainment levels of students' families remain lower than district and provincial averages for both high school graduation and attainment of university degrees (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2007).

In 2006, more than 20% of the students attending Summer Visions came from East Vancouver high schools. These youth were part of a group of 135 students who took part in the program through a needs-based scholarship initiative. Scholarships are funded through a partnership with the local insurance brokers association and a district youth-in film program. This ensures that a cross-section of youth from throughout the Lower Mainland are able to access the program. In 2006, there were a total of 162 youth participants in Summer Visions, of which 85 were female and 77 were male.

Approximately, 40% were visible minorities. Three youth self-identified as First Nations, while four students were physically and/or mentally challenged.

Study Participants

The main participants in this study included the Director of the Summer Visions program (Caitlin), the Education Director at Pacific Cinémathèque (Julia), the Head of Cityschool's Film and Theatre Department (Tony), a community artist and Summer Visions script supervisor (Lucy), and a community member and former program instructor (Ryan). Of this group, Tony is a professional film and television actor and a certified teacher with the provincial College of Teachers. He grew up in East Vancouver and has worked at Cityschool since 1981. He is widely regarded as a dynamic and much-loved educator. Caitlin lives in East Vancouver and has worked as a community media producer and a youth media educator with the Cinémathèque since 1999. At the time of the study, Julia had worked with the Cinémathèque for a little more than two years. She has a background in social work and has taught community college courses on lighting for photography. Lucy has a history of more than twenty five years as a community educator, working largely in the area of theatre activism for social change. Early in her career she was heavily influenced by Augusto Boal's (1979) work, Theatre of the Oppressed. In 2000, she began working on youth media education and production projects with the Cinémathèque and, as noted in chapter four, was influential in developing the storytelling strategies used in the Summer Visions program. Ryan also lives in East Vancouver and is now a professional television editor working on a regionally-based TV show about urban environments. He worked with Summer Visions

as an instructor between 2002 and 2004 and also assisted Pacific Cinémathèque and Cityschool's Film and Theatre Department with various projects during this period.

In addition to these people, I observed most of the 162 students taking part in Summer Visions throughout July and August. During this period and in the months prior to and following the summer, however, much of my attention was focused on understanding the work and experience of peer-to-peer mentors involved in the program. I chose to focus on the insights and experiences of these youth for two reasons.

First, unlike student participants who take part in Summer Visions for nine or ten days, the mentors are involved in production work in the program on a daily basis over a seven-week period. Most are also former students and so they offer a more robust and complex example to evaluate how creative media practices impact young people's relationship with democratic practice.

Second, while peer education has had a central role in liberal and progressive education reforms since the 1960s (Goldfarb, 2002), it is surprising to note the dearth of research about peer-to-peer mentorship in media production settings (Charmaraman, 2006). The Summer Visions youth mentor program is an example of peer-to-peer training designed to support student work throughout the production process. This approach is based on the notion that education and young people's engagement and power is deepened when youth take on pedagogical roles among their peers. Through this, models of learning which position the teacher as master of the discipline are "replaced by a process that emphasizes the development of the students' own collective and individual critical thinking skills and of the students' own rhetorical skills of discussion, group collaboration, and debate" (Goldfarb, 2002, p. 111). In media-based learning, peer

education is facilitated through a process which tends to promote student-to-student exchange and interactivity among and within groups. Kids talk to kids and, ideally, when this works well, "peer education provides a safe community and develops a useful vocabulary in which youths can publicly articulate and analyze their life experiences" (Goldfarb, 2002, p. 112).

In the Summer Visions program, mentors are hired from among the student population at Cityschool. They range in age from fifteen-to-twenty-one years old and are hired following an interview process led by Caitlin. Most of the mentors also have experience in Cityschool's film and theatre classes, although as evidenced in subsequent chapters, they typically have minimal regard for what they learn in these classes. This study is largely concerned with the experience of eight of the eleven mentors hired as part of the 2006 staff[ii]. The eight youth have differing technical and script writing abilities and have been involved with the summer program for varying lengths of time. They represent a cross-section of educational levels, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural and ethnic diversity. As with the names of the program instructors, pseudonyms have been used in each case.

Dominic is a seventeen-year-old African Canadian student who graduated from Cityschool in 2006. In the same year, he worked as a peer mentor in Summer Visions for the first time. Previously, he did not attend the program as a student, although he did complete three film and television production classes during his career at Cityschool. He lives with his father who is a truck driver for Canada Post and he wants to be a film actor in the future. As noted in chapter six, Dominic worked hard but also struggled in his first year as a peer educator.

Justine is an eighteen-year-old Chinese Canadian student who was entering her first year of post-secondary education at the time of this study. She attended Summer Visions as a student in 2003 and then was hired as a mentor in 2005 and 2006. Her family speaks Cantonese at home and her father is retired. During her career at Cityschool, Justine was actively involved in the theatre program and is wonderful with children.

Kira is a seventeen-year-old Chilean-Canadian student who graduated from Cityschool in 2006. She is fluent in Spanish and was a student in Summer Visions in 2003 and then was hired as a mentor the following year. Her father is an independent television producer and a bus driver and her mother is an employee of the local Tenants Rights Action Coalition. Kira is often thought of as the best mentor to work with student groups interested in making personal or highly emotional stories.

Macie is an eighteen-year old Italian-Canadian student entering her first year of university at the time of this study. She began attending Summer Visions as a student in 2002 and then was hired as a peer mentor the following year. Throughout subsequent chapters she is described as a senior mentor in the program. While one of her parents completed a college education, her mother is now a clerk and her father is retired. Among the group, Macie is considered to be especially strong at story editing. She is also very concerned about the way women are portrayed in student videos.

Rachel is a sixteen year-old Italian Canadian student who was entering her senior year of high school at the time of this study. She attended Summer Visions as a student in 2003, 2004 and 2005, and then was hired as a mentor in 2006. She is an academically successful student whose mother is a college educator and whose father is a mail carrier.

Rachel struggled in her first year as a peer educator although she worked very hard at learning from the more experienced mentors.

Rohan is an eighteen-year-old Caucasian student who was entering his second year of post-secondary education at the time of this study. He was a student in Summer Visions in 2003 and then was hired as a mentor the following year. In 2006, as in previous summers, he only worked in the program for four weeks, and then left to attend a religious summer camp in Ontario for the remainder of the season. Rohan is a trained singer and his parents are both highly educated. Among the group, he is often asked to work with groups that have the most challenging stories.

Terrence is an eighteen-year-old Japanese Canadian student entering his third year of post-secondary education at the time of this study. He began attending Summer Visions as a student in 2002 and then was hired as a peer mentor the following year. He is one of the senior mentors in the program. His family is middle class and highly educated and, as noted in chapter six, they are largely disdainful of popular commercial media. Among the group of mentors, Terrence is highly regarded for his intelligence and his ironic sense of humour. He is also kind, easy to work with, and is often very helpful to younger mentors.

Zac is a twenty-year-old Caucasian student who was entering his third year of post-secondary education at the time of this study. He began attending the program as a student in 2001 and then was hired as a mentor the following year. He is one of the senior mentors in the program and has also become an accomplished independent filmmaker. His family is middle class and both parents have completed post-secondary degrees. As noted in chapter four, Zac is a formative presence in the summer program and has become a leader among his peers.

Besides these participants, I also interviewed four former peer mentors in Summer Visions in order to gain insight into the way the program has impacted young people over time. All four of these youth continue to live in East Vancouver.

Position of the Researcher

Beginning with my Master's degree in the early 1990s, I have long been interested in the role of popular media and youth media production as resources for fostering young people's critical understanding and engagement with the issues and relationships that shape their lives. While pursuing these concerns, in 1995, I was hired as Pacific Cinémathèque's inaugural Education Director, a position I held until 2004. During this period, besides leading the development and implementation of film and media education programs and youth media production projects, I was also part of the team that initiated the Summer Visions Film Institute. Largely working with Tony and Caitlin, I helped develop the funding partnerships and institutional arrangements to support the program, and also assisted in the early development of the program's structure and pedagogical practices. As noted in chapter four, many of these initial pedagogical strategies eventually changed over the course of the program's first half decade. Summer Visions also expanded significantly during this period, growing from fifty student video makers and three youth mentors in 2000 and 2001 to a much larger program that included more than 150 students and between ten and fifteen peer educators by 2005.

During my early involvement with Summer Visions, as a member of the senior management group with Pacific Cinémathèque, while always interested in the work and experiences generated in the program, I often spent much of my time addressing administrative, funding and personnel issues. I paid close attention to the operation of

Summer Visions and took a leading role in shaping and fostering its growth throughout the off-season. Between 2000 and 2004, however, I rarely had the opportunity to spend more than several hours each week at the Institute. Instead, I dropped in and out of Cityschool over the course of each summer, talking with the major players involved in the program and getting to know the youth and the peer mentors during video screenings, production meetings, program reviews, and day-to-day conversations. From this vantage point, I developed a close relationship with some of the young people involved in Summer Visions and also developed a specific interest that eventually led to the current research project.

Having worked with youth in a variety of media production projects over the past decade, I came to be interested in the way such initiatives lead young people to become involved with or concerned about the forces and relationships that shape their lives, even when these projects are not specifically designed to politicize youth. As evidenced in chapter four, the Summer Visions program is driven by a series of interrelated objectives, including aiding young people's career development, fostering youth expression and empowerment, bridging digital divides, and nurturing positive youth development and media literacy. These objectives are common for many youth media programs. In observing the experience of youth involved in Summer Visions, it became apparent to me that participating in programs like this can alter young people's relationship with their lives and communities in dramatic and powerful ways. Participating youth did not necessarily become overt political activists, but their sense of concern for and involvement in the world around them changed. I came to be interested in the way this change marked a new relationship with democratic practice for young people.

As noted above, the current media education literature still contains an underdeveloped theorization of this process and so I turned to Hannah Arendt's conception of public action to assess how democratic practice is nurtured through creative youth work. I chose to explore this question through the Summer Visions program in large part because I am familiar with the project and it offered a dynamic case study for my research questions.

The current coordinators and directors of the program welcomed my participation in 2006. So too did the more senior mentors who had been involved in the program for some time. My research project was also introduced to and welcomed by new peer mentors as well as student participants in Summer Visions. All instructors and youth were told that I would be observing their work and their production experiences and that I would be taking notes and interviewing and talking with people throughout the summer. This seemed to cause little difficulty, which was gratifying and significant for my research. At the same time, my past experience with Summer Visions presented certain challenges.

In ethnographic work, one's position in relation to one's research obviously affects one's knowledge. The result is one must always work toward what Katz (1994) describes as conscious reflection on "the situatedness of our knowledge" (p. 498; also see Haraway, 1988). In many ways, ethnographies are as much about the ethnographer as they are about those being studied because the researcher is a social animal. We both play a role in shaping the kind of data collected and also have "needs that must be met in some degree if [we are] to function successfully" (Whyte quoted in MacLeod, 1995, p. 270). In essence, this means, as an ethnographer, I was never entirely outside of my academic

culture or the culture of Summer Visions during this study. Rather, "ethnographic effectiveness [is about] creating a space between [these] cultures where similarity and difference can be explored and explained in an ongoing reflexive process" (Herbert, 2000, p. 563).

In order to create such a space, I began by immersing myself in the 2006 program. To do this, I largely took the role of a passive participant observer, attempting to understand the subjective meanings constructed by participants in all aspects of Summer Visions (Schutz, 1954; 1967; as cited in Robson, 1993). Throughout this immersion, I engaged in a process of tacking back and forth between the meanings and experiences of people involved in the summer program and my own theoretical assumptions about the meaning of democratic practice and its relationship with production work. At times this proved challenging because research subjects were also my colleagues and friends. This tended to make it easier to gain access to people's experiences, but it also proved awkward at times. Specifically, I felt some conflict over which details revealed by my informants were meant to enlighten my study and what information was offered out of friendship. To address this problem I found myself constantly checking in with research participants about the conclusions I was reaching and the sources of information on which they were based.

Because my past experience in Summer Visions was largely sporadic, in order to gain as much detail and understanding about day-to-day experiences in the program, I attended the week-long mentor training pre-camp in the last week of June, 2006, and then spent all but a few days at Cityschool throughout July and August. While there, I took part in all training workshops, followed specific video groups throughout their production

cycle, attended mentor meetings held at the end of each day, took part in mentor evaluation sessions conducted by Caitlin and others, and attended all public screenings, including those held at Pacific Cinémathèque in September. On a number of occasions I also participated in student productions as an actor or crew member and was asked to provide feedback on creative projects. In the spring and fall of 2006, I interviewed senior peer mentors and youth who were formerly mentors in the program. I also interviewed community members during these periods as well as teachers at Cityschool and coordinators of the summer program.

Data Collection and Procedures

To collect data prior to, during and after the 2006 program, in keeping with ethnographic method, I drew on a range of data collection resources (Kusenbach, 2003; Schroeder et al., 2003). To begin with, I constructed a short questionnaire (see Appendix A) which youth participants in the study completed prior to the start of the 2006 program. This tool was designed to provide basic demographic information about students, their families, students' media production experiences beyond Summer Visions, their access to media production equipment, and their media consumption habits. To construct the questionnaire, I drew heavily from a similar questionnaire developed as part of Kline's Media Risk Reduction Project (2003; also see Kline et al, 2006). All focal youth participants completed this questionnaire once, although some did not provide full and detailed responses to each question. These data were used to gain an overview of youths' portrayal of their media uses and experiences and was largely a supplement to data gathered in field note observations and interviews.

<u>Observations</u>

Much of my data collection involved direct observation, discussion and both formal and informal interviews. In my approach to observation, I did not immerse myself in the classic participant observer model where one lives with a group of people for two to three years (Malinowski, 1927; as cited in Robson, 1993). Rather, I used a more practical method of condensed fieldwork common across educational research (Stenhouse, 1982). As an observer with considerable experience in this field, my interests and theoretical frames impacted what I selectively focused on and addressed in this study. As noted above, this is customary in critical ethnographic work.

With my background and experience with Pacific Cinémathèque, the Summer Visions program and youth media production more generally, I entered the research site and the key relationships involved in this project with certain assumptions. I imagined that this project offered a revealing instance of how institutionally mediated production programs impact young people's relationship with democracy. I was not clear how this operated in relation to the specific youth involved, nor the videos examined in chapter five. After framing the foci for my study, I began by interviewing current senior and former peer educators from Summer Visions in January 2006. I followed this with a series of extended interviews with program coordinators and community members throughout March, April, May and June. I attended the summer program daily from the last week in June until the end of August, taking part in all activities including three public video screenings, four staff meetings, and twenty five mentor meetings. In the fall of 2006, I conducted follow-up interviews with all focal youth in the study as well as with key program coordinators between September and November.

While I attempted to operate as a casual observer throughout my time in the program, I regularly took advantage of opportunities to interact with youth video makers, mentors and program instructors. I did not hesitate from taking advantage of impromptu conversations or instances where I could clarify my understanding of youth experiences and program intentions. Of course this open-ended process of observation and interaction was always framed by my overarching research questions and by my effort to understand how youth were interacting together and with peer educators, and what skills youth were developing through both student and mentorship experiences.

Field Notes

Descriptive. I kept detailed descriptive field notes recording my observations, informal conversations and other interactions had throughout the research term (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999, pp. 32-33). Prior to and following each formal interview, I recorded my own perceptions and background with the person involved in the interview. Subsequent to each interview I wrote my reflections and observations about any surprising details and issues that arose between the interviewee and myself. Throughout my time attending the summer program, I recorded macro observations, including the number of students and mentors in attendance, the interaction between the mentors, instructors and the students, workshop procedures and interaction, and the relationship between work and play throughout the production cycle. Where possible, I focused on the minutia of production work, including which students were doing what kind of work, how collaboration versus individual work operated, how the mentors encouraged group interaction and a sharing of roles, and the way mentors and instructors addressed and resolved problems with students. I also paid close attention to the way

"strangers" treated the student video makers and mentors when youth filmed outside of Cityschool.

Because I thought using a tape recorder during my day-to-day participation in Summer Visions would be obtrusive, I chose to write all my field notes in a note book which was visible to all but was not especially conspicuous. At times, this attracted attention from youth and visitors to the program, often leading to helpful and interesting discussions about why I was interested in the daily conversations and interactions of young people and what I would do with this information. Over the course of any given day, there were often multiple conversations or events taking place and so I developed a short hand for my notes. Periodically, I also had to rely on my recollection of events and interactions after the fact. I recorded these whenever time was available and certainly at the conclusion of each day of intensive research. In the end, my field notes were structured according to the day of the week.

Reflective Throughout the research term, I reviewed my field notes every few days during intensive data gathering periods and more infrequently during other periods. I used these opportunities to reflect on the processes and experiences I witnessed. My main purpose here was to assess how participation in the summer program brought about change or transition for young people. In particular, I tracked how youth and others talked about skills development, changes in youths' understanding of themselves, shifts in youths' conceptions of commercial and youth-created media, and changes in young people's understanding of the neighbourhood and people they interacted with. I assessed these practices and experiences in terms of the way they reflected youth engagement with struggles over the social and ethical nature of meaning in relation to their work and the

work of other young people. I was looking for instances where youths's work and experiences in the program fostered an engagement with plurality and new beginnings. I paid special attention to those actions and instances that seemed to "set something in motion" that involved youth with matters of social, cultural or political concern (Wilson, 2003, p. 208). I also tracked those forces and practices that undermined these kinds of developments. These reflections had a crucial role in shaping my analysis of youth video production practices discussed in chapter five and peer mentors' experiences examined in chapter six.

Informal Interviews

Where they were presented, I took advantage of the opportunity to engage in informal interviews with program coordinators and youth involved in all stages of the summer program. I used these instances to clarify my understanding of program and workshop intentions, as well as to gain background details on the experience of youth and the progress of specific video projects. Because of my history with many of the people involved in Summer Visions, I also thought this a more "natural" way to interact and to discuss the linkages between the 2006 program and previous iterations. Further, this ensured for some level of comfort and acceptance of me by youth and adults now involved with Summer Visions. Had I attempted to maintain a more formal relationship with these people, it would have come across as highly unusual, if not suspicious. Many of these people knew me prior to this research project and had we not engaged in regular conversation and interaction, my involvement in Summer Visions would have become highly disruptive.

Formal Interviews

To gather ex situ accounts, I conducted formal interviews with focal participants in this research project prior to and following the 2006 program. Many of these interviews lasted ninety minutes or more and were voice recorded and transcribed prior to coding. During these sessions, I asked youth to reflect on their history in the program, the way it has altered various aspects of their experience as teenagers and how it has impacted their orientation toward the future. Youth were invited to suggest questions that should be asked of new mentors coming into the program in 2006 and to evaluate changes they perceived in Summer Visions over the course of their involvement.

Throughout these and subsequent interviews, I was impressed with the passion and detail youth and program coordinators offered in their commentaries. In their second interviews held in the fall of 2006, many youth noted that having the opportunity to reflect on what they have done and learned in Summer Visions brought to mind ideas they had not really considered in the past. When asked what that meant, more than one youth noted that when they are working in a project like Summer Visions it is often difficult to make sense of how it has affected them. Because there had not been a real occasion to reflect on this prior to this research study, I found many youth quite excited and interested in assessing their own and others' relationships with the program. While not incorporating all the questions asked during the interview process, the protocols for all formal interviews held for this research project are included in Appendix B.

Artifacts

Data collection also included an analysis of the Summer Visions website and program brochures, as well as an evaluation of all videos and related materials – including scripts,

treatments, and editing notes, etc. – produced during the 2006 program. Where relevant, I also looked at videos produced in previous iterations of the program and also examined all videos used as part of the mentor training week and student workshops.

Data Analysis

In the larger scheme, the analysis of my data centred on identifying the kinds and qualities of youth learning that take place in the Summer Visions program. Within this broader focus, I paid particular attention to how an Arendtian framework of public action conceived in terms of a pedagogy of natality could be used to assess the way democratic practice is and is not fostered through this program. I coded data sources inductively, by attending to the practices and events that evolved from within the data, and deductively, by applying codes drawn more specifically from my theoretical frame. Where possible, I endeavoured to triangulate findings through multiple references in the data.

Analysis of Field Observations and Interview Transcripts

While I revised my initial field notes throughout the research term, I did not begin coding until after my data collection was complete. Some methodologists (i.e., Miles and Huberman, 1984) suggest that coding should be done as soon as data is collected. Following LeCompte and Schensul (1999), however, I found it much more useful to develop my coding strategies and categories after gathering all sources together and spending time reading and re-reading field notes, interview transcripts, and other data to gain an "insiders" perspective on the material.

To begin the first phase of coding, I used Atlas Ti qualitative data software and developed a codebook that I used throughout the coding process to keep track of and refine definitions I developed. Many of these definitions changed as my understanding of

the data developed and as the boundaries and relationships between codes became clearer. The main "chunks of data" I coded were made up of utterances or what LeCompte calls "verbal episodes" within field notes and transcripts (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999, p. 58). Such utterances ranged in length from a phrase or a sentence to a full paragraph recounting an event or experience.

While coding my field notes and transcriptions of informal interviews, I simultaneously coded all formal interview transcripts and developed an integrated coding scheme for all materials. I did this because, together, all these data sources necessarily seemed inter-related in ways that offered insight about the larger research objectives. As instances of narrative, I interpreted interview statements as representing "an understanding of the meanings people themselves give to themselves, to their lives and to their contexts" (Cortazzi, 2001, p. 388). Of course interviews cannot be assumed to represent the "truth" nor can views obtained through interviews be taken at face value, as though they represent an objective accounting of a situation or self. Accordingly, following Charmaraman (2006), I conceived of these interviews as "personal tales told from a particular perspective during a particular time at a particular place" (p. 81). Interview answers are "notorious for discrepancies between what people say that they had done, or will do, and what they actually did or will do" (Hanson, 1980; Oskamp, 1977; as cited in Robson, 1993). This problem was exacerbated in this study because I have a previous history with Summer Visions, Pacific Cinémathèque, Cityschool, and many of the youth and adults involved in this research. This no doubt afforded a degree of trust regarding the intentions and outcomes of this study; but it also likely shaped how youth and adults portrayed their own and others' experiences. To compensate for this, I tried to

retain a skeptical perspective regarding overly optimistic or pessimistic interpretations of people's experiences and also attempted to triangulate data sources as much as possible to add credibility to my findings. Having done this, I acknowledge that it is impossible to entirely account for the impact context and previous relationships have on the analysis and research outcomes addressed in subsequent chapters.

In developing my initial coding, I employed a mixture of inductive and deductive practice. To begin with, while reading my field notes and interview transcripts I developed a series of descriptive codes meant to break the data out into frames that seemed to represented basic elements in the summer program. For instance, I developed a code to identify statements having to do with the program's "mandate," or statements describing the technical abilities or demographics of "participating students." I developed another category to capture utterances about the "program's structure," by which I meant the basic ordering of workshops and activities throughout the production cycle. At the same time, I also developed a series of more deductive codes that originated from within my theoretical frame. For instance, I created a code called "natality, pedagogical strategies to introduce..." By this I noted all those utterances and experiences having to do with the way a struggle over meaning in relation to audience, storytelling strategies and processes, and media representations are introduced to students and mentors in the summer program.

As I began to apply these and other codes, I also developed a higher order set of "super codes" or patterns (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999) to designate the experiences of different groups of people involved in the summer program, or to designate different major phases of practice within the summer program. So, for instance, I developed one

"super-code" for Summer Visions' "Pedagogical framework." I developed another such

super-code for "Mentors understanding of the program and their role in it," and a further

super-code for "The impact of the program on mentors," etc. Within each of these super-

codes I tracked a whole set of sub-codes. Table 3.1 below offers a graphic illustration

which exemplifies how this process worked.

Coding Table 3.1

Super-Code		Codes within Super-Codes
A. Pedagogical framework in the Summer Visions program	A1	Learning Environment
	A2	Role of Media Literacy
	A3	Natality, pedagogical strategies to introduce
	A4	Storytelling, role of in the production process
	A5	Technical skills development
	A6	Visiting filmmakers, role of in teaching...
	A7	Sequence of workshops
B. Mentors understanding of the Summer Visions program and their role in it	B1	Preparation for the program
	B2	Understanding of pedagogical process
	B3	Conceptions of media literacy in the program
	B4	Understanding of storytelling in the program
C. Mentors' performances	C1	Roles in the production process
	C2	Problems and difficulties encountered in work
	C3	Understanding of differences between Summer Visions and film classes
	C4	Working relationship with instructors/ management
	C5	Individual Performances – Zac
	C6	Individual Performances – Terrence
	C7	Individual Performances – Macie
	C8	Individual Performances – Rohan
	C9	Individual Performances – Kira
	C10	Individual Performances – Justine
	C11	Individual Performances – Dominic
	C12	Individual Performances – Rachel

Once the first phase of coding was complete, I then entered a second phase of coding

wherein I created a master "interpretation book" that included my reflections and

assessments about the key patterns and relationships I saw emerging between each code.

At this stage, I employed the analytic frame offered by Arendt's understanding of public action and a pedagogy of natality to make sense of youths's and adults' experiences and conceptions of the summer program and also developed a range of ideas about the practices and discourses evident within Summer Visions which appeared to undermine democratic acts.

<u>Analysis of Artifacts</u>

Once I gathered all available artifacts of youth work, including script treatments, various drafts of scripts, production schedules and notes, and video projects, I evolved a coding scheme to analyze their content and form. I transcribed the plot and any dialogue in each video and coded these along with the other artifacts on several levels, including: character development; themes and overarching plots; genre; and, students' decisions about their use of image and audio conventions. I also coded for mentors' interventions throughout the production cycle and noted whether videos were screened in public and, to the extent that I knew, whether videos were submitted by Summer Visions' personnel to city, provincial or national student film festivals. I did not pay particular attention to whether audiences responded favourably or otherwise to students' work because this did not seem especially germane to the focus of this study.

As it turned out, all the videos produced in the 2006 Summer Visions program were fictional narratives, ranging in length from one to seven minutes. Of the thirty videos completed, eight were fictionalized social commentaries, four were docudramas, nine were dramas, four were horror or fantasy films, three were comedies, and two were experimental films.

The study of young people's experiences is a process laden with possibility and potential risk. In many ways, youth represent our culture's sense of anxiety and promise about the future. Because of this, the weight of these discursive frames can result in misleading and unhelpful descriptions of young people's lives. I have tried to avoid this outcome by engaging in a rigorous and methodical analysis of youth experiences in the Summer Visions program. Errors are of course unavoidable, but perhaps in the midst of such missteps, hope and understanding are to be found.

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[i] Practically, this meant, both youth and adult participants were invited to shape and determine the questions used to prompt them to reflect on their understanding of and experience in the Summer Visions program.

[ii] An additional four youth – beyond the eleven noted here – were hired to work as production mentors for a satellite version of the Summer Visions program targeted at elementary-age children. The satellite program takes place on the campus of a local university, and is produced in conjunction with the Summer Camp program hosted by the university's physical education department. This location was not part of the research for this study because the elementary program is one-week in length and is designed to achieve a different set of objectives with participating children.

Chapter 4

The Summer Visions Program – Natality and Pedagogical Design

In this chapter, I begin my examination of how Arendt's conception of public action as conceived in relation to a pedagogy of natality can be used to understand the relationship between democratic practice and youth media work. I do this by drawing on Arendt to assess the role of democratic practice in relation to Summer Visions' pedagogical design and mentor training. I begin by providing an overview of the program and an introduction to the coordinators' beliefs about Summer Visions' mission and goals. I also note where differences and tensions exist regarding these beliefs. I indicate that Summer Visions shares elements in common with other popular youth media production pedagogies widely available on the Web and also note where it differs from these "informant sources."

Using Arendt's conception of public action as defined in relation to a pedagogy of natality, I then examine the mentors' preparation and training process and assess the pedagogical practices used throughout the program. I note how forms of democratic practice are designed into the process both for student filmmakers and for production mentors, and include examples of such practices from the summer of 2006. I also note where tensions in relation to practices of natality are evident at the level of design and address how these tensions reflect different conceptions of the program's mandate, as understood by the program's designers. Finally, I indicate where these tensions reflect larger debates in youth media production about the purpose of creative practice.

Summer Visions Film Institute – Program Characteristics

Through a partnership between Cityschool's media production program and the Education Department at Pacific Cinémathèque, Summer Visions offers digital media production courses for youth aged 14–19. As noted in chapter one, Pacific Cinémathèque began developing film and media education programs in the mid-1990s. This was part of an effort to expand operations beyond film screenings and archival programs in ways that would draw on the organization's tradition of work with community media artists and film cooperatives. In 1999, the Cinémathèque's Education Department began working with the Theatre and Art Department at Cityschool to develop classroom-based film courses and curricula for senior students. A year later, the two organizations expanded their partnership with the creation of the Summer Visions program.

Targeted at low income, at-risk youth, participants in Summer Visions spend two weeks working in production teams to write, shoot, edit and screen original short digital videos during July and August. The program's website (www.summervisions.ca) describes Summer Visions as "a mix of urban sensibilities (funky east-side location), respectful and challenging instructors, and intense and creative youth from across the city." It is neither a summer camp nor a school in a traditional sense; rather, the intention is to develop a creative atmosphere where youth are challenged to tell stories about their lives. Workshops include: visual storytelling, script writing, production planning, acting and directing, camera, lighting, sound, editing and credit design. Training is provided in IMovie, Final Cut Pro, Adobe Photoshop, and GarageBand. Ostensibly, there are both introductory and advanced programs, but the differences between these were negligible in 2006.

Approximately 160 youth take part in Summer Visions each year. Of these, 135 participate through needs-based scholarships. The level of experience youth participants bring to the program ranges across the spectrum, from students who have made two or three videos on their own or in school, to students who have never used a camera. As noted in chapter three, ten to fifteen young people (16-21 years old) are hired each summer to act as peer-to-peer production mentors for student participants. Funding to support these positions is provided by a grant from a local private foundation and a federal government summer employment program. The local school board provides in-kind support by charging no rental fees for the use of school space.

Program instructors are drawn from Pacific Cinémathèque's Education Department and from among community artists and independent filmmakers who live in and around the school community. Tony, the Head of Cityschool's Film and Theatre Department describes why it is important to have these artists participate in the program.

> These are people who have succeeded in life outside of high school and outside of college and university and [they] are excelling in their respective field. And so not only do they care about the kid[s], not only do they care about what's going on in his or her life presently or what's going to happen with their life in the future, but they are extremely talented in their abilities as artists. And it's important for our kids … [to have] great role models (Interview, May 9, 2006).

Summer Visions is managed and led by a collective that includes Tony, Julia, the Director of Education at Pacific Cinémathèque, and, Caitlin, the Summer Visions Director (and former head of Pacific Cinémathèque's video production programs). Lucy, a community artist and Summer Visions script supervisor, and past production mentors are involved in revising the program's curriculum throughout the year.

