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Video Production and Youth-Educator Collaboration: Openings and dilemmas
La production de vidéos et la collaboration entre les jeunes et leurs éducateurs : débouchés et dilemmes

Michelle Stack

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Résumé de l'article

Cette étude fait l'examen d'un projet collaboratif mené entre des jeunes du secondaire et leurs éducateurs adultes (étudiants à la maîtrise en éducation) pour créer des De quelle manière les jeunes et les éducateurs abordent les média, la politique, le pouvoir et les changements sociaux? Basée sur mes observations des interactions des participants, j'affirme que le pouvoir n'est pas dichotomique, les adultes exerçant leur pouvoir sur les jeunes. L'exercice de créer un vidéo collaboratif offre des outils pédagogiques signifiants. Il permet de mobiliser les individus en les engageant dans des conversations sur le sens de la justice sociale et les stratégies possibles pour augmenter sa prévalence.

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VIDEO PRODUCTION AND YOUTH-EDUCATOR COLLABORATION: OPENINGS AND DILEMMAS

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ABSTRACT. This study explores a collaborative project between high school youth and adult educators (graduate students in education) to create public service announcements. How do young people and educators talk about media, politics, power, and social change? Based on my observations of participant interaction, I argue that power is not dichotomous, with adults necessarily exerting power over youth. The very act of creating a collaborative video can provide a meaningful pedagogical tool to mobilize the individuals involved to engage in conversations about the meaning of social justice and strategies for achieving greater social justice.

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RÉSUMÉ. Cette étude fait l'examen d'un projet collaboratif mené entre des jeunes du secondaire et leurs éducateurs adultes (étudiants à la maîtrise en éducation) pour créer des De quelle manière les jeunes et les éducateurs abordent les média, la politique, le pouvoir et les changements sociaux ? Basée sur mes observations des interactions des participants, j'affirme que le pouvoir n'est pas dichotomique, les adultes exerçant leur pouvoir sur les jeunes. L'exercice de créer un vidéo collaboratif offre des outils pédagogiques signifiants. Il permet de mobiliser les individus en les engageant dans des conversations sur le sens de la justice sociale et les stratégies possibles pour augmenter sa prévalence.

INTRODUCTION

Media are central, if not primary, teachers for both young people and adults. The word media is often used to talk about both the means of communication (radio, internet, print, television, video, and film) and the product or text (movies, television shows, and the news) (Stack & Kelly, 2006). When I speak of media I am speaking of the texts and the role of these texts in our social, political, and economic world.

Children and youth spend more time learning from media than schools (Buckingham, 2003, p. 5; Stack & Kelly, 2006). Media educators have played a central role in advocating for curricula and pedagogy which enable young people to

engage with, create, and critique the power structures that surround them. In this paper I examine the relationships between youth and educators involved in a research project in which they created videos together. Central to this analysis is an understanding of how youth and educators build collaborative relationships, an understanding that challenges powerful cultural assumptions about what is to be young and what it is to be an educator.

In a special issue of the McGill Journal of Education on youth and media production, Hoechsmann and Sefton-Green (2006) pose a crucial question:

> If young people are able to communicate and make media exchanging images and argument in a public space, what role do we have as mediators of this work? (p. 190)

In this paper I extend this question to ask: How can youth and adults be each other's mediators? During collaborative class work, I have had many compelling discussions with young people and adults about society's obsession with the potential evils of simulated violence, rather than a concern for real world acts of aggression we are exposed to in daily news reports. Media education projects with youth and adults can provide an opportunity to challenge adults and youth to look at why violence in video games or the news is so ubiquitous. Media education with both youth and adults also has the potential for opening discussion about diverse audience perspectives on issues such as the meaning and experience of media violence as well as many other topics.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Complicating critical pedagogy, collaboration and dialogue

Researchers have focused on the collaborative nature of youth media production (Goodman, 2003, Goldfarb, 2002, Fleetwood, 2005), but much less on youth-adult partnerships in the media production process (Chávez & Soep, 2005). In their 2005 study, Chávez and Soep addressed this critical issue, working with youth in a radio project that attempted to "transcend the conventional relationship between adult 'teachers' and youth 'learners' to co-produce media products" (409). Transcending conventional relationships in formal schooling meant setting up media production opportunities that involved youth and adults both being accountable for collaborative media productions; framing media productions that involved both youth and adults; promoting youth-led inquiry; and seeing media production as a social justice intervention that involved both youth and adults in resolving conflict and better understanding inequality (409). By acknowledging power differentials between youth and adults, Chávez and Soep define a relationship between youth and adults in which both have a high level of emotional and social involvement. Through their interaction, young people and adults have opportunities to develop different ways of understanding themselves and each other.

