Digital Youth Praxis and Social Justice

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Dedication

To my parents:

Eva and Mario Cucinelli

For everything, and more.

To my grandparents:
ai miei nonni:

Colomba & Pietro Cianciusi, and Evelina & Giuseppe Cucinelli

For your lifelong sacrifices for our families well being.

Per tutti i sacrifici che voi avete sempre fatto per il benessere della nostra famiglia.

To my mentors:

Professors:
Joe L. Kincheloe, and Shirley R. Steinberg

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"Being able to hear people and listen to what's going on is the first step in any healing process."

Peter Gabriel, 2008

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Abstract

The development of digital social media has altered the fabric of youth culture in terms of a young person's access to information and ability to communicate with a global audience. The conditions, opportunities, and limitations of using digital media are different for marginalized urban youth. In order to harness the educational value of digital media in the lives of disenfranchised youth, we must understand its potential as a means of empowerment.

This thesis draws together work in digital social media, youth culture, critical media education, and social justice to put forward a new pedagogical model (Digital Youth Praxis) that enables young people to engage in digital practices in order to address social problems that directly affect their lives. Digital Youth Praxis is a six-phase model, which is used to understand how the current digital practices of young people can be effectively managed within a participant-generated social justice pedagogy.

Through participatory action research, this thesis explores how young people between the ages of 14–27 learn and live in an era of media convergence. The research project gathered university, school, and community members to create a collaborative and safe space, which enabled the participants to learn how to engage by means of digital media.

The results have shown that the conditions of dialogue and collaborative learning enabled the participants to create digital media productions informed by social justice principles. These productions became a means of empowerment and collaborative learning. The Digital Youth Praxis approach represents a significant innovation in youth

digital engagements in that it enables youth participants to draw from their own experience in order to create social change.

Résumé

Le développement des médias sociaux numériques a modifié le visage de la culture des jeunes d'un point de vue de son accès à l'information et de sa capacité à communiquer avec le monde entier. Les conditions, les possibilités et les limites de l'utilisation des médias numériques sont différentes pour les jeunes marginalisés en milieu urbain. Afin d'exploiter la valeur éducative des médias numériques dans la vie des jeunes privés de leurs droits, nous devons comprendre son potentiel en tant que moyen d'autonomisation.

Cette thèse rassemble des travaux sur les médias sociaux numériques, la culture des jeunes, l'éducation critique aux médias et la justice sociale afin de proposer un nouveau modèle pédagogique (Praxis de la Jeunesse Numérique) qui permet aux jeunes de s'engager dans des pratiques numériques en vue de résoudre les problèmes sociaux qui touchent directement leur vie. La Praxis de la Jeunesse Numérique est un modèle en six étapes utilisé pour comprendre comment les pratiques numériques actuelles des jeunes peuvent être gérées efficacement au sein d'une pédagogie de justice sociale défendue par chacun.

Grâce à une Recherche-Action Participative, cette thèse explore comment les jeunes âgés de 14 à 27 ans sont éduqués et vivent à l'ère de la convergence des médias.

Ce projet a réuni les universités et les membres de la communauté pour créer un espace de collaboration sécuritaire qui a permis aux participants d'apprendre à se livrer par le biais des médias numériques.

Les résultats démontrent que le dialogue et l'apprentissage coopératif aident les participants à créer des productions en médias numériques fondées sur des principes de

justice sociale. Ces productions sont devenues un moyen d'autonomisation et d'apprentissage coopératif. L'utilisation de l'approche Praxis de la Jeunesse Numérique représente un écart important vis-à-vis des théories précédentes sur l'engagement numérique puisqu'elle permet aux jeunes participants de puiser à partir de leurs propres expériences afin de créer un changement social.

From the pain come the dream

From the dream come the vision

From the vision come the people

From the people come the power

From this power come the change

"Fourteen Black Paintings," Peter Gabriel, 1992

In 1992, I was 12 years old and I would spend most of my afterschool hours watching music videos while finishing my homework at my grandparents' house. I usually sat in the basement while my grandmother prepared supper in the kitchen. However, on September 29 of that year, I decided to spend the afternoon in my grandfather's television room. We called it that because all it had was a color screen Zenith television with a pair of Sony headphones hooked to the side that my grandfather used when he watched hockey games.

It was about four in the afternoon when I turned on the day's top five music videos. As I clenched the remote control to raise the volume the sound and sight of Peter Gabriel's music video for "Steam" caught my attention. My eyes were glued to the television set for the next six minutes, viewing this acoustically stunning and artistically brilliant music video. The young artist in me was compelled to find out more about this singer/ songwriter, and, at the end of the video, the music cross-faded with powerful free-flowing chants and the archaic, emotional sound of the *doudouk* from another of Gabriel's songs "Fourteen Black Paintings". The murals of Mark Rothko dedicated to human rights and civil rights leaders, Martin Luther King and Gandhi had inspired

Gabriel to write and record the song. As the lyrics to the song began, images of human rights struggles from around the world scrolled across the screen. The montage appropriately faded out on Gabriel's lyrics, "From this power come the change". This was followed by a short interview with Gabriel on his humanitarian involvement with Amnesty International and W.O.M.A.D. (World of Music Art and Dance). Gabriel discussed his work on Stephen Biko, Nelson Mandela, and apartheid in South Africa; community empowerment and video activism; and Witness, the organization that he started, which empowers those whose rights are violated to tell their stories through video. Gabriel's interview struck a chord in me, not just because he was so passionate about the topic, but more importantly, because it was the first time I found myself making a conscious connection to global issues. I realized at that moment how privileged I was and acted accordingly.

From Gabriel to Me

Gabriel's involvement with humanitarian work and music shaped my teen years and gave me a genuine interest in human rights that eventually led me to contribute to community and youth projects.

My knowledge of global issues crystallized trough media images provided by Gabriel's work: Amnesty International photographs, Witness public service announcements, and W.O.M.A.D festivals. My knowledge continued to grow over the years through exposure to literature and community based social awareness campaigns and projects. Thus, following in Gabriel's footsteps, I was inspired and encouraged to get involved with social justice initiatives at a local level.

Compared to the likes of Gabriel, my contribution to social justice has just begun: Gabriel has worked in "over 70 countries to advance human rights through the use of video for change" (Witness, 2010, para. 8). However, social justice has led me to my current involvement with local youth in the Côte-des-Neiges Notre-Dame-de-Grâce communities of Montreal. My involvement continues to grow with my media activism projects for marginalized youth and online pedagogical participation with Witness's newest endeavour, The Hub, which is "the world's first participatory media site for human rights" (The Hub, 2009, para.1). My commitment to helping marginalized youth is fueled by the far-reaching impacts I see that result from our collaborations.

From Global to Local

Underlying media activism for social justice is a concern for a large array of global issues, including the violation of human rights, poverty, political corruption, and racial discrimination, among others. In this vein, local media activism and social justice based initiatives are in a prime position to mediate and improve these issues at a local level, which is part of the larger effort to create global change. The opportunities afforded by community initiatives help not only the lives of those directly involved, but also the lives of the people they interact with. It is this chain reaction that advances social justice and enables the conditions of dialogue where all voices can be heard.

The small, yet powerful initiatives, which are discussed in this dissertation, make a difference, particularly for disenfranchised youth who are living and learning in a society overwhelmed by local and global issues, such as racism, discrimination, and violence. Such projects come at a time of considerable global discrepancies between rich and poor, educated and uneducated, and access and restrictions to resources. The very

factors contributing to this digital divide are “interrelations among economic capital, cultural capital, ethnicity, gender and age [and become] barriers, obstacles and challenges to more equitable access, and some of those may be deeply embedded in social and cultural contexts and differences” (Rice, & Haythornthwaite, 2006, pp. 95-107). As this gap continues to widen, the efforts of a few citizens to harness the strength of their communities and share these resources amongst the less privileged youth are invaluable.

Digital divides and broader imbalances in resources and access are now being challenged by initiatives that bring together members of community, schools, and universities. At the same time, the emergence and popularity of digital media has created new and dynamic pedagogical affordances for community-based initiatives that involve marginalized youth. The development of digital social media has altered the fabric of youth culture in terms of a young person’s access to information and ability to communicate with a global audience. Digital media has provided important contributions to media activism because “the technological forms that are used to communicate messages, influence the communicative practice of individuals and institutions, and this in turn influences societies and cultures” (Flew & McElhinney, 2006, p. 288). The borough of Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce has provided leading examples of successful partnerships between a variety of community members and young people. Media-based programs such as Project Media, Montreal Life Stories, and La Maison des Jeunes have sought to make community-, school-, and university-related resources and pedagogical practices available for local youth. Their focus has been on bringing together educators and youth for the purpose of outreach, improving skills sets, and storytelling based on experiences and memories on displacement.

Background and Context. Why Now?

With the advent of digital media, specifically Web 2.0 platforms, there has been a surge in youth media collaborations, and a growing body of research related to youth and social media, which testify to its educational potential. My research was conducted at a time when the relationship between young people and social media was becoming more intricate as the developments in social networking quickly picked up steam. Increasingly, scholars are recognizing that "this generation is at a unique historical moment tied to longer-term and systemic changes in sociability and culture" (Ito, 2008, p.4). Although the growth in research and positive outcomes have been important, these developments in digital media practices have been largely overshadowed by negative headlines and images common in the mainstream media that are provided continuously, and generally ignore the educational potential of digital and social media: "How Dangerous Are Networking Sites?" (*BBC News*, November 18, 2008), "One Click from Danger" (*BBC One*, Jan 7, 2008), "Internet Teens Failing Math" (*The Toronto Star*, September 6, 2009), "Young People Cop to It: Technology Is Bad for Us" (*ABC News*, May 15, 2009). This public discourse of moral panic has led many grassroots educators to doubt the pedagogical implications of digital and social media and instead focus on the discourse of "prevention" best exemplified by the ubiquitous campaigns against "cyberbullying."

My research stands in contrast to the prevention discourse and is fueled by research and observation on the educational potential digital media has, specifically in the context of social justice pedagogy. Given the centrality of digital devices and the World Wide Web to contemporary youth experiences, young people now have access to a powerful means of production, knowledge, and life experience sharing. Additionally,

through digital media, youth are able to disseminate widely their media productions, which creates an "intense period of cultural production and communication by and for young people" (Hoechsmann & Low, 2008, p.64). And, Stuart Hall (1991) argues the significance of the young people's role as cultural producers is a key aspect and catalyst towards developing agency and power in marginalized communities. Many educators have begun to see the potential for these cultural productions to become a means of youth empowerment, but empowerment is often a hollow concept, simply based on giving youth "voice." It is of signal importance to bring forward a critical and analytic framework to this process, in order to give young people conceptual tools to go along side the technical ones. In other words, "to encourage students toward more reflective, critical, and activist engagement with media, it is necessary to sustain the constructive, affirmative energy … while pointing the way beyond simplistic hype" (Lievrouw, 2009, p.562). It would also mean bringing together university and community resources because

> when there is a willingness on both sides—who share common goals such as integrating critical thinking, exchanging insights and perspectives, educating youth, networking with professionals, and making a difference in communities, society, and/or in youth development—then there is great potential for the youth media field and academic professionals to partner, complimenting the specific goals both wish to achieve. (Dahl, 2007, p.10)

The development of these pedagogical collaborations would establish an "alternative approach to collective learning and teaching [and] is key to a future of community engagement, leadership and partnerships" (O'Bryne, 2007, p. 16).

The outcomes of such partnerships are many: Youth are given the opportunity to create challenging and informative cultural productions grounded in educational partnerships. Active participation in these local organizations encourages mutual respect and hope and creates intergenerational relationships based on cooperation. In addition, these collaborations focus on sharing "the kinds of teaching and learning that will increase the life chances of students to become lifelong learners and critical participants in our civic democracy" (Akom, Cammorota & Ginwright, 2008, p. 4).

Not Just Another Project

I was involved in the creation of the Freire Social Media Project (FSMP) at a time when most community-based projects were mainly concerned with improving life skills and competencies, or were primarily interested in capturing oral history storytelling. The conditions of the borough of Côte-des-Neiges- Notre-Dame-de-Grâce affirmed that a project such as the FSMP would fill a void left by other initiatives. The borough's need to address the concerns of marginalized youth made community-based projects a necessity, rather than a luxury.

The FSMP was developed to facilitate and support digital engagements for disenfranchised youth and community educators that enable youth participants to draw from their own experiences in order to provoke social change. The innovation enabled by this project was in the use of digital media to bear upon traditional issues in community development such as racism, discrimination, economic inequality, educational needs, health, and employment.

This thesis draws together work from the fields of digital social media, youth culture, critical media education, and social justice to put forward a new pedagogical

model (Digital Youth Praxis) that enables young people to engage in digital practices in order to address social problems that directly affect their lives. Digital Youth Praxis is a six-phase model utilized to understand how the current digital practices of young people can be effectively managed within a participant generated social justice pedagogy. By using participatory action research, this project gathered together university and community members in order to create a collaborative and safe space. This thesis explores how young people between the ages of 14-27 learn and live in an era of media convergence.

In this work, I set out to explore various questions as an educator researcher in a community-university partnership. Using tenets of critical media education and an interdisciplinary approach that combined youth studies; educational studies; media production; and social justice, my basic research question was, "How does Digital Youth Praxis function as a framework in which youth use current digital practices to promote social justice issues relevant to their lives?" Supporting questions were:

1. How do educators engage with digital media within social justice pedagogy?
2. What specific procedures should educators follow for a successful experience with Digital Youth Praxis?
3. What external and internal factors influence Digital Youth Praxis and those who are involved?
4. How can educators align most digital practices toward a participant-generated social justice pedagogy?
5. What pragmatic projects encourage Digital Youth Praxis?

Each question was addressed and answered in an effort to generate knowledge, experience, and information related to the framework of Digital Youth Praxis.

Significance of the Study

In addition to the creation of a new conceptual framework that responds to the need to align young people's current digital practices toward social justice pedagogy, I also had to devise hands-on projects that would enable my participants to engage with digital technologies to forward social change. The study was grounded in empowering Freirian ideals and encouraged youth to use their existing expertise to create something worthwhile, rather than use a banking model of learning. Additionally, my approach positioned the educator researcher as an educator researcher who was a participant in the learning process. While this is not a "one size fits all" approach, it can be used in a wide variety of educational and community settings that have varying levels of access to digital technologies. Finally, I have ensured that there is enough flexibility built into my approach so that it can accommodate further developments in digital technologies and academic research in related fields and will be able to grow.

Delimitations of the Research

The results have shown that the conditions of dialogue and collaborative learning enabled the participants to create digital media productions informed by social justice principles. These productions become a means of empowerment and collaborative knowledge production.

However, this study has focused on only one of many possible collaborations, one between a community group and a university research project. Therefore, the results reflect only this one application of the Digital Youth Praxis approach in one particular

community with one particular form of partnership. However, by using the information gathered, this knowledge and experience can eventually be applied to other kinds of partnerships, which can include collaborations with formal educational settings, such as elementary and high schools and adult education centres. Such applications can enable educators to test the Digital Youth Praxis conceptual framework further. These results are also shaped by the specific socio-economic condition of the participants as well as the community within which they were experienced. Other communities that have different demographics and are dealing with diverse issues can yield varied outcomes. The most important aspect of a project such as the FSMP, and to the work involved with using a Digital Youth Praxis framework, is for the educator researcher to understand the community's citizens and their resources. Educators must listen to the needs of the participants and understand their conditions before embarking on any kind of social justice pedagogy; otherwise, the educator will engage in a banking form of education and little to no social change will be possible.

Beyond this, educators should focus on the positive outcomes of digital media in the lives of young people in order to gain more knowledge about the role it plays within a context of social justice pedagogy, to demonstrate new, creative, and inspiring potential for increasing the educational use of digital media in the lives of young people.

Another limitation of this study, which is addressed in detail in Chapter Six, was the lack of time for the creation and execution of the SocialforSocial Hub, an open-source website that will bring together knowledge, experiences, resources, and digital youth creations for educators interested in and working with digital media informed by social justice pedagogy. The website, Socialforsocial.org, will be comprised of community

blogs, video sharing components, and educational resources for community and school based educators. It will be designed, executed, and tested by educators from formal and informal sites of learning in order to reach a wide range of users.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into six chapters and accent is placed on practical and theoretical aspects important to a range of initiatives related to youth culture, digital media, and social justice pedagogy. Central to this dissertation was the development of a social media practicum, to be implemented through a community and university collaboration. The practicum is based on the assumption that educators who are interested in digital media and social awareness can benefit from these projects and be motivated to employ the projects in their educational spaces. The first chapter offers an overview of the entire dissertation, the problem statement, and the research questions. Chapter Two describes the literature, theories, and conceptual frameworks that influenced and grounded the research. Four sections are included in this chapter: (a) Emergent Digital Cultures, (b) Youth and Youth Culture, (c) Praxis, Youth and Education, and (d) The Relationship of Critical Media Education to Social Media. These sections present a number of concepts that influence the emergence of Digital Youth Praxis: developments in media technology; classic and contemporary dimensions of youth culture; and practical, environmental, critical, and emotional dimensions of youth. The last section introduces the importance of critical media education in the lives of young people and within the context of Digital Youth Praxis.

As support for my participatory action research, Chapter Three outlines the context of this university and community collaboration. Due to the rich history of the

research settings, this chapter traces a detailed background of the university and community setting (The Paulo and Nita Freire International Project for Critical Pedagogy, Côte-des-Neiges- Notre-Dame-de-Grâce). It also provides a detailed description for each participant of the Freire Social Media Project and an overview of the research duration and curriculum. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, I provide a thorough explanation of my role as a lone research stakeholder and educator researcher to situate my own position in the various sites and facets of this research project.

Chapter Four describes and defines the conceptual framework of Digital Youth Praxis. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section proposes a six-phase process for digital media practices (Recognize, Converse, Share, Engage, Explore, and Reflect), which is followed by an analysis of the importance of acknowledging the influence that forms of capital (economic, social, and cultural) have on Digital Youth Praxis. The second section suggests ways to examine current youths' digital practices based on a Digital Youth Praxis H^3 model (Head: knowledge; Heart: emotions; Hand: technical abilities).

In Chapter Five, I propose a three-leveled typology for understanding young peoples' engagements with digital media in the context of social justice pedagogy: Plug, Play, and Praxis. Each level is an example of the digital practices associated with various projects. As a way to explore the typology, this chapter includes a detailed summary of the ten digital media projects that were used in the Freire Social Media Project and how the participants engaged in each project through the typology of Plug, Play, and Praxis.

The final chapter of this dissertation provides a summary of the research and recommendations for future applications of Digital Youth Praxis. It offers an overview of

the next step in the broader project of Digital Youth Praxis: the creation of the SocialforSocial Hub, which is an open-source website for educators working with digital media in social justice pedagogy. The goal of this online community is to share projects and knowledge, and to outreach to more educators so that they too can use digital media with their students to engage in social justice pedagogies.

Definition of Terms

Analog. Analog is usually thought of in an electrical context; however, mechanical, pneumatic, hydraulic, and other systems may also convey analog signals, "a signal that fluctuates exactly like the original stimulus" (Zettl, 2001, p. 395). In this context, analog technology refers to older CRT (cathode ray tube) televisions, audio, and videocassettes.

Blogs. Blogs (also known as web logs, or weblogs) are websites that contain frequently updated 'posts' with the most recent entry at the top of the page and the previous ones displayed reverse-chronologically. The type of information contained within a blog varies greatly from individual to individual. Authors of blogs (known as bloggers) "can describe day-to-day observations in their lives, or more specific topics of interest to them, such as web design or cycling" (Brady, 2005, p. 4).

Bubbleshare. This website provided "Web-based tools for sharing photos and stories over the Internet (www.Bubbleshare.com). It allowed users to create and email albums to friends and family privately, with the option of making albums public within the BubbleShare community. The company was founded in 2004 and is based in Toronto, Canada" (Bloomberg, 2010, para. 1). As of November 2009, BubbleShare.com was no longer available.

Convergence culture. A term that "describes technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes in the ways media circulates within our culture and across multiple media platforms" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 282).

Crack, jailbreak, or hack digital technology. A process that frees your phone, "in essence jailbreaking your iPhone means freeing it from the limitations imposed on it by your mobile provider and Apple" (Cassavoy, 2010, para. 1)

Critical pedagogy and critical thinking. According to Joe Kincheloe (2008), critical pedagogy is defined as follows:

> It is in this movement from naïveté to critical pedagogy that individuals grasp the social, political, economic, and cultural contradictions that subvert learning. Teachers and students with a critical consciousness conceptually pull back from their lived reality to gain a new vantage point on who they are and how they came to be this way. With these insights in mind, they return to the complex process of living critically and engaging the world in the ways such a consciousness requires (p. 166).

In the context of this study, the term critical and critical thinking is used to denote "habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking, which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse." (Shor, 1992, p. 129)

Digital, digital media and digital culture. The term digital pertains to "data in the form of digits (on/off pulses)" (Zettl, 2001, p. 398). Digital culture refers to users of

digital media technology who participate with digital media creations by producing, viewing, or interacting with media created by using digital cameras, software, computers, and mobile media.

Microblog and thumblelog. Similar to a blog, except they are much shorter forms of writing and posting. The most popular examples are Facebook status updates and Twitter. A tumblelog is a "quick and dirty stream of consciousness, a bit like a remaindered links style linklog but with more than just links . . . really just a way to quickly publish the 'stuff' that you run across every day on the web" (Kottke, 2005, para. 2).

Networked and digital turf. This term refers to online communities and space that offer a "new type of turf—digital turf on which teens' struggles for status and identity play out" (boyd, 2008, p. 211).

Open-source. This allows online users to develop and promote access to their software codes in order to share and improve the abilities of the product, "the open-source movement has been seen running counter to the dominance of large centralized industries: the argument goes that it puts power over media back in the hands of the people that might truly transform society" (Star, & Bowker, 2006, p. 235).

Photovoice. With this method, one is able to use photography as a way to address world issues from a visual point of view. According to Larkin & Mitchell (2006), photovoice is a well-established approach to "accessing" the voices of groups that are marginalized.

Positionality. This concept includes "the notion that since our understanding of the world and ourselves is socially constructed, we must devote special attention to the

differing ways individuals from diverse social backgrounds, construct knowledge, and make meaning" (Kincheloe, 1998, p. 163).

Remix/mashup. By definition, remixing is an alternative version of an existing music piece, whereas a digital mashup is "a visual remix, commonly a video or website which remixes and combines content from a number of different sources to produce something new and creative" (O'Brien & Fitzgerald, 2006, p. 1). This also refers to a remix/mashup culture, a "society that allows and encourages derivative works" (Lessig, 2009, p. 56).

Social justice and social justice pedagogy. Paulo Freire's (1973) focus on "the need for imaging a better future before it can be achieved, the critical role of social practice for justice in education, and the vital necessity of leadership fully at one with the people, deepened the practices of movements for social change." (1973, p. 164)

Social media, and media activism. The use of digital media to identify and expose social issues through online participation, video activism, and other forms through the use of digitally based media (DV and HD cameras, digital audio, digital photography, and mobile media). It is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan, & Haenlein, 2010, p. 59).

Vlog. Video logs are created by recording video using a webcam and then positing the video on a video sharing website.

VoiceThread. A VoiceThread (VoiceThread.com) is a "collaborative, multimedia slide show that holds images, documents, and videos and allows people to navigate pages

and leave comments in five ways - using voice (with a microphone or telephone), text, audio file, or video (via a webcam).” (VoiceThread, 2010, para. 2)

Web 1.0, 2.0, 3.0. The first generation of the Web is defined as, Web 1.0, which, could be considered the "read-only web." In other words, the early web “allowed us to search for information and read it. There was very little in the way of user interaction or content contribution” (Getting, 2007, para. 3). Whereas Web 2.0 is defined as “it [web 2.0] requires that users be able to interact with one another or contribute content” (Getting, 2007, para. 6). And Web 3.0 is defined as, “the semantic web (or the meaning of data), personalization (e.g. iGoogle), intelligent search and behavioral advertising among other things” (Agarwal, 2009, para. 3).

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Youth have a considerable online presence and are considered to be at the forefront in innovation and usage of the Internet. They are connected to a constant cycle of digital technology such as mobile media that allows them to keep abreast of innovations in social media outlets, digital networked turf, and online practices. The amount of energy, time, and dedication that youth devote to engaging with digital social media invariably leads them to develop a particular set of digital practices. However, these digital practices are not always consistent with positive and empowering growth.