As with other youth media initiatives (Charmaraman, 2006), one of the major issues impacting the future of Summer Visions continues to be funding and the instability of foundation and short-term federal, provincial and municipal project-based grants. As in the United States, in British Columbia most community-based youth media programs are supported with soft, transitory funds. "The long-term institutionalization of these programs remains a constant concern from [one] grant cycle to the next, which ultimately affects the quality and sustainability of the programs" (Charmaraman, 2006, p. 45). It is possible that creating networks of like-minded organizations could help to consolidate resources and increase dialogue in support of best practices among these initiatives. In Vancouver, arts and culture coordinators from the Parks Board initiated an umbrella "Youth-in-Film" meeting group for just this purpose in 2004. As is often the case, however, the demands of day-to-day organization and fundraising requirements on program managers has minimized the effectiveness of this group to date. Nonetheless, this is an important initiative to build on the capacity and services offered by different youth media programs in the region.

Program Coordinators' Beliefs about the Mission and Goals of the Program

Youth media programs are normally granted their youth media status when young people are allowed to be creative while taking responsibility and ownership over the final results of their work (Charmaraman, 2006, pp. 108-109). It is not just a question of youth participation, in other words, but of youth empowerment. This objective underlies Summer Visions' mandate, but it is also complicated in important ways that begin to indicate how a pedagogy of natality as defined in chapter two operates in the program.

On the one hand, Julia, Pacific Cinémathèque's Director of Education, describes the program mandate as helping "youth learn the means of digital video production from beginning to end, [so] they [can] create their own videos in a collaborative process and can express ... their stories in ways that are meaningful to them, in their own words" (Interview, June 7, 2006). This aim coincides with the ambitions of many youth media programs, which is to provide opportunities for youthful creative expression. Addressing how the program serves its target audience, Tony from Cityschool, suggests the mandate is also to provide for positive youth development, especially for kids who come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. This means:

> To provide [for] kids that are on the bubble, [who are] ... standing at a fork in the road and not knowing whether to go ... the right or the wrong way ... [O]ne of the reasons why I felt a big need to help start [Summer Visions] was that we found that we were losing some at-risk kids in the course of the summer, after we had worked with them so long and so hard over the course of the year... They either wouldn't come back to school or everything that we had taught them about respect, courtesy and dignity and about believing in themselves, was gone. So [Summer Visions] was almost like a kid putting his finger inside the dike and stopping the overflow (Interview, May 9, 2006).

Tony argues that by targeting disadvantaged youth, stories that might otherwise not be told are brought to light. This "starts to empower young people, when they tell stories about their family, about hurts in their lives, disappointments, as well as, you know, the trials and tribulations ... [From this,] what we started to find out was self-esteem, self-confidence started to blossom in those kids that everybody thought, 'Well, has this guy really got anything going on or that girl'" (Interview, May 9, 2006)?

Tony goes on to say the program helps young people who want to pursue a career in film and television production. Where possible, he says: "we want to help kids if they want to go into this industry, to be ready when they go to post-secondary ... institutions,"

to know which institutions and programs to pursue, and what to do to get there (Interview, May 9, 2006). Additionally, providing access to digital media equipment is important, although the urgency of this goal has shifted over the short history of Summer Visions. Bridging the "digital divide," particularly as this is related to gender, race, class, and/or sexuality remains important, but Caitlin, the Director of Summer Visions, notes that more and more young people have access to media production experiences today. They take pictures with their cell phones, "explore the Internet in different ways," and often have access to video production equipment in schools or at home (Interview, March 14, 2006). Because of this, the focus of the program has changed over time. Now, the emphasis is less about providing young people with access to gear and more about challenging how they produce work.

For Julia, this is really the unwritten mission of the program. Where developing young people's creative voice is important, on the other hand, the goal of Summer Visions is to challenge students' stories, forms of representation and production practices. Julia notes: "there's a secondary perspective on the part of many of the people who ... frame the content of the programme ..., which is [about] hoping we can impart messages about reading media and [producing character] portrayals" that don't simply reproduce stereotypes of youth or other people (Interview, June 7, 2006). She goes on to note "that the way this programme is conducted is very different from one that would say, ... mirror a Hollywood approach to filmmaking, or ... a mainstream approach to filmmaking ... It's not about learning how to replicate genres as we know them now" (Interview, June 7, 2006). Instead, as Caitlin suggests, it's "about giving young people a way to respond to

what they see in the media ... It's about developing [their] critical skills as media

producers" (Interview, March 14, 2006).

Media literacy thus plays a role in Summer Visions, as it often does in youth

production projects. At the same time, critical media analysis operates in a very specific

way in the program. Caitlin's remarks on this recall observations made in chapter one

regarding the changing nature of youth production cultures. She observes that:

> [T]wenty years ago it was, like, make sure kids are [equipped] with critical
> ideas so that when they produce their own media, they're not just
> replicating the movies and television shows they watch ... [But] the way
> kids come to media production is so very different today, having lots of
> experience and the ability to manipulate it, that the notion that you're
> going to load them up with a critical consciousness before they go into the
> production process ... [is not helpful] because they're already inside the
> production process (Interview, March 14, 2006).

In the past, Caitlin suggests media education, including her own university education, has

been hamstrung by the urge to situate media analysis as distinct from production practice.

In contrast, she argues now media literacy needs to be linked into "a learning process and

not made separate or distinct, ... [something] youth need to take on to get into the

production experience" (Interview, March 14, 2006).

> The most important part in becoming media literate is having ... the
> opportunity to produce your own work ... [I]t forces you to look at media
> construction in a way that you absolutely cannot without producing
> [media]. You put yourself in the place of the producer, which you don't
> have to [when you're just watching TV or movies.] So you have to
> investigate your sort of objectivity when you're looking at your [own]
> video. And it gives you the steps, 'Oh, I understand now how they did this.
> I understand how bias and framing and all those things work,' because
> you're doing it (Interview, March 14, 2006).

One may agree or disagree with this analysis but the upshot is there is no single media

literacy workshop in Summer Visions. Instead, as evidenced later in the chapter, the

attempt is made to teach multiple literacy practices across a number of student workshops

and as part of the training process for youth production mentors (New London Group, 1996; Goodman, 2005). This helps develop the youth mentors own critical media practice, while also enabling them to integrate a discussion of such issues as the politics of representation related to gender, race and ethnicity at various stages in the production process. The idea here, as Caitlin argues, is media literacy "has to be built into all parts of the process so that you are trying to create opportunities for [youth] to be creative and engage with the media. But at the same time, [you want them to] step back and go, 'Okay, I see what's going on, I can be critical. I can think about this from a different point of view" (Interview, March 14, 2006).

Drawing on concepts discussed in chapter two, the intention here is thus to aide young people in producing their own stories, but in ways that create forms of agonistic encounter for students and mentors. Videomakers are encouraged to draw from their own experiences and speak "in their own words," but there is also a desire to challenge and contest how young people do this work. At least in part, Summer Visions is intent on creating productive uncertainty for participating youth, uncertainty intended to incite "a different point of view."

At the same time, I note important differences in the program coordinators' beliefs about the aims of Summer Visions. To begin with, while concern for how young people engage with the politics of representation in their work is generally shared among the coordinators, underlying tensions affect what this means in relation to the program. Caitlin, for instance, suggests that "having come from a women's studies background" she sees herself as having "pretty clear politics when it comes to talking about social justice issues" (Interview, March 14, 2006). In regard to the aims of Summer Visions, she

says this means we don't "censor things but [students are] going to get a debate if they come up with something that is racist or sexist." Debating students on these issues is part of challenging how youth understand themselves and their work as part of a social world. Julia, on the other hand, is concerned about this practice. She worries that it involves unspoken forms of censorship. In a sense, students are told that they "have the freedom to create what [they] want" but the truth is "there's some really solid censorship in there that isn't presented as such. So if someone goes, 'I'm going to do … something that involves racism, sexism, homophobia,' that isn't going to be allowed to happen" (Interview, June 7, 2006). Julia agrees that it shouldn't happen, but she is concerned that the program's aims are not always explicit in this regard.

A more contentious divide surrounds the representation of sexuality. The issue here is that while Caitlin, Julia and others believe the program should create a space where the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans-gendered youth can be explored, Tony resists this. This is confusing because Tony and his teaching colleagues in the Cityschool Theatre Department have a track record of welcoming queer youth into their classes and theatrical productions. At the same time, it is a shared understanding among Summer Visions' program coordinators and senior youth mentors that stories about queer sexuality are likely to be questioned and even censored. Publicly, Tony argues that this is done for fear of alienating and losing program funders who may find youth explorations of queer culture problematic. Whether or not this is true, questions around whether Summer Visions should create an open space for such explorations remains a key point of tension. In chapter five, I suggest how this tension shapes student work.

The issue of censorship over language is also a point of difference among program coordinators. Again here the division falls between those who come to Summer Visions from the non-profit film world and those who work as classroom teachers. At issue is really what language youth should use in their videos. Tony argues that Summer Visions needs to challenge young people's use of coarse language. Such language merely reflects what kids already hear in popular media and in daily life, and, because of this, its inclusion in students' videos tends to reinforce stereotypes that can be especially disadvantageous to young people who come from the inner city. Caitlin and more senior mentors agree in general, but also note that over time this casts a moralizing tone over Summer Visions that limits the stories youth tell.

Finally, another tension surrounds the degree to which the program should be weighted toward developing accomplished filmmakers or whether it should focus on developing empowered youth. These goals are not necessarily distinct, but differences of emphasis shape how the mission of Summer Visions is understood. For Caitlin and Lucy, the program's script supervisor, the key objective is to establish a process of media production where youth begin to see themselves as part of a social world. This means, over her time with the program, Caitlin has come to envision it as "a collaborative, creative, democratic exercise in education. That's what it is, and we're using video as the medium" to support this work (Interview, November 16, 2007). On the other hand, for Julia and Tony, the aim of Summer Visions is to help youth become better filmmakers, to develop their aesthetic and technical competencies in ways that might lead students and mentors to jobs in the film and television or related industries. Macie, one of the senior youth production mentors captures this tension nicely when she says, for Julia and Tony

"the agenda [is] 'let's improve the videos. Let's make them look better, let's make them screen better, let's make people more interested in our videos.' Whereas ... [for] Caitlin and Lucy [the purpose of] Summer Visions ... is, 'let's empower kids to talk about their positions and express themselves and engage in some really important discussions" (Interview, October 27, 2007). This divide is a version of the *process* versus *product* question that has been part of youth media production pedagogies since at least the 1960s (Sefton-Green, 1995; Buckingham et al., 1995). Of course, process and product do not need to be conceived as distinct goals, but as dialectically related moments in the creation process. At the level of program aims, however, a clear tension remains as to which part of this dialectic relationship should be given the greater emphasis in Summer Visions.

It was noted in chapter two that the mission of youth media programs tends to fall into six areas. The aims of Summer Visions, as conceived by the program's coordinators, intersect with at least five, including: (1) youth voice/social change through creative expression; (2) career development; (3) positive youth development; (4) media literacy and the development of critical viewers and producers; and, (5) bridging the technological divide for communities who typically lack access to resources (Charmaraman, 2006; Campbell et al, 2001). In this sense, it is a combination of various media production program types. Among the program coordinators there is a high degree of agreement, but also important areas of difference about how Summer Visions' mission is understood. In this and subsequent chapters, these areas of tension will impact the pedagogical design of the program, as well as the way this pedagogy shapes student work and youth mentors' experiences.

Summer Visions and A Pedagogy of Natality

A pedagogy of natality supports democratic practice by challenging the sedimentation of meaning and power (i.e., its "belatedness") in discourses, institutions and visual texts in ways that make clear how dependent we are on others to secure future possibilities for change. This requires one to teach in ways that "preserve newness" or the possibility of new beginnings, not so that one determines what those new beginnings are, but so that pedagogical practice helps young people to imagine how they might contribute to a world that is "out of joint," entrenched in old patterns and ways of being. As argued in chapter two, this means the relationship between pedagogy and democratic practice is not conceived in terms of the development of critically engaged activists. Rather, pedagogy supports democratic agency when young people are enabled to see themselves as part of what Hannah Arendt calls, the "web of human relationships." Understanding oneself in this way means envisioning one's life in relation to plurality. This is different than imagining oneself in relation to autonomy or emancipation. Rather, democratic practice is about how adolescents come to envision their lives in terms of interaction with others. Of course, it is not enough merely to embrace just any action that involves one in speech and action with others because democratic acts have a vital role in contesting the lure of oblivion that threatens to disempower people and limit our sense of reality. If this is so then from an Arendtian perspective youth media production pedagogies facilitate democratic practice when they preserve natality by helping youth imagine themselves as relational subjects whose lives are connected to and ethically obliged to engage in contestation over the social nature of meaning.

Given this, in what follows, I examine how the youth production mentors' training process and the Summer Visions' pedagogy are designed to preserve natality. I also examine what tensions and forces shape how natality is fostered at the level of design and suggest how these tensions reflect different conceptions of the program's mandate and larger debates within youth media production regarding the purposes of creative practice.

Summer Visions involves young people as both students and peer-to-peer mentors. This allows for learning processes to unfold in a number of ways. For students, this generally takes place over a two-week production program, while for mentors learning occurs during their training and work with students throughout the summer. Accordingly, to frame the Summer Visions pedagogy, it is necessary to first describe the mentor training process and then turn more specifically to the Summer Visions pedagogy.

Mentor Preparation and Training for Natality

In Summer Visions, youth production mentors support, challenge and guide student participants over the course of the two-week creation process. Zac, a senior mentor, offers a broad summary of their role:

> The mentors are high school students or recent graduates, [who] are usually previous students of the program, hired by Summer Visions for their experience with video production. Each group of four to five [student] participants has their own mentor who works ... with them [throughout] the two-week program. The mentors act as advisors/producers for their group, imparting their knowledge about all aspects of video production. They also fulfill the authoritative role of protecting the participants as well as the equipment (Written correspondence, July 15, 2006).

Julia's observations concur with Zac: "the mentors are kind of the first line of instructional staff ... They have the most involvement with [the students, ensuring] ... there's never a point at which a group is without support" (Interview, June 7, 2006).

As noted in chapter three, the mentors are a socio-economic, ethno-cultural mix of young people from East Vancouver, all of whom are current or former students of Cityschool with some past video production experience. All but two of the eleven mentors[i] hired in 2006 also participated in Summer Visions as students. Mentor training takes place during the last week of June, prior to the start of the first program. In the early years of Summer Visions, mentor training was erratic. Intentions were good, but the program's tenuous funding structure meant that it was not always clear how many youth would be hired each summer. More senior mentors like Macie talk about learning her responsibilities "on the fly" (Interview, January 16, 2006). Zac talks about being "thrown into the fire in a big way" in his first year (Interview, January 11, 2006). To survive in these circumstances, some mentors talk of drawing on their experience from the Cityschool classroom film program, while others suggest they learned how to work as mentors simply by being involved with Summer Visions for a number of years and by taking other film production classes where this was possible. It is also worth noting that Caitlin, the Director of Summer Visions and Lucy, the Summer Visions Script Supervisor, work with the Cityschool classroom film program and so most of the mentors know them and have a sense of Caitlin's and Lucy's expectations for the summer program. At the same time, in 2006 a concerted effort was made to create a more focused training process, largely because funding for the summer was secured earlier than in the past and five mentors were new or relatively inexperienced in 2006[ii].

Consequently, over the course of the training week in June 2006, a series of workshops and technical reviews were designed to prepare mentors for their roles. These included:

An introduction to Summer Visions

Julia delivered this workshop and offered an overview of the organizational structure of Summer Visions, including the history and purpose of Pacific Cinémathèque, the funding structure and its influence on the program, the work of administration, and the reasons why Summer Visions is designed to serve "at-risk" youth.

The role of production mentors

Caitlin delivered this surprisingly brief workshop outlining the responsibilities of the mentors in relation to their groups. Further detail on these responsibilities is provided in the second half of this chapter in the section on Summer Visions pedagogy.

Technical review sessions

Four technical review workshops were offered on sound and sound design, camera techniques and framing, lighting, and editing and Final Cut Pro software.

A session on safety in the neighbourhood

Zac and Terrence, another senior mentor, delivered this workshop, which reviewed basic responsibilities for care of students while shooting video in the neighbourhood.

Trends in youth filmmaking

Julia delivered this workshop, which examined aesthetic, technical and ethical questions and goals related to student video production in 2006. A series of youth videos produced in 2005 and 2006 in the Vancouver-area were screened and discussed.

Leadership and working with youth

Tony delivered this workshop and discussed concerns about the emotional and physical safety of students as well as the role of communication and openness when working with peers.

<u>Script writing</u>

Lucy delivered this workshop. She emphasized that while the goal of Summer Visions is to have students produce stories drawn from their own lives, it is also to challenge how students explore these stories. The mentors have a crucial role in this process, which is to listen and provoke the thinking and understanding of student video makers, without trying to provide specific answers about how scripts should proceed. This pedagogical strategy and the role of the mentors in it are discussed in detail in the section on Summer Visions pedagogy.

The mentors also spent time setting up the school for the program, doing equipment inventories, organizing equipment packs, and determining mentor responsibilities (i.e., supervising production studios during breaks, cleaning up lunch rooms, etc.). Throughout the week, the learning and planning sessions were conducted with a constant mix of input and exchange between junior and senior mentors and program directors. For the purposes of this study, it is useful to look closely at three workshops to assess how they can be understood in relation to the preservation of natality.

<u>Workshop I – The Language of Cinematography (90 minutes)</u>

This session provides a review of the visual language of cinematography. As leaders and senior mentors in the program, Zac and Terrence created and presented it, along with a series of other workshops on the technical language of video production. As noted in chapter two, such workshops are common in media education and youth production programs. Here, the purpose is to review the conventions of camera shots and framing to develop a common language among the mentors and highlight the impact these

conventions have on the production of meaning in student videos. Zac and Terrence use an especially effective strategy.

The workshop is designed around the screening and discussion of two DVD videos made for the session. Herb and Jeff's Complete Movie Magic Instructional Kit, Volumes 1 and 2 deliberately parody the educational video genre. They are made with a campy sensibility and shot in bright sunlight with Zac and Terrence – now introduced to us as Jeff and Herb – wearing light pink and blue short sleeve dress shirts and plaid sports jackets, with ties knotted too high. Each video is a little over seven minutes and is broken up with intentional breaks between topics so the audience can clarify and ask questions of Zac and Terrence. The workshop itself is sixty minutes, with an additional thirty minutes for a cinematography exercise.

Volume 1 begins with an introduction to four basic shots: the wide shot, the close-up, the extreme close-up, and the medium shot. After reviewing these, Jeff and Herb give the audience a chance to use these categories to identify shots in a series of images and scenes. These images are terrific and the soundtrack is a fabulous and exaggerated dance beat that accentuates Jeff and Herb's campy style. Following this sequence, the DVD stops for audience discussion. When the DVD resumes, Jeff and Herb add shot variations to the list of conventions, including: the two-shot, the three-shot, the Western (which is done using a parody of a scene from the film, Brokeback Mountain [2005]), the bird's eye view, the worm's eye view, and an over-the-shoulder shot. Again, the DVD stops following this sequence to allow time for questions and discussion. Two more sequences follow in which audiences are introduced to: the pan, the tilt, a pan/tilt deviance (which is shot with Jeff standing on the roof of a house using a camera to spy on Herb as he

changes his shirt in the bedroom next door), wheeled tracking shots, and handheld tracking shots. <u>Volume 1</u> ends here and Jeff and Herb tell the audience to go off and complete a ten-shot cinematography exercise to practice what has been demonstrated.

<u>Volume 2</u> is done in much the same way as <u>Volume 1</u>, only here audiences are introduced to more sophisticated conventions of image composition, including the rule of thirds, depth of field, leading lines, planes of focus, and forced perspective. They are also introduced to some basic editing strategies and the 180-degree rule. Throughout, the style of the DVD is endlessly campy while also being clear, effective and funny.

I draw attention to this workshop because if it is designed to introduce mentors to a set of visual affordances in media production, there is also an important way these affordances or conventions are simultaneously shown to be open to change. Using the language of a pedagogy of natality, on the one hand, <u>Herb and Jeff ...</u> demonstrates the enabling work of belatedness in video production. It shows how certain shots create specific effects and how shots can be sequenced together to produce meaningful scenes. In this way, Zac and Terrence highlight the social nature of camera work, the fact that images are produced through specific formulas that are anything but "natural." At the same time, the campy tone has the effect of putting quotation marks around these very conventions. If this point was not clear, it was brought out during breaks in the videos when Terrence said: "the reason we're spending all this time going through shots and formulas some of you know already is, first, so that you're clear about the rules of cinematography, but also so that you'll know how to break those rules" (Field notes, June 27, 2006). Irony in the workshop is not only meant to be amusing then, it is also intended to let the mentors know that visual conventions can be changed, that it is possible and

even worthwhile to think beyond what Terrence calls the "common vocabulary" of visual representation, to contest the social understanding of visual imagery (Written correspondence, August 30, 2006). Of course it is crucial to know what one is changing, and for the mentors to be able to discuss these alterations with student groups; but, new beginnings are possible through conscious, playful work with the conventional affordances of media practice.

Workshop II – Trends in youth filmmaking (120 minutes)

The work of preserving natality in the mentor training process is layered into this session in a different way. Here, the purpose is to review tendencies in recent student video and in one instance, to locate these trends in relation to popular commercial media. Five youth-produced videos are screened and each is used to feed a conversation about aesthetic, technical and ethical goals in Summer Visions. Of the five videos used in the workshop, I discuss three[iii] here.

The first film is called Karma Café (7 minutes) and it was produced at a local high school. It is an ensemble piece that moves among a series of conversations that include: two teenage girls talking about their future as actors; a young woman who is about to be left by her cheating boyfriend; and a teenage boy who is still learning the ropes as a new employee of the café. Each sequence takes place in English, except for the conversation between the two teenage girls, which is shot in Spanish with English subtitles. The video is well done and Julia uses it to establish aesthetic and technical standards for what Summer Visions might achieve. Julia doesn't point out what makes the video successful; she hopes the mentors will describe elements that work well and those that do not. This in fact happens. The older mentors lead but the younger mentors contribute and over a

fifteen-minute discussion, shot construction, blocking shots, editing, character development and acting are all addressed. In particular, a mentor named Kira notes that the video has a kind of unity, by which she means the credits, the camera work, the music and the dialogue all seem of a piece (Field notes, June 27, 2006). She thinks this is unusual and also commendable in a student production. The conversation doesn't go much beyond this, but what's said suggests something noted in chapter two: markedly competent youth videos can operate as examples of the enabling possibilities of belatedness, by demonstrating the surprising potential of young people. This in turn tends to feed young people's interest in each other's work, which establishes youth media as a reference point for community building.

Julia follows this video with The Truth, a short (30 seconds) film also made in a local high school. It is a montage of a street scene. People walk toward a stationary camera and as they move closer their faces react with a sense of confusion or anger or amusement. The background sound is a street scene but it is not synchronized with the images. Instead, the people in the image move in slow motion. After the fourth person walks toward the camera, the image resumes normal speed and synchronizes with the sound as the camera turns 180 degrees. A young man's face painted with an American flag appears in a medium-close up shot, looking directly at the audience. The video ends here.

Julia screens this video because while there is no time in a two-week program for students to research and complete issue-based documentaries, they can and do make work that engages social and political issues (Field notes, June, 27, 2006). This video does this in an effective way. It creates a powerful reaction as we watch strangers respond to something off-screen that clearly confuses or irritates them. When the viewer sees what

creates the confusion we are left with a sense of discomfort. However one responds to the image of a young man with an American flag painted on his face, it is the uneasiness this creates among the people walking toward the camera that stands out. When asked why she chose to use this video, Julia said she did not want to offer any answers about "politics" or contemporary issues; instead, she wanted to raise questions for the mentors (Field notes, June 27, 2006). Recalling terms used in chapter two, she hoped to show how a video can create a sense of uncertainty for an audience by raising an issue without resolving it in anything like a straightforward way. Interestingly, the response to this video was muted. It was discussed for five minutes and one mentor said it was "simple but effective", a bit "obvious" but also eerie because "painting your face with an American flag is just weird" (Field notes, June 27, 2006). Perhaps Julia's point was made.

The third video may have been the most interesting in the workshop. *Oulin* (3 minutes) was made at a local high school in 2006 and it is used to provoke a discussion about popular media, youth production and the politics of representation. The video is derivative of horror/slasher genre movies like Hostel (2005) and Hostel: Part II (2007), Wolf Creek (2005) and Grindhouse (2007). In Oulin, a young woman (with no context or back story in the video) arrives at an abandoned rail yard. As she looks at an address on a torn piece of paper, she is tackled from behind, kidnapped and brutally assaulted. Frome the rail yard, the scene cuts to a dark and dank workshop where the girl is tied to a chair. She is wearing a white tank top and jeans and blood is running down her face and side. A bare-chested young man with a shirt tied around his head is in the room with her and is torturing her. He is going mad as he experiences flashbacks that show the abuse he

received from his father as a young boy. He hits the young woman, screams at her, and finally picks up a weapon and swings it at her head. In the middle of the swing, the weapon turns into an axe which appears to hit her head just as the final shot cuts. As the credits roll, the production company for the video reads, "Picton Films," an apparent reference to Robert Picton, the man arrested and put on trial in 2006 for the mass murder of more than fifty women in Vancouver.

Julia uses this video for a number of reasons. She wants to talk about the influence of popular commercial media and recent news events on young people's work. She asks the mentors what media seem to influence Oulin? To this, Zac says, "It's a slasher movie. It looks like Kill Bill, Vol. 1 (2003) or Kill Bill, Vol. 2 (2004) or Hostel. They're all incredibly violent" (Field notes, June 27, 2006). Julia asks if there are any other influences in the video, expecting, I think, to hear someone comment on the Picton reference. No one does.

Julia also uses Oulin to open a conversation about the role of gender and objectification in youth media and popular Hollywood film. She tells the mentors that the video was screened at a city-wide student film festival in 2006 and that it elicited strongly critical reactions. Rather than explaining why, she asks the mentors why they think this happened. In response, Kira says the video is well made – the sound design is polished, the acting is convincing and the images are even beautiful in instances – but it is also exploitative and awful to watch, especially if you're female. Other mentors – both male and female – agree. In fact, because a number of the mentors are returnees and are aware that images of young women in duress made simply for pleasure are not part of the Summer Visions mandate, the conversation feels scripted. At the same time, when Julia

asks Kira to talk about the images in Oulin, Kira says the problem is the girl is trapped and the "white tank top is just [being used] to make her look sexy… even though she's being tortured and is about to die" (Field notes, June 27, 2006). Another mentor, Justine, talks about the flashbacks, which suggest that the murderer was abused as a child. She doesn't think these sequences are convincing; they seem "put in there" to justify what we see (Field notes, June 27, 2006). When asked to explain further, Justine says she does not watch horror movies much, but this video and others always seem to "excuse" the murderer for his actions (Field notes, June 27, 2006). It's like a convention. Julia adds that it is a convention that has to do with gender. The stalker is suffering, so somehow it's appropriate for the girl to suffer. Feminists have noted the inequity in this logic for some time. They have also shown that gender in popular media is not about fairness. It is about power – who gets to tell what sorts of stories about whom. Julia goes on to say the video was disturbing to people at the student film festival because the three young filmmakers only seemed to care about the "look" of the images and not what they might mean to audiences (Field notes, June 27, 2006). The conversation continues for another ten minutes and Terrence says that Oulin reminds him of a music video a group of students wanted to make in Summer Visions in 2005. He notes the video never did get made.

If this is not surprising, screening Oulin serves a greater purpose than to suggest where restrictions will be placed on youth work in the program. It also seems designed to show the social nature of imagery at the level of both production and reception. The choices students make in regard to visual language and storytelling forms are not natural, as evidenced by Zac's comments about the images in Oulin; they are belated, they have a history and are involved with the way meaning and gender relationships sediment in

specific genres, images, and sounds, etc. How this history is read depends on who is offering the interpretation, which is not the same as saying that all interpretations are equal. It means that both production and reception are social processes and are involved with contestation over meaning. Screening Oulin seems designed to make this process of contestation evident and, in particular, to highlight how gender operates as a form of power in youth work. Kira's and Justine's analyses of the video served to suggest the ethical implications of the choices youth make as producers. In this way, the mentors' work with Oulin involves them in the "web of human relationships." Alongside the screening of Karma Café and The Truth, this workshop exemplifies how an orientation toward natality can be read as part of the mentor training process.

Workshop III – Leadership and working with youth (60 minutes)

In this session, the job of preserving newness is laced with a tension. In the workshop, Cityschool teacher, Tony, addresses how mentors can act as leaders, working in a collaborative environment, taking care and ensuring the safety of their peers. He says this positions mentors as "teacher-like" figures (Field notes, June 30, 2006). He interprets this to mean working well includes caring for the emotional and physical health of others. It involves thinking about how one communicates and observes others. It also includes learning to "read the body language and unspoken communication of those we're working with and mentoring" (Field notes, June 30, 2006). Through this, Tony emphasizes that by establishing emotional connections mentors can help draw students into an educational process, creating willingness on the part of students to open themselves up to learning. Mentors are told to show warmth and even "love" to student peers, in other words, in order to successfully lead them through the production process

(Field notes, June 30, 2006). This is vital, Tony says, to build confidence and self-esteem in the people one works with. If you do this, Tony says, your students "will engage the whole learning/production process so much more willingly. The filmmaking process itself will become secondary to the personal dynamic you establish in your mentoring relationships" (Field notes, June 30, 2006).

In this way, Tony defines leadership as what is often called "emotional intelligence" in mentoring literature (Miller, 2002). This refers to one's "emotional self-awareness" and one's interpersonal skills, including "empathy for the feelings of others [and an] ability to establish a mutually beneficial personal relationship" (Miller, 2002, p. 38). It also includes the ability "to maintain hope in adverse situations and to generate happiness in oneself and others" (Miller, 2002, p. 39). This requires openness to others, which, as noted in chapter two, is a crucial aspect of democratic practice in an Arendtian schema. In this sense, Tony's session contributes to the preservation of natality by emphasizing the fact that mentoring requires one to "show each other respect, show each human being that you come into contact with … that you treat them with courtesy and that you treat them with dignity" (Interview, May 9, 2006).

If this is laudable, at the same time, there is a tension in how Tony defines openness here. Acting in a manner that is open to others in Arendt's framework is not simply a matter of learning to "read the body language and unspoken communication" of others. Establishing a feeling of warmth with those one works with isn't enough because developing a relationship on these terms risks privatizing our communication. This in turn opens our interaction with others to possibilities for manipulation.

Using the current example, one party – i.e., the mentor – is encouraged to draw the other party – i.e., students – into an educational process, instead of engaging with the specific concerns and experiences of the other party. In contrast, Arendt's framework suggests democratic practice requires that we learn to "visit" with others, which means learning to "go into a plural public world and engage with other actors … [on their terms. Through this, we learn that] respecting diverse standpoints requires dialogue with other people, listening to their stories, and relating to their uniqueness without collapsing these divergent views" to fit our own agenda (Coulter and Wiens, 2002, p. 18). Being open to others is thus not merely a tool used to pull others into a learning experience because when we think of openness in these terms it becomes instrumentalized, it risks becoming a form of manipulation that is not intended to respect others because of who they are, but because of where you want them to go. Openness to others that serves democratic practice, on the other hand, requires one to accept "responsibility for traveling to all relevant viewpoints," to listen to others and especially those people whose viewpoints are typically excluded or ignored in the public world (Coulter and Wiens, 2002, p. 19). This is what it means to envision one's life in relation to plurality. In Tony's workshop, mentors are encouraged to respect others, but, respect is set up as a tool, a means for building a "personal dynamic" so that students will trust mentors to lead them throughout the "whole learning/production process." In the end, this creates a tension in the way the mentors see their work in relation to plurality because plurality is now framed as a difference to be overcome through emotional bonding rather than as a resource to be encountered in a successful learning experience.