Interpretations of terms such as "collaboration," "student voice," "dialogue," "democracy," and "transformation" vary wildly in the field of education Some educators and policy makers continue to enforce traditional models wherein young people are expected to comply with adult decisions about their schooling but are given some choice in how to comply. More critical approaches promote collaboration between students and educators to create more democratic learning environments (Fielding, 2004).

The literature of most interest for this paper is the critical writing that posits that student engagement or voice should be part of a larger strategy to transform schools to actively challenge inequity and create places for young people to be involved in debate and decision making about the running of their school (Thomson, 2003; Soohoo, 1993). Such a critical approach to student engagement shares goals with critical pedagogy and critical media education, including: 1) committing to working with youth to "read their world" rather that "read the word" (Freire, 1970); 2) promoting opportunities for collaboration among youth; 3) acknowledging asymmetrical power relations and a commitment to their transformation; 4) focusing on relationships among youth, and between youth and adults; 5) understanding diverse socio-political and cultural contexts and respecting the multiple perspectives within these relationships. Finally, both critical media and critical pedagogy recognize that young people have a desire to learn and know what they need in order to learn.

It is vital to temper a desire for a classroom that challenges inequity, which is the mission of critical pedagogy, with the possibility that critical pedagogy ends up operating, as Gore (1993) argues, as a form of surveillance and regulation of students. In her work, Gore provides many examples of students saying and doing what they are expected to do whether in a "critical" or traditional classroom. Through my data analysis, I will also demonstrate instances in which this seemed to occur during my research.

Collective video production can be a way to engage and debate the difference between true dialogue and compliance. Pushing to resolve differences can lead to what Rowbotham called a "coercive consensus" (1979, p. 40) in which there is agreement based on fatigue or the power of more dominant members of a group. In the end, to create an effective video, there might be decisions to compromise, but this should be done within the framework of allowing and encouraging disagreement This was the dynamic under investigation in the study reported here..

Youth, video production, and the horizons of radical pedagogy

Despite the lack of research that explicitly deals with youth-adult collaboration, there is a rich body of literature emerging concerning community media programs (Goldfarb, 2002; Goodman, 2005). Sefton-Green (2006), amongst others, has argued that community programs allow for more innovation in

the products, as well as the relationships, between youth and adults. School programs are sometimes limited by prescribed learning outcomes, lack of time, and school-based conceptions of what it means to be a student and what it means to be a teacher. Perhaps for this reason, much of the work in critical youth media production takes place within community settings rather than schools. This observation does not negate the work done by dedicated and often isolated critical media education teachers in schools, nor does it mean to minimize the potential for using some of the principles used in community programs in school settings, as Steve Goodman has done at the Educational Video Center in New York.

Producing a video can result in challenges to adult authority. Youth videos sometimes use humour to make fun of adult concerns about troubled or troublesome youth. Sometimes youth videos can suggest forms of resistance to schooling that might be objectionable to adults. Video production can also be seen as part of vocational education (Goldfarb, 2002) or media apprecia-tion, or as a motivator for students to succeed-in traditional school subjects. It can also be seen as a tool to increase student engagement and transform relationships between students and teachers, as Thomson and Comber (2003) suggest through their work with children and youth in six school environments. Their study set out to examine how technology could be used with "pedagogy as an apprenticeship of knowledge production" (p. 305). As Thomson and Comber relate:

> [O]ur view was that schools could become sites where knowledges are brokered, produced and critically interrogated. In such reciprocal pedagogical processes, epistemological relations are fundamentally changed. (p. 308)

Can relations between teachers and students really change when institutional constraints, such as testing and disciplinary structures, have such a profound and persistent impact on youth? This question raises a need for further study of the limits and possibilities of collaborative media production within broader institutional power dynamics.

Buckingham (2003) argues that media education ought to provide students with opportunities to analyze media texts and what they find pleasurable in them, as well as to create their own media texts. In creating their own examples, students become more aware of how the media they consume is produced. Though awareness is important, it doesn't mean young or old people will necessarily change their habits; as one student said, "I know smoking is bad for me, but it doesn't mean I will stop."

Jenkins (1997) has argued that youth production is not necessarily liberatory in a critical sense, but can reflect a reaction to the larger society. In this regard, Masterman (1985) proposes that, through investigation, students will understand the underlying values and ideology of the broader power politics of the contexts in which they operate. I argue, therefore, that video production

does not in itself alter power relations between youth and adults collaborating together. While video production can disrupt and create room for questions, one still needs to observe carefully the social contexts of the classroom.

Analyzing media education: Epistemic, cultural, and relational frames

In this paper, I look at my data through three lenses. The first lens is epistemic. This section deals with claims to knowledge made by both the youth and the adult participants; for example, youth often have more technological skills than adults and cannot be immediately constructed as the "unknowing" student. This creates competing knowledge and truth claims in a classroom that revolve around the culturally entrenched notions of the wisdom of adults and the technical know-how of youth.