What is needed is a reciprocal commitment from youth, and educators at large, to develop within a conceptual framework that aligns these activities with socially relevant practices. I will argue that the conceptual framework that corresponds to this orientation is aligned with what I call Digital Youth Praxis.

Many theories have been developed over the years to explain the nature of the relationship between youth and social media in our networked society. Unfortunately, most of the current research on youth and social media limits itself by not examining the use of digital media by youth for social change. Consequently, less attention is focused on social networks, blogs, and digital storytelling in favor of negative implications of digital practices such as cyber bullying, privacy, and illegal exchange of online material. Here, an opportunity for social media to become a means of social justice pedagogy is missed because many educators equate social media with a counterproductive and harmful way to explore any educational aspects. Furthermore, educators who engage in social media pedagogy do so primarily through a curriculum for civic engagement that promotes online civic duty, rather than empowerment and praxis. Civic engagement as

defined by Montgomery, Gottlieb-Robles, and Larson (2004) is mediated by activities aimed at improving one's community by "volunteering for an organization, working with others to solve a community problem, and raising money for a charity" (p. 5). Online civic engagement communities become sites that facilitate action, rather than places of action. The online communities become a virtual hub that connect youth to information, people, and tools as a means of organizing various offline activities, "these sites enable youth to access information about issues, other relevant organizations, and how to take [offline] action effectively" (Raynes-Goldie & Walker, 2008, p. 162). The development of Digital Youth Praxis is driven by transforming these online spaces to places of action and praxis instead of sites that facilitate discussions on offline activities. Social media can provide a solid foundation for youth and educators to engage in social justice education and an orientation such as the one I propose. Digital Youth Praxis can offer a pedagogical sandbox in which youth and educators may explore the infinite possibilities of social media informed by sound theories and concepts that seamlessly merge social media, youth, and social justice education.

In this chapter, I describe the literature, theories, and conceptual frameworks that influence and ground my conceptual framework of Digital Youth Praxis. My literature review is divided into four sections: (a) Emergent Digital Cultures, (b) Youth and Youth Culture, (c) Praxis, Youth, and Education, and (d) The Relationship of Critical Media Education to Social Media. In each section, I draw from evolving definitions and debates and provide social, political, cultural, and pedagogical foundations for considering the possibilities afforded by the social media, employing theories from critical media studies, information studies, youth studies, cultural studies, and education and curriculum studies.

In later chapters, I develop links between the theoretical and empirical literature and my research.

Emergent Digital Cultures

Developments in new technologies have created dramatic changes in both digital and social media cultures vis-à-vis communication methods, access and usability. It is a particularly interesting time for youth because the ubiquity of digital social media provides them with tools that facilitate their efforts to achieve their own political goals and help them construct their own culture (Jenkins, 1998). Youth culture is not and cannot be a fixed notion, and as such, it must be "a creation of society that is subject to change when ever major social transformations take place" (Steinberg, & Kincheloe, 2004, p. 2). Digital media is but one of the major social transformations that have altered the fabric of youth culture; in fact, "it is technology that has distinguished [youth] from previous generations" (Lessig, 2007).

Media's evolution has transformed to include a number of different dimensions--the innovative pulse of technology, the political agenda of activists, and the entertainment and information value of current events; all represent different branches of media history. One should not divorce media evolution with societal conditions; in fact, the shift in technology and its relationship to society is what prompts us to examine the dynamics between the two. If we are to understand the current state of media in society, a brief analysis of key aspects in media history will allow us to consider the importance of technological advancements on various mediums. Operating on the assumption that there are two distinct historical media phases, analog, and digital, I suggest that the importance of media is its relationship to society. This connection is not novel; nor is there a new

form of media that has materialized over the past decade. Instead, what many consider to be "new media" is really the emergence of a digital culture; a culture filled with affordances created by various channels of digital communication.

Analog media. Media's impact on society dates back to early forms of print, photography, film, and radio when utilized as tools of propaganda and constructed fear: *The Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915), *The Battleship Potemkin* (Bliokh & Eisenstein, 1925), *Triumph of the Will* (Riefenstahl, 1934), *The War of the Worlds* (Welles & Houseman, 1938). However, the correlation between media's effects on society crystallized with the advent of television in the 1950s, when it "brought in visual communication as well as stimulated the rise of an interdisciplinary theory of the media" (Briggs and Burke, 2002, p. 2). Print, photography, film, and radio required a certain amount of production timeline and delay (moveable type, silver process, film processing, post-production editing); television was the first visual medium that was immediate and live. Television greatly influenced how audiences consumed media because it was readily available; due to this television became a scapegoat for all things wrong in society: audience passiveness and short attention span, copious advertising, and commercialization. Television's content was far from novel and borrowed from traditional film production codes and conventions such as screen language (framing, angles, editing, lighting). According to Briggs and Burke (2010), "today's television serials follow the model of radio serials which in turn follow the model of the stories serialized in the nineteenth-century magazines" (p. 2). In the same manner, digital media follows the same pattern of content, immediacy, and implications on society as television did.

Portable video recording. By the early 1960s, television broadcasting had reached its peak with High Fidelity image signals and stereo sound, and was now testing the waters of portable video recording with Portapak technology; this was the first portable single person video recording device. Media producers were no longer constrained to the studio setting, and the ability to record on a VTR (video tape recorder) gave the programmers greater flexibility with content and genre. Additionally, the arrival of the Portapak coincided with the growing popularity of Fluxus art (Higgins, 1966) of the 1960s; an artistic movement created by a group of interdisciplinary artists interested in combining the "flow" of various media and disciplines. It marked the first notable video art work produced by Wolfe Vostell (1963), Nam Jun Paik (1965), and Ira Schneider (1969). The portability and usability of EFP (electronic field production) became an important artistic tool for video art and in 1966, Richard Higgins introduced the artistic approach of *intermedia* "to emphasize the dialectic between the media" (para. 4). Higgins' approach was interdisciplinary and "the advent of video recording technology offered a locus for the conceptual fusion at the heart of intermedia's vision by acting as a virtual funnel through which media could be poured, manipulated, and represented" (Elwell, 2006, para. 3). Fluxus and intermedia approaches to video art played a key role in the developments of videotape being utilized as a social activists' tool. At the time, the analog equipment was still cumbersome limited what media creators could do.

Video activism. In response to the socio-political turmoil of the late 1960s and early 1970s, video activism was born out of necessity and a method for citizens to articulate their discontent. As video production equipment became smaller and more portable, it encouraged citizens to engage with video activism and challenge the content

from mainstream television broadcasters. Counter-culture video collectives were formed and the *guerilla television movement* extended the role of the underground press to new communication technologies. Guerilla television created inexpensive and counter discourse video productions that broke through the barriers of broadcast television. In 1972 Michael Shamberg authored a "do-it-yourself" video production manual for guerrilla television and formed the *TVTV* (Top Value Television) video collective along with Allen Rucker, Tom Weinberg, Hudson Marquez and Megan Williams. Additionally, the *Ant Farm* group (1968) was originally formed as a avant-garde design collective and became an important figure in video activism by the mid 1970s because of their numerous video performances, installations, and critiques on popular culture and anti-consumerism. In 1975, *Media Burn* was created; this was Ant Farm's most popular video production and offered a critique of media, technology, and popular culture by showcasing a Cadillac driving full speed through a wall of flaming television sets. Video activisms popularity grew as the video technology improved to become even more portable and efficient with the introduction of recording formats such as Umatic, Betamax, VHS, Betacam, S-VHS, and Video8. This meant that the equipment was lighter and accessible by more people, which led to the formation of more video collectives. By the 1980s Paper Tiger TV and Deep Dish TV were formed as "a TV-based platform for media criticism" (Renov, 2004, p.66) and they continue to offer television format programs that explored and countered American popular culture programming and journalism.

Digital media. The rapid advancements in technology led to a transformation in analog media to a digital revolution in the early 1980s. The shift from analog to digital

technology brought changes in the computing and communication landscape and marked the start of the *information age*, also known as the *computer era* or *information era*. Digital technology provided a faster and more efficient mode of communication via mobile technology and digital signals, which led to a change in media production because "in the information age, mass media got bigger and smaller at the same time . . . niche magazines, videocassette sales, and cable services were examples of narrowcasting, catering to small demographic groups" (Negroponte, 1995, p.164).

For the context of Digital Youth Praxis, the term *digital social media* is utilized because it encompasses the Internet as well as other forms of digital media such as: mobile media, audio, images, computing, Internet, and social networks platforms.

New media. Whether digital media are "defined in terms of technology (interactivity, digitalization, convergence, etc.), services (delivery of information, entertainment, political participation, education, commerce, etc.), or textual forms (genre hybridity, non-linearity, hypertextuality, multimedia, etc.), they raise different questions about the relationship between old and new media, particularly within an account of the social context of their use" (Livingstone, 2002, p. 215). One of the only significant differences between traditional and newer media forms are the social impacts of their usage. Despite popular belief, Marshall McLuhan (1964) argued in *Understanding Media* that very little is "new" about "new media, whether it is digital or not, and as,

> new media often absorb the format and structures of the old, just as television took up the format of previous radio genres and the same corporations dominated both, and "new media" have progressively absorbed the forms of "old media"

from writing to broadcasting and video to proliferating forms of multimedia." (Kellner, 2009, p. 557)

More specifically as Lievrouw & Livingstone (2002) point out, "new media have not replaced older media, any more than broadcasting replaced print in the mid-twentieth century" (p.1). According to Lee Manovitch (2001), new media represents a convergence of the two separate historical trajectories of computing and media technologies. Manovitch states that the "synthesis of these two histories [is the] translation of all existing media into numerical data accessible for computers [and] the result is *new media*: graphics, moving images, sounds, shapes, spaces and text which become computable" (p. 19–20). Perhaps one immutable constant in the definition of *new media* is its persistence as a conveyor of intermediated texts, "it creates the potential for new content to originate from a whole new combination of sources" (Negroponte, 1995, p.18). More recently, the definition has changed to encompass much more. We now use the term "new media" to describe the media ecology wherein more traditional media such as books, television, and radio, are "converging" with digital media, specifically interactive media and media for social communication (Jenkins, 2006).

Convergence culture. Jenkins (2006) describes the emergence of *convergence culture "*a term that describes technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes in the ways media circulates within our culture and across multiple media platforms" (Jenkins, 2006, p.282). Using largely inexpensive forms of technology "young people are creating their own self-styled cultural texts across multiple digital platforms such as MySpace, YouTube, Facebook, Blogger, and other such sites" (Dimitriadis, 2008, p. 120). Because there are as many possibilities for unique texts as there are individual young people, we

must acknowledge that " there is no one digital culture or digital generation, simply many different ways that groups have integrated digital technologies and practices into their lives, some rewarding, some potentially destructive, but each distinctive" (Jenkins, 2010, para. 18). Social activists occupy space within digital culture alongside hackers and corporate mongers, and their ultimate goals are what separates them. Activists use their skills online to strive for collective action that brings social change, while hackers and mongers work online for their own personal financial gains and for the satisfaction of toying and messing around with online codes and privacy.

The impact of digital technology is as important to current youth culture as music and popular culture texts were in the 1950s rock and roll era, because it reinforces a clear line between the youth culture and the culture of other generations. Young people have grown up with technology and are so amenable to using it and adapting to its rapid developments. Alternatively, many adults who grew up with analog technology are reluctant to digitize their lives, because they have been conditioned through social and technological norms of their time to understand and accept the limitations of technology.

Kranzberg's first law. Due to the portability, mobility, affordability, usability, and accessibility of digital media, it inevitably influences and reshapes how young people access and retain information. Consequently, due to its user-friendliness, digital media has prompted many educators to become concerned with its impact on youth and education. In her work on youth culture, boyd (2008) states that many scholars who problematize, and even pathologize, digital youth practices "are fed by fears of what could be rather than what is" (p. 12). boyd refers to Kranzberg's First Law as an ethos that can guide us through such technological determinism: "Technology is neither good

nor bad; nor is it neutral" (Kranzberg, 1986, p. 454–548). A technology's value is shaped by its social construction—how designers create it and how people use it, interpret it, and reconfigure it, "it is not an outcome of the technology alone or its potential." (boyd, 2008, p. 12). Kranzberg's notion is at the core of Digital Youth Praxis because it offers a way to understand technology as its relationship to society, and as such it encourages the collaborative exploration between youth and educators of the different complexities of technology and social media and how they influence one another.

New cultural economies. The collaborative nature of new media creates the conditions of possibilities (Deleuze, 1978) that allow a Digital Youth Praxis framework to channel digital youth activities toward the creation of digital cultural texts with social commentary, information, and critical awareness. Like other theories about digital youth involvement, Digital Youth Praxis aims to "connect students' everyday interactions and experiences with media technologies, to classic questions of equity, privacy, fairness, openness, access, power, and so on … the challenge is to teach for reconfiguration and remediation" (Lievrouw, 2009, p. 560). In order to achieve this, we must situate Digital Youth Praxis in what Lessig considers to be a new hybrid cultural economy, where the combination of technology and economy is seen as the "coming together of commercial and sharing [of media content] to achieve a society that is not only financially wealthy, but rich in information, knowledge, and skills" (Lessig, 2007). Due to vast changes in digital technology, and young people's responses to digital texts, the Internet has created two different cultural economies:

> One economy is the traditional 'commercial economy,' an economy regulated by the quid pro quo: I'll do this (work, write, sing, etc.) in exchange for money …

> another economy is (the names are many) the (a) amateur economy, (b) sharing economy, (c) social production economy, (d) noncommercial economy, or (e) p2p economy … this second economy is the economy of Wikipedia, most FLOSS (Free/Libre Open Source Software) development, the work of amateur astronomers, etc, [and] it has a different, more complicated logic to it than the commercial economy. (Lessig, 2007)

Most youth who currently push the boundaries of digital culture are doing so within a hybrid cultural economy in which there is a high information-action ratio (Postman, 1985) from and by young people, "who [with] access to mediocre technology and an Internet connection can work (for free) to create meaning and messages … it is driven by the logic of community growth, rather than the logic of capitalism … it is in this cultural economy that today's young people live" (Lessig, 2007). The ratio between information and youth response is evident in the amount of digital media texts consumed and produced by youth. It is in this hybrid economy that youth interact, "this is how youth communicate; it is a literacy for this generation, this is how our kids speak, it is how our kids think, it is what your kids are as they increasingly understand digital technologies and their relationships to themselves" (Lessig, 2007). To force youth to operate in any other cultural economy (especially one that is linear) will jeopardize their ability to engage in cultural exchange. The outpouring of these digital cultural texts confirms that "social networking sites, online games, video-sharing sites, and gadgets such as iPods and mobile phones are now fixtures of youth culture" (Ito, Horst, Bittanti, boyd, Herr-Stephenson, Lange, Pascoe, & Robinson, 2008, p. 4). Furthermore, Prensky (2001) argues that what is new is a population of "digital natives," who have learned how

to learn new kinds of software before they started high school. According to howard Rheingold, (2008) these "digital natives" are ones "who carry mobile phones, media players, game devices, and laptop computers and know how to use them, and for whom the Internet is not a transformative new technology but a feature of their lives that has always been there, like water and electricity" (p. 99). Thus, these are young people who have grown up in this new hybrid economy and are for the most part unfamiliar with other generations' cultural economies.

For example, when young people engage in what Lessig (2009) calls a remix and mashup culture, a society that allows and encourages derivative works; the act of remix is understood as a method of bricolage; a way to engage in cultural production with various texts that circulate the Web in order to create a new and exciting text to recirculate and continue with the cycle of global cultural productions. It is both unfair and improper to criticize youth for ways that they understand society, technology, and the Web because they have grown up saturated in a digital culture and this is their cultural economy. The work produced by youth in a hybrid cultural economy deals with what Willis (1990) calls grounded aesthetics, which can be defined as the ways young people are able to subvert dominant media by using their products in new and different ways. Willis notes that "whilst the media invite certain interpretations, young people have not only learnt the codes, but have learnt to play with interpreting the codes, to reshape forms, to interrelate the media through their own grounded aesthetics . . . they add to and develop new meaning from given ones" (p. 30).

Digital Youth Praxis accommodates the hybrid economy by stressing the importance of participatory learning and education. The hybrid economy, however, as

defined by Lessig falls short on the issue of critically informed thinking and action. Because digital culture uses pedagogical tools that are familiar to youth who have access to technology and the Internet, it fosters a learning environment that can easily merge critical thinking with praxis and social change to create a "critical hybrid economy." This critical hybrid economy within the framework of Digital Youth Praxis is concerned with the creation of a critical vocabulary, and a praxis in youth culture media engagements. Within this framework, the work conducted with youth and digital cultures is approached from multiple perspectives and considers the variables that shape each young person's interactions. Such an approach requires young people to not only consume, but more importantly to produce social media cultural texts using a critical pedagogical lens. This means they engage with digital media within a critical framework to identify problematic areas in their everyday lives and those of others in order to gain greater understanding of the hegemonic sources of power that are perpetuating these issues. All the while, youth and educators work together to produce, share, and revisit critical cultural work that promotes collaborative, and Indigenous knowledge and skills that surpass their own comfort zones and conditioned surroundings. This encourages youth to explore and exchange their online and offline practices through diverse local and global networks. It encourages young people to be involved in work that has emancipatory meaning and offers a chance to reshape the relationship between dominant groups, pro-am (professional-amateur) volunteers, collaborators, and viewers.

I position the concept of Digital Youth Praxis in relation to current ethnographic research on youth and social media, which study how social media facilitate youth digital practices. Digital Youth Praxis offers informative ways to engage youth in socially

conscious digital practices. Digital Youth Praxis suggests and develops ways in which we can shape youth to be critical thinkers. From a social constructivist stance, the Web is seen as a source of diverse information, values, ideas, beliefs, emotions, and concerns—a portal to these many ways of knowing and sharing. Digital Youth Praxis resides in the critical hybrid economy and as such, it sets the stage for us to employ critical thinking with social media in order to discover and advance social awareness and emancipatory work. Thus, one of the most important aspects of Digital Youth Praxis is to offer practical ways for young people and educators to work together for a greater good.

Youth and Youth Culture

Youth is a highly contested term, "historically evolving, often assumed to be stable, and is deployed in a range of ways with concrete effects for the most vulnerable populations" (Dimitriadis, 2008, p. 13). The term is used to refer to minors (under the age of 18), and often encompasses young adults (up to 30 years of age). For example, both UN and Canadian laws define youth as being between the ages of 12–18, except for Canadian Aboriginal youth with disabilities who are categorized as youth until 30 years of age. Most of these government and authoritative bodies equate youth with biological aspects, and nothing more. Therefore, youth as a term is ambiguous because its definition is often categorized in terms of science and biology, which is linked to physical and cognitive aspects of growth. However, over the years the term has transformed because of the arrival and rise of popular culture. This transformation is often linked to mid-twentieth century popular cultural forms such as rock and roll (Steinberg, & Kincheloe, 2004).

Similarly, *culture* is an extraordinarily complex term and it is often linked to the notion of *high culture* (Williams, 1961), which is a collection of the so-called greatest achievements of a particular civilization: their literature, art, music, and philosophy. However, for the purposes of my research, which is engaged with digital media and lifestyles, I have identified culture as the everyday social interplay among the range of, "artifacts, ideas, and institutions people produce and live through" (Dimitriadis, 2008, p.18). To ensure that Digital Youth Praxis is rigorous and complex, it must include an understanding of the current and ongoing changes of youth, and an acceptance of the fact that children now live in a wide, information-saturated adult world. The best educators can do is to prepare youth to cope with it, make sense of it, and participate in it in ways that benefit everyone (Vieira, 2001).

Indeed, technology has played an important role in the transformation of youth culture from the humble scientific notions as suggested by Erikson, and Piaget, to one that is defined and shaped by dynamic social, cultural, political, and economic forces. However, the focus here is not to examine all of these factors in depth, but instead to understand the ways in which media, and digital media in particular, has helped to construct what Steinberg and Kincheloe (2004) call a "new childhood paradigm" (p. 2), wherein children, "both construct their worlds and are constructed by their worlds" (p. 8). This paradigm counters the standard positivist paradigm of childhood, which states that youth are passive receivers of adult input and socialization. In this new paradigm, youth are framed as active agents who are exposed to and actively engage with the complexities of culture, politics, and technology. Motivated by their own curiosity, they navigate their way through digital terrains as a means of self-discovery and cultural exploration.

The contributions made by classical educational psychologists and theorists such as Jean Piaget (1952), Talcott Parsons (1956), Erik Erikson (1950), and James Samuel Coleman (1961) invested interest to further the notion and definition of youth. However, their work was aligned within a positivistic paradigm and ignored social and cultural dynamics, and how life experiences and contextual factors affect young people's development. In order to comprehend contemporary definitions of youth culture and how it situates Digital Youth Praxis, it is important to understand that the research of the aforementioned educational psychologists and theorists was essentialist in nature, and lacked sensitivity toward social factors that shaped youth. Digital Youth Praxis instead is situated within the contemporary work of educational psychologists and theorists such as Angela McRobbie (1994), Carol Gilligan (1982), Valerie Walkerdine (1998), and Henry Giroux (1994). The following section examines classic and contemporary definitions of youth and youth culture by specific educational psychologists and theorists that directly inform and situate Digital Youth Praxis.

Classic educational psychology and philosophy on youth, and youth culture.

Jean Piaget. Jean Piaget envisioned youth in terms of stages of developmental theory that were primarily informed by biological factors (cognition, motor skills, adaptation, and logic) instead of social, and contextual attributes. Furthermore, this model of childhood development was based on studies he conducted with White, middle class youth, so the theories are based on studies that were done with non-representative samples. As a result, this method of childhood development was inherently flawed because it assumed a "one size fits all" universal way to understand youth development. It undermined the complexities and interplay of diversity, class, race, gender, and

language. It also ignored the reality of post-modern families: working and lower classes, and nontraditional family configurations effected by social transformation, vast changes in technology, and industrialization.

Piaget's work with stages of childhood development lacks relevance when applied to contemporary youth and Digital Youth Praxis because it does not consider various societal and cultural factors that shape young people. Piaget's work with constructivist theories of knowing informs Digital Youth Praxis because knowledge development is understood and explored through experimentation and tactile experiences.

Talcott Parsons. Talcott Parsons work shifted the focus from bio-psychological factors that shape adolescence to socio-economic conditions that distinguished youth as a separate social group. Parsons expressed the importance of identity in youth development and coined the term *youth culture* (Parsons, 1942) to denote a distinct "generational cohort subject to common processes of socialization" (Osgerby, 2004, p. 7). Youth and youth culture were understood as transitional experiences that contributed to the maturity of young people and performed a positive function for the social whole by "easing the difficult process of adjustment from childhood emotional dependency to full maturity" (Parsons, 1943, p. 610). Consequently, Parsons's theories were characterized by educators as an attempt to maintain the "scientific rigor" of positivism because he associated citizens as mechanical beings, that subjugated in normative conformity. Furthermore, his work did not reflect social change, human suffering, poverty, deprivation and conflict. Although his work was positivistic, Parsons explored the necessity of the "subjective dimension" of human action incorporated in hermeneutic types of sociological theories. His work was informed by phenomenology, and the

importance of personal experience. The most important aspect of Parsons's work to Digital Youth Praxis and youth development in general was his ability to define youth in terms of social aspects, and to create a term, *youth culture*, that encompassed this distinct group because this was one step forward to distinguish youth as separate from adults.

Erik Erikson. Erik Erikson's (1950) *Childhood and Society* introduced his research on "identity crisis," and the eight life-stage virtues (hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, caring, wisdom) for youth development. According to Erickson, each stage was marked by a "necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshaling resources of growth, recovery, and further differentiation" (Erikson, 1968, p. 16). Erikson's theory is important to Digital Youth Praxis, and youth culture because it portrays youth "as playing an active role in their own psychological development" and "it highlights the important role played by cultural goals, aspirations, expectations, requirements, and opportunities in personal growth" (Biehler, Snowman, D'Amico, & Schmid, 1990, p. 37). His work incorporated social aspects primarily from a psychological stance, and its influence on identity formation during youth development. Erikson was highly criticized by female theorists, particularly Carol Gilligan, for generalizing the process and timing of identity formation for each gender. Gilligan (1982) believed that Erikson's theory was more accurate to the process of male psychological development than of female. Furthermore, his work lacked connection to greater socio-political forces mainly because of its concern with psychosocial relativity, a tendency to process information in comparison to norms or standards, which is opposed within Digital Youth Praxis. Digital Youth Praxis emphasizes Erikson's work on the importance of youth as an active agent during their

developmental process because it is primarily based on young people's ability to make decisions and choices based on their interest and agency.