Throughout the Summer Visions mentor training process there are a number of ways preserving newness can be understood to operate as part of the experience. Of course this process is laden with tensions. Workshops are designed to introduce mentors to the social nature of imagery, including how visual conventions operate as productive affordances in media production. It is also made evident that these conventions are open to change. Where this and the screening of youth videos such as <u>Karma Café</u> and <u>The Truth</u> suggest the enabling possibilities of belatedness, workshops are also designed to indicate how gender representations and popular media culture can become forms of power that shape and limit youth work. Tony's session on youth leadership suggests the need for openness if mentors are to work well with students, yet this workshop also serves to limit the work of natality by instrumentalizing mentors' relationships with others. It is far from clear then that the preservation of new beginnings is a straightforward process within mentor training. This is also true in the Summer Visions pedagogy, and yet, again, there are a number of ways in which this pedagogy seems designed to preserve natality. In what follows, this dynamic is examined and further detail is offered on the role of peer-to-peer mentors as they work throughout the production cycle.

Media Production and a Pedagogy of Natality

Ryan, a former instructor says the Summer Visions pedagogy encourages students to "step outside of themselves" (Interview, May 25, 2006). It encourages what Arendt would call, thoughtfulness. Young people are invited to tell their own stories, but throughout the production process their decisions and choices are questioned and contested. Dialogue is central as students move between a series of different roles – as

writers, directors, camera people, actors, etc. – while developing an understanding of the production cycle and the decisions made along the way.

A typical list of the pre-production stages in video-making as detailed on several "informant" websites, include: (1) the development of a workable screenplay by brainstorming ideas, conceiving of a target audience for the script, writing a pitch or synopsis, then a treatment, finishing the scrip with setting, dialogue (if any), background sound (if any), and visuals; (2) possibly storyboarding individual shots to create a visual map of the storyline, (3) announcing auditions and casting actors; (4) finding a good production crew; (4) buying or borrowing props and costumes; (5) scouting locations, getting permissions and release forms (when needed); (6) holding rehearsals; and, (7) managing crew and talent time for the production process (Charmaraman, 2006). Because Summer Visions is a short, two-week program, some of these stages are condensed and others are expanded or altered. In 2006, the pre-production process included:

- Program introduction

- Visual storytelling workshop

- Introduction to the camera

- Brainstorming a story idea

- Learning the technical language of production, including workshops on cinematography, sound, lighting, editing, acting and directing for video

- Story development – from story outlines through first draft, second draft and final script revisions

In what follows I outline the major stages in this process, paying particular attention to the way opportunities are afforded to develop an orientation toward natality.

Summer Visions begins with an opening speech delivered by Caitlin, the Program

Director, which sets the stage for the two-week session. She explains that students will

work together in groups of three to five people, creating a new one-to-five minute video.

Because youth come from all over the region, she also lets students know that this is an

opportunity to work with new people, who share similar interests. She says that while the

program takes place in a high school, it is not intended to be "a school or a summer

camp." It is meant to be a place for "experimentation" (Field notes, July 4, 2006). She

says this "isn't the best program to come to with a fully formed script … [because you're]

going to be asked to work through a specific production process … [that is designed to

challenge how] you understand your stories, what images you use and how you work

together" (Field notes, July 4, 2006). Caitlin tells the students they will be encouraged to

develop scripts that have a connection and a relationship to their lives. They will also be

asked to defend their choices with each other, with their mentors and with the instructors.

It is difficult to qualify how deeply this talk resonates with students, but it is intended to

set up Summer Visions as a program based on learning through dialogue and

experimentation. It is not craft-driven, but is meant to afford students opportunities to

think about the possibilities of new beginnings.

Following this introduction, students move into a workshop on visual storytelling

delivered by Lucy, the script supervisor. The purpose of the workshop is to introduce

students to the conventions of the basic three-act storytelling structure, including the role

of an inciting incident and its relationship to story climax, and the nature of scene

construction, or "how scenes are broken up into shots" (Field notes, July 4, 2006).

Learning these elements is necessary for the practical work of video production and is

also understood in media education to be a crucial resource for learning how storytelling codes and conventions operate in popular television and movies (Goodman, 2005).

Over Summer Visions' short history a number of changes have been made to this session. Most importantly, it used to follow workshops on camera, sound and lighting, and was largely designed around a series of media clips drawn from television and current popular cinema. The workshop now takes place near the start of the program, however, and is entirely designed around the screening and discussion of youth-made videos. I quote Caitlin at some length explaining why the timing of the session has changed and why it is centred on student work:

> It is profoundly important that ... over the years we have shifted to starting the program [with] an exploration of what [youth work] is already out there ... [It means we don't] start the conversation about what [students] are going to do during the next two weeks by looking at how they're represented in television, ... at how adults are writing for them, ... at what's missing, what's not there ... [That] conversation comes in, for sure, ... that's the media educational interventions that we have with groups. But we don't have that conversation until they've had a chance to grapple with their own abilities to tell stories ... [In this way, we start] the whole conversation from a point of imagining the alternative instead of from critiquing what's wrong (Interview, November 16, 2006).

By "imagining the alternative," Caitlin seems to have in mind the fact that Summer Visions does not exist in isolation. There is a growing body of youth-created media and by drawing attention to it, this workshop – like Julia's mentor training session on "Trends in youth film" – opens a door to a burgeoning youth media-scape. As noted in chapter two, youthscapes are geographic, temporal, social, and political spaces where young people are constituted through a whole range of practices (Maira and Soep, 2005). Power, community and possibilities for contributing to novel forms of change are enacted here. In this workshop, Lucy contributes to the development of such a space within Summer

Visions by establishing a community of young people's work as the reference point for student productions.

Lucy screens four videos, including People (7 minutes), which was made at Cityschool and won the 2006 Canadian International Development Agency Butterfly 208 Award[iv]. The film asks why youth should care about the grotesque number of people who continue to die of HIV/AIDS in Africa. This is followed by a video called, I Love Betsy (5 minutes), which was made in Summer Visions in 2005 and is a funny and loving fiction about a shopping cart that is at the centre of a homeless man's life. Locked (3 minutes) was made at a local high school and is used to show point of view in video production. It fictionalizes a day in the life of a young black man who is new to his high school and is isolated from people and the physical space itself. Finally, 337 was made in 2005 at Summer Visions. It tells the story of a man caught in an underground parking lot, trying to open his car door. Lucy uses it to talk about "choosing a rhythm to contain an audience through what is otherwise a fairly mundane story" (Field notes, July 4, 2006).

Beyond pointing to an evolving youth media-scape, Lucy uses these videos to address the work of stereotyping in youth media. She says stereotypes have a place in videos because they offer an efficient means of developing secondary characters. It's also noted, however, that: "how you are defined as a storyteller depends on how you resolve the predictable moments" (Field notes, July 4, 2006). Lucy uses I Love Betsy to illustrate this point.

Stories about homeless people have a curious popularity in Summer Visions. Perhaps this is because the program operates in a historically low-income community that borders on an area known as "Canada's poorest postal code." When youth come to the

neighbourhood from outside communities, they seem interested in exploring a theme that might otherwise remain dormant if the program took place in another area of the city. This has both positive and negative consequences. Encouraging students to name and take action regarding conditions of marginalization in their communities is important, But Zac notes students first attempts at portraying the lives of homeless people often show a lack of "experience with the subject. [The videos are] ... emotionally charged," but typically laced with simple stereotypes (Written correspondence, July 15, 2006). I Love Betsy is an exception.

By depicting the satisfaction and pleasure one man takes in finding and caring for a shopping cart that makes his life much easier, the video humanizes a figure who is so often pathologized as sick and or a threat to the rest of society. Through this, the video contests a very real kind of oblivion that increasingly causes those on the social margins to disappear from popular conceptions about who belongs and who is part of our city. In this way, I Love Betsy offers a counterpoint, which simultaneously underscores an agonistic dimension in Summer Visions' pedagogy. Students are told again and again to use their own lives as resources for their videos, but it is made clear that they will be asked to explain and defend their choices of imagery and character, etc.

As in other media production and media education programs (Charmaraman, 2006; Goodman, 2005; Buckingham, 2003), Lucy also encourages students to think about their audience in the workshop. She says: "Your audience can be a lot of people so think about what you want to say to them and what you want them to take away" (Field notes, July 4, 2006). In noting this, students are invited to begin a dialogue with imagined viewers. This does not always happen, but students are urged to think about the social nature of media

production, including the way their work will be read differently by friends, family, educators, and other members of the community. By using a series of youth films to highlight the codes and conventions of storytelling, including the way stereotypes can operate as productive and limiting resources, and by encouraging a dialogue with one's audience, plurality operates in this session in an interesting way. Students are urged to undertake action in dialogue with a social field of relationships and possibilities. Plurality thus operates as a force to provoke students becoming as video makers.

Following this workshop, students have lunch and then move into a session where they are introduced to the camera. They divide into groups of five-to-six students and work for the first time with individual mentors who review safety procedures and basic operation of the technology. Caitlin says this workshop is also designed "to make the technology as non-intimidating as possible … [T]hat's something we work on all the time … [so students can] figure out an aesthetic or an idea … and let the technology be just your tool for that" (Interview, March 14, 2006). Beyond essential skills building and learning the technical limitations and possibilities of equipment, this is really the first instance where students begin to see the mentors as people with and from whom they will learn. Students also shoot a five-shot sequence and review the footage with their mentors before day one comes to a close.

Over the next four days, students brainstorm story ideas, participate in a series of sessions on cinematography, sound, lighting, editing, acting, and directing for video, and work through a story development process. The brainstorming session is led by Lucy and is designed to allow students to express their story ideas, not as fully formed scripts, but in a sentence or so about a scene, a key character or an issue.

In 2006, more than twenty ideas came forward in each two-week brainstorming session. Lucy writes the ideas on the board and from this group, a list of five or six story concepts are selected by students to go forward. Once this list is made, a kind of organized chaos unfolds as students find groups that want to work on similar topics. Because students come from across the region there is a surprising amount of movement here. Friends don't always stay with friends, as Zac notes, but instead, choose to work with those who share "creativity rather than social status" (Written Correspondence, July 15, 2006). Rohan, another mentor, concurs and says the brainstorming session often leads students to "work with groups ... they weren't necessarily comfortable with ... [This creates] a good kind of creative pressure ... [because] people ... expect you to come through" (Interview, October 27, 2006).

The mentors are largely in the background throughout this process but Terrence observes an interesting lesson. He says when the students are calling out their thoughts,

> [Lucy will] put circles around ideas that seem the same and [link] them together ... [T]hen the kids get together and they realize, 'Wow, it's like that part of [the movie] Waking Life where Ethan Hawke talks about the crossword puzzle ... in his collective subconscious. How odd [that] we were thinking about the same movie even though we've never met' ... [From experiences like this,] these kids – while some of them anyways – realize, ... 'Gosh, this must be an awfully powerful medium if it can govern my creative process, if it can actually concretely influence what I'm capable of thinking as an idea for an art piece or a video'" (Interview, January 9, 2006).

Within media literacy, it is generally agreed that our media saturated culture teaches "a particular set of ideas, values, and representations about the world and our place in it" (Goodman, 2005, p. 210). Something like this idea is made evident for students during this session and as such brainstorming inadvertently underscores the belated and social nature of our ideas and the creative process itself. Brainstorming also highlights the

difficulty posed when one encounters plurality, an idea referred to in chapter two and one we will return to below in discussing the rest of the story development process. Here I note that moving from story ideas written on the board to work in small groups entails a series of difficult conversations that inevitably involve compromise. Students are placed in a situation where they are trying to figure each other out, while also trying to find common ground with ill-defined stories they will work on together. This produces tensions and compromise, even while new and fruitful directions are revealed.

Following this session, students move to the cinematography workshop, which is followed by other skill-building sessions over the next three days. During the course of these other sessions students learn the basics of three-point lighting and the way to use natural light in a video shoot, as well as how to record actors and location sound and where to find copy-right cleared music. There is a short discussion in the sound workshop about the use of music and actors' voices to support themes and central issues in a video. In the directing workshop, students are introduced to the role and responsibilities of the director. Besides providing creative leadership, it is emphasized that the director should be conscious of the central image or metaphor in the story. Where possible, this metaphor should be used to inform how language, dress, sound, images, set design, and lighting are used in the video. For our purposes, this reinforces the social nature of all signs and codes used in videos and the way in which they communicate with audiences.

This point is underlined in the cinematography workshop, which, as in the mentor training program, is delivered by Zac and Terrence. Again, Herb and Jeff's Complete Movie Magic Instructional Kit Volumes 1 and 2 are used to introduce students to a series of shots, the role of framing, the rule of thirds, and the use of space in relation to depth of

field and image composition. Zac says the purpose here to make students aware of why

shots, camera angles and certain framing techniques "cause them to react in the way they

do" (Written correspondence, July 15, 2006). This helps students develop a "clear intent

[in selecting] shots ... [because] when participants learn ... why a technique creates a

[certain] effect, it makes them more conscious creators/viewers ... [L]earning the intent

associated with a method of production [also] allows for future deconstruction of various

media products" (Written correspondence, July 15, 2006). Zac means by this that

learning to read the technical language of video production is not only about building

skills. It is also a crucial feature of media education, a way in which the social

dimensions of production work are reinforced for students and mentors.

The social and agonistic nature of production work is evidenced most clearly

however, during the Summer Visions story development process. As it happens, this

process is a central strategy through which natality is introduced in the program. Zac in

fact argues: "[t]he conceptualizing/scripting stage is ... the battleground of Summer

Visions. During this period, ideas are colliding, groups are starting to form ... [and]

stories constantly change" (Written correspondence, July 15, 2006). Using storytelling as

the context to fuel new beginnings, including those having to do with social and political

dialogue is hardly new. In fact, a number of scholarly traditions, including psychology

(Bruner, 1987, 1994), sociology (Bourdieu, 1991), literacy studies (Fairclough, 1989;

Dyson and Genishi, 1994), and literary studies (Bakhtin, 1981) have marked the ways

story development lends itself to a reconceptualization of self and one's understanding of

the meaning structures through which we live (Paull, 2002). The "phenomenon of

storytelling" can create shared spaces, in other words, which become instances of public appearance (Greene, 2000, p. 302).

Throughout the script development process in Summer Visions, the mentors work with the script supervisor to challenge students about their stories and forms of representation and to help students with production planning. The goal is to fuel what Arendt would call thoughtfulness. A mentor named Caleb describes what happens. He says:

> just because [students] come up with an idea, a lot of times people think that it's the best idea because you've come up with it ... [I]t's the first one [and it] tantalizes you ... [But it's] never the [best one]. It needs to be worked with. And so story wise we really push them and make them go, 'Okay, let's look at other things ... Where are you going with this? How is it visually going to translate?' (Interview, January 11, 2006).

As Terrence notes, the point is not to put "boundaries on the subject matter, it's just that we're putting boundaries on certain familiar, over-familiar treatments of over-familiar subject matter" (Interview, January 9, 2006). In part, this is to challenge students and mentors to think about what is being represented, to avoid "token" or stereotypical images and stories (Oscar, Interview, January 14, 2006).

The script supervisor plays the central role here. She reviews the story outlines and as Caitlin notes, engages in a critical dialogue "on aesthetics, on story quality, on narrative structure" following first and second drafts of the script (Interview, March 14, 2006). She's looking for a degree of competency in the story, but Lucy says she is really looking for "evidence in the script that students have entered into a dialogue" (Field notes, June 30, 2006). This objective recalls Paulo Freire's (1970) dictum: "Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (p. 69). Evidence that this work is underway can come in many forms – as we will see in chapter five – but it

amounts to scripting details that suggest students are thinking about their experience and the conditions of action that make it possible. Of course students need a good deal of practice to engage in dialogue about the aesthetic, social, and political nature of their work, and so lots of opportunity is given for students to talk through their stories, to consider what they want to achieve, and what forms of representation they will use to do this. Production mentors are crucial to this process.

Peer to peer mentors are assigned to specific groups on day three, once story outlines are complete. During the story development phase, the mentor's role is to keep the group moving forward, but it is also to support the work of the script supervisor by posing story-based questions to students. It takes time to learn how to do this well, not least because the urge to provide script solutions to problem sequences is strong. Moreover, in 2006 there was only a short workshop for the mentors during their training week where their role in posing questions to student groups about script and production decisions was explained. Specific examples of how this might work were not provided. Still, the mentors make a concerted effort to support and challenge their groups.

Throughout the scripting of a video called Drafted, for instance, Rohan tried to query his group about most sequences. The video eventually told the story of a young man who refuses to respond to the military draft notices sent to his home. During pre-production, Rohan situated his questions in relation to the audience students envisioned for the video and then asked them to explain: "Why do we have this shot? What is the point of this scene? What is the purpose of this sound?" (Interview, October 27, 2006). This discussion can become overwhelming at times, but it positions both the students and the mentor in an agonistic relation with the production. For students, this process encourages

them to enter into a dialogue with each other, their mentor and an imagined audience – in this case an audience of peers. For the mentor, the process forces him or her to imagine the trajectory, as well as the social, political, and aesthetic implications of the choices being make. Because the goal is, as much as possible, to avoid the reproduction of "over-familiar treatments of over-familiar subject matter," this process lends itself to a pedagogy of natality. Students and mentors are encouraged to "visit" with new ideas, to encounter the belated nature of their work, and to imagine new possibilities without being told what these possibilities ought to be. Through this, a space is opened to take initiative and act on those initiatives "in light of a vision of a better state of things" (Greene, 2000, p. 297; but also see Arendt, 1968, p 4).

Of course this process is not without tensions. Working in collaborative processes can turn plurality into a debilitating force. This has been observed in youth video work in the past (Sefton-Green, 1995; Buckingham et al., 1995) and was also noted in discussing the Summer Visions brainstorming process. The problem here is that when a group works together, inevitably multiple voices with differing points of view force compromises to be made. Kira suggests why this is a problem. She says: "the whole group has to agree on an idea before it really goes forward. So I guess … that means the ideas kind of get watered down, because they … have to go through so many people and … people [have] to agree. … [As a result,] it's not ever – in theory – one person's film, because there are so many ideas that contribute" (Interview, November 3, 2006). Rohan concurs and adds the short timeframe for writing and editing scripts means "no one can fully articulate their project" (Interview, October 27, 2006). Recalling an observation made in chapter two, the tension here is about the limiting conditions of plurality, the fact that too much difference

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can undermine youth's opportunities to articulate and produce rich and novel stories. Where this is a problem, it intersects with a conflict in the program directors' beliefs about the aims of Summer Visions.

As noted earlier, Caitlin and Lucy envision the program and the story creation process as important opportunities to engage and empower youth through discussion and analysis of their ideas and their condition in contemporary society. On the other hand, Julia and Tony believe Summer Visions is primarily intended to help youth become better filmmakers. To facilitate this, Julia has proposed that the mentors play a much less active role in the story development process so that students can focus on creating better stories, rather than analyzing and discussing those stories (Interview, June 7, 2006). In 2006, this change was not made, but it was a point of tension and discussion throughout the summer.

In chapter five this tension and the story development process in Summer Visions will be explored further through detailed examinations of three videos made in the program. Here I note that across Summer Visions' pre-production process, a number of opportunities are designed to draw young people into a shared space, one that stands-in for the often private spaces where youth live (Greene, 2000). Creating a video is the framework for doing this work, but the aim is to facilitate what Dewey talked about as "a funding of meaning" (quoted in Greene, 2000, p. 298). Drawing attention to a community of youth media work suggests the plurality of other young people's practices, which Summer Visions students and mentors will contribute to. Brainstorming stories and learning the language of media production teaches the belated and social nature of meaning production. The story development process evidences both the powerful

agonistic dimensions of creative practice and the difficulties to be encountered in this work. New beginnings for students and mentors come into being through this process, even if these developments are far from straightforward. Action and speech facilitate appearance before others and, in this way, possibilities for democratic practice are opened because natality is designed into the learning process.

In a lesser way, this is also the case during production. Shooting videos generally takes place over three days in Summer Visions, often either at Cityschool or within a three-kilometre radius of the school. The mentors work closely with their groups throughout the process. They help students secure equipment, locations and actors, and also help set up shots, protect tapes, and rehearse on set. In certain instances, visiting independent filmmakers also work with groups.

During shooting, ideally there is again a potent and ongoing dialogue between mentors and students. The mentors are not only a resource, in other words, they engage students in a work-based conversation. It takes time and confidence to develop the ability to do this, but Caitlin says the goal is that "each shot set up, every time the director does something, there's ... questions ... being asked and [a] kind of negotiation ... going on between the mentor and the students. That's part of the mentors' and the students' learning process" (Interview, March 14, 2006). The production of Drafted again offers an illuminating instance of how this works.

The video was shot in a converted back-stage area in Cityschool's theatre. Where possible, Rohan provoked a series of agonistic encounters largely by challenging students in the group about how audiences would understand shot choices and scene sequences. To do this, he took advantage of a television monitor, which was linked to the students'

camera, showing the group what different sequences would look like "as TV." Using a monitor to test and evaluate shots is hardly unusual in student productions, but it is often not noted how this affords an opportunity to develop a richer dialogue with one's audience. By seeing images and hearing sounds on TV, student media work is positioned in a dialectic relationship with popular media because, more than a camera on its own, the television monitor recalls the belated expectations students, mentors and many of us have about what TV images should look like. In making Drafted, Rohan took advantage of this fact and turned the production of the video into a public dialogue about the meaning and nature of specific images and sounds. A student in the group commented on the value of this process. She said Rohan pushed the group to think about and "talk to" an imagined audience as they made decisions about shots, lighting and acting performances (Interview, July 14, 2006). "He'd ask: 'What would you say if you saw that on TV? Would it make sense?'" She went on to say: "It was cool watching our stuff on the monitor because we could see what it was going to look like" and thus imagine the dialogue with the audience. "We were trying to make it look ... like something an audience would watch" (Interview, July 14, 2006). This did not always work out, but the point is with the mentor asking questions and the monitor affording a view of the shots and scenes as texts, the production process became a site wherein an agonistic encounter around the nature and dimensions of meaning could unfold.

Caitlin notes that the kind of interventions exemplified by Rohan's work on Drafted "doesn't happen with all the mentors" because it is difficult for new peer educators to feel comfortable doing this work (Interview, March 14, 2006). But it does happen, and in this

way, the production process is designed to afford further opportunities for students to experience a struggle over the social nature of meaning.

The involvement of visiting artists with some film groups also contributes to this process. In 2006, an effort was made to bring in more independent filmmakers than in previous years to work with student groups and mentors during production. Caitlin says in most instances, the filmmakers worked alongside the mentors, asking students questions about their shot selection, sound preparation, and scene readiness, etc. (Interview, November 16, 2006). They also provided advice on how to get the most from one's resources and actors and where students might find help from the local filmmaking community. Julia, Pacific Cinémathèque's Education Director, also hoped the presence of the visiting artists would bring in "a little bit of fresh air ..., fresh eyes and different approaches" (Interview, June 6, 2006). Whether or not this happened in difficult to assess. As will be made clear in chapter six, however, it does seem the presence of independent filmmakers in the program offered the production mentors a link to a broader filmmaking community in the city and province.

Because of time constraints, the Summer Visions post-production process is largely designed to allow students and mentors to edit and complete their videos. Considerable effort is made to ensure everyone has an ongoing opportunity to contribute to and physically edit projects. Caitlin says this is consciously done to support young women in the program (Interview, March 14, 2006). Because technology continues to be thought of in relation to young male interests and activities, it has become clear over the history of the program that concerted effort is necessary to ensure male and female students have equal opportunity to edit images and design sound scapes. Mentors are responsible for

ensuring this happens, which, importantly, helps to sustain a sensibility toward issues of gender throughout the program. Students and mentors participate in one critical review session of their rough cut on the final day of the program. This discussion affords one last opportunity to review footage choices, story structure, character development, and so on. Generally, program instructors and senior mentors lead the discussion, which is intended to help students make final revisions of their work.

The public screening of youth films is the concluding stage of the production process in Summer Visions. Many researchers have noted the significance of this stage in the development of youth work (Buckingham, 2003, 2000; Buckingham and Harvey, 2001; Goodman, 2005, 2003; Goldfarb, 2002; Zsalov and Butler, 2002). Screening one's work before an audience constitutes entrance into a public realm and a public dialogue in a most obvious way. In a very real way, it is here where young people come into being through display of their efforts with others. An imaginary youthscape that has been acknowledged through the screening and discussion of older youth media in Summer Visions is re-constituted in the actual space where youth, their friends, families, and other adults watch the videos. In Summer Visions this event takes place early in the fall when all student films are screened as part of a gala evening at Pacific Cinémathéque's downtown theatre. Ryan, a former instructor in the program captures the significance of this event. He says: "when you do a screening in a movie theatre, … you formalize [student work. This is the place] where people sit down and have popcorn and they can go and see *King Kong* or they can go and see a night of Summer Visions films … I'm not saying those are the same crowds. But … there's the same sort of feeling, you're still going into a movie theatre and … it's still the same experience that we all love"

(Interview, May 25, 2006). In part, this is about completion, the final presentation of videos which concludes a long summer. In part, however, it is also about arrival, the appearance of a new public of youth whose agonistic encounters with the world are evidenced through their work. In these instances, freedom is preserved not only because of what is visible on screen, but because a new space is made in which young people act together in ways that contribute to securing a better future.

Conclusion

Summer Visions' aims, training processes and pedagogical design are intended to generate a form of thoughtfulness among participating students and mentors. Unquestionably, there are tensions in the way this goal is understood and in how it is executed, and these tensions impact students' work and mentors' experiences, as evidenced in this chapter and subsequent discussions. Teaching young people the skills necessary to produce new media and affording them opportunities to express themselves are central goals in the program. So too are providing resources to support media literacy, career development and access to technology. Mediating these objectives, however, is a desire to help young people come into being as social actors capable of reflecting on the conditions that shape their experiences and actions in ways that will affect change for young people, their communities and our social futures (New London Group, 2000). I believe this goal underlies many youth media programs and, in an important way, it underscores the democratic ambitions of these practices.

In Summer Visions, a pedagogy of natality, as conceived by Levinson (2002, 1997) is not consciously designed into the program. At the same time, a number of training processes and pedagogical strategies can be read in such a way that they appear to

acknowledge the limiting and enabling possibilities afforded by our condition of belatedness and the fact of plurality. Where possible and where it seems productive, students and mentors are invited to engage in agonistic struggle to reflect on why and how they are producing particular stories and in what ways these videos will be understood by others. Through this, instances of productive uncertainty are designed into the program in ways that allow youth to reflect on the social nature of meaning and our obligation to this. Whether and how such an orientation develops in youth work and as part of the experiences of the peer-to-peer mentors in the program are the subjects of chapters five and six.

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[i] An additional four youth – beyond the eleven noted in this study – were hired to work as production mentors for a satellite version of the Summer Visions program targeted at elementary-age children. The satellite program takes place on the campus of a local university, and is produced in conjunction with the Summer Camp program hosted by the university's physical education department. This location was not part of the research for this study because the elementary program is one-week in length and is designed to achieve a different set of objectives with participating children.

[ii] Three youth were first time mentors in 2006, while two mentors had worked part time as production trainers in 2005.

[iii] Julia selected two videos – Karma Café (2006) and Cash Money Gangsters (2005) – to discuss questions about the aesthetic possibilities of youth production, and two videos – Turbulence (2006) and Oulin (2006) – to discuss issues of representation in student work. I have chosen to analyze one video in each of these categories.

iv The award is now in its sixth year and is intended to make young people aware of international issues. <u>Butterfly 208</u> is based on the theory that, by flapping its wings, a single butterfly can shift the wind enough to cause a storm a month later elsewhere in the world. It symbolizes the interdependence that connects some 208 countries in the world and the fact that even the smallest action can have a significant impact.

Chapter 5

The Struggle Over Meaning and the Production of Plurality in

Youth Media Work

In chapter four I located Summer Visions in relation to other youth media programs and examined the program's pedagogical design and mentor training process in relation to the conceptual framework offered by a pedagogy of natality. The purpose of this was to assess how Summer Visions can be understood to encourage agonistic struggles among youth video makers and mentors. Within Hannah Arendt's public realm theory, as discussed in chapter two, such struggles nurture democratic practice by preserving newness and fostering plurality through acts that contest meaning, especially in regard to the sedimentation of power in discourses, institutions and visual texts. In this chapter, I examine how such struggles are enacted in the production of three Summer Visions films. The objective is to assess in what sense such struggles de-privatize young people's creative experience by involving them with others, ideally in ways that pay heed to the forces and structures that organize and limit our lives. In chapter six, I then offer a different assessment of the way Summer Visions furthers plurality by examining how experience in the program has fostered a sense of the social nature of meaning and our obligation to this among a group of peer-to-peer production mentors.

I situate the analysis of student artifacts in this chapter by summarizing the array of videos produced in the program in 2006, noting common characteristics and features and also pointing out that some have very little, if anything to do with acts that contest meaning, especially in regard to the way power operates belatedly in discourses and practices. I quote from a senior youth mentor and examine the challenges faced by young

mentors in the program to explain why this is the case. I follow this discussion with an extended analysis of three films – In-Between, No Regrets and NE1 – made in 2006, each of which demonstrates how a struggle over meaning is produced in Summer Visions. Not all these productions successfully carrying through on this work and so I also use these videos to indicate how practices of sedimentation and belatedness can limit and undermine agonistic struggles in youth media production. To conclude, I revisit the notion of youthscapes referred to in chapters two and four and suggest that while these videos and Summer Visions more generally are complicated instances of democratic practice, they also demonstrate how youth working in new and mixed media forms are not just producing isolated works of personal expression, they are creating new public spaces.

Summer Visions 2006

Over the three (two-week) video production programs I witnessed during my field observations, students and youth production mentors worked together to complete thirty videos, which were distributed at public screenings and, in some instances, submitted to student film festivals. All the pieces were fictional narratives of one sort or another, ranging in length from one to seven minutes.

Eight of the videos were fictionalized social commentaries. I mean by this that the videos combined a sense of "social analysis and dramatic conflict within a coherent narrative structure" (Roffman and Purdy, 1981, p. viii; Neale, 2000). Examples of such work include Drafted, a video discussed in chapter four that tells the story of a young man who refuses to respond to draft notices sent to him by the military. Paper Bag Boy is about a young man who feels alienated from the world around him until a young woman

befriends him and together they realize that however much unhappiness there is, "the world is more beautiful than [we] think, and it needs people" like these characters to see the potential that is out there. Another piece (Gossip Speaks) is about the impact of rumors at school, while Lakewood Drive portrays the cultural and ethnic diversity that lies inside four houses on a neighbourhood street. NE1 is an internet stalker story, which will be discussed in greater detail below. Transparency is about fitting in at school, and Negative Space and The Neighbourhood are both about the way communication technologies appear to haunt people in their homes.