The second lens is cultural. My assumption is that the process of creating a video encourages discussions in which participants prompt each other to see things in different ways and thus challenge notions of what Lewis and Finders (2002) call the "implied adolescent" and "implied teacher." These authors show that what is often conceptualized as a generation gap, based on savvy teenagers and technologically illiterate teachers, is actually based on the "construction of identity that comes with material consequences related to access and authority" (Lewis & Finders, 2002, p. 101).

The third and final lens is based in interpersonal communication. I structured the class to create an exciting and fun environment, yet one in which participants take themselves and their audiences seriously. Making activities enjoyable for everyone creates tension between different youth cultures, and youth and adult cultures; participants are encouraged to interrogate what "fun" means to different groups and to consider whether these meanings are ever shared. Connections between diverse groups are sometimes hindered not only by age differences but also constructions of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and disability. Age, however, remains significant to an examination of what youth and adults find both funny and offensive in media. As will become clear in the analysis, it is of limited value to think of interpersonal communication as outside of cultural and epistemic issues.

In what follows, I provide background information about the participants, data sources, and methodology, and I offer an analysis of my findings.

Participants and methodology

The high school students recruited for this study were 16 - 17 years old at the time of the course. They were from a predominately middle-class school in Vancouver. Two factors influenced my choice of high school: first, the school was close to the university, and I felt proximity was important for a class that was going to take place over three full-day Saturdays; second, a teacher on staff

at the school was keen to assist me in finding students who were not necessarily considered class leaders, or strong academically, and who came from a variety of backgrounds. All of the students lived in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, with most living in the city of Vancouver. There were four young women and eight young men. Four were recent immigrants from Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. Four were racialized minorities. Many of the high school students had some experience producing videos either on their own or as part of school projects; some had taken a TV production course between grades 8 and 10. Most of the high school students used the Internet, blogged, and used online chat services on a regular basis.[1]

The 11 university students ranged in age from their late 20s to their 50s. The idea of the project was to build a space outside of the usual K-12 classroom to explore collaborative video work. All the adults were registered in graduate programs in the Faculty of Education. Nine of the university students were women, and half of the class members were racialized minorities. All but three were K-12 teachers, counselors, or administrators; the remaining three were adult educators with experience working with youth. Most of the educators reported using the Internet but were not as active in blogging and online chatting as the high school students. One university student described herself as "anti-media," although she did enjoy films and some alternative media. Many of the educators had experience in the arts: three reported experience in the performing arts, one trained as a photo journalist, one as a visual artist, one previously wrote for the local newspaper, and one reported growing up with a photographer and feeling very comfortable around the darkroom. All reported some experience in either creating media or facilitating its creation. Some, however, had very little experience, and suggested they were quite nervous about the requirement to create a video during the course.

Students who registered expressed interest in media and collaboration. The educators were interested in collaborating with youth, and many had prior experience with various forms of youth-adult collaboration. Finally, both youth and adults were interested enough in the research to agree to participate in it.

Data Sources and Analysis The data sources for this study included field notes, pre- and post-interviews with participants, weekly confidential assessments of the sessions provided by participants, course evaluations, written papers completed by the graduate students, and videos taken of the class by videographer Evane Crowe. I directed filming of the class and video process and used the participants' video projects as an additional data source for this paper.

Data were analyzed within an interpretive paradigm. As Bassey (1999) states:

> People perceive and construe the world in ways which are often similar but
> not necessarily the same. So there can be different understandings of what
> is real. Concepts of reality can vary from one person to another. Instead of

> reality being "out there," it is the observers who are "out there." They are part of the world that they are observing and so, by observing, may change what they are trying to observe. (p. 43; *emphasis in the original*)

In keeping with an interpretive framework, I draw on theories of critical ethnography. Critical ethnographers who focus on schools often analyze how traditional teaching practices reproduce oppressive social structures (Fine, 2000, Kelly, 2000), how inequity is reproduced through policy and curriculum, and who is listened to and who is marginalized in schools. They do not see themselves as neutral observers but as actors with a responsibility to create a more socially just society.

In addition to interview transcripts and written papers, this project drew on work from visual methodologies. Pink (2001) states that visual research "begins with the premise that the purpose of analysis is not to translate 'visual evidence' into verbal knowledge, but to explore the relationship between visual and other knowledge" (p. 96). I was provided with a great deal of assistance from two research assistants and videographers – Corin Kokotailo Browne and Patti Fraser - to produce a video of the course. In analyzing the 20 hours of film, my interpretation of the collaboration process became more nuanced. Through watching the tapes and analysis of interviews with participants, I came to see how I was both an insider as the teacher but also an outsider. The body language and interactions between participants offered important data that were very useful in understanding the non-verbal aspects of a collaborative video process as well as the effect my presence had on participants. At times, I was concerned the participants, particularly the graduate students, felt they were being surveilled rather than videotaped to learn more about the process of collaborative video with youth and educators.