James Samuel Coleman. The work of James Samuel Coleman's *The Adolescent Society* (1961) paved the way for youth culture to be understood in relation to socio-economic, political, and ideological structures, as opposed to only biological and physical attributes. According to Coleman, "what sets youth apart as a distinct cultural group is their distinctive pattern of media use and practices of commodity consumption" (Osgerby, 2004, p. 9). He based this conclusion on the fact that society as a whole was preoccupied with commodities of leisure and style, but more specifically that there was influences from a flood of films, records, magazines, and fashion during the late 1950s. This "exponential growth of the youth-oriented leisure and entertainment industries added force to notions of a distinctive adolescent peer culture" (Osgerby, 2004, p. 9). Furthermore, Coleman emphasized youth culture as a phase of identity formation, where "young people's distinctive social experiences, values, and behaviors set [them] apart as a generational group" (Osgerby, 2004, p. 8). The growth in labour markets, family situations, educational structures, and popular culture, coupled with the rise of technology, led to the widespread recognition of youth as the product defined by wider social, economic and political structures,

> Age relations (including youth) are part of the economic relations and the political and ideological structures in which they take place. It is not the relations between [ages that] explain the changes or stability in society, but changes in societies, which explains the relations between ages. (Allen, 1968, p. 321)

Coleman believed that youth culture had a distinct attitude, purpose, and interests, separate from those of the adult world, and he examined different levels of youth socialization: primary socialization (family, playmates, and peers), secondary socialization (schooling, education, leisure time activities, and work), and tertiary socialization (legal and religious organizations, voluntary associations, and mass media). His work on levels of youth socialization, particularly the impact of mass media on youth socialization, informs Digital Youth Praxis because it demands that educators consider various dimensions (beyond physical and biological) of a young person and how they influence development and youth culture.

Contemporary educational psychology and philosophy on youth, and youth culture. Though numerous scholars have examined youth culture across various disciplines, it has not been thoroughly explored through a feminist and critical pedagogical lens such as: McRobbie, Gilligan, Walkerdine, and Giroux. While Piaget, Erikson, and Coleman's research gives insight on youth culture, it lacks attention to the relationship between gender, society, and youth; Digital Youth Praxis is equally concerned with how gender changes the dynamics that underlie youth culture and society.

Angela McRobbie. The work of Angela McRobbie on young working-class girls adds an important dimension to the study of youth; she argues that "youth remains a major point of symbolic investment for society as a whole" (McRobbie, 1994, p. 156). McRobbie is especially concerned with the way previous research essentialized youth culture, as opposed to examining the importance of gender in youth development and culture. The previous work on youth culture concerned itself mainly with boys, and researchers generalized and applied these results to young girls. The assumption that

gender was purely shaped by biological factors was a gross oversimplification, and McRobbie's work brought forward more complex notions of gender, and fleshed out notions of girl culture and feminized youth: she incorporated contemporary social aspects of power, economy, politics, race, background, class, and education, to create more inclusive notions of gender identity, sexuality, and gender roles. McRobbie recognized that young girls were present in youth culture but were invisible in research on youth. Her work influenced subsequent studies of youth culture, including Les Back (1996) and Paul Gilroy (1993), who explored the "relationships between structures of class and racism, and the strategies through which young people negotiate their identities between not only differences of age, gender and social class; but also through discourses of ethnicity and 'race'" (Osgerby, 2004, p. 11). These factors are particularly important to Digital Youth Praxis because of its direct involvement with the diverse population of urban youth. Digital Youth Praxis is created with urban youth in mind, and according to Dimitriadis (2004), "urban no longer can so easily be located, either geographically or systematically" (p. 4). Research with urban youth culture requires us to unpack and acknowledge aspects beyond geographical positions; we must understand it as a complex attribute influenced by socioeconomic location, politics, gender, education, history, and ethnicity. McRobbie's work on youth culture demands educators involved with Digital Youth Praxis to constantly consider the role of power, age, gender and social class when engaged with digital youth culture and research.

Carol Gilligan. McRobbie's work was influential in youth studies because she pointed out the importance of gender differences in youth development. Likewise, Gilligan noted that female voices were silenced and ignored in conversations that

concerned youth development and psychology. Gilligan broke this silence and proposed that females had different ways of thinking, and different stages in moral development, thus young females grew up differently than boys. Gilligan researched three specific stages in female moral development: the first is a selfish stage, the second is a belief in conventional morality, and the third is post-conventional. The progression from selfish, to social, to principled morality grows out of a need for females to recognize that "women's psychological development is potentially revolutionary not only because of women's situation but also because of girl's resistance" (Gilligan, 1982, xxiii). Gilligan's three stages are evidence of a stubborn patriarchal society

> Female children start out with a selfish orientation. They then learn to care for others, and that selfishness is wrong. So in their second, conventional, stage, women typically feel it is wrong to act in their own interests, and that they should value instead the interests of others. They equate concern for themselves with selfishness. In the third, post-conventional stage, they learn that it is just as wrong to ignore their own interests as it is to ignore the interests of others. One way to this understanding comes through their concern with connecting with others. A connection, or relation, involves two people, and if either one is slighted, it harms the relationship. (Phillips, 2009, pp.10-11)

According to Gilligan, we must understand the development of girls in relation to how they function in society and the complexities of such relations from a female's perspective. It is not enough to equate female development to that of boys because as her work suggests, females seem to invest more emotions to external factors (relationships, morality, education). Equally important is the way Gilligan's work reshaped classic

notions on youth development to fit the contemporary view of young women and the "crucial role of women's voices in maintaining or transforming a patriarchal world (Gilligan, 1982, p. xi). Digital Youth Praxis draws from Gilligan's view the importance to acknowledge female youth development and the emotional connections to society. This demands that we approach and examine the digital practices of both female and male within a different perspective. Therefore, it is crucial for Digital Youth Praxis to take into account the gender of the participant and how it influences their digital interactions.

Valerie Walkerdine. Valeria Walkerdine is a critical educational psychologist who is concerned with the ways that gender, class, and the media affect the development and formation of young people and "self". Additionally, Walkerdine argues that media's representations of girls are often negative and sexualized. Walkerdine believes that this victimization "gives them no agency or fantasy of their own" (Jones, 2007, p. 246). Walkerdine was instrumental in the motion to acknowledge how the media's representations of youth skew and effect our expectations and behavior with young people. Furthermore, her work places emphasis on young people's gender and class and how these dimensions directly influence a young person's development and life.

Walkerdine's work is important within the Digital Youth Praxis framework because of her emphasis on young people's class and gender as well as their context during development. Walkerdine believes that context is fundamental in young people's comprehension and production of knowledge. From this perspective the digital practices that youth are engaged with beg to be examined vis-à-vis their gender, class and context. This means that we have to pay specific attention to how each of those aspects not only

influences the young person, but the way it affects their access and the complexities of such choices. For example, a lower class youth will most likely have limited access to digital technology; therefore because their engagement differs, it affects their level of technical skills. Walkerdine places emphasis on crucial aspects of class, and how it directly links to access technology. Digital Youth Praxis responds to Walkerdine's challenge by incorporating new ways of thinking and engaging with digital and social media.

Henry Giroux. The ease of social media to facilitate online global collaborations, information exchange, and civic engagement has crystallized what Henry Giroux calls a public pedagogy. According to Giroux (2004), a "public pedagogy is the diverse ways in which culture functions as a contested sphere over the production, distribution, and regulation of power, and how and where it operates both symbolically and institutionally as an educational, political, and economic force" (para. 11). Digital and social media have enabled young people to effortlessly tap into cultural productions via online communities to explore, resist, and learn from others lived experiences. The importance of the electronic media, and media pedagogy in youth development is a core aspect of Giroux's definition of youth. Giroux's views on youth and youth culture are imperative for Digital Youth Praxis because of the connection he makes to what Paul Virilo calls "speed space"; how technology develops in relation to speed and power. Giroux's work on youth culture examines the influence and effects of technology on their practices and cultural productions. Furthermore, Giroux (1996) explains, "as a concept, youth represents an inescapable intersection of the personal, social, political, and pedagogical. Beneath the abstract codifying of youth around the discourses of law, medicine, psychology,

employment, education, and marketing studies, there is the lived experience of youth" (p. 3). Additionally, because of the vastness of the Internet and digital media, young people no longer are confined to their class and racial locations, "no longer belonging to any one place or location, youth increasingly inhabit shifting cultural and social spheres marked by a plurality of languages and cultures" (Giroux, 1996, para. 23). Therefore, youth culture and their digital practices must be examined in terms of their context and not based primarily on assumptions associated to their class, location, and gender. The Internet has rendered wired youth the ability to explore otherwise unexplored terrain, youth "reorder their imaginations through connections to virtual reality technologies, and produce forms of exchange through texts and images that have the potential to wage a war on traditional meaning, but also run the risk of reducing critical understanding to the endless play of random access spectacles." (Giroux, 1996, para. 24).

Digital Youth Praxis is based on the notion that youth and youth culture no longer have barriers that historically have categorized them because Giroux (1996) believes that "communities have been refigured as space and time mutate into multiple and overlapping cyberspace networks" (para. 24).

Praxis, Youth, and Education

Digital Youth Praxis is driven by the force to merge theory with practice within the context of digital and social media. Praxis is a loaded term, and is often associated with the work of Paulo Freire specifically in the framework of formal and informal education. The following section explores five important aspects, which directly influence Digital Youth Praxis: situated learning, environmental psychology and affordance theory, critical consciousness, enactivism, and flow theory.

Situated learning.

Lev Vygotsky. Lev Vygotsky's research on interaction and praxis amongst youth and adults reshaped how educators understood youth development because he stressed the importance of *situated learning*; that knowing is inseparable from doing and that all knowledge is situated in activity bound to social, cultural and physical contexts (Greeno & Moore, 1993). As opposed to earlier classic research that suggested a link between cognitive development and youth development to assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration, Vygotsky believed that such youth development is largely due to social process, and the influence of what he called the tools of a culture. Furthermore, Vygotsky's *zone of proximal development (ZPD);* the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with help, brought forward key contributions such as of scaffolding, and task-based learning. Both concepts played a key role in situating education and learning within the grander scheme of cultural and social implications in order to acknowledge their influence on a young person's learning situation.

Vygotsky's seminal work on situated cognition and zone of proximal development has an enormous influence on Digital Youth Praxis because of its connection to praxis and action-based learning through exploration. Vygotsky believed in a social constructivist paradigm that promotes shared knowledge and multiple opinions or belief. Suppressing differing viewpoints and opinions learns nothing new, but if we allow these ideas to be expressed openly and attempt to reason for their value or lack thereof, our understanding of the concept or issue will be strengthened (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). Equally important is to contextualize this work within contemporary

society and a media-created electronic ZPD. With Internet, computers, and digital media, youth learn to use the tools of culture, for example, language, mathematics, reasoning, and so on (Fu, 2003). Advancements in digital technology have enabled young people to operate and learn within a mediated digital culture and develop sophisticated and advanced skills because of their ability to function within a digital ZPD, where they access all forms of global information via online communities. Many educators and adults, however, are concerned with young people accessing "adult" information because they fear a loss of innocence for the youth. Educators who understand the importance of digital media pedagogy in the lives of young people know that today's youth are struggling with traditional forms of learning and see this pedagogy as applicable and beneficial to youth, educators and education in general. Digital Youth Praxis thus emerges and is produced around the desire for educators to work with youth through a Vygotskian framework of situated learning and ZPD for social justice pedagogy through digital media.

John Dewey. John Dewey's influence on youth and youth culture was noted with his work on situated approaches to learning and similar to Vygotsky, he argued that understanding is defined within a social unit. Dewey's work was pivotal because it forced educators to think of education beyond the classroom, to encompass everyday life. Dewey was particularly interested in experience and interaction of youth with objective environments in the process of living and learning, whether the experience may be educative, miseducative or noneducative (Simpson, 2006). Furthermore, Dewey was instrumental in establishing progressive education; "the educational theory and movement that emphasized the importance and respect for children and their interests and

experiences" (Simpson, 2006, p. 1). Another important aspect of Dewey's work that contributes to Digital Youth Praxis is his definition and exploration of a reflective person; "a person who is disposed to examine and evaluate the different grounds she and others have for believing and disbelieving truth claims, assumptions, and traditions" (Simpson, 2006, p. 20). Reflexivity is instrumental in Digital Youth Praxis because it demands individuals to continuously think about and examine their actions, thoughts, and experience vis-à-vis their environment and context. This enables them to engage in discussions concerning their praxis, goals, aims, means, methods, and mediums undertaken through their digital media interaction and social justice framework.

Furthermore, Vygotsky and Dewey's notion of situated cognition expanded with the emergence of several key principles developed by James Jerome Gibson that grew from a need to respond to the opportunities for action provided by a particular object or environment; affordance, attention and intention, community of practice, and embodiment. Gibson used Vygotsky and Dewey's work on situated approaches to earning as a springboard for further studies on the impact of environment and context on youth development and youth culture.

Environmental psychology and affordance theory.

James Jerome Gibson and Donald Norman. J.J. Gibson introduced the notion of *affordances* and examined the intersection of situated cognition, environmental psychology and visual perception. Gibson's affordance theory; "an interactionist view of perception and action that focused on information that is available in the environment" (Greeno, 1994, p. 236) allowed educator's perception of youth development and youth culture to acknowledge the importance of objects and ecology, and an individual's ability

to recognize all action possibilities. In this framework, cognition was understood in relation to the environment and stimuli, instead of only an internal information processing method. Gibson argued that cognition is linked to perception and is triggered by objects and affordances created in relation to the environment and the individual's capability to resound. Gibson's research on affordance theory grew out of a need to respond to the influence of ecological and perceptual psychology in a growing technically inclined society. However it was through the collaboration with Donald A. Norman (1988) that the two associated the theory of affordance with interaction design and human machine interaction (HMI) to further understand the complexity of *affordance* within the context of technology and HMI. While Gibson continued to explore the pedagogical aspects of affordance theory, Norman appropriated the term *affordance* referring to "the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those functional properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used" (Norman, 1988, p.9).

Digital Youth Praxis is influenced by Gibson and Normans' affordance theory and reconceptualizes it specifically for youth living and learning a digital media mix. Additionally, the theory is understood as a way for youth and educators to engage with social justice pedagogy and to understand the potential and affordances of digital and social media. Theory of affordance within this context requires educators and youth to explore the action possibilities made affordable by human computer interaction and social media. However, affordance theory relies on *agency*: the capacity and ability for each individual to make choices in the world. Therefore, "in any interaction involving an agent with some other system, conditions that enable that interaction include some properties of the agent along with some properties of the other system" (Greeno, 1994, p. 338).

Therefore, affordances and abilities are, in this view, inherently relational.

> An affordance relates attributes of something in the environment to an interactive activity by an agent who has some ability, and an ability relates attributes of an agent to an interactive activity with something in the environment that has some affordance. The relativity of affordances and abilities is fundamental. Neither an affordance nor an ability is specifiable in the absence of specifying the other. It does not go far enough to say that an ability depends on the context of environmental characteristics, or that an affordance depends on the context of an agent's characteristics. The concepts are codefining, and neither of them is coherent, absent the other, any more than the physical concept of motion or frame of reference makes sense without both of them. (Greeno, 1994, p. 338)

In order for young people to take advantage of the affordances provided by digital and social media as an agent for social justice education; they must fully understand agency, and more importantly, they must achieve what Paulo Freire calls *conscientization* (critical consciousness),

Critical consciousness (conscientization).

Paulo Freire. Paulo Freire's influence on youth and education was particularly important because of his commitment to social justice pedagogy and transformative education. Freire is also noted for his contributions to popular and informal education, and collaborative learning. He was against a banking concept of learning, thus promoting a method of teaching and learning that emphasized dialogue, working together, achieving a better understanding of society, and ways to question and challenge domination. As such, Freire set the foundation for what is now known as critical pedagogy. Freire was

also concerned with praxis: action that is informed and linked to certain values (Freire, 1974). Digital Youth Praxis offers young people exposure to local, national and global issues, and the possibility of social change through blogging, networking, and remixing for a greater good. This praxis occurs when young people have developed what Paulo Freire (1974) calls conscientization, the act of coming to critical consciousness (p. 38). Social media allows young people to not only read the world, but encourages them to speak up, respond and be heard by providing them with empowering tools and a space to host their opinions and ideas. The pedagogy of social media is collectively built with the help of young people, adults, teachers, and netizens (online users) and operates as a form of dialogical and Freirian education. This allows netizens young people to tap into online networked turf, become aware of global issues, and help develop critical consciousness to have the power to transform the world. Freire's work within the context of Digital Youth Praxis and social media, "does not reduce the world to a text but rather stipulates the conditions for the possibility of various competing and conflicting discourses or ways of making sense out of lived experiences" (McLaren, 2000, p. 8).

Digital Youth Praxis draws Freire's work; the belief that individuals must approach the act of knowing and learning by being grounded in their own being, experiences, needs, and circumstances; individuals must continuously make connections between their lived experiences and the reality and society they occupy; individuals must hope and strive to achieve, contributing to new meaning making through collective, shared, diverse and global voices and human beings; and, individuals must engage in transformative action (praxis) to alleviate social injustice and to resist dominant structures and understand how power and injustice operates to oppress marginalized peoples.

Enactivism.

Humberto Maturana, & Francisco Varela. Enactivism is a philosophy based on Maturana and Varela, which argues that cognition and environment are inseparable, and "systems" enact with each other from which they "learn" (Fenwick, 2000). Varela (1991) explains that "enactivism argues that the world is inseparable from the subject, but from a subject which is nothing but a project of the world, and the subject is inseparable from the world, but from a world which the subject itself projects" (p. 7).

The relationship between Digital Youth Praxis and enactivism is centered on the notion of *double-embodiment*; things have no meaning independent of the consciousness of the agent determining meaning (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991). Therefore, when digital media is coupled with critical consciousness youth, their technical skills and experiences, the possibilities to engage in social justice pedagogy are endless.
For example, digital and social media has demonstrated that significant learning of students occurs through investigating, constructing, and interrogating in digital and virtual environments. Furthermore, most research linked to enactivism and digital media limits itself to gaming, identity, and performance (de Castell & Jenson, 2005; Gee, 2003; Squire, 2006). The central theme of this research is to "focus on experience that enables students to develop situated understandings, to learn through failure, and to develop identities as expert problem solvers" (Squire, 2006, p. 26). Therefore, Digital Youth Praxis responds to the need to investigate all forms of digital and social media, and how enactivism allows young people and educators to consider other channels in digital media. Other online communities and digital media activities aligned with social justice pedagogy encourage rich and dynamic environments that most youth are comfortable

with. Likewise, these interactions "contain varied stimulations, where students' attentions are guided toward particular content, though the exact results will vary from person to person and this environment attends to and responds to student needs and the sense they are making" (Li, Clark, & Winchester, 2009, p. 21).

Flow theory.

Mihaly Csíkszentmihályi. The concept of flow is one of the most important aspects of Digital Youth Praxis because it links emotions, environment, and productivity to learning. According to Csíkszentmihályi, flow theory is described as "a state where attention, motivation, and the situation meet, resulting in a kind of productive harmony or feedback" (Geirland, 1996, para. 2). Within the context of Digital Youth Praxis, a flow state is achieved when youth are involved with digital media and online communities of *their* choice. When young people have the freedom to choose specific digital media practices, they become excited about their given goal and task. For example, social justice pedagogy is explored by youth through familiar digital media practices and communities that they are part of. However, this requires educators, schools, and communities at large to work together to understand and keep abreast of digital media trends and youth culture. The presence of flow in youth engaged with digital media appears to be a completely focused motivation; it represents perhaps the ultimate in harnessing the emotions in the service of performing and learning. In flow, the emotions are not just contained and channeled, but positive, energized, and aligned with the task at hand (Csíkszentmihályi, 1998). It is equally important to understand that this method does not equate u*sing* the technology and its ability to harness flow as a means to lure youth into a specific task or pedagogy. In this context, the digital media flow state and

pedagogy are equally important to the state of flow because it emerges in the zone in which an activity challenges people to the fullest of their capacities, as their skills increase it takes a heightened challenge to get into flow (Csíkszentmihályi, 1998). The importance of flow in Digital Youth Praxis is to strike a balance between the challenge of the task and the participants' emotional involvement.

The Relationship of Critical Media Education to Social Media

Digital Youth Praxis draws from tenets of critical media education and social media. The relationship between youth culture and social media is a powerful space that demands educators to examine its complexities and interaction through the prism of critical media education. The following section considers the influences of each area on Digital Youth Praxis.

Media education. The relationship between media education and youth dates back to 1933, with the work of F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson in *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness*. Their work brought forward concepts on the study of mass media's effects on children in schools, and soon became a springboard for the field of media education. Leavis and Thompson envisioned media education as a shield--a set of skills to protect young people against the popular media demon of commercialization and to preserve the heritage of the written word. The goal of media education at the time was to encourage students to "discriminate and resist the commercial manipulation of the mass media and hence to recognize the self-evident merits of high culture" (Buckingham, 2003, p. 7). Educators and advocates of media education were primarily concerned with the preservation of literary texts and their association to Leavis's notion of a culture that comprises a fixed set of privileged

artifacts—an approved canon of literary texts, great art and literature. In response, the seminal work on concepts of culture by Williams (1958, 1961) and Hoggart (1959) influenced people to reconsider the importance of certain texts vis-à-vis "high culture" and popular culture.

Williams's and Hoggart's work brought forth a new concept of media education that was inclusive and considered all aspects of an individual's lived experiences and cultural expressions in order to maximize the various dimensions of a media education curriculum. This nuanced perspective is reflected in Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannell's (1964) *The Popular Arts*, a media education handbook for students, educators, and administrators based on Williams's and Hoggart's approaches to media education. This handbook was particularly concerned with film studies and film theory, but its approach could be used for media studies in general. It offered ways for educators to engage in media education within their classrooms by incorporating the use of films in their curriculum. The use of television texts was discouraged because educators and academics deemed the medium and its content as a "vast wasteland" (Minow, 1961, p. 4).

By the 1970s, journals such as *Screen* and *Screen Education* began to incorporate, through screen theory, the media education concepts of semiotics, structuralism, psychoanalytic theory, post-structuralism, and Marxist ideologies (Buckingham, 2003). Consequently, screen theory and its journals drew further away from the realities of classroom settings, and this made it difficult for educators to apply such theories within their curriculum. These concepts made a significant impact on the content of media education, but educators and students felt detached from what they saw as academic elitism and theoretical material.

Len Masterman wrote what is considered the founding text on media education. Masterman added dimensions of language, ideology, power, and representation to what had been central elements of screen theory. According to Masterman (1985), the fundamental aims of media education were "to reveal the constructed nature of media texts, and thereby to show how media representations reinforced the ideologies of dominant groups within society; and to understand the economic underpinnings of media industries" (p. 47). Masterman was concerned with a more practical media education curriculum, one that was more amenable for use by educators in their classrooms. Masterman clarified that media literacy was a separate entity from media education: media education was the pedagogical process, and media literacy was the outcome. He introduced the concept of demystification, to "reveal the selective practices by which images reach the television screen, emphasize the constructed nature of the representations projected, and make explicit their suppressed ideological function" (Masterman, 1992, p. 47). Teachers used this approach to showcase how a desired media effect is constructed through the producer's manipulation of specific elements and screen language codes and conventions such as: image composition, angles, sound, text, and colors. However, Masterman's work, along with other notable media educator theorists of the time, lacked the transition from theory to practice in media education. A practicum (a place where practice and theory are done as praxis) curriculum demands from educators and students the ability to collaboratively understand media content (message, theme, audience), as well as media form (shots, genres, aesthetics, techniques, codes, conventions). A pragmatic approach to media education empowers educators and youth to completely understand how media functions, and the way it is used by producers to

reach a certain audience and evoke specific emotions.