Four videos were docudramas, which is to say, they used a mix of documentary and fiction formats to tell socially relevant stories. John Grierson aptly described the documentary as "the creative treatment of reality" (quoted in Druick, 2007). Drama, on the other hand, is the about the imitation of life, it is a contrived story (Lipkin et al., 2006). The docudrama is a hybrid of these forms. It often – but not always – mixes footage of "real events and the talent of actors and actresses in performance to act out written stories, thereby gaining leeway to take dramatic liberty with events" (Ogunleye, 2005, p. 480). At Summer Visions 2006, Look Around told the story of different forms of exclusion – based on age, sex, sexuality, and race – that can happen in school. Quarantine returns to a story from the days and weeks immediately following the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11, 2001. In the video, office workers are trapped in a building after a mysterious white power is found on the floor. The Point is ... is about how to help take care of others, especially those we don't know. In-Between, which will be discussed in greater detail below, is about teen suicide.

Nine of the videos were dramas, which addressed a range of themes and topics including the difference between dream worlds and reality (<u>Entre Reves</u>), one's desire to script and control one's life (<u>Cliché</u>), a missed birthday (<u>A Birthday Forgotten</u>), surviving a natural disaster (<u>Earthquake</u>), a missing briefcase caper (<u>The Briefcase</u>), a now-distant relationship between two young women (<u>Wake-up</u>), and a late-night party two young women try to attend (<u>Escape</u>). There was also a story (<u>Between 4-1</u>) about a young man trapped in an elevator who is prompted by a stranger to think about where his life is headed and why, and a video (<u>No Regrets</u>) about a young man given a second chance to be with his now-deceased girlfriend through the aide of a secret military technology. This video will also be discussed in greater detail below.

In addition to these works, four videos were horror or fantasy films (<u>A Ghost Story</u>, <u>Tales of Applegate</u>, <u>Voyage to Norselandic Land</u>, and <u>Cookie Editorial</u>), which are difficult to create in a two-week production program because they rely on more elaborate sets and costumes. Three comedies were made, all of which worked with satire. <u>Dimitry Valdez</u> is about a television dating show, while <u>Normak the Untamed</u> lampoons aspiring superheroes, and <u>The Dishwasher</u> loosely satirizes a television show that takes a behind-the-scenes look into the world of restaurants. Two other videos (<u>Fiction</u> and <u>White Out</u>) were closer to experimental productions. Avante-garde or experimental films are diverse and notoriously difficult to define (Rees, 1999). Nonetheless, I use this term to refer to videos that explore loosely interwoven narratives through visual experimentation intended to create highly symbolic images and sound environments (Buckingham et al., 2003 p. 466). In <u>Fiction</u>, the video makers explore how three people are linked together

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through a single idea, while <u>White Out</u> explores the difficulty a young man has trying to hold on to a disappearing memory.

Most of the students' productions were serious in tone, although some included sarcasm or irony even when they dealt with more sober topics like the damage caused by gossip in schools, the change wrought by communications technologies in people's homes, or the fear caused by unidentified white powder in an office. Certainly not all of the videos preserve newness by expanding a sense of the real, as these ideas are used in this study. Even if Summer Visions' pedagogical practices open up possibilities for this to happen, not all students are interested in being drawn into production experiences that encourage them to "step outside of themselves," to become involved with others in ways that fuel experimentation and thinking about the possibilities of new beginnings (Ryan, Interview, May 25, 2006). Terrence, a senior mentor, suggests why: "sometimes students just don't want to learn ... [W]e have kids" who come to Summer Visions and they "are just there for the summer camp experience and if they want to make a movie about Elvis and his pelvic thrusts or whatever, then they're going to do that no matter what" (Interview, January 9, 2006). As indicated in chapter four, various stages in the video production cycle are intended to challenge how students undertake their work, but, of course, these challenges are not taken up by everyone.

Further complicating how student video production experiences preserve newness and engage in democratic practice is the role of novice or relatively inexperienced peer-to-peer mentors in the program. As evidenced in the previous chapter, mentors play a vital role throughout the production cycle. Because of this, the creation process and resulting videos are deeply affected by mentors' level of experience. Terrence notes as

much when he says, "the same script with five different mentors, would be five different movies" (Interview, January 9, 2006). One reason for this is learning how to contest students' story ideas and decisions about images, sound and performance requires experience and confidence. The mentor training process offers some support, but again, as noted in chapter four, the training process has not always provided clear direction in this regard. Rohan, another senior mentor, says, for instance, that even after working in the program for three years, he does not "feel like [the mentors'] relationship with kids is talked about nearly as much in Summer Visions" as it needs to be (Interview, October 27, 2006). Because of this, he says he is not always sure how to respond to the different challenges posed by students' needs throughout the production process. For younger mentors this problem is magnified.

Following a truncated training process, new mentors are placed in situations where they need to attend carefully to students' stories and representational decisions in order to intervene productively in response to these decisions. Rachel, a new mentor in 2006, says the difficulty this poses is in learning to be "inside the stories of others [and not] … simply [take] over those stories" (Field notes, August 1, 2006). It is hard, she says, because "the weight of your creative thoughts" is so overwhelming, as the story develops it is difficult to ask critical questions and not simply try to take over the production process (Field notes, August 1, 2006). Drawing on an Arendtian concept used in chapter four, we might say this is a problem of learning how to "visit" with the work of others, to contest their decisions in ways that foster agonistic struggle without simply telling students how their stories should develop. Terrence says this difficulty means new mentors shy away from creating "too much tension" by posing questions to students

during the production cycle (October 30, 2007). One result is videos made by student groups and novice mentors tend to be more visually and narratively conventional.

With this backdrop, in the rest of this chapter I closely analyze three videos produced by different student and mentor groups: one is a docudrama that draws on a real life experience, a second is a drama, and the third is a fictionalized social commentary. These videos were selected because they offer differing examples of the struggle to preserve natality through creative work. Each video can be read as revealing examples of how democratic practice operates in Summer Visions' creative process and video artifacts. Here, democratic practice is conceived in terms of agonistic struggles through which students and mentors address and respond to the social nature of meaning in concerted actions related to a common purpose (i.e., the production of a video artifact). This is evidenced through a willingness to engage and open oneself up to others, particularly through actions that challenge the sedimentation of meaning and the belatedness of power in discourses, institutions and visual texts. Not all the videos are successful at this work. In fact No Regrets is instructive as a counter-example that shows how complicating tensions having to do with issues of race and popular media can undermine the way conditions of belatedness and plurality are addressed in youth media work. At the same time, each video affords a revealing example of how an Arendtian conception of democratic practice can be used to understand Summer Visions' creative processes and the artifacts that result.

In interpreting each video, I transcribed the plot and any dialogue in each piece and coded each on several levels, including: character development; themes and overarching plots; students' decisions about their use of image and audio conventions; and mentor

interventions throughout the production process. In turn, I framed these in relation to how they do or do not exemplify acts of initiation, acts that "set something in motion" which contend with the social nature of meaning production and our ethical relation to this (Wilson, 2003, p. 208).

In-Between and Audience

In-Between is about teen suicide, a theme frequently explored in institutionally mediated youth video programs (Goldfarb, 2002; Buckingham et al., 2003). There are several reasons for this. Suicide remains an all too common problem among young people, particularly young men and youth from marginalized communities in Canada and the United States (Leenaars et al., 1998). In addition, autobiographical and testimonial objectives often inform video programs, even when such initiatives aim to critically challenge how students engage their work. Opportunities are thus available for youth to explore traumatic life experiences. There is also a long history to the idea of using video production as therapy. Brian Goldfarb (2002) explains why: "Video has proven to be well suited to various local amateur contexts where the medium is used to foster self-analysis and interpersonal relationship building" (p. 115). Finally, video's therapeutic function is reinforced by the popularity of reality television and a wider televisual therapeutic ethos. Mimi White (1992) noted this relationship some time ago, explaining that in recounting his or her story, the confessional subject of reality television experiences "the processes of repetition and recovery" (p. 182). Through this, an odd form of public celebrity results. Confessional subjects tell their stories on national television, "and they get to participate as actresses and expert witnesses. In such instances, the successful therapeutic trajectory is signified by the patient's accession to celebrity status via an appearance on television"

(White, 1992, p. 182). This public status then encourages the idea that video testimony can offer a means for overcoming traumatic experience.

If a confessional televisual culture leads to instances of trauma celebrity-hood, In Between and the Summer Vision's ethos are bound up with a different conception of public engagement. In Between was made by five young people who were mentored throughout the creation process by Kira, a recent high school graduate who has been involved with Summer Visions as both a student and mentor for four years. It is largely her words I draw on in telling this story. The video is an interesting mix of forms, combining fictionalized and documentary footage.

It opens in the private space of a boy's bedroom. The soundtrack is a single piano, which grows with intensity as the scene unfolds. The image is a long shot, showing a boy asleep in bed in an otherwise non-descript room. As tension in the music increases, the camera remains stationary and a dream-like image of the boy sits up in the corner of the bed over his sleeping body. The boy in the dream image begins to wrench and struggle with anxiety. Over this shot, a boy's voice says,

"You're an accident."

There is then a cut to a bleach white image of the same boy now wrestling with a rope. He is clearly in deep trauma. From here, the video cuts between images of a clock, a hand shown in close-up hanging over the corner of a bed, more bleach white images of the boy struggling, then the clock again, and finally, the dream-like image of the boy returning to sit in the corner of the bed. At this point, a boy's voice-over says:

"Little freak."

The scene stops here and, as it does, the boy looks directly at the camera.

Following a noticeable cut, which is intended to denote a shift from the dream

sequence, we again see the boy sleeping, only now he wakes up, looks at the clock, and

knows he is late for school. He quickly gets up and walks out of his room, passing

another door, which he opens to say good-bye to his mom. She's sitting on a bed,

smoking and reading the paper. She doesn't acknowledge him when he says:

"Going to school..."

In response to her, he says:

"Whatever..."

He walks out the front door, mumbling,

"Great, so much for not being late this year."

The scene then cuts to a young woman walking to school. The boy runs up to her from

behind. She's a friend and he says,

"Amy, you're late too huh ... I had the craziest dream last night..."

As he says this, Amy doesn't acknowledge him and so in response, he says,

"What's wrong? What did I do? Amy, what did I do wrong?"

She turns and walks away. The boy looks down and we cut to a shot of his wrist and then

back to a shot of him looking down the street at Amy. He ends up walking on alone to

school. When he arrives, he finds Amy sitting outside a counselor's office. He sits down

beside her and says,

"Amy, I didn't ... I didn't think about what I was doing, I just wanted to..."

The door to the office opens and Amy walks in to talk with the counselor. The boy is left

outside looking in, trying in vain to talk to his friend. He leaves and as he's walking out

of the school, we see a montage of students walking all around the boy. No one can see him and he can't talk to anyone.

From here, we return to his home. As he walks back into his bedroom, the piano music returns and the shot cuts again to a close-up of a hand – his hand, presumably – hanging off the corner of his bed. The camera cuts to the boy in close-up and a montage of images seen in the opening of the video – including shots of a clock, the boy struggling in a white room, etc. – finally conclude with a black screen. From here, the tone and mood of the video take a dramatic shift.

We cut to a series of interviews, which constitute the second half of the video. The interviews include a range of young people talking about the meaning, causes and impact of suicide. The youth seem to be in conversation with each other. They talk about their understanding of suicide, whether or not it is a selfish act, how it impacts those who are left behind, its relationship to families and religion, how it relates to our obligation to others, and the way other painful experiences influence adolescents' actions. The youth represent a range of cultures and ethnicities, and where they don't all agree, their talk begins to redefine the terms of the private trauma the audience has just seen. Their conversations explore suicide through the lens of multiple relationships. No conclusions are firmly drawn, but the private experience seen in the first half of In Between is reconstituted through a form of engagement that represents a struggle over suicide's meaning, causes and effects.

In this way, In-Between exemplifies how youth videos that explore "personal issues in peer groups settings" can also simultaneously translate these issues into social and political relationships (Goldfarb, 2002, p. 112). The project did not begin this way, but

importantly, ongoing discussions about the relationship of the story to its intended audience throughout the production cycle altered how suicide was explored in the text. By asking the filmmakers to think seriously about who their audience is, what they want to say to them, and how this message will be produced and received, Kira and Summer Visions' instructors helped the filmmakers explore a personal story and examine its meaning in relation to the larger social and cultural contexts where it operates. Through this, Kira and the instructors not only demonstrated how talk about audiences in the context of video production can help students improve the aesthetic quality of their work, but also how thinking about one's audience can introduce forms of public, democratic dialogue into students' work.

For some time, asking young people to think about audiences has been typical of pedagogical practices in both media education and media production (Buckingham, 2003; Buckingham and Harvey, 2001; Buckingham and Sefton-Green, 1994). As noted in chapter four, this is also true of Summer Visions. Early on in the production cycle, students are invited to begin a dialogue with viewers, to consider how their videos will be read differently by friends, family, educators, and other members of the community. Thinking about one's audience has most often been understood as a way to help students refine how they understand their own intentions, construct their stories and use visual and audio resources. Buckingham and Harvey (2001) note as much in their report on VideoCulture, an international media production project involving young people from Germany, Hungary, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, and the United States. They (2001) explain that when youth took audiences seriously in the project, "a kind of 'decentering'" occurred (p. 181). Students were led "to consider the relationship between

intentions and results; to recognize that some of their intentions were not clear, or had changed as the work progressed; and that some of the outcomes did not correspond with their initial intentions, and may have even led them to be misinterpreted" (Buckingham and Harvey, 2001, p. 181).

This is helpful but left unarticulated here and evidenced in the making of In Between is the way consideration of audiences can also introduce forms of democratic dialogue into students' practices. This happens because thinking about one's audience never just involves aesthetic considerations; rather, taste is always related to socio-cultural relationships and questions of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). A fully developed articulation of these dynamics may not result during production work, but thinking about one's viewers positions one in a dialogue with collectivities that are belated and plural, formed "out of independently existing social forces" (McQuail, quoted in Livingstone, 2005, p. 24). We can't talk about a youth audience or any other kind of audience, in other words, without simultaneously thinking about who these people are both as media consumers and social beings. As a result, there is always the potential when thinking about audiences to open up consideration of the social, cultural and political relationships through which meaning operates. This may only happen in small ways, but imagining one's audience doesn't only help students improve the coherence and aesthetic quality of their work. It is also a way democratic considerations come to be inserted into production experiences. This really means that by engaging with their audiences, the active work of creation encourages and allows students to enter into a dialogue, one that "constitute[s] a form of cultural engagement that matters to the public sphere" (Livingstone, 2005, p. 36).

This dimension of creative media work is exemplified in the production of In-Between. The project began with a story based around a singular image of a young person in the midst of committing suicide. A friend of a student in the production team had recently taken her own life, and the student wanted to tell his friend's story by showing the final moments he imagined she must have experienced. He saw this as a way to warn other young people.

After an initial meeting together, the group explained to Caitlin that they wanted to show a young woman hanging herself (Kira, Interview, August 30, 2006). They had an idea they would also show something about her alienation from her family, but really they wanted to concentrate on the moment when she takes her own life. The boy who proposed the story idea compared the power of this scene to the sequence in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, when the lovers take their lives (Field Notes, July 18, 2006). He thought the video could have a similar force, but as a warning to other young people. Caitlin was sympathetic but suspicious. Besides the difficulty of showing a young woman dying, she also worried the scene had no context, little explanation and risked fetishizing the suffering and "gore" of the moment (Field notes, July 18, 2006). In response, rather than tell the production team they could not make the video, Caitlin asked them to pitch the story idea to other students, to find out whether they responded the way the production team hoped.

The team did this, explaining that they wanted to show a young woman's suicide to demonstrate how the victim suffers. The student audience responded with sympathy. Some liked the idea. Others, however, said they would be left numb by the sequence. As a result, it would be hard to take any message away from the story. They would have no

idea why the character died. Caitlin picked up on this point – in part, for fear the group would continue to defend the need for "gory details" – and asked the students to think about how they could warn their audience by exploring why suicides happen (Field notes, July 19, 2006).

This direction proved to be both useful and challenging. Kira was brought in to mentor the group and she says Caitlin's direction helped create a larger canvas to think about the film, the students' intentions and where the story was headed. By focusing on why a young person might take his or her life the students could work more collaboratively because the story no longer depended quite to the same degree on one boy's experience with his friend, and so space was created for the other participants' ideas. Kira pursued these directions with the group and emphasized to the students that while "'we're trying to help you make the best story you can[, …] you [need to] realize … people are going to respond in a certain way, so think about your audience'" (Interview, August 30, 2006).

Thinking about their script and video in terms of a dialogue with future audiences was not easy. Kira says this is something students struggle with. She remembers asking the group many times: "what do you want your audience to feel and to think" (Interview, August 30, 2006)? These questions locate students in agonistic relationships with their work, with their mentors, and with the larger context in which their videos are made and seen. Kira says these questions produce uncertainty among the students "that's good because it pushes them to create something they believe in, but don't necessarily know the answers to yet" (Interview, November 3, 2006). These questions "set something in motion," in other words, encouraging students to engage and open themselves up to new

considerations and relationships (Wilson, 2003, p. 208). Thereby, natality might be preserved.

With In-Between, the effect of this strategy was twofold. On the one hand, as in Buckingham's and Harvey's (2001) study, the students used an ongoing dialogue with an imagined youth audience to refine their script and clarify shot decisions. They wrote out the central character's lines and then rehearsed them aloud to check whether they sounded "realistic" as teen argot. Kira says this led to three stages of script revision (Interview, August 30, 2006). The students also revised the opening scene. In an early draft of the script, it read:

A Boy lies in his bed thinking

Flash to WHITE ROOM

The Boy sits tied up. He struggles to get out.

VOICEOVER

You are worth nothing....

(Going back and forth from white room to the Boy's bedroom, he's imitating the same moves as he does in the white room.)

(Car noises are heard in the background. As the car accelerates the phrases that you hear are growing more and more tense. Louder and louder, the phrases are now screamed.

Then, silence.)

(A car crashes in the background. Silence)

VOICEOVER

He's gone...

Ultimately, this scene was simplified because when the group talked it through in relation to their audience, Kira says "they agreed it felt too angsty. So they tightened it up and it didn't turn out a lot like this" (Interview, August 30, 2006). Imagining how audiences would respond to their work thus helped the students to refine their intentions and evaluate their visual and audio decisions.

On the other hand, asking the students to think about an imagined youth audience positioned the videomakers in the kind of meaningful dialogue which represents "a form of cultural engagement that matters to the public sphere" (Livingstone, 2005, p. 36). That the students undertook something like this is evidenced most clearly by the peculiar mixing of media languages in In Between.

Early on in the production process the screenplay focused on the opening half of the video. Here, we see the boy in his bedroom, then at school, then returning to his house. The style here is highly personalized, using a visual language that includes montage, treated images and some fairly sophisticated editing techniques. Kira explained that while the students were developing this part, she continued to ask them to think about why a young person might take their own life and how to make such a decision "real" for other teenagers. She says, quite honestly, she did this because "I didn't want [the video] to be cheesy ... [O]ther kids would write it off right away and maybe laugh" (Interview, August 30, 2006). No one wanted this to happen so Kira and Caitlin talked about the video's audience quite a bit.

In response, the students slowly began to develop the idea of a documentary piece, a conversation that would follow the opening of the film. Kira says, "[T]hey were thinking more about who's going to watch this ... [and] when the group thought about the

audience more, ... they decided to come up with the documentary idea ... [It] was directed to other young people" (Interview, August, 30, 2006). Of course documentary forms of representation need not always be defined as public modes of communication. In relation to the more personalized representational strategies apparent in the opening of In Between, however, the shift to a documentary interview format shows the videomakers entering into a different kind of discourse with their audience. The interviews allowed the videomakers to have conversations with other young people. They constitute a change in style and orientation, in other words, from the personal and the private to talk among a community of youth. In this way, the shift in form can be read as an instance of de-privatization that leads to entry into communication practices that have democratic consequence.

As evidence, when this change happened the young people interviewed in In Between immediately expanded the social complexity through which youth suicide is explored. Their remarks shifted the discussion from an exploration of a personal story to a discussion about the social, cultural and even political relationships that shape how suicide impacts young people. One young person spoke about how such acts raise questions about our obligation to others, including our families and parents. He says,

> If I were to commit suicide today, my parents would have to deal with the
> fact that someone younger died before them, ... and everything they've
> worked for was to help me have a better life.

Another youth raises questions about the relationship of suicide to religious discourses. He says,

> I don't see that it would be considered a sin, [especially because] it is in a
> way up to the people who are around [a young person] to ... try and help.

A different person suggests there are often other circumstances that impact kids' lives, circumstances that don't justify someone's actions, but place them in a broader context. He then went on to tell a story about a young woman whose experience at home wasn't known to those around her. He says,

> It was kind of shocking because she had no one to talk to and [something] was happening at home, and you would really think that whatever was done ... she would try to tell her side of the story and let people in the school know what she was going through.

From the young man's comments, it is difficult to know what was happening to his friend. However, suggesting how secretive and painful acts in private can impact a young person's life reminds us of the complicated and difficult circumstances young people can face today. It also suggests that suicide is not only a personal or private experience but a phenomenon set within a social matrix of people and resources charged with helping young people.

In the end, In-Between does not fully explain why a young person might take their own life, but this shouldn't be expected. What's more interesting for our purposes is the way producing this work allowed both the students and their mentor to enter into forms of agonistic struggle that engage with the complex social nature of meaning. Kira's request that the students think about their audience can be understood as a way of encouraging them to imagine the belatedness of the people they are addressing, the fact that a teen audience represents a collectivity formed "out of independently existing social forces" (McQuail, quoted in Livingstone, 2005, p. 24). At the same time, Kira's requests also helped the students to engage with the enabling possibilities of plurality. This happened in the second half of the video when the students turned to discuss the meaning and nature of suicide with other adolescents. Here, In-Between offers "a view of youth

culture that demonstrates the varieties of emotional, political, and aesthetic agency that can be enacted by young people engaged in media culture" (Goldfarb, 2002, p. 138). In this way, the video and the process through which it was made suggest how natality or new beginnings open up through youth media practice.

No Regrets and the Belatedness of Race

Preserving freedom through practical youth work is about creating instances that "call something into being which did not exist before" (Arendt, 1968, p. 150). Such acts help sustain public experience when they involve becoming in relation with others in ways that expand a sense of the real. Making In Between offers an instance of such action. The video, No Regrets, on the other hand, is an instructive example of the tensions that can shape and sometimes undermine how freedom is preserved in youth work. Ultimately, No Regrets turned into a dramatic short, but it did not begin this way, and it is really the process through which it changed from one story idea to a very different kind of production that is of interest.

The project began with four youth producers – three of whom are Caucasian and from the Lower Mainland and one of whom is African American and a visitor to Vancouver from Los Angeles in 2006 – who were interested in making a comedy set around a series of racially charged skits. The title for the video wasn't to be No Regrets but The 'Nigga' Moment and it was meant to be derivative of the comedic style popularized on The Dave Chappelle Show, which is broadcast on The Comedy Channel in Canada.

By way of background it is important to know that Dave Chappelle is black and his humour is complex and often harsh. It includes racial caricatures about various communities but black-white relations in America come in for special attention.

Chappelle may or may not be politically significant; it is difficult to tell. Writer Mathew Feeney suggests he is not. Feeney (2004) argues: "Chappelle doesn't 'subvert' [racism, sexism, and other clichés,] he exploits them … [He] extracts laughs from America's racial hang-ups, not necessarily from a solemn underlying commitment to racial justice, but often with an unfettered and indiscriminate comic malice" (para 2). Stylistically, Chappelle is less "reminiscent … of the politically circumscribed satire of Lenny Bruce or Dick Gregory than of the gleeful, cruel, slapstick of the Three Stooges – the jarring, unwarranted violence of poked eyes and conked heads." (Feeney, 2004, para 3).

Other commentators have read Chappelle differently, suggesting note that in the midst of his antics a powerful socio-political critique can be glimpsed. Writing in the British quarterly Sight and Sound, for instance, Ali Jaafar observes that in Chappelle's recent concert film, Dave Chappelle's Block Party (2006), "a socio-political subtext can be seen with both the choice of artists – all part of the 'conscious rap' school of hip hop as opposed to its bling wing – and the inclusion of an unedited speech by Fred Hampton Jr. … [that] excoriates the lack of political radicalism among contemporary US youth" (p. 67). If this complicates how Chappelle's comedy is read, at the same time, his television show is impolite, often callous and quite ruthless. He seems especially adept at targeting "the underbelly of black" America and does not shy away from often malicious satires, including a skit that ridicules the "materialism" of black crack addicts (Feeney, 2004). He exploits stereotypes – about Native Americans and others – in ways that are indiscriminate and because of this it is hard to know if he is a satirist or someone simply using the "incomprehension, anger, guilt, [and] fear" that haunts America's race relations for laughs (Feeney, para 10).

Given this, it will be no surprise that the students' turn to Chappelle for inspiration raised concerns. The impetus for a Chappelle-like video largely came from Thomas, the young man visiting Summer Visions from California (Field notes, July 18, 2006). He wanted to make a piece about racial stereotypes in America, and in keeping with Chappelle, he wanted to use a host of stereotypes as part of the send up. He and the other youth explained this idea to Caitlin and Lucy and immediately the instructors had a number of worries. While not completely familiar with the Chappelle television show, they were concerned that playing with racial caricatures had the potential to offend and hurt, rather than amuse or enlighten audiences (Field notes, July 18, 2006). As with In Between, however, rather than censor the story, they asked Thomas and the other youth to explain their idea to other Summer Visions students to see what the reaction would be. The four youth videomakers did so, and while many in the audience knew and liked some parts of the *Dave Chappelle Show*, questions arose.

At least initially, the video centred on a set of (admittedly) underdeveloped skit ideas that included caricatures of African American youth who act as gun-toting, misogynistic "gangstas" as well as crude stereotypes about "yellow" Asians. The skits also made liberal use of the N-word, something common in Chappelle's humour. This part of the skits appeared to shock the audience (Field notes, July 19, 2006). They became noticeably uncomfortable and when the presentation was finished, one student commented that people don't say "nigger" here – meaning Vancouver – at least not publicly (Field notes, July 19, 2006). Thomas explained that in America and within hip hop culture, the word is used as both an insult and a kind of vernacular, depending on who is using it (Field notes, July 19, 2006). Another student in the audience responded

that she understood this, but she felt it important to say that "people don't use the N-word here" (Field notes, July 19, 2006). When asked by Caitlin to elaborate further, the student suggested the word is too harsh and anyone who uses it publicly would immediately be rebuked. Moreover, as a Chinese-Canadian youth she said racism is not just a black-white issue in Vancouver, nor are people of Asian decent targeted with simple and crude stereotypes like being identified as "yellow." Rather, racism is more subtle here. It cuts across relationships between various groups, affecting how ethnic and racial communities see each other. People are not as explicit or openly racist, however, as compared with the way the young woman imagined racism to exist in the United States (Field notes, July 19, 2006).

As the discussion concluded, what resulted from it proved interesting. In a sense, the videomakers' desire to explore racial caricatures fit with the media literacy intentions underlying Summer Visions' mandate. These intentions were noted in chapter four, where it was remarked that at least in part the program aims to help young people address the belated nature of images, including stereotypes that serve to marginalize people on the basis of gender, race and class. The students' interest in working with the difficult and sometimes troubling style of humour made popular by Dave Chappelle also afforded an important opportunity to address how the commercial media shapes young people's tastes. Additionally, the objections raised by the student audience brought up an important issue about the way race as a social and political phenomenon operates differently depending on local and national contexts (Nayak, 2003). In articulating their point of view, the students in the audience seemed to be taking a position commonly heard in Canada. Frances Henry and Carol Tutor (2006) summarize this stance when they

note, "Many Canadians see themselves as egalitarian and have little difficulty in rejecting the more overt expressions of racism" (p. 29). This perspective can lead to a discourse of denial about the presence of racism in Canada, or arguments which posit racism as "an isolated phenomenon relating to a limited number of social deviants, economic instability, or the consequence of 'undemocratic' traditions that are disappearing from the Canadian scene" (Henry and Tutor, 2006, p. 24). Interestingly, the student audience did not seem to take this latter position. Rather, she suggested that racism is a more nuanced set of social and political relationships in Vancouver, which cut across ethnic communities, affecting groups in different and unequal ways.

This collection of issues offered fertile ground for the students to investigate the politics of representation and the dynamics of race, and yet, it also complicated Thomas' and his group's original intentions. Caitlin hoped this would happen because she worried that if not done well, a Chappelle-inspired video could deeply offend audiences. She also contended that the video would mostly be screened in Vancouver and so, echoing the student audience, she argued the racial stereotypes and caricatures present in it needed to account for the way local audiences experience these issues. Zac, a senior production mentor, said otherwise Vancouver audiences would feel "like someone intentionally walked across the street for no particular reason but to kick [them] in the [b#@*s]" (Fieldnotes, July 21, 2006). The N-word and other stereotypes didn't have to disappear from the skits, but other, more subtle forms of caricature also needed to be addressed. The hope was this would also encourage the students to work collaboratively, something that is central to Summer Visions' aims. Caitlin trusted the end result would be an interesting dialogue among the student video makers and their mentors about how race as

a social and political phenomenon operates across different local and national contexts and among diverse communities (Field notes, July 19, 2006).

Knowing the challenge producing this work posed, Caitlin asked Zac and Rohan to work with the group. This proved helpful, but in the end an intersection of forces militated against the students' meaningful engagement with the politics surrounding the representation of race. These forces were twofold.

To begin, it turned out the other three students working in the group with Thomas were drawn to the project largely out of a desire to work with him. Thomas is a very charismatic, intelligent and exciting young man and his interest in making a Chappelle-inspired video had what might best be described as an exotic appeal for the collaborating students (Field notes, July 21, 2006). Scholars have argued for some time that race is a social construction constituted through a range of practices that involve social and political power (Baker, 1999; Gilroy, 1987). One way these practices are mediated is through an economy of the exotic, which delineates how the "desirable, [the] out of the ordinary, and [the] potentially dangerous" operates to position people of colour in relation to mainstream culture and authority (Ali, 2005, p. 157). Within an economy of the exotic, people of colour or their experiences are situated in terms of an erotic foreignness that at once elevates their status as racialized subjects because they represent novelty and risk, while simultaneously rendering them at an objectified distance. As the students turned to rework The 'Nigga' Moment to account for both "hardcore and swept under the rug" racial caricatures, it became clear that a dynamic like this was at work here (Field notes, July 21, 2006).

Zac and Rohan supported the students in the script development process, working

with the group through three attempts at revising the original storylines. During this

process, the group abandoned obvious caricatures about people from Asia, but, with only

minor revisions, they continued to return to their original focus on skits about hip hop-

infused gangsters who freely deploy the N-word. The students agreed these storylines

were not complex enough to address questions about racism with local audiences, and

yet, they nonetheless could not move beyond them. As this became apparent, it also

became clear that the three Lower Mainland youth, all of who are white, were offering

few ideas about the kinds of racial and ethnic stereotypes typically experienced in Canada

(Field notes, July 21, 2006). Whether or not they could have put forward such ideas is not

clear. It is apparent, however, that they were not altogether interested in doing so because

what drew them to the project was not an interest in comedic explorations of the concept

of race as much as Thomas himself.