On a few occasions when the educators were having a class without the high school students, and were discussing the challenges of collaboration, the participants asked for the camera to be turned off.

Another consideration in the process of videotaping collaborative discussion is the researcher's role in directing filming. It was interesting to reflect on what I chose to have Evan film, and what shots I selected for the 30 minute video out of over 20 hours of footage. Mitchell, Kusner and Charbonneau-Gundy (2004) state:

> Now we are putting forward the idea that video production can be a tool for representation and inquiry, and a way to go "thick and deep" into the study of our classrooms. As educational researchers and practitioners, we could be producing our own classics in school-based ethnographies... (p. 287)

I draw on Mitchell, Kusner, and Charbonneau-Gowdy (2004) in looking at how data can be gleaned not only from what the university researcher collects but also through the eyes and ears of participants. I did learn much from the

participants' analysis of their videos as well as from the one that documented the project, but in the end I acknowledge that I still maintain the authority to write the final interpretation of this work.

Data collection

The course I created and taught represented the first phase in a larger eth-nographic research project. My research assistant at the time, Stuart Poyntz, and I interviewed each of the educators and high school students prior to the beginning of the project. This was done in the spring of 2005. In these pre-project semi-structured interviews, students were asked to talk about what they expected from the course and about their experience in media production, media education, and collaborative projects. The interviews were conducted individually with the educators, and took place at their place of work, and in groups with the high school students–at their school.

Five collaborative videos were created as part of the course. My data sources include filming of the class, the participants' PSA videos, interviews (indi-vidual, paired or small group) with participants, and reflective papers from the educators. A second interview was done after the course in the fall of 2005. Jennifer Muir, an educator who was not part of the project, did most of this interviewing.[2] Interviews were conducted either individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Jennifer or I watched the videos with participants and asked them to comment on their own and the other videos. I used this interview as part of my data as well as the written reflections and evaluations of the course by students. The videos were approximately one minute in length and had to have something to do with the media. For example, one video consisted of two girls getting bombarded with tennis balls, while text was shown about how youth are bombarded with advertising.

The actual collaborative classroom sessions were videotaped by Evan Crowe, who worked in a community media program as a youth mentor. His footage allowed me to analyze the process. All of the video footage (approximately 20 hours) was logged and analyzed.

After the interviews, I debriefed with the research assistants and listened to each interview. The semi-structured interviews lasted from approximately 45 minutes to 90 minutes. By design, most of the educators were interviewed individually. The high school students were given the option of individual, paired, or group interviews; most elected to be interviewed with others. Most of the teachers were interviewed during the school year at their schools; they had limited time and were spread across the Lower Mainland. The high school students, on the other hand, were from one school and many of them knew each other. For the most part, they were comfortable with peers being present when being interviewed by my research assistant. More data were collected

about the educators, since their portion of the course ran 40 hours. High school students only participated for 18 of the 40 hours.

In the post-class interviews, Jennifer Muir asked students about their thoughts and feelings regarding the course, focusing specifically on the collaborative process. She also asked them to reflect on their videos and the meanings that they and other class members attributed to them.

KEY THEMES

Epistemic

A number of themes emerged in the process of coding and analyzing data from reflection papers written by educators, video of the classroom sessions, videos produced by participants, and interviews. In what follows, I discuss the central themes that emerged using the categories of epistemic claims and collaboration dilemmas, relationships and culture.

Epistemic claims and collaboration dilemmas: Equal footing but different feet?

> Amy [E][3]: It's [collaboration] one of those words that it is easy for people to agree with and can mean very different things.

The educators had different experiences with collaboration. Those who were performing artists talked about the culture of collaboration within the arts; a number of participants had experience teaching drama or performing in plays. Another taught visual arts to students in an alternative program, and she talked about collaboration as essential to obtaining the cooperation of the students. Others talked about "steering" projects with children and youth but "giving them latitude," as a form of collaborative teaching.

Thinking through assessment is key to developing the trust needed to collaborate. In his reflection paper, Michael [E] commented:

> Further complicating matters was my desire to do well in university and to align myself with the collaborative aims of this course. Paradoxically, these aims then have the potential to generate mildly coercive behaviour as grad students attempt to ensure that we demonstrate collaboration with youth. I'm very glad that we weren't graded individually on our efforts with the production of the video as I think this helped the grad students to avoid focusing on how we appeared to collaborate and allowed more space to simply focus on the attempt to do so.

Some of the high school students reported being bored for what Sandra [HS] called the "learning day". This was a section of the course in which project team members took all of the students through the techniques of video production and also talked about strategies for constructing PSAs. Melinda [HS] and Sandra [HS] contrasted this to the brainstorming and thinking time.