In 1982, the *Grunwald Declaration on Media Education* was published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Their mandate was clear: to encourage media education in schools, communities and homes across the world and to highlight the "importance [of media] as an element of culture in today's world" (UNESCO, 1982, para. 3). While the declaration signaled the importance of media education, like Masterman's work, it lacked practical advice for educators. This was eventually followed by the establishment of associations across the country: the Association for Media Literacy (Ontario AML, 1978); the Media Literacy Saskatchewan (MLS, 1988); the Manitoba Association for Media Literacy (MAML, 1990); the British Columbia Association for Media Literacy (BCAME, 1991); the Association for Media Literacy Quebec (AMEQ, 1992); the Association for Media Literacy—Nova Scotia (AML—NS, 1992); the Alberta Association for Media Awareness (AAMA, 1993); the Association for a Media Literate New Brunswick (A4MLNB, 2001); and the Association for Media Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador (AML—NL, 2002).

Notably, Quebec was the first province to explore the possibility of media education back in 1966 with the first Summer Institute for the Study of Film and Television hosted by the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) and with the participation of media producers and educators across the country. The program ended after several years; however, the NFB continues to offer numerous media education projects that allow educators, students, and community leaders to participate in various aspects of the filmmaking process. For example, the NFB has created physical spaces such as Cinémathèque centres, which offer participatory media workshops; online teacher

resources such as *Footprints*, *Waterlife*, and *The Media Awareness Network*, which are online communities promoting critical thinking and media literacy resources for educators; open access media content, such as *Aboriginal Perspectives*, which features National Film Board documentaries and media literacy tools by and about Canada's Aboriginal peoples; partnership programs such as *Challenge for Change*, and *Films for Change*, which promote social justice through media activism; and digital storytelling projects such as *CitizenShift* and *Filmmaker in Residence*, which engage educators and media producers to collaboratively create socially aware media content. Quebec was and still is one of the few provinces in Canada that requires its educators to include media literacy with its Quebec Education Plan as Broad Area of Learning (Media Literacy), Cross-Curricular Competency (Communicates appropriately), and Subject Area (English Language Arts, Visual Arts).

By the late 1990s, there was a general move away from a defensive approach to media education toward one that took advantage of the new, sophisticated, and readily available technology. This shift represented a change in technology that had been forecast by Marshall McLuhan (1962) and Gordon Moore (1965). Both scholars had predicted the profound effects that technology would have on society: the creation of the World Wide Web proved how electronic mass media could collapse space and time barriers in human communication that would enable people to interact and live on a global scale, which was a crystallization of McLuhan's (1962) vision of a global village. Nineteen sixty-five was considered a time of space exploration and a time of a great emphasis on making technology better, faster, and more powerful, Gordon Moore postulated that the cost of a unit of processing (semiconductor device used to amplify electronic signals) would be

halved every eighteen months. However, many people did not take their predictions seriously and did not prepare for the rapid technological advances brought about with the advent of the Web. Consequently, the arrival of digital media has made new challenges and new opportunities for educators, and media education curriculums, to keep abreast of the latest media developments. By the mid-1990s, the World Wide Web had become a new playground for youth, and a decade later, it had become a digital sandbox for exploration, communication, cultural production, and identity formation. During this time, the Web was in its primitive years, and by 2005, the first generation of the Web was replaced with a more accessible and versatile version: Web 2.0.

Web 2.0. The term was first coined at a conference brainstorming session between Tim O'Reilly [founder and CEO of O'Reilly Media] and MediaLive International in 2005 (O'Reilly, 2005). According to O'Reilly (2005), Web 2.0 has an architecture of participation; it is a constellation made up of links between Web applications and desktop applications, the blog publishing revolution, and self-service advertising. This architecture is based on social software where users generate content, rather than simply consume it "it is an arena where the Web, rather than the desktop, is the dominant platform, and its organization develops spontaneously through the actions of the group of people using it" (Singel, 2005, para.3). Unlike the first manifestation of the Web, which was primarily established as a read-only environment, this second wave allows its users to contribute and promote user-generated content to a global audience. This has created a digital culture that brings people together who had previously been set apart by the constraints of physical space and time zones. The two-way flow of information continues to be a pivotal component of media culture and elevates the information-to-action ratio to

a much higher dimension.

More than ever, youth are actively engaged in digital media: according to Alexa.com, a data and behavior tracking collection company, the top five most-visited websites in the US in November 2008 all included Web 2.0 functionalities: Yahoo.com, Google.com, YouTube.com, Live.com, and Facebook.com. The same is true for Canada, where the list-toppers included Google.ca, Live.com, Facebook.com, Yahoo.com, and YouTube.com. All of these websites offer a variety of Web 2.0 capabilities, including blogging, vlogging, video sharing, information sharing, instant messaging, instant video, and voice chat. And perhaps most importantly, young people are quickly mastering the tools offered in this new digital environment, and they are using them to learn about, relate to, and engage with the social world. The nature of this second generation of the web facilitates a democratic space that has the power to transform and enhance many dimensions of communication, and it has created conditions that have allowed young people to control and redirect information avenues. In fact,

> new media are frequently seen to offer considerable potential for regenerating democratic participation. Digital technology, it is argued, can "give citizens a voice," enabling them to contribute positively and autonomously to public debates, and to play a more active part in the political process. Young people are developing new forms of global political consciousness and activity through their relationships with new media. (Tapscott, 1998, p. 127)

Above all, Web 2.0 allows youth culture to exist as "open source," as it offers practical and instantaneous global access to youth topics, interests, trends, knowledges, and issues. According to Lev Manovich (2001), this "opening up of cultural techniques,

conventions, forms, knowledge, and concepts is ultimately the most promising cultural effect of computerization because it presents an opportunity to see the world and the human being anew, in ways that were not previously available" (p. 333).

Media culture. The paradigm shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 has required educators to pay closer attention to the advancements in technology in order to fully participate in a media education curriculum that is engaging for their students. This culture is what Douglas Kellner (1995) calls "media culture":

> [Our media culture is] a high-tech culture deploying the most advanced technologies, a vibrant sector of the economy, one of the most profitable sectors and one that is attaining global prominence. Media culture is thus a form of techno-culture that merges culture and technology in new forms and configurations, producing new types of societies in which media and technology become organizing principles. (p. 1)

Kellner envisions a critical media literacy that was at once innovative, but that was also built on prior established work in media education. Kellner observed that the field of media education was divided into three distinct approaches: (a) the protectionist approach, (b) the media arts education approach, and (c) the media literacy movement. The protectionist approach assumes that citizens are passive victims of media and that print culture is more important than other forms of media culture. This approach is linked to Neil Postman's (1985) theory of media as a malicious pedagogy for youth. Postman leaves students with only the dogmatic option to reject media and offers no room of the potential of youth empowerment through or with media. By contrast, a media arts education approach encourages young people to appreciate media aesthetic, "a process in

which we examine a number of media elements, such as lighting and picture composition, how they interact, and our perceptual reactions to them" (Zettl, 2005, p. 5). As a result, students learn to reproduce hegemonic representations, and continuously contribute to audiovisual codes and conventions that reinforce a certain ideology and message. Within this approach, very little attention is given to *contextualistic aesthetics* (Zettl, 2005), which is the understanding that "what and how we perceive an event is greatly influenced by its context … and [it] stresses the interconnection of the major aesthetic fields of applied media aesthetics; light, space, time/motion, and sound" (Zettl, 2005, p. 5). Therefore, contextualistic aesthetics when coupled with critical pedagogy has the power to transform practice by how it "addresses issues of gender, race, class, sexuality, and power, [and it] holds dramatic potential for transformative critical media literacy (Share, 2009, p. 10).

Kellner argues that the most recent approach is a media literacy movement that attempts to "expand the notion of literacy to include popular culture and multiple forms of media (music, film, video, Internet, advertising, etc.) while still working within a print literacy tradition" (Share, 2009, p. 10). This approach expands on the work put forward by The New London Group in 1996 with "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures," which sought to "overcome the limitations of traditional approaches by emphasizing how negotiating the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society is central to the pragmatics of the working, civic, and private lives of students" (New London Group, 1996, para. 1). This approach employs literacy as a means to navigate and communicate through media education, and is fundamentally connected to information literacy, technology literacy, digital literacy, visual literacy, and multimodal

literacy. This approach is often considered a "safe" way to incorporate media literacy in a curriculum because, with it, there is no need to expose the underlying critical components of the text. In practical terms, this means that educators question the obvious "issues" on a superficial level and they can conveniently ignore the more deeply rooted complexities and concerns embedded within the text.

Social media. The current work on new media literacy (Jenkins et all, 2006) includes digital cross-platform media and mobile technologies, however, it is often criticized for its lack of criticality, and its general assumption of access to technology by all educators, communities, and schools. Within new media literacy there is very little that has been done to research the impact of social media as a tool for critical media education and empowerment. Most of the findings thus far have focused primarily on a form of civic engagement that promotes online community duty, problem solving, civic virtue, and virtual social capitalism. Online civic engagement is understood as "being a good neighbor, obeying rules, and participating in the community; others think of it as an engagement with political processes such as voting" (Bers, 2008, p. 151). In his work, Bers (2008) assesses the use of online civic engagement through Zora, a virtual community specifically designed to promote positive youth development. With this program, Bers promotes a civic engagement that

> goes beyond a focus solemnly on the procedural aspects of democracy to one that embraces the many facets of a deliberative democracy in one's own environment, school, local community, or larger society … this includes the ability to engage in civic conversations, to develop civic knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior's, and to participate in community service, activism, and advocacy. (pp. 151–152)

The main issue with this approach, besides its lack of a critical dimension that examines socio-political structures, is the fact that the virtual software and platform have been specifically constructed for the young participants. Accordingly, research conducted by Michael Delli Carpini (2000) found that "efforts in the online civic engagement space are often more strongly suited for enabling or more deeply engaging young people who are already civically minded" (Raynes-Goldie & Walker, 2008, p. 161). The problem here is twofold: youth are forced to learn new software and new platforms, instead of exploring what they currently know, and aligning their practices toward social justice pedagogy; and, these types of software are targeted toward youth that are already socially aware and somewhat critical.

Digital Youth Praxis is intended to work with current online communities that youth voluntarily participate in and contribute to. The notion that educators should force youth into using new programs, new online communities, or new methods of learning is counterproductive and falls into the same faulty pedagogy that some schools are currently practicing through their choice of Internet censorship in schools. This action dismisses the educational value of certain online communities, and discourages educators to align youths' digital practices toward a social justice curriculum via communities and digital media platforms that youth have chosen to work with, instead of ones that they are forced to learn.

Online communities that promote civic engagement often align their work toward a framework of "positive youth development" (Bers, 2008, p. 148), that involves cognitive, personal, social, emotional, and civic aspects of adolescence. Richard M. Lerner et al. (2005) refer to this framework with their concept of the *six C's*: (a)

competence (cognitive abilities and behavioral skills for being healthy); (b) *connection* (positive bonds with people and institutions); (c) *character* (integrity and moral centeredness); (d) *confidence* (positive self-regard and a sense of self- efficacy); (e) *caring* (human values including empathy and a sense of social justice), and (f) *contribution* (orientation to contribute to civil society). This model must include two more C's in order to be fully functional in communities that extend beyond virtual gaming communities: *constructivism* (the ability to understand the complex relationship between a phenomenon and society as an ongoing process) and *critical consciousness* (the ability and willingness to question, challenge, and change dominant forms and practices).

Gaming. Much established scholarship, which correlates youth and their social media practices to a greater purpose, does so via gaming platforms and virtual worlds. This body of research primarily examines massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG). Accordingly, very little attention has been given to the ability of youth to navigate between online and offline worlds, and the ways in which youth develop, transfer, and engage in learning cycles with digital social media. *New media literacy* is the umbrella term that is utilized to define and discuss youth cultural production that is created and circulated via new media tools, outlets, and various forms of online gaming, including single role playing games and MMORPG (massively multiplayer online role-playing game). According to Jenkins (2006), new media literacies are the social skills that are used when interacting within a larger gaming community, and not simply individualized skills to be used for personal expression. A study conducted on digital media and learning by the MacArthur Foundation (2006) associated the following

list of skills to a new media literacy curriculum: “play, performance, simulation, appropriation, multitasking, distributed cognition, collective intelligence, judgment, transmedia navigation, networking, and negotiation” (Jenkins et all, 2007, p.4). Indeed, this approach and list is comprehensive and covers a wide range of skills, and competencies, however its emphasis is on gaming communities and wikis, “a web application whose content is collaboratively added, updated, and organized by its users” (Mitchell, 2010, para. 1)—this is only one part of the broader picture of online social media.

Shaping. More than ever, young people consume and produce digital media at a considerable speed and construct “diverse lifestyles from a mix of media, rarely if ever making use of just one medium” (Livingston, 2002, p. 15). Accordingly, Digital Youth Praxis suggests a dimension of *shaping* to be added to both Kellner’s vision of critical media literacy, and the aforementioned approaches to new media literacy. Shaping is the ability to gather a variety of reliable web-based resources in order to develop a personalized online learning environment, and to acknowledge one’s ability to perform in certain online worlds. Due to the omnipresence of digital media, it is important for youth to be aware of the complexity of their online and offline actions and surroundings, and how these positively and negatively affect other people’s lives (people of different ethnicities, sociopolitical ideologies, classes, genders, sexualities, and educational backgrounds). This is one area that media education and critical media literacy have not accounted for. It requires a critical media education that must speak to both online and offline areas, and must be constantly in flux between the two worlds. Furthermore, this approach to critical media education must account for the concept of online performance,

and the ways in which young people take advantage of the anonymity of the Web and disguise their real human self to portray an alternative digital self. This becomes more complex when youth are more submerged in networked turf (online social network communities), thus critical media education must stress the discernment of which online information is reliable, and which is problematic. For example, activities for students may include the deciphering of the unwritten goals of a website, or online community, which would lead students to the realization that these virtual spaces have their own goals and agendas, as do other media texts.

Social justice pedagogy and media production. So the question is: Where to go from here? Allan Martin (2008) has introduced interesting approaches to work with digital literacy and education. His work examines digital literacy through three distinct operative levels: "First at the level of technique, of the mastery of digital competences, secondly at the level of thoughtful usage, of the contextualized and appropriate application of digital tools, and thirdly, at the level of critical reflection, of the understanding of the transformative human and social impact of digital actions" (p. 167).

According to Martin, these levels of digital literacy are envisioned as a vertical model, which begins with the competency and skill to operate a digital item, followed by the ability to apply that skill to a specific usage, and finally to transform a digital action by taking it to the next level to stimulate significant change for critically informed digital practices. Although Martin's model suggests an interesting way to approach digital literacy and media education, it is problematic in its hierarchal approach; what would be more useful is a more organic, free-flowing model that would allow for multiple points of entry. In order to function within a critical cultural hybrid economy, such a model must

eliminate clearly structured levels and suggest more fluidity, which more accurately mirrors young people's complex interactions with digital texts. This model would account for youth who have adequate critical thinking skills, knowledges, and diverse culture, but lack the technical access and skills to interact effectively with a text. The final stage of Martin's hierarchy is called a digital transformation that enables innovation, creativity, and change. This concept is situated within Digital Youth Praxis, however Lievrouw's (2009) approach to social justice pedagogy and social media are at the core of Digital Youth Praxis because she envisions a digital media pedagogy that

> connect students' everyday interactions and experiences with media technologies, to classic questions of equity, privacy, farness, openness, access, power, and so on—to give students the critical vocabulary and tools to think with and to encourage them toward more active and principled media use and participation (pp. 562–563).

Furthermore, the goal of Digital Youth praxis is to engage youth in digital social media practices "that encourage students toward more reflective, critical and activist engagement with media" (Lievrouw, 2009, p. 562). Her work offers a number of practical classroom exercises for various educational levels and access; they range from exercises on surveillance and privacy, reliable sources, digital divides, access, equity, and remediation. Here is where Digital Youth Praxis is mainly situated and it takes Lievrouw's work to another dimension because of its practicum core: it promotes the production of critical social media texts with the intention of mass online circulation and feedback.

Media education must encourage participants to ask questions that challenge structures of power and commonsensical assumptions; "the goal should be to move toward critical media literacy . . . while planting seeds and scaffolding the steps for transformative pedagogy" (Share, 2009, p. 13). Young people spend an enormous amount of time online, and they require a fluid way to see the world and continually attempt to redefine who they are through the contexts in which they find themselves. Media education must be critical because "without critical pedagogy and cultural studies, media literacy risks becoming another cookbook of conventional ideas that only improve the social reproductive function of education" (Share, 2009, p. 10). Media education must encourage youth and educators to push us all to new levels of social and cognitive achievements previously deemed impossible (Kincheloe, 2005).

Kellner's work addresses the lack of criticality by including critical skills and critical pedagogy in media education and media literacy. Thus, *critical media literacy* emerged with the intention of teaching youth to "learn from media, to resist media manipulation, and to empower themselves by using the media" (Kellner, 1998, p. 104). A critical media literacy approach

> includes all aspects of the three previous models, but focuses on ideology, critique and analyzing the politics of representation of crucial dimensions of gender, race, class, and sexuality; incorporating alterative media production; and expanding textual analysis to include issues of social context, control, resistance, and pleasure. (Share, 2009, p. 12)

Kellner also suggests a movement toward a media education curriculum that is understood as an active participant of a media culture, and is based on an understanding

of the role of technology and its relationship with people, specifically youth. However, this is not to say that the evolution of technology should be the most important aspect of media education—this is reductionist in its view of technology and society, and raises many issues about technological determinism. Technology is one of a number of mediating factors in human behavior and social change that both acts on and is acted upon by other phenomena. For example, Kellner (2000) states that because communication technologies "have become more and more accessible to young people and average citizens, they should be used to promote education, democratic self-expression, and social progress" (p. 251).

Digital Youth Praxis offers a unique connection between community-based education and the partnership between various formal and informal education sites. This encourages not only the online exchange of youth-based knowledges, but also those of community members, elders, and educators at different capacities. Such a partnership could have community members visit university classrooms and work with students on specific social media projects. It also encourages the cooperation of young people from various communities to come together and collaborate on themed projects, both online and offline, and to engage in critical discussion with global participants without necessarily having to physically meet. Digital Youth Praxis aims to bridge the digital gap: between schools and communities, rich and poor neighborhoods, young people and seniors. Bridging this gap will be impossible without the partnering of schools, universities, and communities. There are many community projects created in low-income boroughs across Canada with high school dropouts or gang members, but how can university students and professors work with community leaders and participants to

help develop the participants' skills and motivate them to go back to school or help them enter the workforce? Digital Youth Praxis responds to these concerns through the use of social media praxis combined with critical pedagogy. In order to eradicate the gap, each youth and group involved in Digital Youth Praxis must bring forward their specific knowledges and work together to foster a successful partnership and project.

Chapter 3. Methodology

The specific objectives of my research method were shaped by the following questions: (a) how does Digital Youth Praxis function as a framework in which youth use current digital practices to promote social justice issues relevant to their lives; (b) how do educators engage with digital media within social justice pedagogy; (c) what specific procedures should educators follow for a successful experience with Digital Youth Praxis; (d) what external and internal factors influence Digital Youth Praxis and those who are involved; (e) how can educators align most digital practices toward a participant-generated social justice pedagogy; and (f) what pragmatic projects encourage Digital Youth Praxis?

With these in mind, I had to first consider the various structures that shaped the everyday experiences and the social media practices of the youth in my study. Additionally, I had to understand how they transferred this knowledge and experience to the field site. The majority of my research occurred at the Freire Social Media Project (FSMP), which is a constructed, public, and mediated safe space within a public urban university. There were three important factors that I was conscious of throughout the process of my research:

1. Positionality: Before I began my research, I had to understand "the knowledge, values, beliefs and practices that [I, as] the researcher, carry into the research text "because" our understanding of the world and ourselves is socially constructed [and I] must devote special attention to the differing ways individuals from diverse social backgrounds construct knowledge and make meaning" (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 206). That being said, I am a white, middle-class, educated, and tri-lingual woman with

advanced media skills. Due to my professional media experience and university teaching, I understood the basic tenets of media production, and the importance of pedagogy and curriculum. I was quick with my ability to modify certain media productions and educational aspects for the participants. For example, we had limited access to certain video cameras; therefore, we used webcams and slightly modified the projects. Consequently, I can say that I entered this research project from a different position than most of the participants because of my advanced levels of technical media skills and professional experience.

2. Keeping up-to-date: I had to keep abreast of new social media phenomena and their relationships to youth culture and social justice education. Therefore, I joined many social media phenomena, including Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, Twitter, and Wikipedia amongst others. I explored each space in detail by examining all their functions, I read and researched their privacy statements and corporate profiles, and made sure to interact with other online members. I did not keep records of how many hours I spent on these websites. I also spent several hours on a daily basis reading as many news articles, blogs, and reports on new social media as possible. I paid particular attention to educational and social activism work related to social media and the ways youth were involved, or not.

3. Other online and offline spaces: One of the advances of social media is its ability to connect people at any time and place. The first thing I did when I began the research was to become Facebook friends with each participant. As a result, I was able to read and observe my participants' profiles, activities, and interactions. This also allowed me to be in contact with them via Facebook's instant chat feature and ask them questions about

what they were doing, how they spent their time, what new websites they were involved with, and what functions they were using. I used this means to get more information about their lives offline.

Furthermore, I felt it was also important to explore different mediated and unmediated environments, and public and private spaces that youth occupy (social networks, virtual spaces, youth events, concerts, school activities, etc). I tried my best to explore these through questions, online interactions, and discussions with my participants and other youth in similar socio-economic situations. Due to ethical limitations, it was impossible to gather as much information as I wanted.

These components were important because they influenced my interactions with the participants, as well as my research approach. The ability to keep these three components alive in my mind, combined with my youth community interactions, professional media experience, and technical skills and competencies, offered me the chance to enter the field in a unique position as an educator researcher.

As a means of addressing my research, I have divided this chapter into six sections: (a) general perspectives, (b) research context, (c) participants, (d) research duration and sources of data, (e) procedures followed, and (f) data analysis. Each section elaborates on specific aspects that contribute to the larger scale of the methodology and research questions.

The General Perspective

To study further the dynamics at play with youth, social media engagement, and the potential to steer these everyday practices to something educationally enriching, my research design had to take into account various factors about qualitative methodologies

before I could settle on a specific approach. A survey of literature confirmed that researchers working within educational or community contexts often found themselves engaged with qualitative methodologies (Hinchey, 2008; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Donner, 2005).

The definition of qualitative research is intricate "it cross-cuts disciplines, fields, and subject matters and has distinguished histories in education, social work, communications, psychology, history, organizational studies, medical sciences, anthropology, and sociology . . . [and] qualitative research means different things in each of these [fields]" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 27). Denzin & Lincoln's (2005) definition situates my research and approach "qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible . . . these practices transform the world" (p. 3). Furthermore, the naturalistic approach of qualitative methodologies is suited to work with youth, educators and community to "study people doing things together in the place where these things are done" (Denzin & Lincoln 2008, p. 37; Becker, 1986).

Provided that my research would embody praxis, collaboration, and participation, participatory action research (PAR) was the obvious method to use. PAR reflects the dynamic way in which I integrated theory and practice by "working *with* people rather than *for* people" (Beilin & Boxelaar, 2001, para. 4). According to Hinchey (2008),

> PAR is research by groups pursuing the emancipatory (critical/liberatory) goal of a more democratic and just society. Multiple stakeholders work together democratically to address problems rooted in social conditions that they seek to

change. Problems/issues are often named by those who directly experience them (p. 32).

Therefore, my PAR approach involved cycles of reflexivity and a research design inspired by Denzin & Lincoln (2005) that acknowledges PAR as "a social process, participatory, practical and collaborative, emancipatory, critical, reflexive, [which] aims to transform both theory and practice (pp. 566–68).