Thomas is middle class and well educated, but as an American youth who is black,

charismatic, from L.A., and willing to talk about and even lampoon the character-types

that are common within hip hop culture, he was also exciting. More than this, he

embodied a kind of romanticized ideal for the Lower Mainland youth. Caitlin alludes to

this when she notes the other students thought he was "so L.A." (Interview, November

10, 2006). I understand her to mean by this that Thomas came to signify access to the

world of "urban America," a place often thought to be "violent, tough and harsh"

(Caitlin, Interview, November 10, 2006). As an African American youth, in other words,

Thomas personified an ideal of proximity and access to a place and a culture of "cool"

that is associated with the images, sounds and iconography of hip hop.

Since the emergence of rap in the mid-1970s and certainly since the appearance of gangsta rap within mainstream popular culture in the 1990s and 2000s, hip hop iconography and sound, including the figure of the gangster, has been at the centre of globalized youth cultures (Kitwana, 2005). In assuming this position, as a black musical form like rock and roll, jazz and the blues before it, rap has risen to prominence at least in part because it is associated with a kind of street credibility among youth that is linked to notions of danger, sexuality and violence (Kitwana, 2005; Quinn, 2000; Dimitriadis, 1996). Thomas may not be dangerous or violent, but he signified a different degree of access to such a world. His interest in exploring and playing with stereotypes about black gangsters thus came with a sheen of authenticity. Caitlin captures this when she explains the local youth were drawn to Thomas because they wanted to create a video that was "edgy and would raise people's eyebrows" (Interview, November 10, 2006). These remarks also highlight how a sense of danger and perhaps sexuality played a role in the youths' interest in the project.

The relationship that developed here is best described as a form of exoticism then, because Thomas and a video about the signs and symbols common to hip hop culture came to be positioned as desirable and enticingly out of the ordinary. Located in this way, it proved remarkably difficult to explore more subtle caricatures and practices reflective of the way race operates in a local context. Thomas offered little help in moving the video in this direction not only because he lacked familiarity with Canada and the Lower Mainland; but also, Caitlin says, because he had little interest in learning about this place (Interview, November 10, 2006). At least in part this is to be explained by the fact that once put on a pedestal, Thomas was positioned at a symbolic distance from the local area.

He in fact came to be admired *because* he offered access to another place. The very exoticism that drew other youth to him thus, in turn, pushed him away from engaging with local cultures and experiences. The upshot of this is the group continued to return to a Dave Chappelle-inspired rant about gangsters that liberally deployed the N-word, even after agreeing that these representations were not complex enough to address stereotypes about race and ethnicity for local audiences.

Overcoming this problem was all the more difficult because there was no sustained focus on the complex issues surrounding the representation of race in Summer Visions' pedagogical design or training process. This gap is really the second force that undermined the students' meaningful engagement with the politics of race. The mentor training process in the program is intended to help peer-to-peer assistants question and challenge students' choices about images and the way popular commercial culture influences their story ideas and characters. However, the social and political dynamics of race, including the way these dynamics are shaped by popular culture forms like the <u>Dave Chappelle Show</u>, are addressed superficially and largely through workshops on youth filmmaking practice and visual storytelling, which were discussed in chapter four. These workshops are helpful for mentors, but Macie, a senior mentor notes, the lack of preparation on issues like the politics of race and representation leads mentors to "shy away from controversial" themes (Interview, October 27, 2006). She says there is the impression that "we like ... politically controversial and interesting ... [stories. But] can we really deal with this in a sensitive enough manner? ... I think that we absolutely need to try to tell these stories and live up to our ideal of openness" (Interview, October 27, 2006) But this is difficult as the making <u>The 'Nigga' Moment</u> demonstrated.

Zac and Rohan tried to work with the group to help them add complexity to their

skits. When this did not work, rather than, for instance, attempting to tastefully explore

Dave Chappelle's appeal to youth or African American communities, or why youth

would satirize the hip hop culture they know and often love, the video team was

encouraged to abandon the project. They were persuaded their topic was too complex for

a short video program and they needed to move on to a new idea (Field notes, July 21,

2006). Caitlin, Zac and Rohan did this for fear the final project would offend audiences.

But this decision had the effect of all but eliminating the discussion of race and ethnicity

from the final project, which became No Regrets.

This video is a dramatic short about two lovers – one black and one white – separated

by the woman's early death, who are given one last opportunity to visit with each other

through the aide of a mysterious new time travel device. While well-made, it is

interesting to note how different No Regrets is from the group's original story idea.

Beyond the inter-racial relationship, which was only part of the video because of arbitrary

casting decisions, there is no real hint about the discussion of race and ethnicity that

occurred prior to making this video. In a sense, all speech and action that aimed to

explore and contest how belated discourses and practices of racism limit and organize our

lives are gone. This does not mean the videomakers and their production mentors learned

nothing through the creation process. The students in fact ended up making a technically

accomplished video with a clear and satisfying storyline. Even more, the struggle to work

with this group to address the social, cultural and political meanings of race suggested

how volatile and contested the boundaries are around such discourses. Macie noted this

when she said the struggle to make The 'Nigga' Moment/No Regrets "was a really good

opportunity to solidly discuss and figure out what we were willing to show and what we weren't. What we wanted Summer Visions to be and whether or not what [that group] was suggesting could fit under those guidelines. In the end, we [decided], 'no,' it couldn't" (Interview, October 27, 2006).

At the same time, producing these works also demonstrated how belated power structures – here exemplified by practices of exoticism – and underdeveloped pedagogical practices can undermine natality and thereby limit the way youth media work supports the preservation of freedom. In the end, a form of exoticism undermined the videomakers' willingness to explore the plurality represented by cultural and ethnic differences in the Lower Mainland area. Just as importantly, when this happened Caitlin, Zac and Rohan were equally ineffective. They failed to see how belated images – including those on the <u>Dave Chappelle Show</u> – could be used in novel ways that might have offered a new route to explore the students' interest in racial caricatures. The end result was to shut down the project, which only serves to highlight how tensions arising due to the plurality and belatedness of meaning can mitigate how democratic practice operates in youth work.

<u>NE1</u> and the Production of Thoughtfulness

As the title is meant to suggest, <u>NE1</u> is about an experience not uncommon among young people. The video tells the story of an Internet stalking incident. An older man sexually assaults a teenager he meets online. Stories like this are common in newspaper headlines and television news reports and are an ongoing focus of concern for parents, young people, media educators, and criminal justice advocates, among others. In many ways predators who victimize children and youth through online chat rooms, social

networking websites like Nexopia, Myspace or Facebook, and other online forums are the newest nightmare haunting adolescent development and young people's media use (Buckingham, 2006b; Steeves, 2005). Alongside worries about the increasing ease with which children can access violent and sexually explicit material as well as websites that promote hate, drug use or computer hacking, stalking is at the centre of public safety concerns about how digital media is changing young people's lives (Clark, 2001)[i].

NE1 strays into the midst of these concerns and in a way that ultimately contributes to the preservation of freedom. It does this by promoting thoughtfulness among Summer Visions' mentors – and likely others – regarding the plurality of meaning and the diversity of experience. In this way, it expands a sense of the real. At the same time, the process through which the video was made demonstrates how difficult it can be to achieve this result. From an Arendtian perspective, preserving freedom or the possibility of new beginnings depends on a willingness to engage in agonistic struggles that address and respond to the social nature of meaning in concerted actions related to a common purpose. As evidenced with The 'Nigga' Moment/No Regrets, such struggles can be undermined by belated practices and discourses that entrench relations of power. A similar process nearly derailed NE1. With this video, however, key interventions by a Summer Visions' instructor and a mentor helped the student video makers work together in ways that ended up confronting belated practices that limit how youth media develops. What resulted is a video that produces a sense of natality or new beginnings, particularly in relation to the culture of Summer Visions itself.

NE1 began during the program's brainstorming session when two students – both of Chinese-Canadian descent – proposed a video on Internet stalking (Field notes, July 18,

2006). Eventually, another student – a young Cambodian-Canadian woman – joined the group and following the cinematography, sound and lighting workshops, the three youth began developing their story outline. Initially, as is often the case at this stage, what resulted was confused if still focused on the central topic. The outline read as follows:

NE1 Characters	Vulnerable girl – Sara Parents – Sara's mom Middle aged workingman - Dave

SCENE	Description
1	Dave picks up Sara and asks her where she'd like to go
2	Sara skips school to go online to talk to Dave
3	Dave asks Sara online if she'd like to go out for coffee.
4	Sara sneaks around late at night to talk to Dave so parents won't know
5	Sara walks home alone from school.
6	Dave and Sara have an uncomfortable sex conversation online. Dave suggests Sara to take off her top.
7	Sara comes home to her parents arguing. Seeks Dave's support online.
8	Split scene to Dave's emotionless reaction to Sara's problems.
9	Sara is walking on the street while Dave drives to his drive way
10	Dave returns home from work, parks car and enters home to wife.
11	Dave goes online talking to multiple girls online.
12	Wife asks him when will he be going to bed because it's late. Dave tells her to go to bed first
13	Dave is in the chat room and sees a victim and messages her, Sara.
14	Sara receives message from stranger and begins talking to her
15	Sara is crying and turns to mom.

After reading this through, Caitlin[ii] sat down with the group and explained that elements in the basic story idea seemed to be in place, but there also appeared to be some confusion. The scene sequence did not make obvious sense and this left gaps in the story. To unpack this confusion and to develop an understanding of where the group wanted the story to go, Caitlin began by asking them why they wanted to make the video. The response to this surprised her.

It turned out the group was interested in the story because one of the youth had experienced something like what is depicted in their outline. There was however an important difference. Unlike in the story the students were proposing, it was a 17-year old boy in the group who had met a man online. A short and increasingly affectionate relationship had developed (Field notes, July 19, 2006). The boy eventually agreed to meet the man in person and when he did, a sexual assault had occurred. While sensitive to the difficulty of talking about this experience, Caitlin asked the students why they didn't frame the story around a teenage boy and a man (Field notes, July 19, 2006). She had no intention of compelling the group to change the script, but she wanted to know why they made the decision they did. In response, the students offered a complicated explanation.

They were interested in making a fictionalized social commentary which expressed clearly that when stalking incidents happen, it is not the fault or responsibility of young people. In these circumstances, youth are victims of adults who disempower them, leaving young people hurt and vulnerable. (Field notes, July 19, 2006; Caitlin, Interview, November 10, 2006). The group wanted this message to reach the largest possible audience, and in their minds, this meant making the video "tasteful," as they explained (Field notes, July 19, 2006). To do this, they decided to focus the story on a male/female experience. To be clear, this was not done specifically because the young man who had been assaulted wanted to avoid any reference to his experience. He in fact was willing to talk about this event and had also begun to talk about his sexuality with his friends, although he had not "come out" as of yet to his family (Field notes, July 19, 2006). Because the group wanted to make a video that would trouble or cause offence to the

fewest possible people, however, it was decided the story should be centred on a man and a young woman.

Now, of course, what's interesting and complicated here is the way tastefulness and audience appeal operate as instances of normalization that result in the marginalization and exclusion of youth experiences associated with non-dominant forms of sexuality. The video makers may not have explicitly intended this outcome but their decision inadvertently privileged a kind of heteronormativity in a time when research continues to demonstrate that queer youth face "an especially hard time getting social recognition within their local families, neighbourhoods, or schools" (Driver, 2006, p. 230; but also see Owens, 1998). Caitlin was aware of this, and at the same time, she felt uncomfortable pressuring the young man and the other students to create a video about a teenage boy and an older predator. Had the male student been more obviously open about his sexuality, perhaps this would not have been a concern for Caitlin. But the students' apparent uncertainty left her hesitant.

Caitlin did, however, want to challenge how the students were using a notion of tastefulness in their script. She worried that thinking about the video in these terms could lead to a generic project that resembled what she in private called, an "After-School Special" (Interview, November 10, 2006). What she meant by this and what she explained to the students is that the difficulty to be avoided when trying to make a "tasteful" video is this can produce a paradox. By attempting to appeal to the largest possible audience, the video inadvertently ends up becoming so broad, non-specific and mundane that it speaks to no one in particular. As a result, its effectiveness is undermined (Interview, November 10, 2006). Ultimately, it becomes so "cleaned-up" that its impact

on audiences, especially teen audiences, is nullified. From an Arendtian perspective, another way to frame the challenge Caitlin put to students is she urged them to consider the way "tastefulness" acts to neutralize struggle over the social, political and cultural dimensions of meaning. Essentially, concern for tastefulness reproduces plurality as a limiting force. The urge to address too many groups simultaneously ends up undermining the specificity of meaning and results in an act of representation that affects no one.

The group responded to this challenge in an interesting way. On the one hand, following Caitlin's provocations they decided to redevelop their story outline by drawing more specifically on the experiences of the young man in the group who had been sexually assaulted. They did this, Caitlin explained, because while the young man was not "out" or entirely certain about his sexuality, he and the other youth wanted to acknowledge that stalking can happen to "anyone" (Interview, November 10, 2006). With this in mind, the students re-drafted the story and set it around a teenager named Eric and a stalker who meets Eric online (Field notes, July 20, 2006). To protect the identity of the youth whose experiences influenced the story, the students decided that an actor who is not Chinese Canadian play Eric. In making this and other decisions, the group was assisted by Michelle, an older mentor who had worked in Summer Visions for four years and who was brought in to help the group for the remainder of the production process.

On the other hand, having made the decision to change the focus of their story, the students were then faced with a series of challenges. These arose because when young people produce work, they are inevitably faced with a set of decisions throughout each stage of the production cycle that involve struggles with the belated nature of meaning. In this case, the content of the film meant these struggles had to do with the way power

operates through sedimented discourses and practices associated with sexuality. At least initially, however, when the students ran up against these struggles they responded by drawing back from confrontation. The work of the group's mentor, Michelle, thus proved to be especially important. She helped the students to stay involved with each other and to engage with rather than withdraw from agonistic struggle that involved discourses of sexuality which can shape and limit acts of representation. Two examples, both of which took place during the shooting of the video, exemplify this point.

In the final version of NE1, Eric is a complicated character in the last year of high school who becomes the victim of a sexual assault. His parents appear to be too busy to take any real interest in his life and while it is not made explicit, the video hints at the fact that he is struggling with his sexuality. This is alluded to in the opening scene when we meet Eric walking home from school with his friend Sara. In the midst of small talk, Eric interrupts the conversation and in a serious tone says:

"Sara, I need to tell you something..."

He hesitates and after a long pause says:

"Never mind..."

Sara is confused, but she doesn't push the issue. Instead, the two friends part and Eric goes into his house where we learn that he has developed an online relationship with a man who calls himself "bloodlust." The audience is not told how long "bloodlust" and Eric have been chatting together, but it is evident in the first online communication we see between them that they have developed a friendship and a sense of trust. They talk about Eric's family and his homework and then "bloodlust" – whose offline name is

Dave – asks if he can meet Eric in person. Eric is hesitant but ultimately, he agrees and so they meet.

The "coffee shop" scene that follows is crucial to the story. The scene is intended to portray a sense of trust and affection between Eric and Dave, but also a note of apprehension on Eric's part. This complicated conjunction of reactions is highlighted in one instance where Dave quite intentionally tries to rest his hand on Eric's arm. Eric backs away from this public display of affection, but he doesn't leave. He stays with Dave and they have lunch together. In the context of the film, this scene is important because it highlights emerging warmth between the characters. Eric does not appear to be altogether certain about how he wants the relationship to proceed. In contrast, Dave is more intentional with his actions, for reasons we learn about later in the film.

In terms of production, shooting a complicated sequence like this is difficult for novice video makers. Not only must they contend with the emotional subtly of the character's interactions, but the scene foregrounds a homoerotic tension. The video makers and the actors are thus compelled to engage with a form of agonistic struggle that involves the politics of sexuality and the sedimented force of a heteronormative bias in our culture. This is unavoidable because creating this scene involves the production team in crafting meaning; that is, they need to decide how the scene will proceed in a way that captures the affection between a teenage boy and a older man; they then need to assess through rehearsals and re-shoots whether in fact the dynamics of intimacy between Eric and Dave have been adequately represented on tape. To do this requires that the video makers think about and entertain the legitimacy of intimacy and affection between two male characters.

If this is the challenge posed by shooting this scene, however, at least initially the video makers responded to it by pulling back from actively pursuing the representation of non-dominant forms of sexuality. This was evidenced in a number of ways. At first, the video makers quite literally did not want to speak about the scene during the shoot (Field notes, July 25, 2006). At the café where the sequence was shot, I observed the students engaging in small talk with each other and the actors but they very intentionally seemed to resist providing the actors with directions about how to perform in the scene. Michelle, the group's mentor, thought the students didn't want to talk with the actors about their roles because they feared this would make the actors feel uncomfortable with the intimacy the scene required (Field notes, July 25, 2006). Concerns like this made the video makers unwilling to rehearse or to provide specific directions to "Dave" about how he should caress "Eric's" hand. It was as though they did not want to talk about the sequence for fear this would bring attention to its homoerotic undertones, which in turn might make people feel uneasy.

Because of these difficulties, Michelle thought the first shoot of the scene was unusable (Field notes, July 25, 2006). The performances were stilted and the camera work was unfocused. In response, Michelle intervened. She talked with the students about needing to provide the actors and the camera crew with direction. She spoke about engaging with the scene so that everybody is aware of the intimacy and confusion that should be depicted (Field notes, July 25, 2006). As a result of these provocations, the students became more involved with actions that legitimize non-dominant forms of sexuality. Maybe the best evidence that this occurred is apparent in the final cut of the film.

Following Michelle's comments, the students re-shot the sequence three times. Ultimately, there is still a sense of awkwardness and uncertainty in the footage, as though neither the actors nor the video makers fully embraced the challenge posed by shooting the scene. But the sequence is also believable. It contains a note of realism. Eric is shown to be confused about how to respond to Dave's acts of affection. He also appears to be drawn to Dave and does not flinch when the older character talks about being on a "first date." He is hesitant about Dave's public displays of affection, but when Dave talks about meeting someone "really exciting online" and couches this in a rather obvious tone of intimacy, Eric doesn't leave; instead, he blushes, shows no offence but says they should order lunch. In the context of the film, creating a sense that Eric might be both attracted to and yet surprised by Dave's forwardness is important. It highlights how a young man whose sexuality happens to be in question can become the unwilling and undeserving victim of an online predator. It highlights how Internet stalking can affect "anyone," in other words, including a young man who is trying to come to terms with his sexuality. That the video makers were able to convey this sense of realism was not only crucial for the success of the project, but from an Arendtian perspective, it also indicates that Michelle's interventions helped the students to re-engage with the struggle to represent non-dominant forms of sexuality.

Later in the production process, Michelle's assistance would again prove necessary to assist the video makers in staying focused on this task. In the video, following the "coffee shop" scene, Dave finds out what school Eric attends and he inadvertently shows up one day and offers Eric a ride home. Eric is surprised that Dave has come to meet him, but he gets in the car and when Dave says:

"So, where do you want to go?

Eric responds:

"Anywhere."

The scene that follows is the assault sequence. It takes place in a parked car in a non-descript lot.

Crafting this scene would be difficult in any circumstance, but again, what proved to be especially challenging was that the video makers were hesitant to represent intimacy between two male characters. Initially, in fact, when they went to shoot the scene, the students quite literally placed the camera so far from the car that it was impossible to see anyone inside, or to distinguish the designated car from others in the parking lot (Field notes, July 25, 2006). In a sense, the meaning of the scene literally disappeared. Michelle reported that the video makers did this because they worried the sight of any kind of physical closeness between a same-sex pairing would trouble and even offend audiences (Field notes, July 25, 2006). That is to say, it was not the potential voyeurism of the scene that worried the students; rather, it was specifically the visibility of physical proximity between two male characters that concerned them. Caitlin said that this worry was a function of the students' desire to make a "tasteful" video that wouldn't cause offense to audiences (Interview, November 10, 2006). Again, however, in thinking about the video in these terms, the students drew back from representing any kind of physical contact between Eric and Dave. They quite literally addressed this contact by making it invisible.

In response to this, Michelle posed a challenge to the students. She asked them to consider how to show this sequence so audiences would understand what was happening without making it voyeuristic or in any sense salacious. The students took on this

challenge and re-shot the scene in such a way that audiences remain distant from the car, but we see Dave as a shadow clearly moving into a position of physical contact with Eric. There is nothing gratuitous about the sequence; instead, it acts as a powerful turning point in the story.

Following this scene, Dave abandons Eric. Eric is shown to be experiencing a wave of complicated emotions and reactions. He writes to Dave online, asking:

"Where are you?"

Dave doesn't respond; instead, we see quick cuts to him going online to meet other people. Eric finally writes a long email to Dave, which audiences can only read if they freeze the frame that shows the note. It importantly explains Eric's confusion, his desire to meet with Dave, his anger at being abandoned, his sense of sadness about losing a friend, and his confusion "and disgust" about what happened. In the final scene, we return to Eric's home where he and his friend Sara are shown in a medium long-shot sitting together doing homework. Eric is distracted. He wants to talk with Sara about what has happened to him. After a moment of hesitation, he turns to her and in a hushed tone, says:

"Sara …. I need to tell you something."

Sara looks at him and waits a moment before saying,

"Eric, are you okay?"

The camera then cuts to a close up on Eric who very quietly says:

"No."

At this point the image slowly fades from view and the credits appear.

At seven minutes long, NE1 ended up being a powerful video that depicts the way young people can become victims of abusive and exploitive acts perpetrated by adults. By telling this story through a teenage character who appears to be questioning and negotiating his sexual identity, the video both engages with a contemporary public safety issue and also challenges the way queer youth experiences are often excluded and marginalized from social recognition in the public realm (Driver, 2006; Owens, 1998). In this way, from an Arendtian perspective the project helps to preserve freedom by expanding a sense of the real. In opening up new beginnings, it is of note that NE1 was especially significant in relation to the Summer Visions program itself.

As noted in chapter four, there has been a history of tension in the program around the representation of sexuality. On the one hand, a number of program coordinators believe Summer Visions should create a space where the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans-gendered youth can be explored. On the other hand, key program coordinators have resisted this idea. As a result, a shared belief has developed among Summer Visions' instructors and senior youth mentors that stories about queer sexuality are off limits. Ultimately, of course this form of marginalization and exclusion undermines the way plurality is represented, encouraged and promoted through the program. In the face of this, NE1 helped to enlarge Summer Vision's culture. This was noted by a number of mentors, but especially by those who have been involved with the program for some time. Kira, for instance, argued that NE1 "pushed the boundaries of Summer Visions. It's a story that might have been censored in the past but wasn't this time" (Interview, November 3, 2006). Macie noted the same, as did Justine (Field notes, July 24, 2006). Terrence suggested NE1 is the "kind of film that [has] not been made here in the past. It

worked the 'heart strings,'" he suggested, "but the video also [brought] complexity to the [kind of] stories made in Summer Visions" (Interview, October 30, 2006). Terrence compared the making of NE1 to a film about heterosexual dating (Dimitry Valdez) made at Summer Visions in 2006. He said, no one "protested this video and yet if it had included a gay kid on a date," he says "this would have been protested" (Interview, October 30, 2006). In this context, NE1 thus represented an opening up of the culture of Summer Visions. In an Arendtian sense, the work done by Caitlin, Michelle and the student video makers acted to preserve freedom by promoting thoughtfulness about the experience of young people who are beginning to question and perhaps negotiate their sexuality identity. Through this, the video helped to produce a sense of natality or new beginnings, most crucially in relation to the culture of Summer Visions itself.

Conclusion – Youthscape and Summer Visions

Throughout the formal and informal interviews and field notes gathered for this study, a common observation made by many spoke to the day-to-day environment created during the Summer Visions program. It is best characterized as a culture of generosity. The program offers a space where, Zac, a senior youth mentor says, "fairness and openness [dominate;]... no one is afraid to put forth their ideas" (Written correspondence, July 15, 2006). This is perhaps an overgeneralization, which does not acknowledge where tensions exist in regard to the program's mandate, training and pedagogy. Nonetheless, a culture of generosity is also alluded to by Macie. She suggests that the atmosphere at Summer Visions is "very encouraging, trying to foster people's ideas and growth, ... but [also] challenging them at the same time" (Interview, January 16, 2006). Caitlin attributes this to her commitment to "popular education [where] the

base understanding is that young people are experts in their own experience" (Interview, March 14, 2006). Unlike the progressive tradition of education discussed in chapter one and targeted by Hannah Arendt in her essay, "The Crisis in Education," however, this does not mean authority has no place in student/instructor relationships. But the authority, as Caitlin notes, is:

> based on the fact that we have knowledge that [the mentors and students] want ... We try not to force that [knowledge] on them ... [Instead,] we offer ourselves, [saying] 'We know some stuff about [media production and] have some experience [with it.] We're going to outline the process and the procedures based on our experience of what we know ... we [need] to do to [create videos.] How [students and mentors] figure out [their] own way through that or how they challenge us on that or how they let themselves learn is up to them (Interview, March 14, 2006).

What results is a culture of generosity and calm, a kind of collegiality that allows youth and adults to work together in the development of media artifacts that often unsettle social, cultural and personal issues in new and provocative ways (Soep and Chavez, 2005).

As noted in this chapter, this is hardly a straightforward process, nor is it always successful, especially in regard to the production of democratic practice as conceived in terms of natality. At the same time, the program enacts a kind of youthscape in which young people produce stories about themselves and their world through a range of media production experiences (Maira and Soep, 2005). Young people are invited to engage in forms of agonistic struggle through which they encounter and contest the social nature of meaning, including the ways in which it is constituted through belated discourses and sedimented practices that limit our sense of plurality. In this way, Summer Visions, like many video programs can be understood to constitute a powerful kind of public culture wherein youth engage in action and speech through which they develop aesthetic

expressions that "carve out independent spaces for exchanging ideas, images and information" (Goldfarb, 2002, p. 138).

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[i] In actual fact research about Internet stalking is limited. In 2001, the Pew Internet and American Life Project reported that nearly 60 percent of 12-17-year-olds had received messages from strangers (of any kind) while online (Livingstone, 2003). Another survey, part of the Chatwise, Streetwise Report in the UK, which reported "evidence of actual crimes against children, suggested that incidents of adult sex offenders meeting children online and gaining their trust are increasing in both the UK and the US" (Livingstone, 2003, p. 156). The key group at risk here appears to be girls aged 13-17. But there is still need for more extensive research about how unwanted sexual contact and young people's responses to it are affected by traffic online (Buckingham, 2006b). This is especially true in Canada, where research on young people's Internet use reveals a broader but less specific picture of the dangers youth face. For instance, a 2001 Statistics Canada study revealed that 24% of youth have inadvertently "come across content that promotes hate or violence" while surfing the web, and another "10% have received an email that they considered threatening or harassing" (Rotermann, 2001, p. 8). Meanwhile the Media Awareness Network's 2005 study about <u>Youth Canadians in a Wired World</u> suggested most kids do not seek out adult chat sites and less than one-fifth of youth intentionally visited a pornographic site (Steeves, 2005).

[ii] Lucy, Summer Visions' script supervisor was not available to help with this script and so Caitlin, Summer Visions' director, filled in for her and was instrumental in working with this group during the script development process.

Chapter 6

Youth Media Production Mentorship and Living in the Public Realm

In chapter two it was noted that in Hannah Arendt's public realm theory public acts are related to democracy because they foster plurality by disclosing the world, often in ways that challenge the sedimentation of meaning and power in discourses, institutions and visual texts. They are also related to democracy, however, because such acts simultaneously make evident the social nature of meaning and our ethical responsibility to this notion. In the same chapter, I argued that a pedagogy of natality is about helping youth develop "an understanding of themselves in relation to the world in a way that holds open the possibility that the world and one's position in it might be changed" (Levinson, 1997, p. 443). This not only occurs when young people engage in agonistic struggle, but also when youth develop a sense that meaning is to be contested, that our dependence on others is the existential condition that allows for transformative power in action (Gambetti, 2005). In chapter four, I examined how the conceptual framework offered by a pedagogy of natality can be used to examine the democratic implications of the teaching practices and mentor training program in the Summer Visions Film Institute. In chapter five, I then addressed how a struggle over meaning is enacted in the production of three Summer Visions films. In this chapter, I conclude my analysis by assessing the degree to which participation in the program leads to an understanding of the ethical and social conditions underlying the production of meaning. As noted in the introduction and in chapter three, while it is possible to examine this outcome in relation to student participants I focus the discussion on the experiences of peer-to-peer mentors in Summer Visions largely because there continues to be little research on youth mentorship in media

programs (Charmaraman, 2006). The mentors also spend a longer period making videos each summer than do students and so they offer a more robust example to evaluate how creative media practices produce an enlarged _mentalité_ among young people.

In what follows, I draw on extended interviews with three mentors who have a range of experience in the Summer Visions program. All three youth have been introduced in previous chapters. I examine their narratives about how Summer Visions has shaped their investment in and responsibility to plurality and the social construction of meaning. Vázquez (2006) argues that to situate oneself in relation to such practices is to operate in the "realm for thinking," to operate in a manner that is "dynamic and open to question[ing]" the nature of the world and our place in it (p. 44). Of course how such an investment in public experience arises is not a straightforward process. Nonetheless, the mentors' descriptions afford a telling portrait of the successes and tensions that are part of the way young people become oriented to a democratic life through media production work.

Mentorship and Media Production

Mentoring and peer education have had a central role in liberal and progressive education reforms for more than four decades. In a helpful literature review of the phenomenon, Andy Roberts (2000) concludes that mentoring is about a relationship in which a helping process established between two parties aids the less experienced party through a reflective practice that facilitates career, personal, and/or social development (p. 151). Different than more traditional forms of teaching, the mentoring relationship is learner-centred. "[T]he model of learning by rote from the teacher as master of the discipline" is replaced by a set of practices which aim to develop the critical thinking

skills of students through dialogue and group interaction (Goldfarb, 2002, p. 111). As remarked by Little (quoted in Roberts, 2000), it is generally assumed among proponents that "mentors will be a source of expert knowledge to others" (p. 154). I agree, but also note that access to mentors' knowledge can be thwarted. In chapter five, the making of The 'Nigga' Moment/No Regrets, for instance, demonstrated how social forces and power dynamics related to race can undermine a dynamic exchange of knowledge between mentors and students. It is worth remembering this example because while a "'manic optimism' ... seems to prevail amongst mentoring proponents," some caution is needed about the actual impact these relationships have on mentors and mentees (Roberts, 2000, p. 148).