> Interviewer: And what part did you like the best?
> Melinda [HS]: I liked brainstorming and thinking.

> Sandra [HS]: Yeah, that was so much fun. It was like we went from a totally different. Like we started somewhere and then went to a totally different place.

Melinda and Sandra are stating that learning is something that takes place in a formal classroom situation in which a teacher is at the front of the room and talking to students. They contrast this with the "brainstorming" and "thinking" time in which they are full actors in the process of determining the video production process.

Knowledge of technology was a part of the collaborative relationship in a number of ways. For example, the high school students' confidence in using and helping the educators use the technology was evident in the interviews, particularly with male high school students.

> Joe [HS]: One of the main reasons that it was easy to do that is because we all were sort of able to put different things into it. Like, me and Quinn [HS] sort of had one side of it, but they had another side. We were all on equal footing but we were like, we were all on different feet. [chuckles]

Here we see that knowledge of the technology disrupts notions of the young student and older teacher. Later, Joe elaborated that they were not merely equal to the educators; in some regards, they claimed greater strength.

> I mean, you're just talking about it like oh, it's all special to be on equal footing with teachers and I thought like, it sort of turned out to be like we knew how to use video cameras and they didn't. [laughter]

Quinn and Joe are making a claim of superior knowledge. This and similar claims sometimes resulted in frustration in the group when the educators sometimes felt that that high school students, particularly the males ones, were dominating the technology.

The high school students talked about how they and the educators brought different things to the table. The high school students often had greater technological skills, but sometimes the adults had more experience with organization, which assisted in getting the video done. Melinda [HS], Louie [HS], and Sandra [HS] talked about how Doris, the educator they worked with (a high school principal), "kept them on track but not like in a bossy way." They maintained, "She wasn't our leader or anything. She was just part of the group." After the video was completed, Doris [E] asked Melinda [HS], Louie [HS], and Sandra [HS] what they thought of the process. They talked about how they felt listened to and respected. Doris [E] responded that it was "a two-way street... because... I am just a geek when it comes to, you know, technology. And I said you guys are great and very supportive of me. So I always felt that that was reciprocated." Kathy [E] talked about Sophie's [HS] ability to see what she wanted to create and the ability of the educators to help her articulate this through drawing and asking questions.

Interpersonal dynamics and power

The educators who were also elementary teachers sometimes expressed some anxiety about working with youth. One connected her nervousness with the age group to her own negative experiences as a teenager. The high school students, overall, expressed excitement about the prospect of collaborating with adults. They talked about how "strange" or "weird" it would feel to work as a partner with adults, some their parents' age, rather than working in a hierarchal relationship of student-teacher.

Educators and high school students sometimes had different interpretations of the collaborative process. The youth for the most part spoke of feeling like they were "equal" and how unique an experience this was for them within an educational context. Josif [HS] explained how unique it was to not have an adult say "okay we're going to do it like this." He understood this happens because it is seen as saving time; however, he went on to explain why not doing this made the class enjoyable for him:

> I think we got much more out of it.... It didn't really feel like it was school, right, when I went to the video project. It was more like all the grown-ups there and the teachers and stuff were all like equal and we were all talking to each other like we were friends like we're. Like they're not teachers, you know? Like there weren't any differences between us. So everyone was kind of equal. (Josif) [HS]

A theme throughout the high school students' remarks is the feeling of being equal and respected. Christopher [HS] talked about how much he enjoyed working with the educators and how he wanted to try harder because they "perceived me as something." When Claire [HS] asked what he meant by "something," he responded: "Something more recognizable than just like a student or something." Claire [HS] agreed with this and added:

> Accepted. Like everything you said actually mattered. You know? Whereas before it was like, well. "Okay. Well, we'll keep that in mind." But now it's like your opinion can actually change that decision.

One high school student who is also an ESL learner spoke of the anxiety of choosing the wrong words or having incorrect grammar when speaking with people older than herself, but also about being excited by the possibility of being seen as an equal participant.

> You, you think like even though I'm smaller, I'm accepted... in like older people's group. So you just get there and say what you want. And they just accept. If it's wrong, they just tell you it's wrong. If not,... And they just kind of accept that you, like if it's wrong, they give you the reason. If not, like, just say, no, my opinion is better. (Sophie) [HS]

Here Sophie [HS] still assumes that if an adult states something is wrong, it is, but she feels that her views are respected. At other times in the interview, she talked about feeling like she could assert her opinions and be treated

with respect by the educators. Sophie and a number of the other high school students talked about how powerful it was to be in a situation with adults in which they were all students and in which everyone had a collective purpose. The different skills and experiences youth and adults brought to the project was also a theme in many of the interviews.