Furthermore, because I was engaged with social media, I grounded my PAR approach within cultural studies and critical pedagogy. Cultural studies theory stresses diversity across gender, race, class, and culture. As "organic intellectuals" (Gramsci, 1971), we engaged in dialogue and reflexivity to identify hegemony and work to question and fight it and "develop knowledge specifically related to the exercise of power within that class" (pp. 5–7). The identification of power (political, authoritative) was an entry point for praxis; the participants created social media projects with underlying social justice themes that "connected education to an [impassioned spirit] that can embolden educators and students to act in ways that make a difference, and push humans to new levels of social and cognitive achievement previously deemed impossible" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 4). The goal was to bridge together the knowledge of both the youth participants and their community educators with my own experience and commitments to "understand the discourse as a function of the relationship between and among knowers" (Heaney, 2000, p. 114). Equally important was to acknowledge the connections between social media, technology, and youth, and understand the links from a social constructivist perspective, instead of sheer technological determinism, which "fails to account for the complex ways in which technology and society interact" (boyd, 2008, p. 11). Therefore, I

constantly acknowledged the relationship between youth, technology and the phenomenon, and its socio-political context to grasp fully the educational potential of digital and social media in the lives of young people.

Unlike a traditional PAR approach, which involves the collaboration of various research stakeholders to solve a problem or eradicate a specific community situation, I conducted my work as a lone research stakeholder, which is addressed in a later section of this chapter. My role as a educator researcher was to carry out a project of personal interest and significance, and contribute my knowledge and experience to the process, provided that I share my findings with "the wider field of educational theory and practice—that is, to be useful outside a single classroom [educational site]" (Hinchey, 2008, p. 34).

While some research about youth and digital social media practices has been conducted and disseminated (see *The MacArthur Series on Digital Media and Learning*, 2007; *Digital Youth Research*, 2008; *Digital Youth Network*, 2008), little research has been done to explore digital youth practices that are grounded on social justice. Additionally, most work centered on youth and media rarely occur in lower socioeconomic locations. This was one of the major motivations for my research; I wanted to reach out to youth who do not have the privilege of home computers, access to Internet, and other digital media.

Furthermore, the work that has been done and continues to happen is often approached by "experts" in a traditional, linear "top-down" method of teaching: media educators "train" and "equip" youth and youth educators to create media and study the results. Given the failure of the top-down method that impose an "expert" to teach and

train youth and youth educators, it is apparent that a new vision of curriculum that focuses on social media practices for social justice must be developed in concert with its participants. A PAR approach allowed me to work collaboratively with participants to create media texts, rather than train them, which enriched their existing community knowledge and led to such necessary end results as self-discovery, pride, and simply the motivation to learn. This growth was evident in the participants' comfort level with the technology, their overall skills and competencies, and their increased interest in community issues.

My intention was to research the social media practices of youth and work with them to construct a model (Digital Youth Praxis) where youth and educators (both formal and informal) come together as critical constructive thinkers, practitioners, and citizens to promote social justice with social media. As part of the larger scale of my research, I was, and I am still, committed to the communication and dissemination of results to scholars, the formal/informal teaching community, the online network of social media activists, and educational open source websites. Overall, my research approach is a response to "traditional academic research that emphasizes the development of theory yet seems unconcerned or unable to effect practical outcomes or change" (Beilin & Boxelaar, 2001, para. 4).

The Research Context: University and Community Research Collaboration

Meetings with these groups would occur either at the group's community location or at McGill University's Freire Project Room, located in the Faculty of Education. This was important and unique because it allowed me to study how their context and immediate environment changed their digital media practices and overall involvement. I

worked with two groups of participants from the borough of Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce in Montreal. The first group was from Project Media, a project for high school dropouts located in the St. Raymond neighborhood in the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce district. The second group of participants was from La Maison des Jeunes de la Côte-des-Neiges Inc., a community centre in the Côte-des-Neiges district.

University setting. The university sessions took place in the media room at McGill University's The Paulo and Nita Freire International Project for Critical Pedagogy. I have been actively engaged with this project as a media producer, which involves the creation of interviews and short media segments on critical pedagogy around the world. Founded by Professor Joe L. Kincheloe, Canada Research Chair in critical pedagogy and Professor Shirley R. Steinberg, the project is dedicated to building an international community of educators who work in social, political, and educational contexts to promote critical pedagogy and social justice. Given the web-based and video work done at the Freire Project, the project room is equipped with state–of-the-art Apple desktop and laptop computers, a Smart Board, and digital media production equipment, which were available during my research work.

The community settings. This research project was created for specific socio-economic locations in neighborhoods that have limited access to technology or media programs. The urban borough of Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce is largely comprised of immigrants and working-class citizens. Both districts are known areas of gang activity, youth street violence, and issues with school dropouts. It is a poorer borough surrounded by mostly affluent boroughs'. The borough is situated between Mount Royal, Outremont, Ville-Marie, Westmount, Le Sud-Ouest, Côte Saint-Luc,

Hampstead, and Montreal West. It has an area of 20.01 km^2 and a population of 164,246, making it the most populous bureau in Montreal (Arrondisement.com, 2009). According to the April 2009 issue of *Profil Sociodémographique, Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce*, the borough includes roughly 164,246 habitants. Of that population, 16% are between the ages of 0–14, 13.8% are between 15–24 years old, and 17.7% are between 25–34 years old.

The rich diversity of the Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough is often seen as both a strength and weakness among its citizens and the Greater Montréal Area; visible minorities make up 41.4% of the borough's population (Arrondisement.com, 2009), 5.84% higher than that of Montréal. Even though the borough works to maintain the citizens and community's integrity, several racial issues are at the root of many of their core problems. Unfortunately, in today's society diversity continues to stir controversy and friction. Historically, the borough's residents were second-generation working class Italian, but in recent years, Caribbean immigrants have settled in the area. New, more affluent, residents have bought homes in the eastern and central parts of the borough. Visible minorities make up 41.4% of the borough's population: 23.5% are identified as Black, 18% are Filipino, 14% are South Asian, 12.1% are Chinese, 11.4% are identified as Arab, 6.9% are Latin American, 6% are Southeast Asian, 3% are Occidental Asian, 1.2% are Korean, 0.5% are Japanese, and 3.3% are identified as another minority. There are several community organizations in the area, and many services are located along Sherbrooke Street, Saint-Jacques Street and Côte-des-Neiges Road, including a CLSC, Emploi Quebec, and "ethnic" markets and supermarkets.

The borough also includes many residents with lower incomes: 26.9% of the population, aged 15 and older, make less than 10,000 dollars annually. In terms of education, 13.7% of those who are 15 years old and older have no formal education, (high school dropouts or never attended school) and 23.4% of those between the ages of 15–24 are considered school dropouts or never received a formal diploma. Many residents of Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce struggle with employment because of language barriers and insufficient education: 25 percent speak English only, and 3% speak neither English nor French, and 28% of the borough's citizens do not have a high school degree (Arrondisement.com, 2009). There are additional linguistic complexities regarding Haitian residents of the area, who are assumed to speak French, but in fact speak Creole.

Notre-Dame-de-Grâce district (St. Raymond neighborhood). The first site for my research was in the St. Raymond neighborhood of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. St. Raymond occupies 15 small neighborhood blocks and is located between two sets of train tracks with two points of access. The neighborhood used to have a local school, but due to a drop in enrolment primarily because of the general low socio-economic conditions of the families residing in the area, the English Montreal School Board decided to shut it down. Young people are now bussed across the tracks to both French and English schools mainly located in other neighborhoods of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

The Canadian Government has deemed St. Raymond neighborhood a "defavorised community" (J.Prescesky, personal communication, April 11, 2009). According to Jill Prescesky, President of the St. Raymond's Residents Association,

It is something they have lived with to some extent all their lives. It didn't take

> the government to "label" some young people and seniors on a fixed income as marginalized. If you are a young black male who doesn't speak French in Quebec, you get the message throughout your life. You will face systemic barriers that surface through institutions, the media, and society in general. The message starts at a very early age. (Personal communication, April 11, 2009)

Both the St. Raymond's Residents Association and the St. Raymond Community Centre were created to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood for seniors and young people. The St. Raymond Residents Association's mandate is to create and encourage opportunities, services, and support for youth and seniors through collaborative projects, youth and senior initiatives, and community activities for all ages. The St. Raymond Community Centre is managed by a non-profit organization called Comité Jeunesse N.D.G. and offers various activities and services geared toward all residents. It has several programs designed specifically for young people and seniors. The activities and services geared toward youth include administrative aid, after school programs, athletic programs, language classes, family activities, and social clubs. By having programs that acknowledge and promote the diversity of the neighborhood, both the Centre and the Residents Association enhance the residents' quality of life.

My research involved working with a group of participants from Project Media, a federally funded pre-employability program for N.D.G. youths, from 16 to 27 years of age, who have not finished high school. The members of Project Media participated in a five-month community project that included learning computer, radio and film documentary skills, as well as leadership skills, teamwork, communication skills, and

critical thinking. With the collaboration of Jill Prescesky, I was able to meet with the Project Media participants on a weekly basis in order to develop my research.

Côte-des-Neiges district. My second research site was located in the district of Côte-des-Neiges. I was involved with La Maison des Jeunes de la Côte-des-Neiges Community Centre and a cohort of six youth. The centre (for youth aged 12 to 18) offers a variety of programs and activities, including daily recreational, structured programs, social interventions, counseling, support, and referrals. The goals of the centre are to develop new approaches to education through activities that enable their members to become more aware of their social skills, comprehend their values, and increase their sense of unique needs and abilities. The Maison des Jeunes is an important structure in the lives of its teenage members and is unique in its ability to offer these young people a safe environment tailored to their needs, where teenagers can practice their decision-making skills through various projects and they can test their abilities within their peer group.

Brief history of the borough: Ongoing strengths and problems. Although the history of this borough is brief in comparison to other Montreal areas, we must comprehend its past in order to understand its current state and citizenship dynamics. I identified three characteristics of the borough that are sources of both concern and strength: (a) urbanization, (b) diverse citizens, and (c) formal and informal education sites.

Community research is complex: the aforementioned characteristics of the borough are interconnected and cannot be seen or researched as separate entities. Like most qualitative research methods, PAR demands that researchers work through such

complexities before making a general statement or claim about the history or present state of Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. In order to make sense of these interconnections, I examined my research through a cultural studies lens, which required that I undertake a "contextualist/realist investigation of historical, social, and political structures of power" at play in this borough (Saukko, 2005, p. 343). Through this perspective I was able to identify several issues related to power within the community.

Transportation. Issues related to urbanism date back to the 1920s: at that time, a tramline was constructed that ran from Mount-Royal Avenue to Snowdon, nearby Queen Mary Road and the Décarie Autoroute. This meant that the area, which was occupied by the Décarie family farm, suddenly "received more English-speaking residents and this became a start point for the construction of many schools and churches in the area" (Images Montréal, 2009, para.2). This led to the conversion of farmland to streets and tramlines, which did not sit well with local citizens.

Perhaps the most significant change for the borough came in 1961, when the Montreal Metropolitan Transport Agency (AMT) proposed the construction of new expressways to accommodate commuters, including the Décarie Autoroute. It was deemed "most urgently needed, as it was expected to handle a peak of 90,000 vehicles per day by 1981" (Eastern Roads, n.d., para. 2). The local borough citizens resisted its construction; even the Décarie family weighed in on the discussion with their concerns about what effects the construction might have on the land. However, Montreal's Mayor Jean Drapeau was far more concerned with the city's needs than that of the borough and "ultimately, it was Expo '67 that served as the catalyst for the expressway project" (Eastern Roads, n.d., para. 5). And thus the construction began in 1961, which physically

split the borough in half. The autoroute was open for traffic on April 24, 1967, (five days before Expo '67's grand opening) and today, the Décarie Autoroute carries as many as 180,000 vehicles per day (Ministère des Transports du Québec, 2009), surpassing twice its design capacity. It continues to be a problem with the borough because of its infrastructure flaws, including overpasses in poor condition with crumbling cement, floods, traffic, and pollution.

McGill University Health Centre. The development of the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) on Saint-Jacques Street near the Turcot Interchange has similarly stirred controversy with local citizens. The Quebec Government chose to build the MUHC in response to the overflow of patients in local hospitals. Additionally, they chose the specific site because of the convenient location (highway, major streets). However, the communication between the developers and local citizens was non-existent. Far too often, those with political or economic power assume that any form of community revitalization is positive, but particularly so in ethnic communities. In the case of the MUHC, people in the mayor's office and the hospital's governing board made such an assumption. The city decided that construction could begin on the MUHC without the input of local citizens.

If the city had conducted meetings with citizens and community groups, residents would have had the opportunity to discuss their desire to see the construction of several low-income project homes and local community services on the MUHC site. Also, the city would have gained greater insight as to the borough's emotional mood. In the most recent major study on the topic, McGill University's Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) (2009) discovered a prevalent sense of anxiety felt by the citizens in

relation to their quality of life in the face of the construction of the MUHC, as well as the "dynamics in the neighborhood, implications of the MUHC hospital project, and development of action projects to improve St. Raymond and other neighborhoods in the area." (District of St. Raymond Community Needs Assessment and Mobility Analysis, 2009, p. 1).

As a result, the MUHC and the city have agreed to provide adequate services and resources to local citizens in exchange for the terrain. Despite what could be qualified as a hegemonic relationship between the MUHC and the borough, the borough has maintained a collaborative approach in its dealings with the MUHC: the borough has promised to work with the CURA project and the MUHC to develop and implement "a community development and access plan that incorporates physical, social, and circulation elements, and best meets the needs and visions of local residents." (District of St. Raymond Community Needs Assessment and Mobility Analysis, 2009, p. 2). This will ensure that local citizens maintain a voice in the process, and that community-wide needs and concerns are respected.

There have also been grassroots mobilizations within the borough that have been spurred by the arrival of the MUHC: "community groups have developed alternative plans for transit, housing, and youth programs, among others" (District of St. Raymond Community Needs Assessment and Mobility Analysis, 2009, p. 1). The borough continues to develop new programs and works with its citizens to redevelop residential areas and local services for low-income individuals, elders, and at-risk youth.

Benny Farm. Projects such as Benny Farm have improved the lives of marginalized citizens to the general positive attitude in the borough. The history of Benny

Farm is rich and complex. It originally served as farmed land for Walter Benny and his descendants since 1940. In 1947 the Benny Farm was transformed to provide housing for World War II veterans and their families. Over the past decades the site has become the "object of contesting visions of redevelopment" (Énergie Verte Benny Farm, 2005, para.1). Finally in 2001 the Canada Lands Company proposed a new development for the project, and in 2002 they

> launched a participatory process to reach a consensus on a set of common development objectives for its Benny Farm site…following preliminary consultations with a wide range of community representatives, Canada Lands created a Task Force of twelve individuals representing the diverse views on future uses and redevelopment within the community. (Canada Lands Company, 2002, p. 1).

The residential project dedicated "75% of the site to housing, while targeting low to moderate-income groups…[and] 25% of the land for services on the Benny Farm site to serve residents and the larger Notre-Dame-de-Grâce community" (Canada Lands Company, 2002, p. 1). Furthermore, those responsible for the redevelopment "agreed on a housing mix designed to reflect the diversity of Notre-Dame-de- Grâce, while addressing special needs within the community such as those of seniors, young families, and single-parent families" (Canada Lands Company , 2002, p. 1).

Not-for-profit youth groups. Immigrant youth make up 35.2% of Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce's youth population; "most of the [youth of the borough] have similar histories, having arrived in Canada a few years ago and experiencing the confusion, isolation, and family strain common among many immigrant families"

(Lejtenyi, 2003, para. 10). For the most part, immigrant youth do well for themselves and maintain their ethnic identities and cultures within their new lifestyle and local knowledge. However, some immigrant youth feel a strong need to protect their ethnic identities, and are drawn to gang activity as a means of empowerment "and as a kind of self-defense mechanism against racism, being isolated and taken from one place to another" (Lejtenyi, 2003, para. 7). Unfortunately, this minority of youth is more frequently depicted in local media outlets. The constant negative images of immigrant youth from Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce feed into the vicious cycle of the borough's image as Montreal's hub of gangs and violence. In spite of the considerable amount of immigrant youth who are engaged in positive community activities, the media headlines tell a very different story: "Man's Skull Cracked in N.D.G. Beating" (*The Montréal Gazette*, August 9, 2009), "Shootings Spark Gang Speculation—Latest Victim Uncooperative" (*The West Island Chronicle*, July 31, 2009), "Côte des Neiges Caribbeans Fear Popular Gathering Spot is Being Shut by Cops" (*The Westmount Examiner*, October, 26, 2009), "N.D.G. Victim Feared 'Mafiosi hired killers'" (*The Montréal Gazette*, January 24, 2010). These articles make connections and allegations of youth heavily involved in illegality and gang activities.

Many local not-for profit programs have been established and continue to aid immigrant youth and adults with their transition into life in Montréal. These projects and programs help prevent gang activity and confrontation between immigrant ethnic youth by assisting them with education, vocational skills, and personal development: Project Media, La Maison des Jeunes de la Côte-des-Neiges Community Centre, Kabataang Montréal, Head & Hands, Westhaven-Elmhurst Community Centre Skills Link,

Prevention CDN/NDG, NEXT-GEN NDG, Streetworker Côte-des-Neiges, Hip Hop Don't You Stop, Outreach-worker NDG, Tandem Montréal CDN-NDG, Éco-quartier NDG.

Despite the fact that these groups and programs are playing a vital role in the borough, many of them have insufficient funds and operate on a shoestring budget from day to day. The funding of these projects and programs is sustained by volunteers who contribute an enormous amount of time and dedication to grant applications for government funds. A large portion of these volunteers are involved with other community programs and projects, as well as their own careers. Through my involvement with several of these community projects, I noticed that they are still optimistic, but unless there is a constant supply of funds and support, many of these volunteers fear that the programs and projects will collapse.

Despite this tenuous situation, this overall positive attitude of the community leaders, educators, and citizens continues to be the borough's greatest strength. It is no longer a discussion about the use of farmland, but it is still a discussion that is driven by the force of its citizens, who have always believed that those in power must respect the borough and work with its citizens to improve and strengthen the community at large, but especially immigrant and marginalized youth.

The Participants

Qualitative research methods demand from its participants a critical dedication to the study in order to find "new ways to understand the complications of social, cultural, psychological, and educational life" (Kincheloe, 2004, pp. 24–25). In particular, PAR deepens this commitment through praxis and reflexivity: participants are engaged with

the research to learn, improve, and advance the work. Furthermore, PAR requires its participants and researchers to invest interest in all dimensions of the work (intellectual, emotional, mental, physical, and technical) in order to eradicate and improve a community situation. In the context of my research, my participants and I collaborated and ventured to research ways in which youth engage with social media to build and improve their skills and align their work and ideas toward social justice education.

The participants in this research collaboration were marginalized youth. I decided to collaborate with marginalized youth in the Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough because I have always been emotionally attached to the community and its diverse population. Although I do not live in the area, most of my time is spent there and I often volunteer for several community youth programs. As an undergraduate student I studied at Concordia University's Loyola campus, which is situated in the heart of the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce district, and as a high school and university student I participated as a player in numerous basketball camps in the Côte-des-Neiges. Through my interactions with people from these areas, I soon became attached to the borough and its diversity, and I consider it my home community because of my active involvement with local projects and people. I currently work there, and divide my time as a full time instructor at Concordia's Loyola Campus, and as a volunteer for community youth projects in the area: Media Project, Westhaven Community Centre, and La Maison des Jeunes.

Through my community interactions over the past decade, I realized that the marginalized youth living and learning in the area had a wealth of community activities centered on physical education and sports. Conversely, there were barely any social

media or media-related activities being offered. This has recently changed, and the community has seen a spike in media-based community activities for young people, including Project Media (2008), Co-op Collective Vision (2007), and the Witness Video Advocacy Institute (2007).

As mentioned previously immigrant youth make up over one third of the borough's youth population, and many of them are marginalized due to their ethnicity, socio-economic status, and their language. Working with participants from this population is important because "youth facing forms of social and educational marginalization have the greatest stake in social justice and democratic change and the contributions to education change should not be underestimated" (Gardner & Crockwell, 2006, p. 1).

The purpose of the next section is to introduce the 12 participants from both community projects. The descriptions focus on their aspects that were most important to the research and offer context for the participants' quotes or comments that I have included in my research. The participants I interviewed each identified their age, nationality, gender, living condition, and education. Before they responded to these questions, I explained what was meant by these categorical terms. Nationality was understood as belonging to a particular country, whether by birth or by naturalization. I clarified that a participant could have more than one answer; a few of the participants were considered "refugees"; therefore, they could see themselves as belonging to their birth nation, but were also naturalized to their current location. I explained the many possibilities of gender, although no participant identified as transgender. Finally, due to the socio-economic status of the borough and the diversity of its citizens, I inquired about

living arrangements (alone, family, single parent, etc.) and spoken language(s). The names and nicknames provided for each participant are real, and all of the participants agreed to be identified as such. The following descriptions were created through information gathered by one-on-one interviews, field notes, and discussions. All names are pseudonyms that I selected. These descriptions provide a quick summary of each participant, divided by community projects:

Project Media participants.

Anthony

Anthony is a 20-year-old Native/Ukrainian male who lives alone, speaks English, and is a high school dropout. Anthony is an energetic and extremely respectful young man. He is very interested in graffiti and other street activities: he is well informed about graffiti taggers and local street gangs. He spends time participating in community graffiti programs, and he always wears a cap with a graffiti logo. Anthony has been arrested "a few times" and was undergoing a court trial (due to a police confrontation) during the research project. He was somewhat knowledgeable about technology. Anthony's work in this project often reflected his opinions about racial profiling and police brutality. He considered these to be major issues in the community.

Aaron

Aaron is a 26-year-old Antiguan male who lives with brother, speaks English, and is a high school dropout. Aaron is a quiet young man with a passion for technology. Aaron had a state-of-the-art iPhone 3G, and made a point of talking about how he "cracked" his phone: a process that frees your phone form the limitations imposed by your service provider. He would arrive to every session with a new application for his

iPhone that he felt compelled to talk to me about. Aaron was the resident "techie," and the gear excited him. He was also very interested in girls, and often used a hacked application that he installed on his iPhone to meet girls in the area. He would drift away during project sessions because he was engaged with his iPhone, either texting or downloading applications. Aaron also loves cars and music.

Braz

Braz is a 19-year-old Canadian male who lives alone, speaks English, and is a high school dropout. Braz loves hip hop music and is an artist himself: he spends much of his time making beats and working on his hip hop tracks. You will never see Braz without headsets on. He loves money and wants to be a rich and famous singer/rapper. Braz is very respectful and protective of his friends and colleagues; once a person shows that they care for him, he will forever respect and care for them. He has an incredibly huge heart, and he's a truly good spirited person. Braz is also well organized and methodical when he approaches projects. He is quiet during discussions, but offers a wealth of information in his projects, written work, and during one-on-one conversations.

Kevin

Kevin is a 22-year-old Jamaican male who lives with his parents, speaks English, and has a high school diploma. Kevin is a quiet and low-key young man who is interested and active in basketball. During the sessions, he often spent his time multi-tasking: surfing the Internet reading about the latest basketball standings, searching for player and team information, and listening and keeping up with the projects and tasks. Kevin is a hard worker and when he struggles, he rarely asks for help. He enjoys working alone,

with his headset on, and rarely leads a discussion. He is a very smart young man, but he is extremely introverted.

Ryan

Ryan is an 18-year-old Irish male who lives alone, speaks English, and has a high school diploma. Ryan is a quiet, yet opinionated young man. He is interested in hip hop music, gang activities, and money. He has a history of illegal gang-affiliated activities. Ryan is a hard worker and is very street smart. Most of his contributions to the group's discussions were based on his life experiences. Ryan often questioned others because he was genially interested in others' perspectives, and he challenged them to support their ideas.

Shanice

Shanice is a 27-year-old Trinidadian female who lives with her aunt, speaks English, and is a high school dropout. Shanice was born and raised in Trinidad. She is constantly smiling, very laid back, and extremely friendly. She is interested in cosmetics and hair styling, as well as fashion.

La Maison des Jeunes participants.

Erika

Erika is a 15-year-old Yugoslavian/Peruvian female who speaks English and French, lives with her mother and sister, and is a student in the 10th grade. Erika was only with the research project for one week. She and her best friend, Melissa, decided to leave because they lost interest in the project and wanted to use the time out of school to meet boys. She also complained about the commute, and no matter what time she would wake up, she was always late.