Roberts (2000) notes that most literature in the mentoring field posits reflective practice as a crucial element in peer education. This typically means mentoring is intended to help students step outside of what they think they know. John Dewey (1983) said this is about entering "a state of doubt, hesitation, [and] mental difficulty," which in turn leads to "an act of searching, hunting, inquiring to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the complexity" (quoted in Roberts, 2000, p. 154). In the Summer Visions program, as noted throughout chapter five, production mentors play a crucial role in troubling or casting in doubt what novice video makers intend or mean by their work. At the same time, by encouraging agonistic struggle, it is not clear that the role of mentors is to help students "resolve the doubt, [or] settle and dispose of the complexity" that arises in producing new work. In fact, In Between and NE1 are good examples that suggest the role of mentors is to help students operate inside uncertainty in ways that lead to new directions and new possibilities. The program aims to foster

complexity, in other words, rather than resolve this condition. Summer Visions facilitates a "reflection [that] is action-oriented," a form of *praxis* intended to help young people engage with their worlds in new and forceful ways (Kemmis, 1995 p. 141).

As to be expected, much of the mentorship literature tends to focus on the benefits of peer education experiences for students or protégés (Roberts, 2000). But of course there are also tremendous benefits to be gained by those doing the mentoring because peer education is never simply a one-way form of exchange. Rather, as Eric Fromm (1956) observed, it is a reciprocal relationship; "in the act of giving something is born, and both persons involved are grateful for the life that is born for both of them" (pp. 24-25). "[A]s the mentor gives of what is alive in him or her s/he enhances the other's sense of aliveness, which in turn reflects back to the mentor and enhances his or her sense of aliveness" (Ellis et al., 2001, p. 5). The result is often a form of emotional self-awareness, assertiveness and self-reliance, which can help to broaden one's knowledge and skills (Miller, 2002). It can also produce "empathy for the feelings of others, [an] ability to establish mutually beneficial personal relationship(s) ... [and an] abilit[y] to maintain hope in adverse situations" (Miller, 2002, pp. 38-39). These rewards are part of a list of positive consequences that seem to accrue from mentoring practices, a list that can be expanded to include: the discovery of latent abilities; growth in mentee confidence; a sense of self-actualization for both mentor and mentee; and "a resonating phenomenon; protégés become mentors themselves" (Roberts, 2000, p. 160).

In the Summer Visions program, some of these consequences are apparent in the remarks and analysis offered by production mentors. Peer mentors support, challenge and guide student participants over the course of Summer Visions' two-week production

cycle. Julia, Pacific Cinémathèque's Director of Education, describes the mentors as "the first line of instructional staff ... They have the most involvement with [the students, ensuring] ... there's never a point at which a group is without support" (Interview, June 7, 2006). In what follows, I suggest how mentoring has impacted youths' confidence, self-esteem, and their knowledge and skills. Given the focus of this study, however, I am more specifically concerned with how this work has produced in mentors an understanding of the ethical and social conditions underlying the production of meaning. As evidence that such an understanding exists and has been fostered by youths' experience in the program, I draw on statements that depict the mentors' shifting conceptions about the media, their communities and themselves. In evaluating these statements, I assess how the mentors' narratives indicate an understanding of the contestable and contingent nature of meaning and also examine the extent to which their remarks indicate an ethical obligation to foster plurality. Where important, I draw attention to those practices and belated discourses that mitigate these outcomes. Methodologically, then, I use Arendt's public realm theory as the framework to assess how mentoring in the Summer Visions program supports democratic practice by developing an enlarged mentalité among youth.

In interpreting the mentors' interviews, I initially transcribed and coded each using categories meant to capture a broad representation of how the youth understand their experiences in Summer Visions. I coded the transcripts according to mentors' conceptions about how they believe the program has impacted: themselves; their relationships with the community in and around East Vancouver; their relationships with other people; their understanding of mainstream commercial media; and, their

conceptions of youth media production. I also coded how the mentors evaluated the successes and failures of the program. I then examined the utterances within each of these codes to assess how the program has impacted mentors' conceptions about the social and contingent nature of meaning. Here I asked whether the program shaped the mentors' understanding of the contestability of meaning, why they think such contingency does or does not matter, and how their response to this idea has shaped their understanding of themselves and their role in relation to social and political change. As noted in chapter three, this study is largely concerned with the experience of eight youth mentors hired as part of the 2006 staff. Of these eight, the experiences of three mentors are analyzed in detail below. Macie, Dominic and Terence were chosen because they reflect a diverse range of experience in Summer Visions as well as a mix of gender, socio-economic status, age, and education levels. They thus provide a helpful portrait of the tensions and possibilities that shape young people's experiences as peer educators in a youth media production initiative.

Macie – Discovering the Social Life of Ideas and Experience

Macie is an eighteen-year-old Caucasian woman who was entering her first year of university at the time of this study. She was involved with the Summer Visions program as both a student (one two-week session) and a peer-to-peer production mentor (three summers) over four years. Her family is Italian-Canadian and while one parent completed a college education, her mother is a clerk and her father is now retired. Macie took two video production classes during her high school career at Cityschool, although she says, "basically, I didn't learn a single thing in the actual school program" (Interview, January 16, 2006). She attributes this to disorganization and little focus in the class. She also says

because "we [got] so much knowledge during the summer program, when we [went] back to school, there [was] not much ... more they could [teach us, especially because] ... the instructor [was] not a professionally trained filmmaker" (Interview, January 16, 2006). This kind of discrepancy between the learning opportunities afforded by Summer Visions as compared with those offered in Cityschool's regular film classes was noted by many of the mentors interviewed for this study.

In certain ways, Macie's media consumption habits are similar to those of the average North American youth (noted in the introduction). Like many people her age, Macie watches two-to-three hours of television a day on weekdays and weekends, and tends to see movies at the theatre once or twice a month. She describes herself as open to all sorts of films and tends to choose what TV shows to watch based on what is available when she has time. She spends one-to-two hours per day playing online computer games, which is not uncommon for young women in North America, and she spends an hour or so a day reading magazines like In Style and another hour or so reading for school. At the same time, Macie's media consumption patterns show some differences from the average North American teen. She attends what would be considered non-mainstream movie theatres in the city two-to-five times per year, makes an effort to attend local film festivals, and also says she seeks out media she considers alternative to mainstream fare, including: student films, locally-produced movies and TV shows, and independent music.

In terms of access to media production equipment, Macie owns her own digital still camera and has a computer that includes Photoshop and video editing software, such as IMovie and Final Cut Pro. She has access to a digital video camera through a nascent film cooperative developing in Macie's East Vancouver neighbourhood and is also able

to borrow a full range of lighting, sound and other production equipment from Cityschool to produce her own video projects. She had done this twice to make two videos at the time of this study. Access to some of the equipment Macie has available – i.e., a digital still camera, a computer with some image editing software, and even a video camera – is not altogether unusual in a North American context (Sefton-Green, 2006; Lenhart and Madden, 2005). Having access to and the ability to use a full range of resources for making short films is still the exception, however, rather than the rule for youth in North America and around the world (Burn and Durran, 2006). If Macie attributes her own success and knowledge as a media producer in large part to her work in Summer Visions, also of note is how her experience in the program has shaped her sense of the contingent and contestable nature of meaning across a variety of contexts and practices.

Reflecting on her own development, Macie says prior to Summer Visions, as a young high school student she had no idea and certainly no critical conception that "what we're constantly being bombarded with" through commercial and other kinds of media "could become part of [her] own work and ideas" (Interview, January 16, 2006). Lacking such awareness is probably not surprising nor is it terribly striking that an older teenager would think back on an earlier stage in her life as a time of ignorance. At the same time, Macie's remarks underscore the fact that as a young teen it had not occurred to her that her creative ideas and expressions could have their origin beyond herself, in "what I've already seen" (Interview, January 16, 2006). She developed this conception through her work in Summer Visions. In fact this experience impacted her thinking about the commercial media, youth production work, her community, and in turn, her conception of how to work with others.

As noted in chapter four, Macie's early development as a production mentor was not easy. She had to learn her responsibilities "on the fly" and had little experience to draw on for guidance (Interview, January 16, 2006). She says she "was able to learn with the student groups ... [although] I couldn't tell any of them how old I was because ... I was working with nineteen year-olds and here I was a little runt, I'd turned sixteen" (Interview, January 16, 2006). As difficult as it was to learn both the practical and storytelling skills Macie says her first summer as a mentor was "mind blowing ... Being sixteen years old, being your first real job, I couldn't have asked for anything better ... My only drawback ... was that I felt like I wasn't properly educated to do the job ... I didn't feel like I had the technical skills" (Interview, January 16, 2006). She called on other mentors for help, "learned ... 'hands-on,' out there doing stuff, learning where problems can arise and learning how to solve them creatively" (Interview, January 16, 2006). This boosted her confidence and gave Macie the feeling she "was doing something genuinely important with my time ... Like, I was out there. I had a job that I loved and it was the best experience for that period in my life" (Interview, January 16, 2006).

Macie eventually learned a host of production skills and developed her ability as a scriptwriter and editor. Simultaneously, her thinking about the way ideas and meaning develop for young people and others also began to change. Having worked with and helped novice video makers develop scripts and produce new media over three years, Macie says she became aware that one's ideas are often not one's own. They are shaped by the larger media environment in which we live. Such an environment is formative, although this can be one of the most difficult lessons to learn, especially for young video makers. Macie notes as much when she says: "one of the biggest traps for all the kids in

Summer Visions [is to think,] 'We're going to tell a story from a teen perspective because we're teens and we know what we feel'" (Interview, January 16, 2006). In fact she says, after spending time with youth developing their scripts, she has noticed that "while trying to come from a really honest natural place," students' initial stories often "just end up [being] ... reflections about what they've seen in the media" (Interview, January 16, 2006). In a sense, what Macie is describing here is the way our media culture acts as a form of public pedagogy, one which shapes how youth come to see themselves and their work. She says she began to make sense of how the commercial media influences what we think we know about ourselves and our world because:

> programs like Summer Visions teach you to stop for a second. [They teach you to] just be aware of what you're being influenced by and maybe, hopefully, you're able to separate yourself from that and remember, 'Wait a second. My name's Macie ... This media world isn't real. My world in East Van[couver] as a student is real and what am I actually feeling, not what do I think I'm feeling because I'm told that this is how I [should] feel and [what] I should buy' (Interview, January 16, 2006).

Besides what she has witnessed in students' videos, Macie says learning the language of media production in Summer Visions was crucially important in leading her to stop and reflect on how she and others are influenced by images and ideas circulating in the media environment in which we live.

As noted in chapter four, during the mentor training week and throughout their work with novice video makers, peer educators learn to use and analyze the language of cinematography, sound, and, to a lesser extent, story form. This includes developing an awareness of and an ability to talk about the uses of different shots, camera angles, and sound effects, and the role of specific scenes, characters and even genres in students' work. Macie says learning the language of media production was crucial for her. It

"showed [her] there is a language to video making," there is a set of belated practices that

one learns as part of developing one's ability as a media producer (Interview, January 16,

2006). Ryan, a former instructor in the program notes that when "mentors start using that

language, ... they start to realize, 'Oh, actually I'm good at [my job,] I know what I'm

doing'" (Interview, May 25, 2006). Ryan says taking on these codes builds confidence

because when youth find out that media production includes its own taxonomy, they enter

into "a relationship with history" (Interview, May 25, 2006). They discover that the

media resources they are working with have "been around a long time ... [O]nce mentors

start to grasp that," Ryan continues, "they realize the power of the languages of media

production" (Interview, May 25, 2006). In her own way, Macie concurs, although she

adds an important qualification.

She says learning the language of media production built her confidence, showed her

that media representations have a history, and helped her to make sense of the influences

that bear down on her work and the work of others. But it also taught her a further lesson:

that the language of media production itself is flexible and open to change. On the one

hand, she notes learning the techniques of production helped her "to be ... more aware

and more critical of how the media and advertisers ... use images and sounds and ideas

[to target audiences] ... The techniques used by advertisers and [TV producers] right now

are [very sophisticated]. They've ... honed their skills so much at marketing to youth"

(Interview, January 16, 2006). On the other hand, she says, "by being more aware of how

images work," it has become clear to her that she and other youth can "respond ... [to]

the influx of media messages and imag[ery] today, ... I think it's very important that

youth know [they can] express their side, their reaction to the environment they live in"

(Interview, January 16, 2006). If one's ideas and creative expressions are not always one's own, in other words, from an Arendtian perspective we read in Macie's reflections her own developing understanding about both the contingent nature of media representations and how young people, including herself, can contest such representations through creative acts.

Working in the Summer Visions program has also shaped Macie's understanding of the social nature of meaning in another area of her life. Macie moved to her East Vancouver neighbourhood as a young child. She offered an interesting set of observations about how her conception of place developed as she mentored and helped students produce new videos. She says this change started "in a rather simple place, in thinking about locations" for productions (Interview, January 16, 2006). As she had to imagine alleys and storefronts, parks and streets as sets for new videos, her reflections on these specific sites altered her thinking about the larger place where she lives. Macie continues: "[Y]ou end up spending so much time in the area, moving around, shooting stuff, meeting people, meeting local actors that you totally … [get] more of a hold on the place" (Interview, January 16, 2006). Once this happens, Macie went on to explain, she and the other mentors started to see the neighbourhood differently.

On the one hand, they began to see themselves as a network within the neighbourhood, a "new creative force" capable of acting on and shaping the world around them (Interview, January 16, 2006). On the other hand, they began to see the neighbourhood itself as one place in the midst of a much larger city, a place that was also changing. To highlight this, Macie talked about a short video (five minutes) made by another mentor and a group of students in 2004. Documentation of the Society and

Coffee Culture of Commercial Drive From a New Perspective addresses the role of gentrification in Macie's local community as reflected through the closure of family-owned coffee shops, the appearance of new cars on the main drive, and the arrival of new Starbucks outlets in the area. Macie highlighted the video because she says it exemplifies her own developing awareness of the social, political and economic forces shaping and inevitably changing her community. She also highlighted the video, however, because it demonstrates how her own burgeoning concerns about the development of her community were shared with and often informed by the thinking of her fellow mentors. Where assisting novice video makers to produce new work helped Macie get "a hold on the place," to see this place as a community subject to change and reinvention, then, her Summer Visions' experience also led Macie to imagine herself and her colleagues as a creative network able to intervene in the face of this change. In Arendt's terms, an awareness of the socially contingent forces that shape her life has thus fostered a belief on Macie's part that she and her friends can challenge how these forces might develop in the future.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Macie has taken on the work of contesting how meaning is produced and circulated in her and others' lives most often in the context of Summer Visions. Engaging in such work is part of her job as a mentor; nonetheless, she says she's "become more [willing to] challenge new students and other mentors every year ... I'm finding I'm certainly [less] afraid to say, 'Well, wait a second, have you considered this and this and this'" (Interview, January 16, 2006). A telling example demonstrating her new found confidence occurred in a meeting with the other mentors in early July 2006 (Field notes, July 5, 2006). During the session, Macie addressed an unacknowledged

pattern surrounding the role of gender in students' films. The context for the discussion was a meeting in which the first story ideas from the opening program were beginning to surface. After the mentors and head instructors reviewed the story proposals, Macie pointed out that nine of the ten videos were about male protagonists (Field notes, July 5. 2006). She then argued that this is a trend in Summer Visions projects. In most of their videos, students "default to a male lead just because [they] don't seem to think things could be otherwise" (Field notes, July 5, 2006). In response, Macie challenged the other mentors to encourage students to write stories with female protagonists. This wasn't to be a hard and fast rule; but she wanted mentors and students to become conscious of how gender practices operate in their work and to consider how students' stories might change if they were centred on a female lead.

Macie's reflections on the social and ethical nature of meaning have also impacted how she watches and uses popular commercial media. "When I watch films and TV shows now," she says, "I try [to] be more aware of exactly what I'm seeing, what – whoever created this – what their ambition was and what their goal was [for] me ... [I'm] trying to realize how this works, ... [to] be more aware of [it and] less passive..." (Interview, October 27, 2006). She does this at least in part to find recent media examples she can use as helpful resources to foster critical reflection among the video makers she works with in Summer Visions. "What can I learn from watching ... a television show," she asks, and how can I "impart [this] on students" (Interview, October 27, 2006)? How can I use a scene from a teen drama like The OC to highlight how "camera movement affects [the construction of] atmosphere for audiences? ... [E]veryone knows and has seen [the show]" and so Macie says, using it as a resource to talk about how meaning is

produced in both prime time television and youth media is tremendously helpful (Interview, October 27, 2006).

In complicated ways, her thinking about the contingent and contestable nature of meaning has also begun to shape Macie's ability and sense of obligation to work with others. Tony, the Head of Cityschool's Film and Theatre Department suggests one of the most important outcomes that arises from mentoring in the Summer Visions program is it fosters an ability to be with others who are different than oneself or one's group. Mentoring encourages one to entertain the differences of each person, their plurality. Tony suggests this is about developing a sense of respect and obligation to others. Because you have to work with so many different people as a mentor, he says, "mentors become good listeners, … they understand that you have to approach a human being [as a human being] first and foremost and then everything else will fall into place" (Interview, May 9, 2006). In a similar vein, Julia suggests mentoring is about learning to listen and imagine a multitude of possibilities for how each video could develop. As a result, she says, mentors "learn how to negotiate collaborative projects which means [they develop a sense of] conflict resolution, [an ability to] work out an idea among people who [often] have very different perspectives than [their] own" (Interview, June 7, 2006).

In earlier chapters, developing this ability to visit and carefully listen to the perspectives of those we don't know and by extension, those situations that are unfamiliar to us, was noted to be a crucial aspect of democratic practice in Arendt's schema. By "train[ing] one's imagination to go visiting," it is possible to foster "an enlarged mentalité" that furthers plurality through dialogue with others (Arendt, quoted in Smith, 2001, p. 83). "[L]istening to their stories, and relating to their uniqueness without

collapsing these divergent views" to fit one's own agenda operates as a crucial mechanism for sustaining a democratic life (Coulter and Wiens, 2002, p. 18). If this is so, Macie's remarks reveal an important tension surrounding how mentoring has impacted her ability and sense of obligation to work and be with others.

On the one hand, Macie says mentoring has caused her to become much more open to others. Working with so many different people and stories over the course of each summer has helped her to learn how to "step [back] from making immediate judgments about people" (Interview, January 16, 2006). She has learned to draw from the opinions and ideas of kids she finds "really irritating" and focus on the goal of completing a video project in two weeks. This has taught her to manage group dynamics and personalities and it has led to another outcome arguably more relevant to democratic practice. She says working in a collaborative environment where debate and contestation are foregrounded has made her conscious that:

> Young people have such interesting stories to tell and such important
> things to discuss. [They] have so much potential to contribute to their
> communities in producing art and engaging in conversation. I think that …
> allowing people to have these conversations and articulate what they're
> thinking is so important and I … hope that that will continue when the
> summer program's gone. There needs to be more opportunities where
> youth can … [engage with each other and adults] in a really free,
> unrestricted, uncensored way (Interview, October 27, 2006).

She argues this happens infrequently in our culture and yet it is vital if young people are to imagine being part of the social and political worlds they will inherit. Arriving at this conclusion has influenced the projects Macie has taken a role in outside of Summer Visions.

In 2005 and 2006, for instance, she and other mentors (including Terrence) took a leading role in the development of a pirate youth television station. East Vancouver

Television (EVTV) was created as a low-watt screening network for videos made by young people in the local area. Reflecting the vision evident in Macie's remarks above, the intent behind the project was to provide young people with the know-how and means to produce and distribute their own work, the funny, the socially observant and those that represent "opposition with a social and political purpose" (Knight Abowitz, 2000, p. 878). To date, the project has led to seven broadcasts in and around the East Vancouver area, including a live broadcast in the midst of the Car Free Commercial Drive Festival, which was attended by an estimated 50,000 people. Additionally, EVTV has contributed to or hosted five community screenings of youth media work. Currently, the project is off the air, and while its future remains in doubt, Macie says the link between her work in Summer Visions and the development of EVTV is clear: "EVTV [and] Summer Visions … all kind of overlap[. They've become] this one big glob of talking a lot and trying to articulate things we're thinking and philosophizing about" (Interview, October 27, 2006). In an earlier interview she added: "EVTV is a place for us to take all the stuff that we've learned through Summer Visions … and really do exactly what we want with it with no rules, no – nothing to censor us" (Interview, January 16, 2006). It has provided an outlet for young people's creative practice, in other words, and in an important way, has come to exemplify Macie's own conception of what it means to engage with others in public acts.

At the same time, tensions remain around how Macie's experience in Summer Visions has fostered democratic sensibilities. EVTV is important, but Macie's conception of her work with others is also filtered through a sense of cultural exclusiveness, a sense that she and other mentors are part of a vanguard, a group which has managed to escape

the false consciousness seen to afflict other youth. This is evidenced, for instance, when Macie talks about students' early video work. As noted above, some of her comments reflect an understanding of the way our media culture operates as a form of public pedagogy. Other remarks, however, indicate disdain toward the perceived naiveté of other youth. Witness as an example Macie's comment that so many new video makers produce "copy-cat spew [based on what] … we're taught … we're supposed to be and feel by the media … I feel like a lot of students … end up spewing that out without being fully aware of what they're doing" (Interview, January 16, 2006). When they do this, Macie says, she's frustrated largely because she's not altogether interested in "[p]eople talking about things they have no authority or knowledge to talk about. That bothers me" (Interview, January 16, 2006). In addition to this, a sense of cultural exceptionalism vis-à-vis other youth is evidenced by Macie's talk about the future of Summer Visions. Julia noted this in recounting a conversation she had with Macie about the prospects for the program. Macie explained to Julia that she was worried about the program because "some of the older mentors, including herself, were thinking about leaving" the following year (Julia, Interview, June 7, 2006). Other, younger mentors were developing through the ranks, but as the conversation continued, it became evident to Julia that from Macie's perspective, Summer Visions' future was cast in doubt because of the likely departure of some senior mentors. Optimistically, I think these concerns are a sign of Macie's attachment to the program; on the other hand, they indicate her difficulty in imagining how other young people could engage in the same kind of critical practices she has learned over four-years. This disconnect suggests a tension in the way Macie's mentoring experience has impacted her openness to others. While apparently more capable and even

willing to engage the plurality of others, Macie is also suspect and sometimes even disdainful of the abilities of other youth to engage the very sense of promise and possibility she now envisions as part of her life.

If this tension is significant, it is part of a series of changes that have developed through Macie's experience in Summer Visions. On the one hand, her work has helped her develop a range of media production skills and a sense of confidence in her ability to engage and be with others. On the other hand, from an Arendtian perspective, in specific ways she has also become a social actor, aware of the contingent and contestable nature of meaning across a variety of contexts and practices. She conceives of herself and others relationally and is engaged in questioning the nature of the world and our place in it. Macie seems to imagine that she and her colleagues are exceptional and uniquely positioned to understand the plural and belated conditions that shape her and others' experiences; but her observations also reveal an awareness of how our lives are enabled and enriched through our dependence on others. Macie's sense of exceptionalism contains the potential to undermine her commitment to foster difference and entertain the plurality of others. At the same time, her work with the EVTV project is symptomatic of her willingness to initiate new programs and new possibilities intended to empower youth. This is indicative then of the way democratic practice is enabled by an <u>enlarged</u> <u>mentalité</u> fostered through Macie's experience as a youth media production mentor. To be sure, this outcome is not the same for all mentors. In fact, if Macie's story exemplifies certain democratic possibilities that arise through mentoring, Dominic's experience highlights a set of difficulties and shortfalls in the Summer Visions program that

undermine how young people become oriented to democratic life through media production work.

Dominic – Struggling to Keep Up

Dominic was seventeen and a recent high school graduate from Cityschool at the time of this study. He is African-Canadian and was involved in Summer Visions as a peer mentor for the first time in 2006. Previously, he had not attended the program as a student, although he did complete three film and television production classes during his career at Cityschool. He lives with his father who is a truck driver for Canada Post, and while he is interested in acting and video making he does not have access to production equipment outside of school. He says there are four television sets at home and like Macie, Dominic tends to spend two-to-three hours per day watching TV. He is not particularly selective about what he watches, but says he prefers cartoons. He attends movies once or twice a month and says he is generally open to watching all different kinds of films. He spends two-to-three hours per day playing online computer or console-based video games and another hour per day using the computer for school work. He says he reads an hour a day for pleasure or education purposes, although he did not identify any books or magazines that especially interest him. Unlike Macie, Dominic does not attend non-mainstream movie theatres, nor did he note any specific interest in seeking out media he considers alternative to mainstream fare.

Coming into Summer Visions in 2006 without any prior experience in the program in many ways set Dominic at a disadvantage as compared with his fellow mentors. Although he did take a number of classroom-based production courses, echoing Macie's remarks above, he said he didn't learn very much in these classes. In fact, he

acknowledged, "I haven't really made that many films, I've wanted to but mostly what [would] happen is that I … [would] come up with the idea and then try to find the right crew but it never seemed to work out in class. The best [experience] I had was when I just latched on [as crew with] someone else's film" (Interview, November 8, 2006). If this situation was a problem, the spotty mentor training framework in Summer Visions compounded the difficulties posed by Dominic's history as a video maker. Shortfalls in the training program were noted in chapters four and five. In the latter instance, I also suggested how this impacts the production experiences of students and the kinds of videos they make.

Another challenge Dominic faced as a new mentor in 2006 relates to the close working relationships many of the older mentors, including Macie, have developed after working together for two or more summers. In chapter four, I noted that all the mentors in Summer Visions are drawn from Cityschool. The policy of hiring students exclusively from one institution began as a way of providing jobs and opportunities for inner-city youth. The strategy worked, but it has also produced complex results. On the one hand, it has contributed to the development of a network of youth media producers in East Vancouver who continue to work together as a kind of informal digital video collective. Macie's (and Terrence's) work on EVTV is indicative of this development. On the other hand, this strategy has encouraged the growth of a fairly hermetic culture among Summer Visions' mentors, one which is not always open to new people. Julia, the Director of Education at Pacific Cinémathèque has noted this, as have others. During an informal conversation in the opening two-week session in 2006, for instance, Caitlin, Lucy and Terrence all noted that it can be difficult to absorb new people into the program (Field

notes, July 5, 2006). The short production timeframe during each session exacerbates the

problem, as does the truncated training schedule. Kira, an experienced mentor, said in

Dominic's case, however, another issue arose. She remarked,

> I don't know exactly how to explain it. There were the core original
> mentors who are 'eastside,' not hippies, but [with] hippy-type parents in
> some cases. The kids aren't hipsters but hipster-types. And Dominic is
> kind of hip hop, a more mainstream guy. [Because of this,] he was just one
> step behind everybody else ... [H]e had to learn more ... [Additional]
> training would have helped ..." (Interview, August 30, 2006).

Because Dominic did not arrive in the mentoring program with the same kind of youthful

cultural capital as some of the older mentors, in other words, he faced challenges fitting

in with his peers (Bourdieu, 1984). In the end, this made his job much more difficult.

Dominic notes as much when he talks about his experience with his first student

group in the opening session in 2006. He says shortfalls in his preparation were

noticeable. In particular he had a very difficult time challenging his group in ways that

would help them produce better work. As a result, he felt

> like [he] was really stumbling all over the place ... [Especially with the
> first film,] I was trying to figure out my whole mentor role ... I didn't
> really know what a mentor does, what a mentor doesn't do, so ... [the
> first] film didn't come out so great ... I was like, 'yeah we should do this;
> and [the students] were all like 'no, we should do this,' and so I was [in
> conflict] with them when I should have been flowing with their ideas. [In
> the end,] we just ended up kind of going back and forth and I think that
> sort of [hurt] the film (Interview, November 8, 2006).

During a critical review, following the first two-week session, Caitlin met with Dominic

and gave him specific objectives to work on for the next session. These included

developing a production plan for his group, helping his students develop a shot list, and

using his critical viewing skills to help challenge students' decisions throughout the

production cycle (Field notes, July 17, 2006). If useful, taking up these directives was

difficult because, while learning to mentor, Dominic was also trying to improve his technical production skills and his abilities as a storyteller.

In response, he says, in the second two-week session, "I just tried to watch everybody else, I just sort of tried [to do] what the other mentors were doing" (Interview, November 8, 2006). Macie used a similar strategy in her first two summers as a mentor. In Dominic's case, this helped in the second film, but with this production he says he really struggled knowing how much to intervene with the students' script and how much of the story to leave open for them to develop and clarify while shooting the video. He also had difficulty keeping the group on task. All of this had a noticeable impact on the final project. In fact, Dominic felt the video wasn't as successful as the first project he mentored. In the second video, there ended up being plot holes in the story and ultimately the students had to return for two extra days of shooting and editing to complete the project after their two-week session ended (Field notes, August 1, 2006).

By the third program, Dominic said he began to feel more comfortable in his role, to know how to organize a project, how to find actors and locations for his group, and how to keep a shoot on schedule. He says he also developed ways to work with conflict that arose among his students over aesthetic choices that needed to be made during shooting. "[W]hen conflict [arose]," he says, rather than trying to discourage it, he learned to work with the students to "film scenes twice ... and then [let them determine] which one look[ed] better in editing" (Interview, November 8, 2006). This made for an improvement, but Dominic's lack of preparation as both a mentor and a video maker created a difficult situation.

Watching him work over the summer, I observed Dominic's struggles to find his role and place in the program. He is not an especially assertive teenager and yet, at the same time, his genuine interest in helping young people develop creative and critical skills and abilities was made evident in the fall of 2006. With Summer Visions finished, Dominic returned to Cityschool and volunteered his time mentoring junior high school students in film and theatre classes. He also volunteered to work as an assistant director in the school's theatre program, helping to produce a new play for a weeklong film and theatre celebration held at the school in 2007. Given this, it is unfortunate that training deficits in the Summer Visions program limited Dominic's success as a production mentor. This deficiency, however, was not the only factor that affected Dominic's experience. In addition, the hermetic culture within the program left Dominic on the outside to some extent, feeling less like a colleague than an interloper among the more senior mentors in the program.

Kira's remarks quoted earlier allude to this problem. Unlike many of the older mentors, Dominic does not possess any of the obvious cultural competencies that would stand him apart from the mainstream of youth culture. As far as I could make out, for instance, he is largely interested in hip hop music, not because it articulates a social or political message or a commentary on the power dynamics experienced by disenfranchised groups in North America. Rather, he likes hip hop because it "sounds cool" and the videos usually "look awesome" (Field notes, July 28, 2006). To date, he has also demonstrated little interest in other media that might be considered alternative to mainstream fair. Within a sociology of taste cultures (see Bourdieu, 1984), in other words, Dominic does not carry nor express the kinds of cultural capital that would imply

"'subcultural' experiences and identifications" (Buckingham et al, 2003, p. 468). Instead, at least as evidenced through observations, a questionnaire, informal conversations, and formal interviews, his tastes and interests are more conventional. This stood him apart from other mentors, especially those like Macie who, in part through her experience in Summer Visions, have evolved a fairly explicit disdain for the signs and symbols of mainstream media culture. The upshot of this is that where a sociology of taste framed around alternative or subcultural experiences and knowledge is privileged within the evolving culture of older mentors in Summer Visions, this discursive frame left Dominic little room to negotiate his own role and place in the program. Instead he was positioned as an outsider, someone thought to be "juvenile" as compared with the "intelligence" and "professionalism" attributed to more senior mentors (Macie, Interview, October 27, 2006).