Some of the educators talked about how nice it was to work with high school students who were participating voluntarily, rather than by requirement. Some of the high school students talked about how the money, an honorarium, was an incentive. The high school students said they ended up enjoying it far more than they had expected to. Joe [HS] maintained he did do it for the money but that he had fun and it was better than "some crappy job."

High school students and educators were asked if they felt they had fully participated and if others in their group had as well. The high school students all said they felt they fully participated and that they felt equal to the educators in determining the nature of the video. They spoke highly of the educators. Joe [HS] talked about how, as a group, they sat down and thought through the main concept of their movie:

> ... it was kind of cool. One of us would like think of like a sort of broad, open idea and another person would like narrow it down and like add something to it. And we'd just keep on doing that until we got some, till we got our good idea.

Sometimes it seemed like equal meant the youth took the lead:

> So yeah, they would let me to do whatever I thought, not whatever I thought, but they just, they trusted me. (Sophie [HS])

Yvette [E] and Kathy [E] worked with Sophie [HS] and expressed the sense that they let Sophie take over. Kathy asked in the graduate-student-only debrief: "Is that collaboration?" Terri [E] asked if Kathy [E] had given up too much. Terri, in asking the question, talked about how she had to tell the boys she was working with that they needed to make room for her and her needs in the project. Interestingly, Kathy also talked about how youth do well with structure and that it is important for youth and educators to know where their respective parameters are. She feels strongly that eventually consensus must be reached. The high school students and the educators have different views of the experience. Sophie [HS], for example, stated that it had been collaborative, while the educators put themselves in a more maternal or teacherly role. They felt their job was to empower Sophie [HS] rather than to enter into a dialogue in which they could disagree and challenge. Diane [E], whom I discuss below, talked about the lack of time to develop deep relationships that might have initiated a more collaborative process.

An issue that came up with educators was the difficulty of changing roles. Amy [E] spoke of how roles are so entrenched that breaking out of them is

challenging. She spoke of how *inviting* youth to collaborate and *doing* it are two different things.

> ....youth and kids have spent, for the most part, have spent a lifetime sort of having to do what adults tell them to, so you can't just turn that off.

Yvette [E] reported how she was struck by the focus on creating a welcoming environment – especially for most youth – by not starting too early in the day and by providing food. She said she came to realize more clearly that instead of seeing youth as lazy, one could construct them as having busy schedules and needing structures that allow them to participate. She compared this to her needs for childcare provisions for her to be able to participate fully.

But Michael [E] brought up the difference between talking about change and acting on his talk.

> We spent a lot of time in the first few classes dealing with how to be respectful with youth and how to really set up equitable partnerships. And once the youth appeared, it was interesting because we had that in our heads, but at the same time, you fall back on certain teacherly things. Sometimes it's modes of voice. And it was difficult to, you know, to not be aware of the differences between the two groups particularly around food. At food time everybody would separate.

As the course progressed, high school students and educators who were in the same video group sometimes ate together, but people tended to sit next to people of similar age, especially at the beginning of the course. This is probably not just a matter of age but also related to the educators knowing each other and the high school students knowing each other prior to the first meeting.

Amy [E], was aware of how the power configuration changed when I or any other member of the teaching staff was present.

> Any time any sort of a teacher or authority came by, the entire language, the entire positioning, everything was just put on for show.... yeah I think it was completely limiting.

Amy [E] points out how formal power structures always exert control, despite attempts to create a space that allows for a plurality of opinions and power by both youth and adults. Terri [E] talked about how she and the other educator she was working with were both conscious of their behaviour, rather than it being "submerged out of habit." For this reason they were able to look at and act on what was going on. They both examined the dynamics and challenged themselves and the young men they were working with when they felt the dynamics were not serving everyone's needs. Amy contrasted this with the young men with whom she enjoyed working. She felt that they were able to say when their needs were being met but were less capable of seeing what was happening for the educators. Gender became a dominant feature in this group as the young men saw themselves as more capable with the technology and sometimes became frustrated with the female educators.

Participants were never explicitly censored in what they created, but young video mentors provided them with advice. Furthermore, during the first class we looked at Public Service Announcements that my research assistants and I considered exemplary. In this way we were directing students as to what we saw as "good." Of course, issues of self-censorship are always present. These were schooled students. They had years of knowing what the teacher expected, even when not stated, but also years of media implicitly teaching the lessons of effective and ineffective media. In this class there were intergenerational and positional differences that required a sophisticated analysis by participants to negotiate and to communicate their vision for the video. This is an unequal process that is based partly on structural power issues, which are connected to the confidence of individuals to communicate with others who are seen as powerful. However, video production is interesting because who is seen as having more influence or power can change quickly. For example, one person might have the power of the mouse because of her editing ability and another the power to focus a group because of age.

Differences in age caused some divide in the group. However, some of the tension was between adults: between participants who understood references to current pop culture and those who did not. For example, one participant felt he was being portrayed as a "slacker guy" even though he believed that the work was being done; he and the high school participant merely had a different way of communicating and getting the work done.