Erika is a "girly" girl who loves boys. Her nickname is *DiamondGee*, because she loves all things that sparkle and glitter, including diamonds. She is the leader of a gang and often bullies other girls. When Erika is alone, she is quiet and respectful. During the sessions, Erika spent a considerable amount of time on Facebook, MySpace, and Pouchons (a hip hop social networking website). She was constantly posting new photographs of her hanging out with friends and boys, as well as photos of her in provocative poses on these social networking websites. Most of Erika's self-portrait photographs are treated in PaintShop, with *DiamondGee* typed across them or along the side of the images.

Junior

Junior is a 15-year-old Haitian/Canadian male, who lives with brother, speaks English and Creole, and is a student in the 10th grade. Junior is a refugee from Haiti, who has also lived in the USA. His first language is Creole. He struggles with English and French, but this does not hinder him. Junior loves participating in community projects and is well known by many educators in the community. He is quiet and shy, but opinionated. Junior often hesitates to make comments, however, his comments are often very thoughtful and interesting opinions. His family lives in Haiti, Santo Domingo, and the Dominican Republic. He mentions that since his arrival in Canada, he has become a calmer and much more dedicated individual. During his time in Haiti, he was often in trouble because of fights and violence. Since he has been in Canada, Junior has been involved with community projects and takes his schoolwork and personal life more seriously. He loves music, girls, and being around people. Junior is always smiling, and he is never in a bad mood. He often spent time with his cousin Marcel, who also

participated in this research project. Junior is dedicated to his health: he runs and lifts weights on a regular basis. After the sessions, he often photographed himself shirtless when no one was around, and used these images as his social networking profile image. Junior is heterosexual and made it clear to everyone that he likes girls. He appeared homophobic during our group discussions concerning people who identified as LGBITQ. Junior used derogative words to describe gays and lesbians and seemed uneasy when other participants challenged his opinion. Occasionally, Marcel would tease him and call him names: fag, gay, girl, homo. It was evident that this name-calling upset Junior.

Melissa

Melissa is a 15-year-old Italian/Hungarian female who lives with her parents and siblings, speaks English and French, and is a student in the 10th grade. Melissa and Erika are best friends. They decided to leave the project after one week to spend more time with their girlfriends and boys. Like Erika, Melissa had problems arriving on time and felt the commute to McGill University was too long. Melissa is a kind and good-hearted person, and her public persona is loud, opinionated, and she puts a lot of effort to act "crazy." She describes "crazy" as someone who is loud, obnoxious, and disruptive. She has difficulty concentrating on specific tasks and seems generally disinterested in serious issues. She always had MSN messenger, Facebook, MySpace, and Pouchons open while she worked on projects, or participated in the discussions. We had a long talk after the first session about this, and I agreed to have her engaged with the social networking sites while she worked, on the condition that she completed the tasks, and contributed to the sessions. However, Melissa maintained her disinterest: she rarely engaged in the discussions and never finished her projects. Melissa spent most of her time on social

networking websites and spent her time posting her photographs, as well as chatting online.

Marcel

Marcel is a 16-year-old Haitian-Canadian male who lives with his sister, speaks English and Creole, and is a student in the 10th grade. Marcel is a mature young man who is respectful, calm, and smart. He was born in Haiti, lived in the USA for a few years, and recently arrived in Canada. He is proud of being Haitian and is optimistic about people and life in general. One of his most striking characteristics is his obvious appreciation for everyone he meets. His ambition is to get a university degree. He is knowledgeable about technology and is currently working on a hip hop music video that he produced and wrote. He is close to his cousin, Junior and often plays the role of a big brother for him (helps him get around, teaches him computer tricks, shares his music, and helps him with written and oral language).

Samantha

Samantha is a 14-year-old Canadian/Filipina who speaks English and French, lives with her mother and siblings, and is a student in the 10th grade. Samantha is very smart and aware of global issues. When she first attended the sessions, she was very close to Erika and Melissa, and was not totally into the project because they distracted her. During the second session, when we were talking about racism and the LGBITQ community, I noticed that she became very involved in the discussion. I later found out that a few of her family members are gay, and she was sensitive to the issues they had to deal with on a daily basis. After this discussion, Samantha sat away from Melissa and Erika and produced really informative work.

Stephanie

Stephanie is a 15-year-old Montrealer-Vincentian Black female (these are aspects of her identity that she feels very strongly about) who lives with sister and father, speaks English and French, and is a student in the 10th grade. Stephanie is bright young woman who is dedicated to her studies and loves to have a good time with her friends. She often plays the devil's advocate and asks questions during discussions. She asks questions because she wants to know why people think they way they do; she wants to know why things are the way they are. Stephanie digs into social issues, often expressing her desire to help with global peace. She felt targeted by racism and engaged in discussions with other Black youth about their own ethnic origin. She often spoke about her grandmother and was close to her. She is a friend to both Erika and Melissa, but often felt that they excluded her. When she voiced her concerns with them, it usually led to an argument and eventual reconciliation.

Research Duration

The nature of my research project required participants to learn new programs, become familiar with various websites, and get comfortable with the workflow of social media production. As an educator researcher, it was important to provide an ample amount of time for this to happen. Due to the social socio-economic status of my participants, I was faced with the additional challenge of working with youth who did not have daily access to media equipment (computer, camera) and Internet. I recognized these realities and planned my research design accordingly. As a stepping-stone, I allocated enough time in my research design to work with the participants to explore the equipment and social media platforms within the context of social justice education.

Likewise, I dedicated a sufficient amount of time to do my research, gather data, and evaluate my findings.

My research activities with the group from Project Media covered a three-month period, from April 20, 2009 to June 28, 2009. I met with this group on a weekly basis for a total of ten sessions. Each session ranged in duration between three consecutive hours to a full seven-hour day. Meanwhile, my work with the group from La Maison des Jeunes de la Côte-des-Neiges Inc ran from August 10, 2009 to August 22, 2009. Because the research occurred during the summer, my schedule and the participants' schedules permitted us to meet on a daily basis from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for ten sessions.

Sources of Data

I approached the research with an awareness of what Hinchey (2008) calls triangulation: "to collect different types of data relevant to the same question in order to increase the likelihood that findings are not idiosyncratic or unreliable" (p. 76). I considered various possible sources of data and settled on six:

1. Projects (artifacts): The participants were asked to produce digital social media projects within specific guidelines (see Procedures Followed section). Each project would suggest something unique about a participant's knowledge, experience, and set of skills.
2. Field notes: Because I was involved with the teaching aspect of this research, I found it difficult to keep ongoing, detailed field notes. Nevertheless, I used a notebook and my computer to jot down specific events; these included participants' comments, dialogue, questions, specific actions and techniques, critical incidents (such as realizing that one of the participants transferred a specific skill to another context), and anecdotal

records (taking note of a participant's specific learning curves (critical, technical or social).

3. Interviews: I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant. For the Project Media participants, I set up interviews in a private room with a laptop that they controlled. They would each enter the room, read the questions I printed out on a piece of paper, and type out their answers to my questions. There was no one present in the room, not even myself. This allowed them to be in total control of recording their answers. They used the Photo Booth application on a MacBook laptop to record themselves answering the questions that I later used for my analysis. As for the La Maison des Jeunes participants, I asked each of them the same set of questions in a private interview. Both sets of interviews were semi-structured: the participants had to answer specific questions, but they were given the opportunity to express other comments, thoughts, or concerns.

4. Surveys: In the final hour of our last sessions together, the participants from each group had to answer one survey of 30 questions about their personal socio-economic situation, media practices, and the outcome of this research project. The survey was created using SurveyMonkey and was made available to them via a private URL.

5. Video recording: For the duration of the study, I recorded intervals of video of the participants. For the most part, the camera was set up in the corner of the room, as a sort of fly-on-the-wall, which captured the participants and myself involved in our work. The camera was fixed on a tripod at the back of the room and was placed at a high angle. The purpose of my camera placement was to capture the widest angle and hence cover as large an area as possible and not to convey a specific aesthetic or message. Because this footage included only wide shots, I occasionally asked my colleague to take control of the

camera and get closer to the participants and myself. This allowed him to record my interactions and discussions at a closer range. The camera operator was very discreet and did not intervene with the participants' actions or discussions. After each session, I would transfer the footage as QuickTime files from the camera to an external hard drive. Afterward I reviewed the videos and wrote down notes about specific moments I felt were important to my research.

6. Photographs: There were occasions when the video camera was turned off. During this time, I occasionally took photographs with my iPhone of the participants engaged in their media productions. The reasons I chose to capture images with my iPhone were twofold: (a) it was quick and convenient, and (b) it was an object that they were familiar with. It did not cause any distraction. I used the iPhone to capture comments and words that the participants wrote on the whiteboard during our critical dialogue.

Overall, the sources of data were diverse and facilitated the ability to revisit the sessions throughout the analysis procedure. Furthermore, because PAR encourages its researchers to be flexible and drift between the role of educator and researcher; it was crucial to collect as much diverse data in order to review the material from different perspectives at a later time. On many occasions, I felt myself deeply involved with the teaching aspect of the project but I was able to detach myself as a researcher because I had created the opportunity to revisit the sessions on video at a later time. Above all, I felt that both the research duration and the sources of data used were ample, and offered me unique insights that enabled me to respond to my research questions.

Procedures Followed

According to (Hinchey, 2008), "there is no right way to undertake action research," and therefore it is crucial for anyone engaged with this work to be rigorous, motivated and fluid at all times (p. 33). Most PAR sites deal with a transformative change, and

> although the process of participatory research is poorly described in terms of a mechanical sequence of steps, it is generally thought to involve a spiral or self-reflexive cycles as follows: (1) planning a change, (2) acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, (3) reflecting on these processes and consequences, (4) replanning, acting and observing again, (5) reflecting again, and so on . . . " (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 559)

Accordingly, my research design had to consider several aspects and procedures in order to attain the most precise and insightful findings within a PAR approach: collaboration, ethics, community participants, trustworthiness, access, reflexivity, data collection, and dissemination. To account for each of these important aspects, I created well-structured and time-sensitive procedures of sufficient duration in order to collect the appropriate amount of data from each source.

Lone research stakeholder and educator researcher. I approached my research as a lone stakeholder and as an educator researcher. For the purpose of my work, I use the term *educator researcher*, rather than teacher researcher, because the latter is often associated with formal education sites. My research work was informal and community based, therefore *educator researcher* is better suited for this discussion.

My role as an educator researcher was to "test out new ideas and methods…and to question and reflect upon practice and bring about desirable change in schools, [communities,] and society through thoughtful teaching" (Kanu, 1997, p. 173). However, I also had the cooperation of the educators at Project Media and La Maison des Jeunes de la Côte-des-Neiges Inc. While they did not participate in the content of the sessions and hence could not be considered as research stakeholders, they arranged the coordination and logistics of the sessions, including facilitating the transportation of participants to McGill University: Jill Prescesky, Janice Dayle, Tia Dayle, Antoine-Samuel Mauffette Alavo, and Robints Paul. Despite the fact that they were not research stakeholders, they were interested in the process and wanted to meet at the end to discuss the outcomes and future collaborations, and they were involved with several of the media projects. The meetings and discussions we had at the end of the research project were invaluable because they allowed us to collaboratively review and reflect the process, outcomes, findings, and limitations. Each community project offered the involvement of up to ten youth who were considered research stakeholders, and were equally a part of the collaborative, participatory research, and cycles of reflexivity. The youth participants played a vital role by being involved with the planning, execution, reflection, and replanning of the research process.

Due to the nature of my role as an educator researcher and lone stakeholder, I had to address the power issues that were inherent to the research process. Within the PAR paradigm, it is easy to blur the line between educator and researcher. Therefore, I understood my role as a researcher and did not engage in the research as an "expert." Instead, I approached it as an open-minded educator with the intention of working with

community youth and experimenting with different projects and possibilities for social media. Educators and teacher researchers are often criticized that they do not assume the role of the "expert" and "authority figure"; however, according to the PAR model, doing so compromises the research process and findings and undermines the knowledge and experience that each participant and educator brings to the research circle. As a way to continue to understand my role as a researcher, I often asked the participants to discuss their thoughts on my role as both an educator and researcher.

In addition, I had to consider and discuss the complexities of what it meant to take action with social media and youth, including how to avoid creating a show and tell style of demonstration and how to not focus only on the trendy and "cool" aspects of media activism. It was also important for me to keep in mind the ethical, civic, and social responsibilities that the participants and I had while we engaged with the technology. For example, I made sure not to exploit the technology and use it simply as a "cool" and trendy tool for youth; rather understand its role and the complexity of social media with the framework of critical pedagogy. This coupled with my commitment to cycles of reflexivity and discussions with my participants allowed me to approach my research in a diligent manner and reminded me about my role throughout the course of action.

Engaging in cycles of reflexivity. As an educator researcher, it was important to consider, evaluate, and re-evaluate my dual roles in order to gather as much concise information and research findings on Digital Youth Praxis. To help shape and guide my research, I created a project that focused on "practices in a concrete and specific way that makes them accessible for reflection, discussion, and reconstruction as products of past

circumstances that are capable of being modified in and for present and future circumstances" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 565).

My decision to use PAR with my research was due to its flexible, collaborative, practical, and participatory nature. This setup gave me the opportunity to engage in a typical PAR reflexivity process, which enabled me to explore and push the limits of what social media could offer within the context of social justice education for and by youth. PAR demands from its researcher, and participants, dedication and motivation because

> it is a learning process whose fruits are the real and material changes in the following: what people do, how people interact with the world and with others, what people mean and what they value, and the discourses in which people understand and interpret their world (Kemmis, & McTaggart, 2005, p. 565).

My research design included an ample amount of time to plan, act, observe, reflect, and replan, and continue this procedure through to the completion of the research project. Furthermore, I went beyond the typical self-reflexive spiral, and worked with the seven key features of PAR, provided by Kemmis & McTaggart (2005):

1. Participatory action research is a social process: I approached the research with the fundamental belief that "no individualization is possible without socialization, and no socialization is possible without individuation" (Habermas, 1992, p. 26). My core assumption as an educator researcher was to "individually and collectively try to understand how they [and we] are formed and reformed as individuals, and in relation to one another in a variety of settings" (Kemmis, & McTaggart, 2005, p. 567). Therefore, I had to consider the implications and relationship between social media, youth, society,

and education to better understand its potential in the context of social justice education and praxis.

Accordingly, I had to repeatedly consider the socio-economic conditions of my participants, and how that affected their approach and participation. The universal assumption is that most youth (mainly middle-upper class) take certain social media skills for granted, whereas my participants lacked the access and daily exposure to these tools and skills. However the overall lack of access to technology and the Internet by my participants meant that they have been socialized differently and their social relationships are different from that of middle and upper class youth. Furthermore, another important aspect to consider in terms of access and exposure was the physical location where youth engage in such activities: youth who surf the Internet from their personal laptops or computers from the comfort, privacy, and safety of their homes will most likely approach the activity differently if they are situated in a more public space like a community centre. It was vital for me to keep this concept of social constructivism in mind throughout the research process.

2. Participatory action research is participatory: Participation is the major force of PAR. To that end, one of the goals of PAR is to allow participants and researchers to feel at ease with the research project, in order to effectively explore and contribute to the project. Through my initial discussions with the participants, we understood the process to be organic, and a means to discover certain aspects related to social media and social justice. It is a process in which all individuals in a group try to get a handle on the ways "which their knowledge shapes their sense of identity and agency and to reflect critically on how their current knowledge frames and constrains their action" (Kemmis, &

McTaggart, 2005, p. 567). In order to achieve a high level of participation, I repeatedly examined the participants' responses and feedback to establish whether or not I was creating a truly safe environment that allowed everyone to feel comfortable and honest. The creation of a safe space, coupled with our ability to respect one another and the purpose of the research, was what fostered and maintained a participatory spirit.

3. Participatory action research is practical and collaborative: Social media is fueled by the energy and commitment by and for the people. I engaged in PAR because I was attracted its collaborative process and the ways that we (as a research group) could advance certain practices for a greater cause within the pre-existing assumptions associated with social media. PAR requires its researcher to collectively improve a situation or practice in a practical and reflexive manner.

> It is a process by which people explore their practices of communication, production, and social organization and try to explore how to improve their interactions by changing the acts that constitute them, that is, to reduce the extent to which participants experience these interactions . . . " (Kemmis, & McTaggart, 2005, p. 567).

As an educator researcher, I was able to connect with my participants, and we worked as a collective to understand the value of teamwork and the role of our individual growth and limitations within our research.

4. Participatory action research is emancipatory: The FSMP was created to establish a creative, theoretical, and conceptual educational sandbox to explore emancipatory action. The FSMP is a laboratory for evolving critical pedagogical practice for students, educators, community leaders, and community members. The driving force of the FSMP

is social media education, which is emancipatory in nature. However, my challenge as an educator researcher was to reflect not only on the process and praxis, but also on the complexity of what it means for youth to take action with social media within their society. As a result, I had to observe the intricacies of their work and how it connects to their social process. This forced me to really think about what it means for youth to participate and engage with digital technologies within this context, and how and if they understand their positionality, "it is a process in which people explore the ways in which their practices are shaped and constrained by wider social (cultural, economic, and political) structures and consider whether they can intervene to release themselves from these constraints" (Kemmis, & McTaggart, 2005, p. 567).

5. Participatory action research is critical: PAR has a rich history with practitioners interested in the eradication and improvement of specific unjust and underdeveloped practices, projects, and spaces that have been influenced by internal or external conditions that are often linked to hegemonic power structures and act as barriers and oppressors. In spite of and perhaps because of such powerful forces, PAR asks its researchers and participants to embark on a process to help fight and dissolve these power structures through critical and emancipatory practice. In this work, "people deliberately set out to contest and reconstitute irrational, unproductive (or inefficient), unjust, and/or unsatisfying (alienating) ways of interpreting and describing their world (e.g., language, discourses), ways of working (work), and ways of relating to others (power)" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 567). Additionally, although PAR is emancipatory, it is naive to assume that everyone engaged in such work understands its complexities, and the current political, cultural, social, and pedagogical climate that surrounds them and their actions,

therefore it is crucial to acknowledge and study the context and complexities of what it means to be engaged in emancipatory research.

6. Participatory action research is reflexive: Self- and group-reflexivity are key components of PAR, and to do so requires that each participant and researcher addresses power and social processes that are at play in the work. By engaging in "a spiral of cycles [of self-reflexivity] and self-critical action and reflection the [educator researcher] can explore and advance research on a subject" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 567) and the participants and the researcher can change existing constructions of self and relationships with others. I was actively involved with cycles of reflexivity, and took time in-between and after sessions to review my notes and video recordings to understand where I could make improvements as both a researcher and educator.

7. Participatory action research aims to transform both theory and practice: A strong component of PAR is the willingness to explore both theory and practice and the notion that it is unfair and unjust to separate the two. I approached my research with the intention to thoroughly examine praxis, which is action that is informed by theory, value, and reflection. I also wanted to understand "the relationship between theoretical understanding and critique of society . . . and action that seeks to transform individuals and their environment" (Leistyna, 1999, p. 45). My approach was dialogue driven and hands on; we spoke about potential of social media for social justice, created certain projects, explored various options, reflected, and started over until we (as a group) felt comfortable with the method, curriculum, and the product.

Research work approached in this manner "helps practitioners use their own intelligence and creativity to find ways to effect change" (Hinchey, 2008, p. 39). Self-

and group-reflexivity are at the essence of PAR because they help to shape the process and outcome of the project and they allow each participant to bring forward their knowledge and opinions

> PAR involves reaching out from the specifics of particular situations, as understood by the people within them, to explore the potential of different perspectives, theories, and discourses that might help to illuminate particular practices and practical settings as a basis for developing critical insights and ideas about how things might be transformed. (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 568)

However, in order for participatory action research to achieve its maximum potential through cycles of reflexivity and a collaborative and critical attitude, it must be first grounded in a safe space environment, which allows dialogue, constructive criticism, and encourages acceptance and respect. The FSMP was created for this purpose, and is discussed in great detail in the next section of this chapter.

Creating the space and collaboration: The Freire Social Media Project. As a way to research and work with young people, I established The Freire Social Media Project in 2007. The objective of this project was to explore learning and living in an era of media convergence in an effort to understand the role of social media and its impact on youth culture and its possibilities with social justice education. The FSMP is also a laboratory for evolving pedagogical practice for students, educators, community leaders, and community members. The main goal of the project is to work with young people and social media to develop Digital Youth Praxis, which is a combination of critical thinking skills, transferable skills, competencies, and affordances. The project is based on the

work of Paulo Freire (1968), who believed that students should be asked what they want to learn and that the learning should be a collaborative cultural synthesis.

Background. The Freire Social Media Project was originally created to work with public, private, and semi-private schools. The first school to cooperate with the FSMP was a local private school (for privacy reasons, the school name will not be mentioned). The private school was very enthusiastic about the collaboration: the vice-principal and the art teacher were supportive and offered me space and facilities at the school. A group of students was recruited from the school's mainly white, upper class population, who had regular access to technology both at school and at home. After several attempts to work with the school, my personal interest diminished: I felt disconnected from the youth and the school overall. Although many of the participating students were interested in the technical aspects of the project (editing, shooting, producing), most lacked a living connection to the social issues I wanted to explore with them, including poverty, racism, and gender discrimination. This became the turning point for the FSMP, and I realized that I should be working with a different group of youth in an informal learning site. Nevertheless, I am glad to have collaborated with the private sector of education; it allowed me to work through my personal research objectives and goals. More importantly, this experience encouraged me to work with youth who lacked access to technology, media creation, and education.

For these reasons, the new mission of the FSMP was to work with marginalized youth and use social media to encourage them to build their skills and motivate them to continue their studies, or other proactive short- and long-term goals. More specifically, the objectives are for participants to use social media within a critical framework,

produce youth social media productions, and then be able to critically think about the message and the medium they have chosen, and to critically reflect on the entire experience.

One of the planned outcomes of the FSMP is to improve living and educational conditions for disenfranchised youth. However, this requires a rigorous work ethic and dedication to examine the complexity of the participants' lived world and the intersections of issues such as class, gender, education, socio-political beliefs, ethnicity, race, sexuality, religion, and family. Another outcome of this project is to facilitate youth, educators, and community leaders/members to produce work that explores issues related to social justice in a participatory learning environment. This research project has created the groundwork needed to continue to understand and promote the knowledge and experiences of marginalized youth, through the use of digital social media and critical pedagogy.

New beginning. During my final months of collaboration with the private school, I began to make contact with various community centers in the Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough. My community outreach consisted of phone calls and emails to community centres across the borough. Soon after, I was introduced to Jill Prescesky, who is the founder and director of Project Media in St. Raymond, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. Jill and I briefly spoke about a potential collaboration between her project and the FSMP, and after several meetings, we decided to give it a go. Once I secured the participants from Project Media, I continued to look for a second group of participants and was introduced to Antoine-Samuel Mauffette Alavo and Robints Paul of La Maison des Jeunes de la Côte-des-Neiges Inc. Again, after a few conversations and phone calls, they

agreed to support a collaboration and recruit participants from La Maison des Jeunes. The participants from both community organizations were invited to visit the university setting on different occasions and were encouraged to ask questions and voice their opinions and concerns related to the research project. Thereafter, I met with each group at their respective community centres and offered more details about my research project. Once all of their questions were answered and their concerns were addressed, Jill Prescesky authorized that I could do research with Project Media participants from April 20, 2009 to June 28, 2009. Antoine-Samuel Mauffette Alavo also confirmed that I could work with participants from La Maison des Jeunes de la Côte-des-Neiges Inc August 10, 2009 to August 22, 2009. In addition, I confirmed access to the media room and audio-visual equipment at McGill University's The Paulo and Nita Freire International Project for Critical Pedagogy for the duration of the research project.

Because my research involved the study of young people, an ethics outline and application that endorsed the principles set out in the Tri-Council Policy Statement "Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans" was submitted to McGill University's Research Ethics Board, and received approval on April 17, 2009 (see Appendix A). During the first session with each group, each participant received the following consent forms (see Appendix B): (a) Form A (Parent or legal tutor, minor participants), (b) Form B (Refusal to participate, although agreed to be videotaped/photographed if image is blurred/deleted), (c) Form C (Publication of student work attribution of Creative Commons authorship licensing), (d) Form D (Assent/agreement for students), (e) Form E (Educator and/or Leader) and, (f) Form F (Students/participants-18 and older). Also included were consent form for the community educators (Appendix B), which granted

me permission to interview them about the research project and their involvement and thoughts. The participants were told that they had to return the signed forms before any research would begin. Furthermore, during the first session, I dedicated a considerable amount of time to review each form with the participants, the process of data collection, and I made myself available for any questions. Participants and parents or legal guardians were encouraged to contact me if they had any questions or concerns. Once all the forms were collected, they were placed in a binder in the Paulo and Nita Freire International Project for Critical Pedagogy office.