In the face of this, it is surprising to note what Dominic said he did learn as a peer educator. He said sometimes it felt like students were "just pounding you" with demands and questions, but because of this, he learned to be patient with others (Interview, November 8, 2006). He developed what he called his "people skills" because mentoring "helped [him] with [his] ability to read others, what they're about. [This, in turn, helped him] … learn to mesh with people, [to] become less rigid" (Field notes, July 28, 2006). He commented that in Summer Visions,

> you learn how to cope with people and how to work in an environment
> where even though it's laid back, you are expected to finish something in a
> certain time, you have a deadline. You learn how to get a group of people
> and focus them, how to work with them and play off their strengths and
> nullify their weaknesses (Interview, November 8, 2006).

He said this helped to produce a clearer vision of himself and also a sense of independence. To be sure, this does not mean Dominic's experience fostered what Arendt might call an openness to the plurality of others. In fact, Dominic's struggles simply to learn his job in many ways tempered his willingness and/or ability to engage with the uniqueness and diversity of youth in his groups. He remarked, for instance, that ultimately the mentoring experience meant learning

> [how to] control the group and control the situation. You've got to crack the whip if the whip needs cracking. You've sort of got to push them in the right direction, up that tube because then they'll see the places that they've got to go … [Y]ou've got to hold it all together and you've got to keep everybody focused and be involved with what's going on around you … [Y]ou've got to look out for their safety, … [and just] be really aware (Interview, November 8, 2006).

By controlling his groups, Dominic no doubt felt better positioned to ensure projects were finished in the allotted time. The pressure to ensure this happened, however, limited his ability to explore and engage with those youths' ideas and experiences that were different from his own.

This is not to say the impact of Dominic's experience in the summer program were limited to psychological changes having to do with his working relationship with others. In fact, it is interesting to note how, in the face of various difficulties, this experience nonetheless affected Dominic's conception of meaning's contingency and contestability, fostering what Arendt might understand as a sense of the social and ethical conditions underlying certain practices.

These sentiments began to emerge through Dominic's reflections on the differences between his experiences at Summer Visions as compared with his work experiences as a sales clerk at a local department store. He observed that the latter work environment is

highly managed. Employees have a very specific set of tasks they are to accomplish and a small range of possibility to express anything individual or distinct about themselves. This is hardly surprising in a postFordist age (Harvey, 1989) where "fast capitalism" increasingly requires the "[r]eplication of corporate culture" through the reproduction of discourses and practices that aim to achieve conformity and control (New London Group, 1996). Dominic noted at the department store, "they give you a script" about what to say to customers, where to stand in the store throughout your shift, and how to interact with fellow employees (Interview, November 8, 2006). Space and time are highly organized and as a result, he observed, in that kind of work, "you do the same thing [every shift] ... [Y]ou're sort of stuck behind a till for like eight hours straight [and] you're supposed to say the same thing as people go through" (Interview, November 8, 2006). In this setting, meaning and the words one speaks are provided for you.

In contrast, while challenging in many ways, Dominic said, in Summer Visions "you get to flex your creative muscle ..." (Interview, November 8, 2006). Instead of following a specific script, you work with other youth to produce new stories and new ideas. Of course the working environment in the summer program is not entirely open and flexible; but the discrepancy between this community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and the working environment produced in a department store resonated for Dominic. In the latter setting, meaning is dictated and framed; it is a script one follows. In Summer Visions, on the other hand, he said, "you get to be you," you have liberty to shape ideas and contest how meaning is organized and constituted for young people and others (Interview, November 8, 2006).

This analysis hints at the fact that an emergent sense of the social and economic forces which shape meaning began to develop over Dominic's time in Summer Visions. A more telling signal about how mentoring affected his understanding of the social and ethical conditions underlying the construction of meaning, however, is evident in his remarks about the significance of youth media production. Although he took three video classes prior to his work as a mentor, Dominic noted he had never really considered the relationship between youth media work and more commercial, mainstream media experiences. "I didn't think there was much of a relationship there," he said (Interview, November 8, 2006). Watching kids try to shape their own stories and thinking about how and why they choose certain characters and storylines, however, revealed a new dynamic for him. No doubt influenced by visual storytelling workshops in Summer Visions as well as the training he received prior to the start of the student sessions, Dominic said he began to evolve a distinction between creative youth work and the larger media environment in which we live. He said he began to see youth video making as "like your freedom to speak, your freedom to be who you want to be and to talk about whatever the hell you want to talk about" (Interview, November 8 2006). He went on to note:

> it's kind of weird that only a certain amount of people know how to do it
> [i.e., make videos]. But it [does relate to] democracy in a way, because if
> everyone who knows how to use a camera thinks a certain way, we're all
> screwed right, because we're just going to see the same damn thing over
> and over again. And then there's this media that's going to get stuck in our
> heads, then we're all screwed ... So I guess it does sort of make sense then
> that it is democratic to teach people how to operate a camera (Interview,
> November 8, 2006).

These remarks are hardly conclusive, but they do suggest a burgeoning distinction for Dominic, one which differentiates between and signals the inequality symptomatic of specific media practices. It is a distinction that seems to acknowledge that the commercial

media can shape how young people understand themselves and their worlds by constituting ideas and conceptions that "get stuck in our heads." In response to this, creative youth media work is posed as a resource that fosters plurality, one which allows youth to contest "your freedom to be who you want to be." In this way, it appears as though Dominic's experience in Summer Visions led to the development of an enlarged mentalité, a sense that he and other youth are social actors whose lives are bound up in a set of contestable relationships with the media environments in which we live.

If this is so, at the same time, I contend the challenges and difficulties encountered in his first summer as a mentor undermined the degree to which this experience fostered a democratic sensibility for Dominic. So much of his time was spent learning his role and attempting to find a place for himself in the program that the potential impact of this experience was lessened. This is unfortunate, and also indicative of a shortfall in Summer Visions. In the conclusion to this study, this and other deficits in the program will be addressed to highlight how media production initiatives can be designed in ways that better serve young people.

Terrence – The Contingency of Audiences and the Social Nature of Production

How Summer Visions impacted Terrence, one of the senior mentors in the program, is complicated and revealing. Unlike Macie and Dominic, Terrence's family is middle class and highly educated. His father is Japanese Canadian and a university math professor, while his mother is Caucasian and a part-time counselor, a writer, and a cleaner. At the time of this study, Terrence was eighteen and entering his third year of post-secondary education, majoring in English. Like Macie, Terrence attended Summer Visions as a student for one two-week session in 2002 and then was hired as a peer

mentor the following year. He continued to work in the program each summer between 2003 and 2006.

As a media consumer, Terrence's tastes and habits are noticeably different from the average North American teenager. Growing up, he said his family acquired their first television set when he was ten, although it was never connected to cable service and he "can only think of a couple occasions when it was turned on – playoff hockey, I guess" (Interview, October 30, 2006). Terrence's father talked about TV in the same terms he reserved for the local tabloid newspaper: "not even a guilty pleasure" Terrence said, "but actively damaging garbage. [His] mom had fond memories of [watching] the <u>Ed Sullivan Show</u>, <u>Mighty Mouse</u> and <u>Zorro</u> [as a child,] but [h]aving become a hippie early on, she figured everything since was, similarly, actively damaging garbage" (Interview, October 30, 2006).

Because of this, Terrence did not watch television as a child and even now, he watches less than an hour a day and often only to view rented DVDs. He goes out to see movies two to three times per month and said he currently attends what would be considered non-mainstream movie theatres five-to-eight times per year. He has a computer at home but rarely plays video or online games. He does, however, use the computer two-to-three hours per day for schoolwork. He is a fairly avid reader, although he said, lately he reads only an hour a day for pleasure but another four or more hours per day for school. An avid mountain bike rider, Terrence reads magazines like <u>Dirt Rag</u> (a UK mountain bike publication) as well as the music and pop culture monthly, <u>Vice</u>, on a semi-regular basis. More and more he noted, he also seeks out media he considers alternative to mainstream fair, including: <u>http://thetyee.ca</u>, an online site that specializes

in news and commentary about politics and culture in British Columbia; the UK daily, The Guardian; local, independent music groups; and, CBC radio, which Terrence described as "alternative by corporate media standards" (Questionnaire, January 10, 2006).

Similar to Macie, Terrence has access to a range of media production resources, including: digital still and video cameras; a computer with image and sound editing software; and lighting, sound and other video production equipment through Cityschool's film and theatre department. If his participation in Summer Visions is in part responsible for the access he has to these resources, his experience in the program has also affected him differently in comparison with Macie and Dominic.

By the time Terrence entered the video program in 2002, his family had already left him with a sense of suspicion about the influence commercial media can have as a form of public pedagogy in the lives of young people and others. While not expressed in precisely these terms, Terrence's family's approach to television echoes Neil Postman's concerns about the deleterious role of TV as both technology and culture in young people's lives. Postman (1992) famously argued that the mass media is "not only inferior to print based epistemology but is dangerous and absurdist ... It creates a culture without a moral foundation. It undermines certain mental processes and social relations that make life worth living" (p. xiii). Postman opposed the use of TV, computers or popular culture generally in educational settings, arguing that these forms of communication produce passive audiences who are incapable of rigorous, critical thought. Terrence's family's approach to the power and affect of television was similarly absolute. While they recognized the influence this medium can have on the lives of young people and others,

they also apparently saw this in non-negotiable terms: television was "damaging garbage," and it need not taint our lives.

When Terrence became a mentor in the summer program, it is interesting to note how his conception of commercial media culture changed. As a young teenager, as to be expected, Terrence negotiated space to explore his own relationships with media texts deemed inappropriate by his parents. He recounted a story, for instance, about watching "violent action films after school on Fridays" and then returning them to the local video store "before [his] parents got home" (Interview, October 30, 2006). Working in Summer Visions in a sense extended this kind of experimentation with media texts. In particular, Terrence's experience in the program altered his understanding of the determinacy or mutability that characterizes relationships between audiences and the representations created by media producers. If his parents instilled him with a sense of suspicion about the power of the commercial mass media, in other words, his work as a mentor shaped his imagination about how the relationship between audiences and media representations, including texts produced by the commercial media, might be open to contestation and change.

Terrence, like Macie and Dominic, struggled in his first year as a peer educator. He too "just got dropped in [to the job] headfirst..." (Interview, January 9, 2006). He said:

> [I was] mentoring people who were maybe three years older than [me]
> and, I mean they gave us a week of training and preparation and
> everything, but there was a lot of pressure that first year ... I mean we
> know now that we're never going to have all the answers, but it felt then
> like, ... what are they going to ask me that I'm just going to have to
> bullshit my way out of? ... [L]uckily I had a great group the first program
> and they made a very funny film, and I was able to sort of relax because I
> hadn't made a total bomb (Interview, January 9, 2006).

Over time and through work with older mentors, Terrence developed his abilities and understanding of the video production process. His confidence grew and his capacity to talk and act in public changed. He noted, for instance, that: "I just don't feel the same sort of anxiety about being observed or evaluated because in a sense those kids are observing and evaluating all summer... And you just have to get comfortable with that... I have [and so I] think mentoring has just given me much more confidence in myself" (Interview, October 30, 2006). He also developed significant technical skills and as this happened, he was given new responsibilities. In 2006, for instance, Summer Visions' coordinators asked Terrence and another senior mentor to produce new workshops for the program. One session, described in detail in chapter four, was aimed at younger mentors and students and addressed the language of cinematography in media production.

Besides furthering his ability to perform in view of others, mentoring and delivering workshops for youth had another interesting consequence. Terrence argued doing this work made clear to him "how authority is completely constructed. It's not like it's completely [a lie] and you're hoodwinking youth into believing you're an expert for two weeks, because you wouldn't sustain that" (Interview, October 30, 2006). As someone new to working at developing these relationships, however, Terrence became conscious of the contextual and contingent nature of authority. In a sense, Terrence noted, it is the situation one is placed in that constructs a relationship of authority not the specific skills or ability of the person in charge of the situation. Mentoring has helped him to realize that a "reciprocal and cooperative effort [is needed] to establish some sort of authority" because both sides need to be invested in the relationship (Interview, October 30, 2006).

Authority is not natural or embedded in a self, in other words, as much as it is constituted by the situation in which one operates and works to achieve certain objectives.

Not surprisingly, working with novice video makers over four summers also provided Terrence with numerous examples demonstrating how quickly the codes, preoccupations and concerns of the commercial media find their way into students' work. Like Macie, Terrence suggested students typically have a difficult time recognizing that their early videos are often not about their own ideas as much as they are about ideas young people have "absorbed by watching shitty TV" (Interview, January 9, 2006). At the same time, watching students produce and screen work for audiences altered Terrence's understanding of the contingency and contestability of media texts themselves. Where Terrence's family tended to conceive of electronic media texts deterministically, in other words, one of the critical and novel ideas that emerged for Terrence through mentoring is a sense that audiences are active producers of meaning. They are not mere dupes or easy victims of all-determining media representations; rather, audiences are a key and active ingredient in the two-way relationship between media creators and consumers.

Terrence arrived at this understanding, he said, in reflecting on what he and other young people learn as both mentors and media production practitioners. He argued, when you create your own work, you begin to watch commercial media differently, "noticing booms and shots in Hollywood movies" (Interview, January 9, 2006). At the same time, he noted,

> once you've been both audience and creator and you've had the anxiety of
> showing something that you've ... created to an audience, you suddenly
> realize that it's actually a two-way relationship ... [Audiences] are not just
> a passive vessel waiting to be filled to the ears [with messages] ...,
> streaming in one single direction out of a TV set (Interview, January 9,
> 2006).

Rather, they are actively engaged in shaping and constructing the meaning constituted through media representations. Such representations don't act deterministically on audiences; they become a site of struggle, an instance where audiences shape, contest and interpret meaning in a dialogue with texts.

Of course Terrence continued to argue that commercial media culture has a formative role in shaping how young people understand themselves and their worlds. However, he contended the relative indeterminacy of media texts <u>vis à vis</u> the meaning audiences construct with them is cause for optimism about possibilities for more open democratic communication to arise. Bolstering these possibilities for Terrence was his claim that so much contemporary media culture demonstrates a "lack of respect for the viewer" (Interview, January 9, 2006). By this, he meant audiences are not addressed as though they are actively involved in creating meaning with the media; rather, the assumption is that

> certain people … have this set of skills [to produce media] and certain people don't … [T]he people who have these skills and have the money and have access to distribution [think] they can show whatever they want to this passive audience … I think that's really arrogant and I think that if things go my way, that'll be the impetus for the downfall of the current … dominant media model" (Interview, January 9, 2006).

Now, claims that contemporary mass media address youthful audiences as passive consumers may in fact be off the mark (Jenkins, 2006, Buckingham, 2000a, 2000b; Kinder, 1991). Nevertheless, if this part of Terrence's analysis is perhaps wanting, more important for this study is how his conception of the contingency and contestability of media texts shaped his desire to initiate struggles over meaning in his own video work.

Imagining media representations as a point of contestation not only signified a shift in Terrence's conception of media audiences, it also marked a change in his understanding of the work media producers do. Terrence's family and his experience with novice video makers in the summer program left him with concerns about how popular commercial media influences children and youth. If media texts are a site of struggle, however, both the moment of reception and the act of production are rendered social in complex ways. Strictly speaking, neither is adequately described as an instance of what we might call indoctrination, an act of one-way communication. Rather, reception is turned into an instance of struggle and dialogue between the formative power of any given text and the dynamics of interpretation at work among specific audiences. Production, on the other hand, is turned into an instance in which a dialogue of one sort or another is initiated with audiences. Terrence seemed to acknowledge his understanding of this point when he said: "once you've been … [a] creator … you … realize that [media production] is actually a two-way relationship … [Audiences] are not … a passive vessel waiting to be filled to the ears [with messages]" (Interview, January 9, 2006). Rather, they and the act of media production are two moments in an emerging dialogue. But if this is the case, from an Arendtian perspective, in an important way, coming to understand media texts as a point of contestation clarified Terrence's conception of his social role as a media producer. Participating as both a student and a mentor in Summer Visions equipped Terrence with a range of technical and interpersonal skills and storytelling abilities. Simultaneous with this, however, the experience also fostered a certain idea about what production means. Creative media work is not just about the actions of an individual who extends their voice into the world, nor is it simply a one-way act of indoctrination. It is crucially about a

dialogue one enters into through creative acts. In this sense, media production is a social initiative, an act through which one engages in contestation over the social nature of meaning with others.

Evidence that Terrence has developed this way of thinking about production is apparent on a number of fronts. He suggested, for instance, that his experiences in Summer Visions have made him "much more critical about my own videos and my thought processes ..." (Interview, January 9, 2006). Producing work is now about finding ways to create uncertainty for audiences. It is not just about individual expression; it is about developing media that incites a struggle over meaning between himself as the video maker and viewers. To do this, Terrence suggested, he has turned to producing material that is often "outside of any conventional narrative structure.... Or, if it is a story [with a beginning, middle and an end], then it's lampooning whatever conventions might be easily associated" with the work (Interview, January 9, 2006). As an example, he recently made a short video called, The East Vancouver Bike Rant, which is about youth, mountain biking, public space, and inequities in municipal funding. The video begins as a mock infomercial and then quickly shifts to a politically inspired rant about the discrepancies between funding for youth spaces in different regions of the city. It is funny, sharp and ironic, combining a mixture of montage and direct appeal, with a compelling and yet amusing address to youth and municipal politicians alike. It represents an effort to challenge viewers and in this way, it exemplifies how Terrence has begun to work in a way that is "dynamic and open to question[ing]" the nature of the world and our place in it (Vázquez, 2006, p. 44).

Besides this video, of late, Terrence has also been involved in writing and producing three videos on youth and racism for a multicultural television station and was the lead video producer and mentor in a school-based civics initiative centred around media production and First Nations youth in Vancouver. Additionally, along with Macie and other youth involved in the Summer Visions program, Terrence took a leading role in the development of East Vancouver Television (EVTV). As noted earlier, this low watt pirate TV station is geared toward fostering plurality by supporting the production and distribution of a range of youth media.

In various ways, each of these initiatives highlights how forms of Arendtian democratic practice have emerged through Terrence's experience as a peer educator. This work has evolved not only because of the skills and relationships Terrence has developed as a mentor, but also because his understanding of himself as an actor and a media producer has changed. His thinking has become "much more critical." He has evolved an enlarged mentalité, which is to say, he has come to conceive of his work and his actions relationally, in terms of the way they intersect with and impact the lives of others. His willingness to engage and, in certain instances, lead projects that address the role of race and youth empowerment in contemporary culture also suggest that Terrence has evolved an ethical obligation, a willingness to contest the lure of oblivion through his work. I say this because each of the aforementioned projects seems intended to expand "the plural hetergenous quality of experience" (Curtis, 1999, p. 24).

When Terrence began attending the Summer Visions program as a student in 2002, he brought with him a sense of suspicion about the influence and authority commercial media culture can have in the lives of young people. Over the course of his experience as

a student and mentor, this sense of suspicion changed. He is now no less concerned about the power of mass media, but he is, in a sense, aware that this power and influence are not absolute. Perhaps more importantly, Terrence has come to conceive of his relationship to the world "in a way that holds open the possibility that the world and one's position in it might be changed" (Levinson, 1997, p. 443). Media production for Terrence is not so much about the expressive work of an artist, creatively giving voice to their experience. It is about a dialogue with others, a social, cultural and political contest over meaning, which holds the potential to shape our understanding of both the present and our imagining about what the future might be.

Conclusion

The impact mentoring in the Summer Visions program has had on the youth examined in this chapter is varied, complex and exciting. While improving their technical abilities as video makers, Macie, Dominic and Terrence have all developed or clarified their understanding of youth media as a resource that fosters plurality. In differing ways, they have also evolved a sense of themselves as social actors whose lives are bound up in a set of contestable relationships with the media environment in which we live.

Through her experience in the program, Macie has come to imagine herself and her colleagues as a creative network capable of intervening in the changes taking place in her community. She has become aware of the socially contingent forces shaping her life and has developed a willingness to initiate new programs and new possibilities intended to empower youth. Less encouraging is the fact that Macie seems to imagine herself and her colleagues as a kind of vanguard, uniquely positioned to understand the plural and belated conditions that shape her and others' experiences. I note this is less encouraging

because a sense of exceptionalism contains the potential to undermine Macie's commitment to foster difference and entertain the plurality of others. In his first year as a mentor, while Dominic developed an emergent sense of the social and economic forces shaping his and other youths' lives, the richness of his experience was lessened by shortfalls in the Summer Visions training program and difficulties related to the hermetic culture that has developed among older mentors. This is unfortunate because even with these deficiencies, Dominic's experience did foster a sense that young people are able to engage and change their lives through their media work. Finally, Terrence was the oldest and most experienced mentor assessed in this chapter. Because of his family background he presented an interesting case study in how mentoring shifted his understanding of the contingency of media texts. As this shift happened, I indicated that Terrence's thinking about the meaning of media production and his own role as a creative producer changed.

Mentoring in a youth media production program involves a complex and challenging set of practices. Through these experiences, young people develop their confidence, their self-esteem, and a host of other skills and abilities that facilitate work with others in the future. At the same time, evidence in this chapter also indicates that this work can support democratic practice as conceived in Arendt's schema by fostering an understanding of the social and ethical conditions underlying the production of meaning. In this way, youth media experiences hold the potential to preserve freedom and nurture a sense of natality and hope for the future.

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore how a conception of public action drawn from the work of Hannah Arendt can be helpful in assessing the way democratic practice is fostered through a youth media production program. In chapter one, I provided a short history of the field of youth media production pedagogies in relation to democratic practice and showed where limitations exist in the way these relationships are conceptualized. I focused particular attention on weaknesses in the way a dominant strain of critical media pedagogy frames the relationship between youth media work and social and political change, and also noted shortcomings in the way liberal conceptions of empowerment and creative voice theorize young people's participation in the production of culture. In response to these deficiencies and to recent research on young people's media use, I suggested Hannah Arendt's conceptualization of public action as framed in relation to a pedagogy of natality offers a novel model to assess the relationship between creative youth practices and democracy.

In chapter two, I addressed Research Question #1 noted in the Introduction, and outlined Arendt's understanding of public acts and their relationship to a democratically-oriented pedagogy. I distinguished Arendt's position from liberal notions of the public sphere as well as from Habermas' work and noted that Arendt understands public acts to have a dual function in relation to democratic practice. Such acts resist social, political and cultural practices that attenuate "the plural heterogenous quality of experience" while simultaneously preserving freedom by bringing into view the contingent nature of meaning and our ethical responsibility to others (Curtis, 1999, p. 24). From an Arendtian perspective, democratic practice is constituted through forms of "human togetherness,"

where agonistic struggles foster plurality in ways that allow for new meanings and new forms of experience to take hold. I showed how this model translates into a pedagogy of natality or new beginnings (Levinson, 2002, 1997) and also noted how the objectives of this pedagogical framework are to be distinguished from the emancipatory aims of critical media pedagogy. In contrast to critical media pedagogy, an Arendtian conception of democracy trains us to examine how youth media programs enable youth people to see themselves as part of the "web of human relationships." The democratic potential of creative youth practices are thus understood to be a function of the way such practices foster agonistic struggles that lead youth to think of themselves as relational subjects, plural selves whose lives are connected to contestation over the social and ethical nature of meaning.

In chapter three, I described and assessed the critical ethnographic method used in this study, situated Summer Visions in relation to the school and community where it takes place, and described the key participants in the research. I also outlined my role in relation to the history of Summer Visions and indicated how my data was collected and the methods used for data analysis.

In chapter four, I addressed how an Arendtian conception of public action conceived in relation to a pedagogy of natality can be used to examine Summer Visions' mentor training program and the pedagogical practices employed throughout the production cycle. This discussion addressed Research Question #2 (a) and partially addressed Research Question #3. I began with a detailed outline of the Summer Visions program, including the program coordinators' beliefs and differences about the mission and goals of the program. I then followed this discussion by using the Arendtian notion of natality

to analyze the youth production mentors' training process and Summer Visions' pedagogy. Largely, this lens helped to draw attention to the numerous strategies deployed throughout the program that help to foster an engagement with the social nature of meaning among young people. In the mentor training program this occurs through workshops that encourage conscious, playful work with the conventional affordances of media practice. It also occurs through sessions that highlight the social nature of imagery at the level of production and reception and the role of youth video work as a reference point for community building. In Summer Visions' pedagogy, this occurs through pre-production, production and post-production practices intended to draw young people into a shared space, one that stands in for the often private spaces where youth live. Production mentors are intended to play a crucial role in this process by provoking agonistic encounters that challenge students to engage with the way meaning is constructed in shots, scene sequences, etc.

Using an Arendtian framework, I also noted tensions in the way democratic practice is related to Summer Visions' pedagogical design. Some of these tensions had to do with divisions surrounding how coordinators understood the aims and objectives of the program. This was noted in regard to the way issues of sexuality, youth language and expression and issues of youth empowerment are understood in Summer Visions. Tensions were also noted in specific teaching practices. For instance, while the mentor training workshop on "Leadership and working with youth" was shown to contribute to the preservation of natality, it was also noted that Tony, the Head of Cityschool's Film and Theatre Department, tends to instrumentalize openness and respect for others. He encourages peer educators to use personal connections and emotional bonds with novice

video makers to make it easier to lead students throughout the "whole learning/production process" (Field notes, June 30, 2006). The problem was this strategy creates a tension in the way mentors see their work in relation to plurality. From an Arendtian perspective, rather than learning to visit with others, to "go into a plural public world and engage with other actors" on their terms (Coulter and Wiens, 2002, p. 18), Tony's advice suggested that mentors learn to manipulate their personal relationships with students in order to draw youth into an educational process. This in turn can be understood to undermine how democratic practice is built into the mentors' work with other young people.

Where these problems are important, chapter four largely demonstrated how an Arendtian framework helped to locate the multiple ways relationships with democratic practice are opened up through Summer Visions' pedagogical design. In chapter five, I addressed Research Question #2 (b) by demonstrating how an Arendtian framework can be used to understand the relationship between democratic practice and the production of three videos made in the program in 2006. To do this, I examined how a struggle over meaning is enacted in the making of In Between, The 'Nigga' Moment/No Regrets, and NE1. The objective was to assess in what sense such struggles de-privatized young people's experiences by involving them with others in ways that attended to the forces and structures that organize and limit our lives.

In my analysis, I found an interesting example of such developments in the making of the teen suicide docudrama, In Between. Kira, a peer mentor who had been involved with Summer Visions since 2003, played an especially important part in this process. By encouraging the student video makers to think seriously about their audience throughout

the creation process, she helped students engage with the social nature of meaning and a plurality of perspectives. That the videomakers ultimately took on this challenge was evident in the second half of the film when they turned to discuss the meaning and nature of suicide with other adolescents. Here, <u>In-Between</u> moved from a narrative centred around a personal or private experience to a much more public conversation about the diversity of meanings and the forces that are involved when young people take their own lives. In this way, the making of the video underscored how youth can enter into social and political relationships through production work.

In contrast to <u>In Between</u>, the analysis of <u>The 'Nigga' Moment/No Regrets</u> offered an instructive example of how belated power structures can undermine natality and limit the way youth media work supports the preservation of freedom. This discussion in part addressed Research Question #3. With this project, I argued a form of racial exoticism prevented the video makers from exploring the plurality of cultural and ethnic differences within the communities around the summer program. This problem was exacerbated by shortcomings in the way issues of race were addressed in Summer Visions' pedagogical design and mentor training process. In the end, these problems undermined how the makers of <u>The 'Nigga'Moment/No Regrets</u> engaged in a struggle over the contingent nature of meaning. As such, the making of this work demonstrated how an Arendtian sense of democratic practice can be stifled in youth production practices.

The fictionalized social commentary, <u>NE1</u>, offered an interesting case that evidenced how youth video makers engaged in a struggle over the social nature of meaning at various stages in the production cycle. The video ultimately promoted a form of thoughtfulness about the experience of young people who are beginning to question and

negotiate their sexual identity. What was most revealing about the making of the film, however, was the way it demonstrated how media work can offer a context for young people to enter into public relationships, even when they have some resistance to taking on such tasks.

In chapter six, I addressed Research Question #2 (c) and extended my investigation of Research Question #3. I engaged in a detailed examination of how Arendt's conception of public action can be used to assess the experience of youth production mentors in Summer Visions. To do this, I examined the degree to which participation in the program fostered an understanding of the ethical and social conditions underlying the production of meaning among three mentors. I situated this discussion in relation to research on mentoring and peer education and found that while working in the summer program tended to positively influence youths' confidence, self-esteem and their knowledge and skills, it also had a significant influence on how Macie, Dominic and Terrence understood the contingent nature of meaning and their own social futures.

For instance, Macie developed a clear sense of herself as a social actor who is conscious of how the contestability of meaning operates across a variety of contexts and practices. She understands herself and others relationally and is engaged in questioning the nature of the world and our place in it. In regard to question #3, I noted that Macie seems to conceive of herself and her colleagues as unique in comparison to other youth in their ability to understand the plural and belated conditions that shape her and others' experiences. This sense of exceptionalism had the potential to undermine her commitment to foster difference and entertain the plurality of others. At the same time, her observations also revealed an awareness of how our lives are enabled and enriched

when spaces of communicative plurality are created. Her contributions to the EVTV project bear this out. Macie thus represented an example of the complicated ways democratic practice has been enabled by an <u>enlarged mentalité</u> fostered through her experience as a youth production mentor.

Dominic had a more difficult time during his first year as a peer educator in 2006. Shortcomings in the mentor training process and the development of a hermetic culture among the older mentors in Summer Visions were important underlying issues complicating his experience. There is a sense in which he seemed to develop an understanding of himself and other youth as social actors whose lives are bound up in a set of contestable relationships with the media environments in which we live. At the same time, so much of his time was spent learning his role and attempting to find a place for himself that the potential impact of his experience in the program was mitigated.

In contrast, as one of the senior mentors in Summer Visions, Terrence offered a different and perhaps more inspiring example of how working in the summer program can impact young people. While Terrence's family instilled in him a sense of suspicion about the influence of the mass media on social, political and cultural life, his work as a mentor altered his understanding of the way media texts are open to contestation and change. This influenced Terrence's conception of his role as a media producer. Participating as both a student and a mentor in Summer Visions equipped Terrence with a range of technical and interpersonal skills and storytelling abilities. It also influenced his understanding of media production as a social initiative, an act through which one engages in contestation over the contingent nature of meaning with others. Coming to this conclusion has influenced the kind of media work Terrence now produces as well as the

projects he is involved with. In various ways these developments highlight how forms of Arendtian democratic practice have emerged through Terrence's experience as a peer educator.

Limitations of Study

Throughout this study, I attempted to assess how work and experience in the Summer Visions program impacted a group of young people. I did this by using a variety of tools to gather data and also tested my judgments and conclusions with various participants for accuracy and believability. At the same time, it is always difficult to know with certainty the degree to which changes marked in this research were the result of opportunities afforded by a youth media program, or whether they were affected by a broader set of issues related to factors like youths' socioeconomic class, educational experiences or peer culture. I made an effort to assess how some of these forces impacted youths' experiences, but, I was not able to control for variation in all instances. In particular, while I attempted to understand how youths' families might have affected their experience in Summer Visions, such influences can be difficult to mark. As noted in Charmaraman's (2006) study, for instance, scholars (Chubb and Fertmann, 1992) have pointed out that "the more adolescents feel a sense of belonging to their family members, the more likely they will participate in outside community activities with the encouragement and security they feel [due to] a stable family network" (pp. 215-216). This in turn is likely to influence how readily youth take up the challenges posed by video production work in an initiative like the summer program. I tried to assess for these kinds of influences, but note that family background can be a difficult force to reveal

completely in young people's lives. These influences therefore may have impacted

outcomes addressed in this study in ways that I have not registered.