Culture

On the first day that the high school students and educators were together, we brainstormed ideas for the Public Service Announcements. I was assisted by two educators (who have now completed their studies) – Stuart Poyntz and Corin Kokotailo Browne – who both have extensive backgrounds in media education. A theme that generated a great deal of conversation was representations of masculinity. A number of the young men in the group spoke of being pressured to act in hyper-masculine ways that they didn't identify with. At lunch a discussion ensued in which Terri, a middle-aged white educator, and a number of high school students had an animated discussion about identity. A group formed that determined it would look at how hip-hop is marketed, another group formed to look at "mooks" (guys who do macho and dangerous things), two groups formed to look at advertising, and two formed to look at identity. The hip-hop and mook groups and one of the advertising groups specifically challenged stereotypical masculinity. Michael [E] spoke of connecting with Jacob [HS] on popular culture. He and Jacob both watched the show the Family Guy. Michael liked parts of the show, but he found the misogyny in the show challenging and sometimes felt like he wanted to "lecture" Jacob [HS]. But he thought about it and decided not to:

> So it was hard or I could feel like there's that thing, like, I enjoy this. Don't ruin it for me. And I'm saying that you know, I think adults really don't respect young people. Like, you're right. You do enjoy this and I should respect that kind of thing.

Here, Michael is dealing with contradictory and sometimes uncomfortable ways of watching programs, such as the Family Guy. He likes it but simultaneously is uncomfortable with parts of it. Frequently in talking to youth about programs such as the Family Guy, adults focus on irony and how the Family Guy and other shows are making fun of misogyny rather than promoting it. In this case, the duality of Michael's own interpretation is layered with his concerns and assumptions about how Jacob might be interpreting the show and possibly developing his sense of gender and sexuality from the show.

The sense that the differences between adults and youth were eliminated is a common – albeit contested – theme throughout the data. Some of the educators maintained that when working side by side with youth, at first adults might think they have all the answers, but as youth and adults get into the collaborative work at hand, the age difference is minimized and everyone works together. Others spoke of wanting to get away from the power differences, which were described as the informal power that operated between the youth and the adults, the facilitators and the students, and between men and women.

Connected to the discovery of different skills and experiences is a process of questioning previously fixed ideas about the other. A number of the high school students, particularly the group that worked with the school principal, commented that the adults they worked with seemed not like teachers but like equal participants. Louie [HS] reported:

> I mean, I didn't know she was an actual principal! And I would never have thought she was a principal at all.

The concept of what a school principal or teacher is seemed to revolve around setting rules and enforcing them, and determining what was to be learned and how. Most of the educators had critiques of the implied adolescent, but some spoke of how meeting the high school students challenged them to look at the assumptions they had made about youth and themselves. Michael's [E] implied youth was one of being hip, and, through the course, he realized he was no longer young and hip and that hanging out with the youth would not make him so.

> One of the things that I thought was interesting for me is that [pauses] it wasn't so much me wanting to step, to step out of my adult role and cling to my adult role, it was part of what was happening to me was "oh, I'm no longer young."

Kathy [E], an elementary school teacher, talked about how impressed she was with the high school students and how this brought her to see youth in general in a more positive light. Other educators made assumptions based on their

experience of working with youth who were constructed within the school system as "at risk" or otherwise problematic. Terri [E] compared the youth in the class with the youth she works with at an alternative setting.

> And so these youth coming in to this project. It was like, oh wow, this, this is nothing... They're not acting out. They're not poking each other. They're not stealing the equipment [laughter] ... I was pleasantly surprised because they were, they seemed so mature and so with it. Like, so with, not coming up to me and hating me before they'd even talked to me. But actually being curious and being able to just have this very respectful relationship.

The categorical nature of youth was disrupted through Terri's relationships with the students. However, these spaces were not uniform among educators and high school students. Maureen [E] explains adolescents in essentialist terms. She believed they were naturally less logical and angrier than adults, even if they did not know it:

> Many of them are still stuck in the syllogisms, you know, so that you wind up with everything being black. [Laughter] If this one's black and that one's black, then my whole world is black. [Laughter]. And so, you know, we've seen that in youth culture over the years, it's a repetitive thing and that's because that's so endemic, you know, in their thinking.

The sociocultural context in which youth are angry is absent, replaced by a universalistic and biological notion of what it means to be a youth.