Session research workflow, FSMP curriculum, and projects. The ethos of the FSMP was and is to provide an organic experience for its participants and community educators. Therefore, the timeline and projects were constantly in flux to adapt to the participants' schedules, motivations, and interests. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the research activities with the participants from Project Media covered a three-month period with sessions that often ranged in duration from three consecutive hours to a full seven-hour day. Research activities with the participants from La Maison des Jeunes de la Côte-des-Neiges Inc. lasted five to six hours daily over the span of two weeks for a total of ten sessions. A typical session for both groups comprised of discussions, workshops, brainstorming, meetings, hands-on media production work, sharing media examples, and reflections. The final session for each group involved one-on-one interviews with the participants, solo interviews, and time dedicated to survey questions. The one-on-one interviews meant that I was in the same room with them and asked the questions, whereas the participants were left alone for the solo interviews and were given a list of questions

to answer. Furthermore, we allocated the final hours together to discuss the process and their final thoughts.

As an educator researcher, my intention was to develop a curriculum that allowed me to try different social media projects with the participants with the aim of researching the set of social justice, equity, and diversity competencies that youth develop through their digital social media practices. Before the research process began, I created short projects that I deemed important to engage with in order to develop Digital Youth Praxis. Although not all the projects were produced due to lack of time, there were ten projects in total, each with specific goals based in social justice. Also, many of the projects were changed or took on a new form to adapt to the participants interest. Each project was to be carried out either individually or with partners, and equally important was for the participants to create the projects in a Freirian manner, which means that the participants were encouraged to develop work that they felt familiar with and interested in. The participants worked with various social media platforms to create a variety of media projects:

1. Digital Hub Project: With the use of Wordpress, a popular open-source blog application, each participant created a personal website. This personal website functioned as a hub where they could post all the projects they created throughout the research project, like a digital portfolio of their work.
2. Say What? Project*:* Through the use of their Wordpress websites, the participants were encouraged to maintain a blog. Participants were occasionally asked to answer specific questions, which were generated in the session. The questions covered topics such as racism, racial profiling, gender discrimination, and representation.

3. Pixel Pusher Project: Through the use of YouTube and other video logging sites, each participant was asked to watch and create one to five personal video logs.

4. Digital Photovoice Project: With the use of VoiceThread or Bubbleshare, each participant was asked to create a short photovoice project related to an important social issue in his or her community.

5. Digital Mashup/Remix Project: With the use of YouTube and other video sharing websites, each participant was asked to research, screen, and create a digital mashup/remix that offered social commentary on the topic of their choosing.

6. Digital Self-Portrait Project: Each participant was asked to create a one-minute self-portrait that could either cover "a day in the life" of the individual or it could explore one important life event. Furthermore, they had the option of creating a What If Self-Portrait, which was comprised of two parts: the first part was their personal self-portrait, and the second part involved the exploration of a specific country in the world and the creation of a portrait based on the question "What if I grew up in that country?"

7. Wiki-Wiki Info Project: As part of the process, participants were asked to visit and read various pages on Wikipedia. They were often asked to research different topics and compare it to other information they either knew, or that they found elsewhere, such as on other websites, in books, magazines, etc.

8. Person Portrait Project: Participants were asked to create a short portrait of a senior in their community. Part of this process was to research the person, write interview questions, record the interview, and edit the portrait.

9. Public Voice Project: As part of UNICEF's Voices of Youth Convention on the

Rights of Children, participants were asked to produce a public service announcement for the 20th anniversary video contest about what children's rights mean to them.

10. Top 5! Project: Participants were asked to choose a social justice topic and search for the top 5 websites, videos, Wiki pages, and social network groups they felt had the most information on the subject, or were the most important. They were also asked to write about why they chose their topic.

The FSMP curriculum was created to work with the participants' knowledge and experience. This meant that participants were offered the possibility to look closer at their community and the social issues they were connected to. For example, graffiti is deemed a major "problem" by local police and political figures in the Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. As a response to this ongoing "problem," a few of the participants chose to look at the way media represented graffiti subculture, how it was often seen as vandalism instead of a form of urban art, expression, and visual poetry. The participants engaged in discussions of power, misrepresentation, and the social and economic status that is often associated to this art form. The end result was a social media project with a social and political message that allowed for local discussion among the participants in the room and global interpretations on the Internet.

Data Analysis

In order to triangulate my data collection, it was important to methodically analyze everything and be consistent and thorough with (a) how I reduced and reported the data, and (b) how I interpreted the reduced data. The following section explores each aspect in detail.

Data reduction. After each session, I watched the video footage, reviewed the photographs I captured, and surfed through each participant's personal website to get a feel for how the session went and to look for areas of concern to address the next day. I also reviewed my field notes and compared them to the session footage I screened. The daily footage was transferred to an external hard drive as QuickTime files and was labeled by location and date. Each research site had its own folder with subfolders for each daily session. This organization allowed me to go in at any time and view the videos.

Once my field research was over, I transcribed the interviews and re-screened the daily footage to add descriptions and notes correlated to the interview or other material. In order to reduce the data in a methodical and rigorous manner, I paid close attention to how the material informed my three research questions. This allowed me to eliminate unnecessary data. However, if I was uncertain about the importance or relevance of the data, I did not eliminate it, but instead I revisited it on another day and then made the decision to either keep or disregard it. I followed the same procedure for the photographs of the sessions. The answers the participants gave in the online surveys provided information about the amount of time the participants engaged with digital media practices outside of the sessions. I did not reduce this information, nor did I choose to convert the numbers into graphs, or visual representation; I felt this information to be the least valuable for the purpose of my study.

The reduced data was then reported and displayed in my research findings through narrative text, quotes, described action examples, as well as other media

including screen captures, photographs, raw data sequences, audio, external internet, and audiovisual links.

Data interpretation. I began my analyses in preliminary stages by spending a certain amount of time after each session reviewing the videos and other data. This provided a chance to write down notes, and examine how certain aspects played out. Because I worked with numerous data sources, it became crucial to dedicate time early on to review footage, photographs and projects. This also aided with my self-reflexivity process, and forced me to share my thoughts with the participants. Doing so created the opportunity to move on and build from previous mistakes, and it allowed me to formulate specific questions for the interviews. The most important aspect for me in order to interpret the data was to become familiar with all my material; to know what happened every day, and if it contributed, informed, and in any way responded to my research questions. Once I reduced the data, I then screened the daily footage with vCode, which is Freeshare video annotation and workflow software. This program enabled me to code the audiovisual material (daily footage, and projects) on an interactive timeline. I spent several hours screening each clip, and created color codes for specific themes, categories, and important items that I deemed important and informative to my work. The entire process of reducing, reporting, and interpreting the data proved to be difficult because qualitative research is often concerned with credibility and bias; therefore, I wanted to provide and analyze the most informed examples.

This chapter has explained the way I used a participatory action research approach to examine three research questions about youth and social media practices within the context of social justice education. The reason I chose to work with a PAR approach was

because of its sensitivity to collaborative and emancipatory work. Because I worked with a community- and university-based collaboration, it was only natural to utilize this particular method. The following three chapters present the results I obtained using this method.

Chapter 4. Digital Youth Praxis and the H^3 Model

The value of access to digital media, by youth in particular, has not been fully explored with reflective critical approaches. Advocates of a traditional media education curriculum frequently justify and employ it in terms of video production and magazine creation. By focusing more closely on the specific features of video, film, and print production, educators are able to demystify (Masterman, 1985) the mass media with their students. Other media education approaches, including screen theory, media literacy, and new media literacy, instead emphasize the value of literacy, which assigns central importance to the role of "reading and writing" in the context of media education over the balance of theory and practice (practicum) with digital media objects. In this view it is assumed that, "incorporating participatory practices into the classroom allows for a blurring of boundaries between informal and formal learning and harnesses the power of digital technologies for students to reflect on the participatory culture that they live in" (Reilly, 2010, para. 7). This step forward in media education curricula is limited by their emphasis on gaming communities and the reality of school boards censoring various valuable websites.

Although all of these approaches recognize the broad importance of media education to youth, they are less attentive to the immediate ways in which emergent digital cultures shape young people's digital practices and learning environments. Additionally, most educators have yet to analyze how established digital media approaches can align current practices to create a more critical and social justice curriculum. When digital media informs effective social media pedagogy, youth can devise creative and socially relevant cultural productions.

This chapter offers an exploratory investigation of Digital Youth Praxis. It first provides a precise definition of the term and examines its relationship to economic, social, and cultural capital. It then examines the Digital Youth Praxis H^3 Model and its complexities. The final section is subdivided into three segments: Head, Heart, and Hands. I will relate research findings from my involvement with the FSMP and discuss how the research findings connect and contribute to the Digital Youth Praxis framework.

Definition and Dynamics of Digital Youth Praxis

Digital Youth Praxis is a conceptual framework in which youth use the current digital practices with which they are familiar to promote social justice issues that are relevant to their lives. In so doing, young people are guided through the creation of critical, educational, and thoughtful digital texts that offer insight, knowledge, experience, and hope for social change. The goal of Digital Youth Praxis is to conceptualize youths' digital practices within a bigger picture of social justice education, which connects "the relationship between theoretical understanding and critique of society… and action that seeks to transform individuals and their environment" (Leistyna, 1999, p. 342). However, in order to align youth digital practices toward social justice pedagogy we must first understand the current online and offline spaces where youth engage in digital practices: With which online communities are they engaged? Do they transfer their online experiences to their offline worlds? If so, how? Digital Youth Praxis provides an ongoing dialogue between the participants and a collaborative learning environment for us to do that. Additionally, we must understand how youth culture is influenced and transformed by rapidly evolving digital technology and its associated pedagogical implications.

Digital Youth Praxis includes the holistic dimensions of each participant; their emotional, cognitive, and artistic dimensions, therefore Digital Youth Praxis comprises digital practices informed by theory, and vice versa.

> It is a praxis orientation to the use of technology that is fluid, fluent, and critical. This is one, in other words, that connects to youths' outside-of-school technological practices (fluid), is technically wide-ranging and astute (fluent), and involves a questioning and reflective approach that recognizes social and cultural implications of technological practices and projects (critical). (Poyntz & Hoechsmann, forthcoming)

Digital Youth Praxis posits that when youth engage with digital media and social justice, a participatory educational approach is required, one that promotes a praxis orientation to the use of digital media and inspires and encourages youth to explore socio-political and economical issues that directly affect their lives such as economic, racial, gender, and health inequalities; democracy; peace; justice; and Aboriginal issues. Rather than emphasizing the "harmful" aspects of digital media in youth culture, Digital Youth Praxis asserts the positive and educational dimensions of youth's digital practices and fosters a critical consciousness (Freire, 1968), and in-depth understanding of a world freed from oppression. Within Digital Youth Praxis, this critical consciousness is a way of being "that fully integrates the heart and mind and so creates in the individual a sense of highly principled morality, philosophical expansion, and historical and global vision that represents the acme of human consciousness" (Mustakova-Possardt, 2003, para. 5).

Within Digital Youth Praxis, the educator's traditional fixed role is replaced with a more fluid and flexible approach to learning and teaching. Digital Youth Praxis asks

educators to approach teaching as a collaborative practice because as such, it creates an opportunity for change in the traditional power dynamics between the educators and youth. Whereas traditional pedagogy requires educators to maintain an authoritative stance, Digital Youth Praxis demands a much more participatory and collaborative environment. Additionally, both youth and educators who are engaged in digital practices must equally acknowledge the space they occupy by engaging in a dialogue. This process encourages educators and youth to evaluate how knowledgeable they are with the digital media practices, how comfortable they are with specific online communities, and what they consider the pedagogical possibilities to be for social justice with an online community. This process of self-reflection offers both educators and youth insight on one another's positionality, "which involves the notion that since our understanding of the world and ourselves is socially constructed, we must devote special attention to the differing ways individuals from diverse social backgrounds construct knowledge and make meaning" (Kincheloe, 1998, p. 163). Consequently, youth and educators can build a foundation of their collective wisdom around social justice knowledge, praxis, and pedagogy and then they are able to establish different points of entry with digital practices for each young person.

Regardless of their familiarity with digital technologies and practices, both youth and educators are encouraged to enter the Digital Youth Praxis framework with as wide an array of digital practices as possible. Although not all digital practices can be aligned toward social justice pedagogy, there are different levels of engagement that are appropriate for most digital practices, which are suggested by the Digital Youth Praxis Typology that is discussed in Chapter 5.

Digital Youth Praxis relies on the assumption that educators and young people have knowledge and lived experiences with digital practices within online communities and the overall collaborative learning process. This assumption raises important issues related to economic, social, and cultural capital, as well as how this shapes affordances and the abilities of each participant, educators, and youth alike, within the Digital Youth Praxis framework.

Ongoing Dialogue and the Phases of Digital Youth Praxis

By focusing on my involvement as an educator researcher with the Freire Social Media Project (FSMP), I am able to use the principles of Digital Youth Praxis to explain the outcomes and suggest several factors that affected the immediate and long-term outcomes of the project.

On a daily basis, I learned that the flexibility of Digital Youth Praxis is invaluable when working with marginalized youth because in order to respond to their needs and keep them connected to the social justice agenda on cognitive, emotional, and creative levels, I needed to adapt to the feedback given to me. In order to really "hear" what the participants were saying, specific attention had to be paid to the relationship between Digital Youth Praxis, forms of capital (economic, social, cultural), and the critical complexity theory of praxis orientation to the use of digital media for social justice. The participants and I had to build and maintain a certain amount of trust before diving into the digital media production component of the framework and the only way to do that was through sustained dialogue. Through my interactions with the participants, I envisioned, created, and enacted six distinct relational phases in Digital Youth Praxis:

1. Recognize: to understand your positionality and how it influences how you enter the process.

2. Converse: to express your lived experience with other participants in a safe offline environment.

3. Share: to share, through dialogue, your knowledge, skills, and experience with other participants in the hopes of creating an offline and online collaborative learning environment.

4. Engage: participating hands on with your choice of digital media and create projects primarily from the FSMP curriculum.

5. Explore: to push yourself to connect with unfamiliar concepts and curriculum and to understand the complexity of this praxis.

6. Reflect: to reflect on your process and its online and offline implications through self and group refection.

Many participants can enter the process through the first phase (recognize), however this framework has multiple points of entry that accommodate the diversity of backgrounds of each participant and group. —the most important element of these six phases within the framework is dialogue and the execution of these discussions using praxis. Ultimately, as long as participants engage in authentic dialogue, it does not matter how participants enter the process.

During our first session of the FSMP, the participants and I spent three hours discussing their personal interests, their backgrounds, their goals, and other personal information (some was pertinent to the project and my research and some was not). This Freirean style dialogue set the stage for ongoing conversations among the participants

and between them and me. These conversations covered a multitude of different subjects: racism, sex, homophobia, trends, clothes, child labor, community issues, and much more. Interestingly enough, our first intense conversation that sparked immediate interest from all participants concerned the term, "daggering", and how it can be interpreted to mean several things: it can mean that a man and woman are dancing in a sexually provocative way; it can also mean that two people are having sex in an aggressive manner; or it can mean that a person is stabbing someone with a dagger (knife). This conversation began when one participant said: "the meaning of the words depends on who you are" (FSMP Participant, 2009). Other participants began expressing their understanding of the word *context* and how different people attach different meanings to the word. A discussion followed about the word's connection to the music industry, particularly Jamaican reggae, and how daggering (man and woman are dancing in a sexually provocative way) has become a major concern of the participants because of how young people from different countries have skewed the original meaning of the term to something violent.

The participants were upset by the fact that young people posted personal videos on YouTube of violent interpretations of daggering, which created outrage in the media because of the misogynistic nature of the interpreted act. The participants' main concern was the impact of this negative interpretation of daggering had on reggae: "[reggae] usually has a nice little message, [with] positive vibes always . . . some people take it as rubbish, but you have to listen to the words" (FSMP Participant, 2009). Many of the participants are from Caribbean backgrounds and reggae music is very important to them and their culture, therefore the popularity of daggering and its link to reggae upset them. This discussion, which might seem tangential or inappropriate in a traditional educational

setting, revealed a wealth of information about each participant's background, positionality, values, beliefs, and education. Similar conversations that were closely tied to at least one of the six phases outlined above occurred through the process and shed light on other important factors that influence the participants' connections to the project and their digital practices.

Recognize, **converse, and share.** Young people are informed by their immediate surroundings, and this has a significant influence on the work they produce and their access or level of participation through digital practices. It is important for us to understand young people's digital practices in relation to their location, access, abilities, and socio-economic class. For example, youth living in Kenya do not have equal access to digital technology, as do youth in The Netherlands. It is not possible for all youth and educators to enter Digital Youth Praxis in the same way because they have varied levels of digital practices, knowledge, emotional involvement, and technical skills. Participants may be reluctant to share their levels of proficiency and understanding of these factors and by encouraging dialogue, it provides them with an opportunity to share where they are. By acknowledging participants' different forms of capital (economic, social, and cultural) (Bourdieu, 1986) prior to engaging in the curriculum and before any claims or examples about digital practices are made, Digital Youth Praxis brings these individual and collective inequalities to light.

Economic capital. Bourdieu (1986) describes economic capital as "immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights" (p. 47). However, this form of capital cannot be examined within the context of Digital Youth Praxis without a closer look at its relationship to the development of each

individual and its effect on social and cultural forms of capital. One of the many implications of economic capital is its connection to *access*. An individual participant's access to education, to digital media, to Internet, to Net Neutrality is a central issue in Digital Youth Praxis. In light of current global issues such as poverty, famine, health, security, and freedom, access to technology and digital media seem to be an insignificant concern, a luxury at best. Nevertheless, in the tradition of social justice in which Digital Youth Praxis is rooted, inequalities are overcome through solidarity and empowering those who are most affected by those inequalities to share their voices. Unequal access to technology shapes the dynamics of a group involved with Digital Youth Praxis and dialogue is the key to ensuring that this inequality does not go unnoticed. It is important to note that Digital Youth Praxis must not be understood and cannot be used as a global formula or an all-purpose recipe that enables the seamless merging of digital media with social media pedagogy. Still, it offers participants multiple entry points, depending on their level of access; it encourages an ongoing conversation between participants to exchange experience and knowledge, and lastly, it promotes a curriculum of social justice, which aims to alleviate such inequalities.

Social and cultural capital. In a Digital Youth Praxis context, two additional forms of capital must also be addressed: social and cultural. Social capital is the network of resources and support available to a person, and cultural capital "acts as a social relation within a system of exchange that includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status" (Barker, 2004, p. 37). Whereas economic capital is linked to how much money you have, social capital is about whom you know and how these connections manifest themselves into advantage and opportunity. However, of the three

forms of capital discussed in this paper, it is cultural capital that has the greatest significance to Digital Youth Praxis.

According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital is a form of power for an individual that exits in three forms: (1) Embodied capital: "consists of both the consciously acquired and the passively "inherited" properties of one's self [for example] *habitus*, culture, tradition, family values, beliefs, positionality" (p. 47), (2) objectified capital: "consists of physical objects that are owned, such as scientific instruments or works of art [for example] cultural goods, access, privilege, status" (p. 47), (3) institutionalized capital: "consists of institutional recognition, most often in the form of academic credentials or qualifications, of the cultural capital held by an individual [for example] education, institutional recognition" (p.47).Within Bourdieu's notion of embodied capital is the concept of *habitus*, which is "a set of durable values, practices and dispositions which is both structured and structuring" (Barker, 2004, p. 81). A person's habitus is the way in which an individual understands the world and how a person "acquires beliefs, values and knowledge through practice . . . the dispositions of the habitus are the consequences of family, class and educational background" (Barker, 2004, p. 81). In relation to Digital Youth Praxis, habitus informs how an individual approaches digital media (or "machines" as Bourdieu (1986) refers to computers) through their acquired patterns of thought and behavior, which is said by Bourdieu (1977) to constitute the relationship between social structures and social action. This relationship becomes "a type of objectified cultural capital, and the ability to use [machines] is an embodied type of cultural capital" (p. 47). In this context, a computer is purely an object until an individual brings to it their cultural capital.

The importance of articulating levels of capital within a Digital Youth Praxis context became apparent at the start of my research and opened up a completely new area of analysis: I sought to understand how these various factors influence each participant's point of entry and how these factors guide their process. I found that forms of capital most notably shaped three aspects of my participants' lives that were particularly relevant to Digital Youth Praxis: *access*, *background*, and *identity and persona*. We discussed these factors from the start of the project and continued to do so into its final stages. It was crucial for the participants to discuss constantly issues related to their access, background, and identity because these issues informed how they understood the framework, their point of entry, and the digital practices they performed. Most of these factors influenced the FSMP participants, however I have selected examples that I feel significantly helped the construction of the Digital Youth Praxis framework.

*Access***.** The concept of access suggests affordances created by economic, social, or cultural forms of capital that enable a certain right of entry to cultural goods and opportunities. Several of the FMSP participants lacked the economic capital to engage with digital media because their families living condition does not permit them to afford digital media in their homes, however through school and community settings they found themselves up to date and engaged with digital practices. A recurring factor within my research group was how different types of access affected the participants' digital practices and there are three specific examples that I feel best demonstrate this relationship.

The first example involves Braz, a participant who lacked economic and cultural forms of capital such as financial stability, linguistic competencies, access, and formal

education, but who nevertheless found ways to be up-to-date and engaged in digital practices. Through his relationships with his community friends, he was able to access computers, recording studios, and other digital media to write, promote, and record his music. Braz did not feel the need to own digital media equipment or software, so he did not buy anything to which he already had free access. For Braz, objectified cultural capital was irrelevant. However when the desire or need arose for him to engage with digital media equipment and software, he accessed and used them as an embodied type of cultural capital.

A second and more elaborate example of access involves Junior, who also comes from a low socio-economic background and recently moved to Montreal via Haiti and the United States. When he arrived, Junior had very little economic capital and scant social capital because of his unfamiliarity with his new living environment. However, what became apparent with Junior from the outset of the FSMP was his undeniable drive to learn and make a difference in society. During my interviews with him, he was very clear about how a lack of access to education and technology denied him the ability to get the most out of life while he lived in Haiti and the United States. He explained that while he lived there, he would get in trouble for disrupting and physically fighting people. Junior's ability to deal with his lack of capital was unique: although he had no appreciable forms of capital in Haiti and the United States, his cultural capital increased when he moved to Montreal. The fierce pride in his Haitian background, which he inherited through culture, tradition, beliefs, and local Haitian knowledge and life experiences, emerged from the digital projects he created. Junior approached each project with a wealth of information about real world issues, and he brought his local Haitian knowledge and observations and

applied it to more global issues of poverty, political corruption, slavery, and racism. His way of seeing life and his habitus in general is unique because of his experiences while growing up in Haiti and the United States, so he is very well informed about social justice through lived experience, culture, tradition, family value, and beliefs.

A different example of access was revealed through my analysis of Aaron's participation in the project. Aaron is passionate about technology and pushes himself to keep abreast of all new forms of digital media (mobile, computers, televisions, and audio systems are all among his passions). Despite his low level of economic capital, Aaron uses his rich social capital to purchase cutting-edge electronics for the sake of increasing his objectified cultural capital (the electronics he purchased were often at a very low price or free because they were stolen). Aaron does not concern himself with the possibilities and implications of engaging with digital media; he only cared about owning the electronic object and he did not place a high value on using digital media as an embodied type of cultural capital. Forms of objectified cultural capital seem to be the most important aspects of Aaron's life, and this is proven further by his constant need to hack his electronics, which allows him to have the latest illegal software and applications on his mobile media for free by acquiring codes and keys through his social circle of social capital. In terms of his digital engagement, Aaron's inability to align his collection of digital media and digital practices toward a socially progressive use became an obstacle to his work in the FSMP.