In addition, because of my own history with Summer Visions, it was not always

possible to know with certainty the degree to which study participants were telling me

what they actually believe as compared to what they thought I wanted to hear in

interviews and informal conversations. As noted in chapter three, I tried to control for this

problem through various strategies. I also made clear to the youth and adults involved in

this research that my work would have no bearing on future funding for the program.

This seemed important because questions of financial health are a tenuous and well-

known issue among those involved in Summer Visions. If these steps proved important,

at the same time, I believe my past relationships with study participants had both

productive and unproductive influences on my research.

Implications for Youth Media Educators

The Summer Visions Film Institute was selected as the central focus for this study in

part because I am familiar with its history and development. Additionly, however, it

shares many characteristics with other informal youth media production initiatives and so

it offered a helpful case study to examine how an Arendtian conception of public action

can be used to assess the way democratic practice is fostered through creative youth

work. Today, the availability of low cost, consumer and near-professional-level

production and digital editing technologies has been crucial in fueling the expansion of

youth media programs in both school and community-based settings. In some instances,

technological changes have also allowed for increasing numbers of children and youth to

use media production resources beyond formal and informal learning environments. The

result is that young people now seem to have more opportunities than ever to alternate between their roles as media consumers and media producers (Goldfarb, 2002; Buckingham, 2003, 2000a, 2000b).

In this context, Arendt's work on the public realm and Levinson's (2002, 1997) clarification of this model in relation to a pedagogy of natality provide a unique and helpful lens for assessing how these developments relate to democratic practice among young people. Always wary of philosophical, technological and political practices that limit or attenuate our experience of a diverse world, Arendt conceives of public acts and democratic practice in terms of the plurality of meaning. She means by this that public actions are related to a kind of thoughtfulness. They are not about a specific form of social activism nor are they about a particular political project. Rather, public acts are a form of thinking and doing in which one is attentive to the fact that all meanings have a social and historical context, a form of contingency that itself is susceptible to change through action with others. Of course not just any actions matter because where public acts are a function of plurality, they have a crucial role in ensuring that individuals or whole classes of people don't disappear from our social and political radars. Arendt's model of democratic practice thus cannot be divorced from ethical concerns about human superfluousness, about the way we contest forms of oblivion that frustrate our ability to see and understand each other's needs. At the same time, subtending these ethical commitments is concern for the plurality of meaning itself, a sense that our futures are contingent on the way we learn to see ourselves and our becoming in interaction with others.

I believe this model of democratic practice is especially useful to media educators for thinking about the experience of young people in production programs because it focuses attention on how these situations help young people understand and engage with the contingencies of meaning in a media saturated environment. Rather than focusing attention on the way such programs facilitate youth voice or youth engagement with social justice initiatives, Arendt trains us to look at how these programs foster a struggle over meaning, how they bring young people into a shared space where participants begin to see themselves as social actors whose creative work depends on involvement with others. This conceptual focus is also helpful for making sense of the forces and tensions that can undermine the role of democratic practice in youth media programs.

Throughout this study, I made this latter point clear (thus addressing Research Question #3) by focusing attention on specific deficiencies evident in Summer Visions' pedagogical strategies, video production practices and mentor training experiences. I noted on a number of occasions how the underdeveloped training program in Summer Visions failed to prepare mentors for their work. This problem cannot be overcome quickly because in many ways it is the result of an uncertain funding environment that limits the time Summer Visions' coordinators have to prepare for the program each season. Still, the mentors play a formative role in fostering a willingness among student filmmakers to question their assumptions, storylines and decisions throughout the production cycle. Yet they are given little direction and preparation about how they might work with others to instigate contestation over the signs, symbols and risks posed by media representations. Mentors participated in one workshop where they addressed issues of leadership, but this workshop, as noted above, included elements that in fact

discouraged the kind of visiting so central to Arendt's notion of democratic practice. Other than this session, mentors tended to learn how to question and challenge students "on the fly." This strategy worked over time, but it also tended to leave new mentors scrambling. As we saw in the case of Dominic, the result of this was to substantially lessen the impact of the mentoring process on some youth.

Problems in the mentor training program, however, were really just an example of a number of forces at work in the summer institute that undermined a struggle over meaning among young people. Such forms of contestation were also lessened by discourses of race and by the hermetic culture among Summer Visions' older mentors, which made it more difficult for new mentors to perform their roles. Tensions around the objectives of the summer program, especially in regard to the representation of sexuality also proved to be a problem. Finally, lack of student interest in being challenged about how they engaged their work was an issue that challenged the ways democratic practice was fostered through the program.

Where all these problems are important, at root, Arendt's concern for agonistic struggle in the service of plurality points to the fact that the relationship between youth media work and democratic practice is fundamentally about a kind of thoughtfulness. It is about how such programs help young people to think and act in ways that support "multiple and conflicting voices and strivings" which disrupt forms of complacency and create an upsurge in human responsiveness (Curtis, 1999, p. 8). Such actions foster plurality and it is in attending to the centrality of this outcome that Arendt's framework and this study make a contribution to our thinking about the work of youth media educators.

Future Directions

Youth media production research has a long and diverse history as well as a promising future in large part because creative youth work with digital technologies has become an increasingly common practice in informal and formal education settings. This is an exciting development. If more research is needed to make sense of the way digital technologies are being used in schools, however, our understanding of how youth media programs located within a specific geographic setting work together in ways that influence and shape each other also remains underdeveloped. This study, like many in the area of youth media production, focuses attention on one community-based program and its impact on a group of young people. If this is helpful, what we lack in contemporary research is an understanding of how production initiatives – centred in both school and community-based settings – develop and impact each other in a specific geographic region. This is really to say that we lack an ecological analysis of digital media production pedagogies in current research.

Engaging in this kind of work is difficult because the life span of youth media programs can be precarious given the vagaries of funding and the shifting climate of educational policy and practice in schools. At the same time, media production pedagogies in a given geographic space typically develop through overlapping personal and professional relationships and practices that shape and influence each other. They evolve through affordance networks (Barab and Roth, 2006), in other words, networks that involve a collection of practices, concepts, tools, methods, agendas, and people working across time and space in ways that enable youth production work to grow. We lack, however, a sense of how and the degree to which knowledge practices, concepts, and people operate across institutional and community-based settings in ways that influence how media programs

evolve. Increasingly, there is cross-fertilization between teachers working in media production and community-based youth groups using digital technologies to enhance healthcare and risk prevention, aboriginal education, community development, and art and employment training, etc. By examining how an ecology emerges and by using an Arendtian conception of public action to assess how such an ecology shapes youths' democratic practice, new research has the potential to recast the way the field of media literacy conceptualizes the development of critical production pedagogies among young people.

Conclusion

Having spent more than a decade working with youth, independent filmmakers and school and community-based educators developing media literacy and media production programs, I have a sense of the tremendous possibility that can be opened up through this work. It is not always the case that young people's worlds expand and grow when they produce their own media, but this work often helps youth develop more complex, layered and imaginative conceptions of themselves, their communities and their potential futures. These outcomes may not be evidenced through grand political gestures. But they exist nonetheless in the way creative media practices help young people to see themselves as part of the social, political and cultural spaces where they live.

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APPENDIX A

SUMMER VISIONS MENTOR QUESTIONNAIRE

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Summer Visions Mentor Questionnaire

**Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
Your responses will be kept strictly confidential.**

Research Identification Code #_____   Date:_____
(Using your research identification code # helps keep your information confidential)

Summer Visions Mentor Questionnaire, Part I

1. Date of birth: _____(Month, Day, Year)

2. Gender: _____

3. Place of birth: _____   _____
                   town/city   country

4. Parents'/Guardians place of birth (leave blank if not known):

    (a) Mother/Guardian: _____   _____
                             town/city   country

    (b) Father/Guardian: _____   _____
                             town/city   country

5. Have you lived in Vancouver all your life?   **YES   NO**   (circle one)

    If **YES**, skip to question 7.   If **NO**, what year did you move to Vancouver? _____

6. How many years have you lived in Canada (total number of years, even if you lived outside of British Columbia)? _____

7. Are you a Canadian citizen?   **YES   NO** (circle one)

    If **YES**, how many years have you been a Canadian citizen?

    ❑ All my life   OR   _____ (years)

8. What is your postal code? _____

9. What languages do you speak at home? (please circle all that apply)

Cambodian	Hokkien	Taiwanese
Cantonese	Japanese	Tamil
Chinese	Khmer	Tutchone
Dutch	Korean	Vietnamese
English	Kurdish	Yiddish
Finnish	Mandarin	Tagalog
French	Persian	Hebrew
German	Punjabi	Other:
Greek	Spanish	_____

Of the languages you checked above, which one do you use most often?

At school: _____   At home: _____

10. List the jobs of the adults (mother, father, others) with whom you lived while you were in high school (do not include the jobs of brothers and sisters). Please indicate in parenthesis () the adult that does each job listed. [Example: (mother) teacher]

_____

_____

_____

OR _____ Check here if you do not live with any adults.

11. What is the highest level of schooling that either of your parents attended? Check only one response (for the parent that received the highest level of schooling).

_____ elementary school

_____ high school

_____ college or university

_____ post-graduate professional or academic schooling

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Summer Visions Mentor Questionnaire, Part II

I now want to ask you a few questions about your media production experiences.

12. Besides video production courses you have taken while you in high school, have you taken any other digital media production courses (i.e., web design, or digital photography, or music mixing)?

    YES   **NO**   (circle one)

    If YES, please list the course(s) you have taken and where you took the course [Example: Web Design, Capilano College]

    _____   _____
    Course   Where you took the course

    _____   _____
    Course   Where you took the course

    _____   _____
    Course   Where you took the course

    _____   _____
    Course   Where you took the course

    _____   _____
    Course   Where you took the course

    _____   _____
    Course   Where you took the course

    _____   _____
    Course   Where you took the course

    _____   _____
    Course   Where you took the course

    _____   _____
    Course   Where you took the course

13. Besides the video production and other digital media production courses you have taken, please list any other media production projects you have been involved with either inside or outside of high school. This could include, for instance, media production projects you have been involved in with other organizations [Example: a video project connected with your local community centre, etc.]. Please list the project name, the media used, your role in the project, and the dates of the project.

(a) _____   _____
    Project Name   Major media used

    _____   _____
    Your role in the project   Dates of project

(b) _____   _____
    Project Name   Major media used

    _____   _____
    Your role in the project   Dates of project

(c) _____   _____
    Project Name   Major media used

    _____   _____
    Your role in the project   Dates of project

(d) _____   _____
    Project Name   Major media used

    _____   _____
    Your role in the project   Dates of project

(e) _____   _____
    Project Name   Major media used

    _____   _____
    Your role in the project   Dates of project

(f) _____   _____
    Project Name   Major media used

    _____   _____
    Your role in the project   Dates of project

14. Are you currently able to access (for your own use), any of the following media production equipment? Please √ each technology you are able to access and indicate in the space provided how you access this equipment.

☐ Digital Still camera
How you access _____
☐ Digital Video camera
How you access _____
☐ Computer with still image editing software (i.e., Photoshop, etc.)
How you access _____
☐ Computer with video editing software (i.e., IMovie, or Final Cut Pro, etc.)
How you access _____
☐ Computer with Web Design software
How you access _____
☐ Music mixing equipment
How you access _____
☐ Other (please explain): _____
How you access _____

Summer Visions Mentor Questionnaire, Part III

Now I want to ask you a few questions about the media you watch, listen to and use outside of school.

15. Do you have access to a working television at home?   **YES   NO**   (circle one)

If YES, how many televisions are in your home? _____

16. On an average weekday (Monday to Friday), how much time do you spend watching television? (circle the most relevant time frame)

0-1 hour   2-3 hours   3-4 hours   4 or more hours per day

17. On an average weekend day (Saturday and Sunday), how much time do you spend watching television? (circle the most relevant time frame)

0-1 hour   2-3 hours   3-4 hours   4 or more hours per day

18. Do you typically watch TV while eating (circle all that are appropriate):

Breakfast   Lunch   Dinner

19. What kind of television programming do you typically watch? (Circle as many as are appropriate).
Situation comedies   Dramas   Sports programs   Reality TV shows
News programs   Other (please be specific)_____

UBC

20. When you watch television, do you do so because you know there is a specific program on that you want to watch? Or do you choose to watch television and then decide the best choice from what is available? (Please √ which is the most likely)

☐ Watch TV because there is a specific program on
☐ Turn on the TV and then decide the best choice from what is available

21. How many times per month do you go out to see a movie in a theatre? (circle the most relevant answer)

0-2 times per month   2-3 times per month   4 or more times per month

22. How many times per week do you watch movies at home on a DVD or VHS? (circle the most relevant answer)

0-2 times per week   2-3 times per week   4 or more times per week

23. Is there a genre (type) of movie you prefer to go and see? **YES   NO** circle one

If YES, please indicate your preference for the following types of movies by numbering each from favourite to least favourite:
_____ action-adventure
_____ comedy
_____ romance
_____ horror
_____ documentary
_____ other (please specific) _____

24. Do you have access to a computer in your home?   **YES   NO** circle one

If YES, on an average **weekday**, how much time do you spend using the computer for (circle the most relevant time frame for both Entertainment use and Education use):

Entertainment   0-1 hour   1-2 hours   2-3 hours   4 or more hours per day
Education (homework, etc.) 0-1 hour   1-2 hours   2-3 hours
                                4 or more hours per day

If YES, on an average **weekend day**, how much time do you spend using the computer for (circle the most relevant time frame for both Entertainment use and Education use):

Entertainment   0-1 hour   1-2 hours   2-3 hours   4 or more hours per day
Education (homework, etc.) 0-1 hour   1-2 hours   2-3 hours
                                4 or more hours per day

25. Do you play video games using a game console (i.e., PlayStation 2, XBox, etc.)?
YES   **NO**   circle one

If YES, on an average **weekday**, how much time do you spend playing videos games with a console (circle the most relevant answer)?

0-1 hour   1-2 hours   2-3 hours   4 or more hours per day

If YES, on an average **weekend** day, how much time do you spend playing video games with a console? (circle the most relevant answer)

0-1 hour   1-2 hours   2-3 hours   4 or more hours per day

26. How much time per day do you spend reading (circle the most relevant answer):

For pleasure 0-1 hour   1-2 hours   2-3 hours   4 or more hours per day
For education purposes 0-1 hour   1-2 hours   2-3 hours
                                    4 or more hours per day

27. Have you attended a movie at any of the following local theatres (circle all that apply) in the past year:

Ridge Theatre   Park Theatre   Fifth Avenue   Pacific Cinémathèque Hollywood

If YES, how often do you typically attend movies at any of these local theatres (circle the most relevant answer)?

0-1 times per year   2-5 times per year   5-8 times per year more than 10 times per year

28. Do you read any magazines on a regular basis? **YES   NO** circle one

If YES, please list their titles: _____

_____

_____

_____

29. Do you seek out any media (i.e., websites, magazines, movies, television programs, etc.) that you would consider to be alternative to mainstream media?

YES **NO** circle one

If YES, please list the alternative media you seek out. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Summer Visions Mentors, Individual Interviews
(January 2006)

Questions may need to be added, deleted, or revised depending on the substance of the other data collected and the trajectory of this semi-structured interview.

1. Can you describe what your relationship has been with Cityschool's film program?

2. Can you describe what your relationship has been with the Summer Visions Film Institute?

3. How would you describe the influence, if any, either of these programs has had on you to date?

The next four questions specifically address your experiences with the Summer Visions Film Institute.

4. Has your experience with this program impacted your understanding of and relationship to your local neighbourhood? If so, what impact has it had?

5. Has your experience with this program impacted your relationship with your peers? If so, what impact has it had?

6. Has your experience with this program impacted the way you approach relationships with adults? If so, what impact has it had?

7. Has your experience with this program shaped or influenced decisions you have made about education or career choices following high school?

8. Tell me about one or two of your favourite videos made in the Summer Visions program.

9. Tell me about one or two of your most memorable mentoring experiences in the Summer Visions program.

The following questions are of a more general nature and are intended to solicit participants understanding of and relationship to various media issues.

10. Do you think it is important that young people learn to produce their own media? If so, why?

11. Are movies, television shows, advertising or video games important in shaping the way young people understand themselves? If so, explain why you think this is the case.

12. What impact do you think the media has on how adults understand young people?

13. If I ask you to define the term media literacy, what would you say this term means to you?

14. If I ask you to define the term independent media, what would you say this means to you? Can you give me any examples of independent media?

15. Are there any social, political or economic issues that are important to you at this point in your life? If so, can you explain what these issues are and why they are important to you?

16. Some people come from families where social, political and economic issues are thought to be quite important. Would you say this is the case for your family? If so, what are the issues of greatest concern in your family? What is your opinion in regard to these issues?

17. Some of us learn about politics from sources outside of our families, like, for instance, through our teachers or friends. Have any of your teachers and friends affected your thinking about any social, political or economic issues today? If so, on what issues have you been affected, and by whom?

Summer Visions Mentors, Group Interviews
(Pre-Summer Visions Program, June 2006)

Questions may need to be added, deleted, or revised depending on the substance of the other data collected and the trajectory of this semi-structured interview.

1. Individually, describe what your past experience has been with the Summer Visions program.

2. As a group, describe what you understand to be the role of student mentors in the Summer Visions program?

3. What do you think are the advantages of having students mentor other young people in the video production process? Do you see any disadvantages? What might these be?

4. Do you have any special concerns related to your positions as mentors that you're thinking about as you begin work in the program?

5. What skills and capacities are you most hoping to gain from your experiences working in the Summer Visions program?

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Summer Visions Mentors,
Individual Exit Interviews (Fall 2006)

Questions may need to be added, deleted, or revised depending on the substance of the other data collected and the trajectory of this semi-structured interview.

1. How many years involved with Summer Visions and in what capacities?

2. It's been said that Summer Visions aims to be neither a school nor a summer camp but another kind of production/community experience. Is it different from these other kinds of summer programs, and if so, how?

3. Was there anything like a central theme or set of themes in the videos this year?

4. Do you think conflict or dissonance plays any positive roles in the Summer Visions production process?

5. Have you ever found you discovered something new about yourself through your experiences as a mentor at Summer Visions? If so, can you let me know where or how this took shape?

6. Has your understanding of the mainstream media changed in any way as a result of your work as a student mentor in the Summer Visions program? If so, how has it changed?

7. Has the way you use or watch television or Hollywood movies changed as a result of your work in the Summer Visions program? If so, how has the way you watch these media changed?

8. If I ask you to define the meaning of independent media now that your work as a student mentor is complete, what would you say this means to you? Can you describe any examples?

9. If I ask you to define the term media literacy now that your work as a student mentor is complete, what would you say this term means to you? Are there any media literacy concepts you used while mentoring student video makers? If so, what are these concepts, and can you provide examples of how they were important in your mentoring work?

10. Does youth media production have any relationship to how you understand the meaning of democracy? If so, what is this relationship?

11. How do you think your experience as a student mentor will affect decisions you make in the future – for instance, the education you might pursue, or any other activities you might pursue?

12. Now that you've completed the Summer Visions mentorship program, how might you change the role of student mentors in future Summer Visions programs?

Community Media Educator, Interview
(Spring 2006)

Questions may need to be added, deleted, or revised depending on the substance of the other data collected and the trajectory of this semi-structured interview.

1. How long have you been working as a media educator? Which organizations and programs have you primarily worked with?

2. Why is it important that young people learn to produce their own media? Tell me what you think young people gain from developing these skills and having these kinds of experiences?

3. What is your understanding of the purpose of the Summer Visions Film Institute in relation to other youth media production programs?

4. What impact has participation in this program had on past student participants – in relation to their academic achievement; and in relation to students' future plans following graduation from school? Can you provide some examples?

5. Is it important that audiences from the community at large see young people's media productions? If so, why? How do you think this experience impacts young video makers? How does this experience impact the community's view of young people?

6. Why do you think a community media educator is hired to act as the director of the Summer Visions program?

7. How would you describe the working relationship you have developed with the drama, video production and art teachers at Cityschool through your work in the Summer Visions program?

8. What is the role of the production mentors in the program?

9. What strengths does the mentorship model build into the program? What weaknesses are created in the program as a result of the role played by the mentors? Can you provide examples?

10. Besides providing young people with a job, what gains do you think the production mentors achieve by working for Summer Visions? Can you give some examples?

11. Describe the training process mentors go through in preparation for working in the program? What is the role of media education in this training process?

12. How would you describe the pedagogy or teaching practices that inform the Summer Visions program?

13. If a stranger were to walk into Summer Visions, tell me what the scene of creativity looks like?

14. What opportunities are provided for students by participating in this program that wouldn't exist in regular classroom-based video production courses?

15. If I ask you to define the term media literacy, what would you say this term means to you?

16. If I ask you to define the term independent media, what would you say this means to you? Is it important that young people are exposed to independent media? If so, why?

17. Can you tell me about one or two of your favourite videos made in the Summer Visions program?

18. How might this program improve? What are its weaknesses and what are its strengths?

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Community Media Educator, Interview
(Fall 2006)

Questions may need to be added, deleted, or revised depending on the substance of the other data collected and the trajectory of this semi-structured interview.

1. Tell me what successes you saw in the work of the mentors in the Summer Visions program this year? Any disappointments?

2. If you had to summarize the impact participation in this program has had on the mentors, what would you describe this impact to be? Can you provide examples in relation to specific student mentors?

3. What role did the mentors play in the development of Summer Visions' workshops this year? Can you provide examples in relation to specific workshops and mentors?

4. In what ways do you think media literacy concepts informed the teaching practices of student mentors? Can you provide examples in relation to specific videos?

5. Describe the skills and capacities you believe student mentors gained from their experiences in the program this summer. In what ways will these skills and capacities be useful for students in the future?

6. Were there any instances where you saw student mentors change the way they work with young people as a result of developing their understanding of media literacy? If so, can you provide examples?

7. Now that the program is complete for this year, what changes, if any, might you make in designing future versions of the mentorship program?

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Pacific Cinémathèque Director of Education
Interview (Spring 2006)

Questions may need to be added, deleted, or revised depending on the substance of the other data collected and the trajectory of this semi-structured interview.

1. How would you describe your role in the Summer Visions program?

2. Describe what you see as the mandate or intensions behind the Summer Visions program?

3. Can you describe the organizational model that lies behind the program?

4. What do you see as the advantages, if any, of having the program organized as a partnership between a film institute and a high school? What are the disadvantages of this organizational framework?

5. What is the role of the production mentors in the program?

6. What strengths does the mentorship model build into the program? What weaknesses are created in the program as a result of the role played by the mentors? Can you provide examples?

7. Besides providing young people with a job, what gains do you think the production mentors achieve by working for Summer Visions? Can you give some examples?

8. Describe the training process mentors go through in preparation for working in the program? What is the role of media education in this training process?

9. How would you describe the pedagogy or teaching practices that inform the Summer Visions program?

10. If a stranger were to walk into Summer Visions, tell me what the scene of creativity looks like?

11. If I ask you to define the meaning of independent media, what would you say this means to you? What role, if any, do independent media play in the Summer Visions program?

12. What public skills do the mentors learn and what is the relationship of these skills to critical media education? Can you give examples?

13. How, if at all, do the mentors' experiences prepare them to engage with people they don't know in their professional, public, and educational lives beyond Summer Visions? Can you give any examples?

14. Are there ways in which the older mentors come to care about each other through their experience in Summer Visions that makes them a community or sub-community?

15. What is the dominant discourse that organizes the interactions taking place in Summer Visions?

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Pacific Cinémathèque Director of Education
Interview (Fall 2006)

Questions may need to be added, deleted, or revised depending on the substance of the other data collected and the trajectory of this semi-structured interview.

1. Tell me what successes you saw in the work of the mentors in the Summer Visions program this year? Any disappointments?

2. If you had to summarize the impact participation in this program has had on the mentors, what would you describe this impact to be? Can you provide examples in relation to specific student mentors?

3. Describe the skills and capacities you believe student mentors gained from their experiences in the program this summer. In what ways will these skills and capacities be useful for students in the future?

4. Now that the program is complete for this year, what changes, if any, might you make in designing future versions of the mentorship program?

Classroom Teachers, Individual Interviews
(Spring 2006)

Questions may need to be added, deleted, or revised depending on the substance of the other data collected and the trajectory of this semi-structured interview.

1. Do you think it is important that young people learn to produce their own media? If so, why?

2. What impact do you think the media has on how adults understand young people?

3. How would you describe your role in the Summer Visions program?

4. Describe what you see as the mandate or intentions behind the Summer Visions program?

5. In what ways, if any, is the Summer Visions program different from film courses offered in Cityschool?

6. What impact has participation in this program had on past student participants – in relation to their academic achievement; and in relation to students' future plans following graduation from school? Can you provide some examples?

7. What is the role of the Summer Visions program in the local community?

8. What is the role of the local community in the film program?

9. Is it important that audiences from the community at large see young people's media productions? If so, why? How do you think this experience impacts young video makers? How does this experience impact the community's view of young people?

10. Why is a community media educator is hired to act as the director of the Summer Visions program?

11. What contribution does this program make, if any, in preparing students for choices they will make following graduation from high school?

12. What do you see as the advantages, if any, of having the program organized as a partnership between a film institute and a high school? What are the disadvantages of this organizational framework?

13. What strengths does the mentorship model build into the program? What weaknesses are created in the program as a result of the role played by the mentors?

14. Besides providing young people with a job, what gains do you think the production mentors achieve by working for Summer Visions? Can you give some examples?

15. How would you describe the pedagogy or teaching practices that inform the Summer Visions program?

16. If a stranger were to walk into Summer Visions, tell me what the scene of creativity looks like?

17. What public skills do the mentors learn and what is the relationship of these skills to media education? Can you give examples?

18. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having the mentors act as spokespeople for the program? Can you give some examples?

19. How, if at all, do the mentors' experiences prepare them to engage with people they don't know in their professional, public, and educational lives beyond Summer Visions? Can you give any examples?

20. Are there ways in which the older mentors come to care about each other through their experience in Summer Visions that makes them a community or sub-community?

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Classroom Teacher, Individual Interview
(Fall 2006)

Questions may need to be added, deleted, or revised depending on the substance of the other data collected and the trajectory of this semi-structured interview.

1. Tell me what successes you saw in the work of the mentors in the Summer Visions program this year? Any disappointments?

2. If you had to summarize the impact participation in this program has had on the mentors this year, what would you describe this impact to be? What examples can you provide in relation to specific student mentors?

3. Describe the skills and capacities you believe student mentors gained from their experiences in the program this summer. In what ways will these skills and capacities be useful for students in the future?

4. Now that the program is complete for this year, what changes, if any, might you make in designing future versions of the mentorship program?

Summer Visions Instructors
Individual Interview (Spring 2006)

Questions may need to be added, deleted, or revised depending on the substance of the other data collected and the trajectory of this semi-structured interview.

1. Describe your history with the Summer Visions program? How long have you been involved? If your role with the program has changed over time, describe the various roles you have played throughout the history of your involvement.

2. Describe what you see as the mandate or intentions behind the Summer Visions program?

3. What do you see as the advantages, if any, of having the Summer Visions program organized as a partnership between a film institute and a high school? What are the disadvantages of this organizational framework?

4. What strengths does the mentorship model build into the program? What weaknesses are created in the program as a result of the role played by the mentors?

5. In what ways have you developed working relationships with Summer Vision mentors? Can you provide examples? How, if at all, have these relationships continued beyond the program? Can you provide specific examples?

6. From your experience, what role did the mentors play in the development of Summer Visions' workshops? Can you provide specific examples in relation to workshops and mentors?

7. How do you define the aims of media education?

8. What difference should media education make for mentors who work in the Summer Visions program?

9. From your experience, in what ways do you think media literacy concepts inform the teaching practices of student mentors? Can you provide examples in relation to specific videos or mentors?

10. Were there any instances where you saw student mentors change the way they work with young people as a result of developing their understanding of media literacy? If so, can you provide examples?

11. Describe the skills and capacities you believe student mentors gain from their experiences in this program. In what ways will these skills and capacities be useful for students in the future?

12. If a stranger were to walk into the Summer Visions program in the middle of a program, tell what the scene of creativity would look like?

13. How would you define the idea of the public sphere?

14. How does helping less experienced youth to produce their own media impact or alter the mentors' relationships with the public nature of their lives? Can you give any examples?

15. During your experiences working with Summer Visions mentors, have you noticed changes in the way the older mentors engage with the public nature of their lives? Can you give any examples?

16. How, if at all, do the mentors' experiences prepare them to engage with people they don't know in their professional, public, and educational lives beyond Summer Visions? Can you give any examples?

17. How would you describe the contribution the mentorship program makes in preparing young people for choices they will make following graduation from high school? Can you give specific examples?

Community Members, Individual Interview
(Spring 2006)

Questions may need to be added, deleted, or revised depending on the substance of the other data collected and the trajectory of this semi-structured interview.

1. Can you describe your relationship with the Summer Visions program? How long have you been involved with the program? Why has it been of interest to you to work with this program?

2. Describe what you see as the mandate or intentions behind the Summer Visions program?

3. What importance do you think a program like this has in the lives of young people?

4. Do you think it is important that young people learn to produce their own media? If so, why?

5. What impact does the mentorship component of the Summer Visions program have on those young people hired for these positions? Does it effect their academic achievement; their ability to develop future plans following graduation from school? Can you provide some examples?

6. What role, if any, has the Summer Visions program had in the community located around Cityschool?

7. Thinking of the young people you know who been involved in the Summer Visions program for two or more years, what impact, if any, has the program had on the way these youth understand or relate to their community?

8. Is it important that audiences from the community at large see young people's media productions? If so, why? How does this experience impact the community's view of young people?

9. If I ask you to define the term media literacy, what would you say this term means to you?

10. What impact do you think the mainstream media – television news, advertisements, movies, video games – has on how adults understand young people?

11. In a general way, does youth media production have any relationship to democracy? If so, what is this relationship?

APPENDIX C

UBC BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS, CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	DEPARTMENT	NUMBER
Seixas, P.C.	Curriculum Studies	**B05-0956**

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT
Vancouver School Board ,

CO-INVESTIGATORS:
Poyntz, Stuart, Curriculum Studies

SPONSORING AGENCIES
Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council

TITLE:
Producing a Media Literate Community: An Ethnographic Study of Youth Media Production and Mentorship

APPROVAL DATE	TERM (YEARS)	DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:
DEC - 1 2005	1	Nov. 25, 2005, Consent forms / Assent form / Cover letter / Oct. 27, 2005, Questionnaires

CERTIFICATION:

The protocol describing the above-named project has been reviewed by the Committee and the experimental procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approved on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board
by one of the following:
Dr. Peter Suedfeld, Chair,
Dr. Susan Rowley, Associate Chair

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the experimental procedures