On the one hand, Doris [E] views youth as naively accepting the images they see in a world that has become increasingly more complicated for them; on the other hand, she views youth as sophisticated and knowledgeable because of their access to media and the Internet. Doris's statement includes epistemic claims, as well as cultural understandings of youth and her understanding of power based on the categorization of youth and adult. She wants to know more about how youth become passionate and interested in the world. Youth have differential access to technology based on economic capital, and this is entrenching a divide that rarely enters discussions about youth and technology; however, it does speak to the world of many high school students in the study and the youth in Doris's [E] school, who were engaged with technology at home and in their leisure time. It also speaks to how the youth Doris refers to, both at her school and the high school participants in the project, often see making meaning and sharing it through video and the Internet as central to their lives.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to show how educator-youth collaboration using video creates a place to explore critical media education as a strategy for more democratic pedagogy. In this study I argue that media is central to how youth and adults come to understand each other and that collaboration has the

potential to create new ways of creating stories that allow youth to be more than troubled and troublesome and educators to be more than disciplinarians. Video collaboration projects can allow youth and educators a time to consider strategies for challenging media representations (including their own) that exclude, demonize, or marginalize groups of people

Following Giroux and Aronowitz (1991), this study emphasizes the need for schools to take into account the epistemic claims that students make based on popular culture and to use this knowledge to engage in dialogue. However, lacking in much of the critical pedagogy literature is an analysis of educators' understandings of how media influences them. Adults come to learn about youth, social problems, the environment, and a host of other issues through the media. What do they learn about youth that they deem different than themselves? How does this influence the way they interact with them and their parents? I argue that media accounts of troubled and troublesome youth do play a role in the construction of youth pathology. Media education for adults or collaborative youth-adult media education provides a space for stories that allow complexity and diversity.

The goal of collaboration should not necessarily be consensus, but the willingness of participants to look at the contradictions and disagreements they have with each other but are also contained in the videos they produce. A video can be both radical and conservative at the same time. We need only look at shows like the Simpsons to see a show that is seen as both radical and conservative to understand the need to be complex in our analysis of media. Collaborating in creating and talking about media has the potential to challenge simplistic understandings of media, youth and educators. At the moment there are too few opportunities for youth and adults within the educational system to move beyond mere critique of media and to use media as a way to initiate dialogue about creating a more hopeful and equitable world.

In this study, I looked at power relationships between high school and graduate students and found there were openings, albeit partial ones, to challenge normative adult-youth relations. High school participants reported feeling a sense of "being somebody" even though this happened within asymmetrical power relations with adults. While youth reported feeling equal, the adults sometimes felt that their job was to facilitate the voice of youth rather than to have a voice themselves. Some adults tried to have a dialogue (defined differently by different students) with the youth but found that, due to lack of time and a lack of attention to issues other than age (gender, for example), they were not provided with the space to do this.

The idea is not to eliminate power but to question how it operates – and many of the educators did this. Working towards these possibilities opened up some space for dialogue and action within the class. Another area that

requires more research is to look at frequent claims that the use of technology, including video, transforms schools and flattens hierarchies. A more complex analysis would examine underlying contradictions about choice, creativity, and individualization alongside increased competition and standardization. This project took place within a specific cultural context that includes notions of schooling, what it is to be a youth, and what it means to an adult. Within this, openings did occur through which adults and youth challenged their implied notions of what it means to be a youth or adult. Some of the educators spoke of being surprised at how articulate and engaged the youth were, and the youth spoke of thinking of the educators not as teachers but as equal participants. The implied youth and educator appeared to be disrupted for some students when they worked together. However, idealized notions of equality were challenged by many of the educators who noted the power differences based not just in age but also in gender. Furthermore, it was noted when I or any other authority figure was in the room the students seemed keen to do what they felt I was looking for.

Imitation of what the authority wants is a danger that Buckingham (2003) speaks to. Students may substitute imitation of corporate media standards for imitating what the critical pedagogue is looking for. Challenging this imitation requires time but also an examination of the structure of power between the professor or researcher and the participants. There was a lack of time to more fully develop the relationships of trust that might have provided more opportunities to discuss and interrogate the structure of power and collaborative ways of thinking about and attempting to alter power dynamics. Ultimately, though, power differences can be altered but not eliminated given the history of institutional structures and relationships between youth and adults and other axes of power.

An understanding of critical media education which takes into account the specificity of epistemic claims and acknowledges multiple identities, along with respect for specific cultural contexts and power within the classroom, has the potential to provide a pedagogy that allows for a more nuanced understanding of dialogue, collaboration and action.

NOTES

1. The high school students were given an honorarium, through research funds, and some received work experience credit at school. Giving an honorarium ensured that those with jobs (many of them) could take time off and not lose money.

2. I wanted a research assistant who would not be perceived by the students as invested in seeing the course as a success. Furthermore, I was supervising some of the educators for their graduate

degrees and felt interviewing them and asking them to be critical of their experience in the course would put them in an awkward position.

3.   E will be used to indicate a participant who was an educator and graduate student at the time of the project, and HS to indicate a participant who was a high school student at the time of the project. Participants selected their own pseudonyms Or asked me to do so.

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