In comparison, Anthony's brief, yet intense experience with and resulting insight on street gang activities shed light on how power structures function and influence young people's ability to access cultural goods in life. Anthony is a charming young man who

has a passion for graffiti and over the years, through his street art he has maintained a healthy network of people (social capital). He believes that graffiti is art, and even the simple act of *tagging* (the most basic writing of an artist's name on a surface) is a clever way for young people to use urban space as a means of expression. In this context, Anthony's access manifests itself through his ability to engage in graffiti art in a meaningful and creative manner, and this access to creative expression is an important aspect of his background. However, Anthony's access to this creative outlet has been limited by the efforts of Montreal authorities, including police and local government officials.

Anthonys's discussions about graffiti art opened up conversations between the participants about what access meant in the context of illegal, non-violent artistic activities. Each participant expressed their views on graffiti in Montreal and its connotations: gang activities, violence, and pseudo art. Anthony explained how the representation of graffiti art in the media influences the public to view it as a violent and dangerous subculture. This discussion became an avenue for new discussions about street gangs, police racial profiling, and illegal street activities. During these discussions, the participants shared their personal stories and discussed how these issues affect and limit their access to education, cultural goods, and digital media. .

Background. As I pushed to understand the complexities of my participants' lives, the concept of *background* surfaced. The importance of an awareness of participants' backgrounds became clear in the cases of two specific participants: Marcel and Anthony. Each one had a combination of unique factors that informed my understanding of the positionality within the framework and their journey through the FSMP project.

Like Junior, Marcel was born and raised in Haiti and the United States before moving to Montreal in early 2009. Marcel has a tremendous amount of embodied and institutionalized cultural capital because of his strong connection to his family in Haiti, who placed emphasis on education and helped him as best they could with schooling. He also demonstrates a strong sense of culture, tradition, and family values and extensive knowledge of Haitian history, current events, and politics, which are forms of embodied capital. Although Marcel does not have any educational credentials to speak of (he is currently in Grade 10), he was by far the most informed and technically advanced participant in my project. From my observations, I noticed that Marcel used his digital knowledge and skills to try to make the country he loved so dearly a better place. During group conversations, he drew from his experiences in Haiti and he would often take the time to share pictures of Haiti as examples of what he was discussing. One such example occurred during a group discussion about politics and history. Marcel explained the importance of the Haitian Presidential Palace and how it represents power to all Haitian people. He brought up an image of the palace on the computer he was using and everyone gathered around him. He informed the participants of the history of the palace, and Haiti's connection to France through slavery. This particular discussion was engaging for all the participants, who asked Marcel questions and engaged in dialogue. This exchange revealed not only information about Marcel, but it also offered insight on everyone else through the types of questions they asked.

Identity and persona. One of the most central concepts to the contemporary study of youth culture is that of identity and persona: *identity* implies the distinct personality of an individual, whereas *persona* suggests a social role performed out by an individual as a

means to belong to a distinct social group. In the context of this research, I was intrigued by the dynamics between forms of capital and identity and persona. I paid close attention to the ways in which identity and persona played out among the participants in online and offline spaces, how they influenced the participants' points of entry to Digital Youth Praxis, and how they informed each participant's process.

The three most compelling examples of identity and persona that emphasized the importance of understanding the role of self and image for my research came from Ryan, Melissa, and Erika. Despite, or perhaps due to, the popularity of street gang culture in the neighborhood where my research was conducted, several of my participants were drawn to the culture and were meticulous with their clothing (baggy pants, caps with graffiti tags, and T-shirts with specific logos) and body movements (slow, rhythmic pace walk and specific hand salutations) to prove their connection to street life. One of these participants is Ryan, a street-smart eighteen-year-old with a history of illegal street and gang-affiliated activities. Ryan has been immersed in street culture since he was a young boy, but has recently ended his activities. He has a wealth of social capital through his network of friends and affiliation; this means that his appearance and tough attitude are part of his identity, and not of his persona. Since his decision to end his street activities, Ryan has had to deal with police officers profiling him because his physical "street culture" presentation (persona) is mistaken for who he really is (identity). He would often engage in conversation with other participants about how young people dress or act in a specific manner to be perceived as a gang member. The knowledge that Ryan brought to the conversations about identity and persona helped other participants think through the way they "performed" and had them re-evaluate their true identity. It was through Ryan's

constructive criticism toward several participants that they realized the difference between what it means to perform a certain attribute, and to have the attribute as part of a person's identity. This was particularly noticeable when the participants engaged with media to create texts about street life; Ryan's work was well–informed based on the intricacies of his examples and the local knowledge he had gained from his live experiences, whereas other participants' work provided a more superficial treatment of street culture and glorified it.

Another example of identity and persona played out between Melissa and Erika. These two participants performed hypersexual personas both online and offline that generated dialogue between participants about sex, sexuality, stereotypes, and respect. By photographing themselves in provocative poses, posting those photos on their online social networking profiles, and commenting on one another's photos (which would increase the number of friends who would see them), Melissa and Erika used their bodies and sexualities as forms of objectified cultural capital. They used these personas to sell a specific sexualized image of themselves, which they said would attract boys and make other girls jealous. Melissa and Erika were the most sexually expressive participants and generated a large amount of sexually explicit conversations within the group, which revealed information about the participants' views on sex, gender, dating, interracial relationships, and sexual orientation. However, my one on one interaction with Melissa and Erika revealed their identity as young and innocent girls who used their persona as a way to project a specific sexualized image of themselves. This identity was made obvious when we discussed social justice issues because that was the only time they let their sexualized guard down and revealed their inner self and compassion for others. Even

though they both struggled to engage fully with the media production component because their primary concern was taking provocative pictures of each other and posting them online, occasionally their persona faded and their media production work was informed by their identity. One example was when they were researching child rights; specifically in the context of sweatshops, the information and images they found online was mind-blowing. They informed me after the research was completed that they realized through the power of images that they were privileged to be living in Canada and to have their human rights respected.

Engage, explore, and reflect. Engaging with Digital Youth Praxis requires a commitment to understand the complexity of young people's digital practices. As mentioned previously, this involves ongoing conversations between youth and educators in order to understand the socio-economic, political, educational, cultural, and economic conditions that affect the way young people participate with digital media and the choices they make. This relates to the phases because it enables all the participants to understand how they engage with the media production, to what extent they explore the online possibilities of digital practices, and to reflect on the implications of their actions.

Consciousness of complexity. The extent to which youth are informed and inform digital media culture and social justice pedagogy creates a need to examine the complexity of what it means to take action with digital media. According to Kincheloe (2005), a critical complexity theory must "account for the interaction of self and context, the intricacies of memory and concept building, and the value of cross-cultural cogitative insights" (p. 116). It is not enough for youth and educators to engage with digital media; both must understand the complexity of praxis and how it enables a deeper understanding

of possibility. Additionally, the more I work with youth and educators with outreach projects and digital media, the more I see a need to think about the ethical, civic, and socio-moral responsibilities of engaging with technology: in addition to digital skills and a social justice pedagogy, am I adequately teaching and modeling the complexity of what it means to take action and engage in social change work? A complexity theory of Digital Youth Praxis should, "address modes of criticism, creativity, theorizing, imagination, and meaning-making . . . complexity attempts to blur boundaries separating cognition, culture, epistemology, history, psychoanalysis, economics, and politics" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 116).

Digital Youth Praxis borrows from Joe Kincheloe's existing framework on the consciousness of complexity and adds specific aspects of young people's living and learning in a new media mix. According to Kincheloe (2005), a consciousness of complexity involves an understanding of the following realities:

- Things-in-the-world often involve far more than what one notices at first glance.
- Things that appear isolated and fixed are parts of larger, ever-changing processes.
- The way one perceives an object may change drastically when one encounters it in another context.
- Knowledge of the world is always shaped by the position of the knowledge producer.
- Ignoring relationships that connect ostensibly dissimilar objects may provide us with a distorted view of them.

- Windows into revolutionary new understandings may be opened by exploring the contradictions and asymmetries of the social, physical, psychological, and educational spheres.

- Profound insights may be gained by attending to the experiences of those who have suffered as a result of a particular social arrangement or institutional organization. (p. 30)

In order to engage effectively in digital media pedagogy, we have to consider young people's current digital practices, the critical complexity of their context, and the interactions between these two factors. A critical complexity theory of Digital Youth Praxis would enable researchers to study a phenomena through multilogicality, which offers an observer diverse frames of reference (Kincheloe 2007).

There are, of course, some caveats and unpredictable matters that add to the complexity of Digital Youth Praxis, the most notable being how youth alter their online identities to reflect their desire to be someone or something else. Additionally, youth often modify their personal information, which allows them to mask their true physical location and skew their real identity. However, as much as they alter their personal online information, the reality is that they cannot change their offline identities when they are engaged with a group through Digital Youth Praxis. A critical complexity theory of Digital Youth Praxis allows educators and youth to consider aspects of themselves and their lived experiences in relation to their interactions with digital media, as well as how external factors such as class, education, gender, and location influence their actions.

As a result, when Digital Youth Praxis is viewed by educators and researchers through a critical complexity lens, it allows them to become familiar and aware of the

purpose and outcome of young people's online activities. It encourages educators to ask questions about context, interactions, purpose, process, contribution, and personal growth; this provides a holistic understanding of young people's online and offline digital footprints. A consciousness of complexity revealed that the factors affecting the engage, explore, and reflect phases the most were: awareness, communication, and technophilia.

Awareness. In the context of Digital Youth Praxis, awareness means more than the ability to perceive, feel, or be conscious of one's surroundings; it also encompasses the ability to understand social cues and react accordingly by drawing from knowledge or experience. Due to each participant's unique life experiences, their awareness in relation to consciousness of complexity is manifested differently.

Stephanie exhibited the first example of awareness. Her conversations, interactions, and digital media practices demonstrated her ability to respond to social justice issues by drawing from her exceptional school smarts. Unlike several other participants, Stephanie has excellent grades and is actively involved with her school's extracurricular committees and activities. However, her awareness is limited by her lack of street sense and this made her shy away from conversations about street culture. However, because she is self-aware, Stephanie counterbalanced her lack of street sense by working closely with Samantha, a participant who has a wealth of street sense and social awareness. Samantha brought an enormous amount of knowledge and life experience to the engage, explore, and reflect phases. Her ability to identify with situations, and her ability to apply her well-rounded knowledge was only surpassed by her concern and care for human rights, particularly the rights of LGBITQ committee. She would often inform others about the importance of human rights and how they are taken

for granted because we live in Canada. Additionally, she brought forward issues related to the LGBITQ community, and how couples from that community are often denied the rights of same-sex couples. Samantha would often challenge other participants, specifically those who express homophobic remarks, to think about why they feel hatred toward LGBITQ people. Because of the experiences of a lesbian family member, Samantha often forced others to think through their hatred and to try to identify or understand how people have suffered because of a specific social or political problem. Samantha's lived experience informed the participants and enabled them to express their thoughts on current problems with discrimination.

Communication (language). Another significant factor influencing the phases of engage, explore, and reflect was communication. The participant's ability to communicate influenced not only how that person engaged in digital practices, but the ways in which that person explored and exchanged knowledge and experience with others. The participants in my work most frequently communicated verbally; however, some language barriers had to be overcome. Such was the case with Junior and Shanice, who grew up using their respective languages of Creole, and English (Trinidad). For Junior, his struggle with the English language was evident in the way he spoke with the other participants; he often appeared shy and talked in a low tone. He communicated using the images and subtitles he assigned to each image, even though there were typographical mistakes.

Similarly, Shanice struggled with speaking and writing in English. Shanice was outspoken and opinionated; however, her strong Trinidadian accent limited her ability to communicate effectively with the participants. This example suggests the sheer

persistence and importance of dialogue-informed pedagogy, as well as how nothing must limit participants who want to learn more.

*Technophilia***.** The ideology of technology is obvious in most young people who are connected to digital media on a daily basis. These lovers of technology are called technophiles (Postman, 1992), and are defined as those who "gaze on technology as a lover does on his beloved, seeing it without blemish and entertaining no apprehension for the future" (p.5)

The influence and potential of digital media skills and knowledge played out in an interesting manner within the framework and consciousness of complexity. As mentioned earlier, Aaron was the best-equipped participant in the group. However, despite his technical knowledge, he lacked the will or the ability to apply his skills toward socially progressive ends and he did not share his knowledge with other participants who lacked hands-on media skills.

One participant who demonstrated solid technical media skills and used that knowledge to help others was Stephanie, who was mentioned earlier in this chapter; she was the participant with book smarts, but lacked street smarts. Unlike Aaron, she understood the importance and positive implications of helping other participants who struggled with the technical component of the process. Stephanie was often one of the first participants to finish the projects, and rather than engaging in personal activities online, she would volunteer her help to those who were struggling.

Gender is often suggested to play an influential role in such situations, where females are considered more likely to help others; however, I believe that this was not the case with Aaron in comparison to Stephanie. I believe the main motivating factor for him

was his general inability to engage in a serious, constructive conversation, which made him feel inadequate. On the other hand, while Stephanie felt inadequate about her lack of street sense, this did not impede her from sharing her knowledge and skills with others.

Overview of the H^3 Model

The Digital Youth Praxis framework enables educators and young people to work together through a dialogical process to align their current digital practices toward social justice pedagogy. Based on my interactions with and analysis of the participants of the Freire Social Media Project, I created Digital Youth Praxis, a model that examines and suggests attributes and attitudes of the participants that influence their digital practices.

The addition of the H^3 Model to the six stages of the Digital Youth Praxis framework draws attention to three core aspects of each participant engaged with digital media: Head, Heart, and Hands. This model was created by my own experience as a media producer and educator because I felt it was important to acknowledge all facets of media production. The model was also informed by my initial conversations with Professors Joe L. Kincheloe, and Michael Hoechsmann who suggested the terms. The model seeks to clarify how aspects of the Head, Heart, and Hands influence young people's digital practices. The H^3 Model enables educator researchers and participants to explore, understand, and acknowledge the deeper, complex mechanics at play within their digital media practices and social justice pedagogy: the cognitive (Head), the emotional (Heart), and the technical (Hands) factors that influence how and what young people do in a digital setting. The DYP H^3 is situated and influenced by aspects of situated learning, affordance theory, critical consciousness, enactivism, and flow theory and is explained in greater detail in later sections of this chapter.

Because we cannot examine young people's digital practices through a single lens or isolate a single practice in time or space, we need a way to know the complexities that surround and shape these practices. The H^3 model does not examine youth practices in a cause-and-effect manner; instead, it examines the relationship between the action, the product, the process, and the reactions. It evaluates different sets of variables that influence the ongoing digital practices and their outcomes, and how these variables shape a person's digital practices. Additionally, this model can be used as a way to understand young people's digital practices that are not yet aligned with social justice pedagogy. This is important because not all of the participants entering the Digital Youth Praxis framework have access to digital media, and every participant has different knowledge and experience related to social justice.

Another key tenet of the H^3 model is a need to understand that it is situated in a society that is in a constant complex flux. To fully comprehend young people's digital practices, we need to ask questions about internal and external factors that constantly influence society and youth, including background, living conditions, access, education, and gender, to name but a few. Figure 1 represents a two-dimensional representation of the H^3 Model, and an encompassing circle to represent the factors that influence the Head, Heart, and Hands.

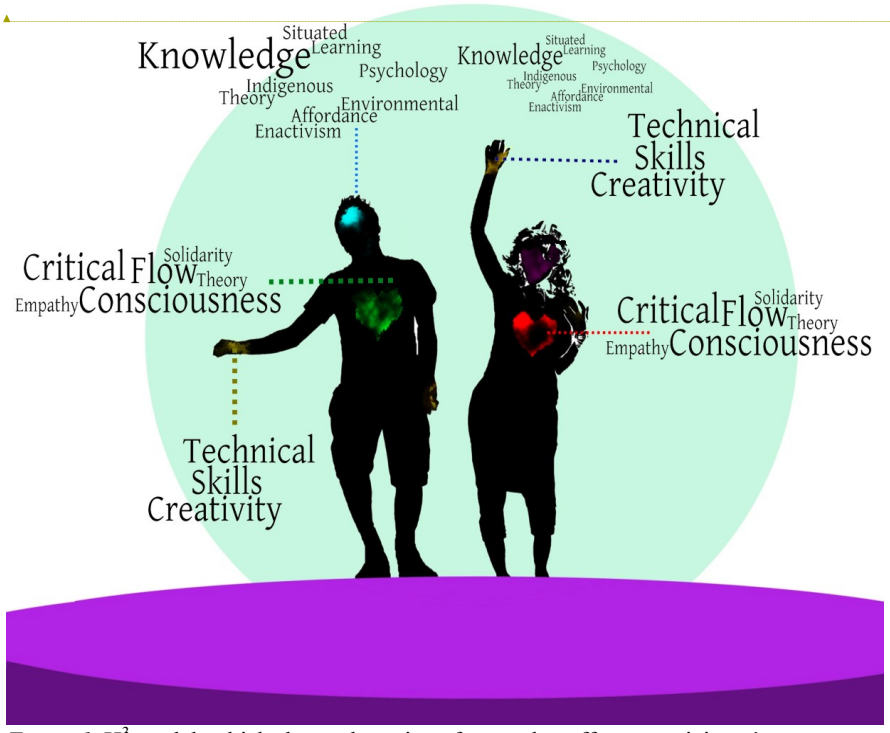

Figure 1. H^3 model, which shows the unique factors that affect a participant's involvement in Digital Youth Praxis.

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Head. Based on tenets of enactivism, affordance theory, environmental psychology, and situated learning (cognition), the Head section of the Digital Youth Praxis H^3 model represents aspects associated with cognition. Everyone carries with them unique knowledge based on their lived experiences, and therefore no two people will experience or approach a phenomenon the same way. This means that the way a participant relates and reacts to their environment changes depending on their social, cultural, and physical contexts. The Head section of this model implies a need for

educators and participants involved with Digital Youth Praxis to consider knowledge in the context of situated cognition and ecological psychology. Educators must also understand that knowledge production and meaning making occur beyond textbooks and formal educational sites.

For example the importance of indigenous knowledge is important for the Head component because it is knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society, and "refers to local-level knowledge systems unique to a particular community or ethnic group" (Warren & Pinkston, 1998, p. 158). In the context of Digital Youth Praxis, this form of knowledge includes and is not limited to the information base for a society, community, culture, and sub-culture, which facilitates communication and decision-making and the teachings of these communities. Indigenous knowledge is informed and informs life-world experiences, tradition, practices, oral storytelling, legends, folklore, rituals, ceremonies, and music. When participants draw on indigenous knowledge, educators begin to see how the Head is influenced and challenged by "indigenous information systems [that] are dynamic, and are continually influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems" (Flavier, de Jesus & Navarro, 1995, p. 479).

The Head component of the model requires educators to examine how ecology influences each participant and how "complexity asserts that our knowledge systems are rooted in our physical forms—and that those forms, in turn, are engaged in ongoing cyclings of matter with all other living forms" (Sumara & Davis, 2007, p. 465). In order to grasp fully the meaning and implications of young people's digital practices prior and during the Digital Youth Praxis framework, educators and young people must view their

cognition as "ongoing processes of adaptive activity … [and] as with complex systems, the cognizing agent can be seen as an autonomous form or as an agent that is behaviorally coupled to other agents and, hence, part of a grander form" (Sumara & Davis, 2007, p. 467). The way youth approach and engage with digital practices is the result of a unique and complex mix of knowledge, access, physical affect, social circumstance, cultural context, and affordances. Within a Digital Youth Praxis framework, knowledge incorporates the ability to understand and respect other people's experiences and life-worlds; Digital Youth Praxis encourages participants to see through a multicultural and multidimensional lens. Furthermore, digital practices cannot be separated from who the participant is; that is, "the self cannot be separated from language; cultural values; socioeconomic influences, ideological, discursive and other modes of power; the thought processes; and the nature of consciousness" (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 147). Thus, their digital practices are understood "in terms of explorations of ever-evolving landscapes of possibility and of selecting (not necessarily consciously) actions that are adequate to situations" (Sumara & Davis, 2007, p. 468).

Heart. Through the process of Digital Youth Praxis, I noticed that young people's engagement with digital media and social justice pedagogy was motivated by the content of the project during the engage and explore phases. Much of what was carried through by the participant in terms of social justice content was connected to the participant's emotional involvement and personal interests. Additionally, because this framework is based on a dialogic process, many of the participants were to some degree aware of critical consciousness, empathy, and solidarity. Therefore, the Heart section of the Digital Youth Praxis H^3 model is grounded in Csíkszentmihályi's (1998) flow theory and

Freire's (1968) conscientization.

The theory of flow surfaces when there is a balance between having an emotional investment in an activity and a sense of challenge. Therefore, within the Digital Youth Praxis framework, the participants are encouraged to engage with digital practices of their choice and to align their content toward social justice issues. For most participants, the latter is a challenge because of their unfamiliarly with social justice and media activism. Therefore, the combination of young people's familiarity with digital media, coupled with the challenge to align their work toward social justice provides the opportunity for flow. Csíkszentmihályi's suggestions for experiencing flow include

> picking an enjoyable activity that is at or slightly above your skill level; continually raising the level of challenge as performance improves; screening out distraction as much as possible; focusing attention on all the emotional and sensory qualities of the activity, and looking for regular feedback, or concrete goals to monitor progress, even if it is a large or long-term project with delayed outcome. (1998, para. 24)

Once youth attain this balance and its connection to a critical consciousness, transformative actions occur and are then guided or limited by the Hand component of the H^3 model.

Hand. Given the ubiquity of digital media in the lives of most young people, it seems natural for them to acquire a certain amount of technical skill and competency. The Hand component of the Digital Youth Praxis H^3 model represents hands-on technical skills and creativity. These technical skills include the ability to understand the digital media (i.e. mechanics of video production); the ability to understand, apply, or redefine

the aesthetics, codes, and conventions associated to a specific medium and genre; and the implications and complexities of engaging with digital media.

Summary

The Digital Youth Praxis framework and the H^3 model can adapt to changes in digital culture and technological advancements. The core of this framework and model are driven by a need to acknowledge and understand the changes in society and the complexities of such changes and the resulting actions. Due to the fast-paced changes in the digital landscape and the ability for most youth to remain on the crest of those changes, the H^3 model can constantly evolve with the input and experiences from educator researchers and youth involved. This model was created to respond to the need to examine young people's digital practices beyond the scope of negative implications that often surface through educators' experiences and the media's representation of contemporary youth culture and digital media.

Chapter 5. Digital Youth Praxis Typology

Due to the growing importance of digital media in everyday life, the digital gap between educators and students, schools and communities, and rich and poor is a serious issue that requires attention. More important is the reality that digital engagement is not possible in the same way for all social groups because of structural, social, local, and individual differences. As discussed in the previous chapter, the discrepancies of conditions, opportunities, and limitations for disenfranchised youth created by forms of capital influence the way they enter the Digital Youth Praxis framework. The Freire Social Media Project gathered university, school, and community members to create a collaborative and safe space where the participants could exchange and access knowledge, experiences, and digital media in a unique partnership.

Through the use of the six-phase model (recognize, converse, share, engage, explore, and reflect) in participant generated social justice pedagogy, I discovered the following typology within Digital Youth Praxis: (a) Plug, (b) Play, and (c) Praxis. I define typology as a study of types and a collection of possible practices, which are similar in their level of criticality and engagement. The typology was examined based on theories of affordance (Gibson, 1977; Norman, 1988), critical consciousness (Freire, 1974), enactivism (Varela, 1991), and flow (Csíkszentmihályi, 1998). The typology offered a unique point of entry to digital projects and their associated digital practices. Each one was distinct because it considered the participants' experience and their ability to act critically and reflectively and to create and change within social contexts.

The following section brings forward detailed descriptions of each project that was utilized. Next is a reminder of the details for the ten projects, followed by an outline

for the typology (Head, Heart, and Hand). Lastly are practical examples of Plug, Play, and Praxis that I analyzed from the Freire Social Media Project to provide a concrete image of Digital Youth Praxis in action.

Freire Social Media Projects

Central to the six-phase model and the Digital Youth Praxis curriculum was the development of ten practical and pedagogical projects that the participants and I would carry out by the participants in order for me to study the participant's interactions with digital practices and social justice pedagogy. The following projects were created with the participants: (a) Digital Hub Project, (b) Say What? Project, (c) Pixel Pusher Project, (d) Digital Photovoice Project, (e) Digital Mashup/Remix Project, (f) Digital Self-Portrait Project, (g) Wiki-Wiki Info Project, (h) Person Portrait Project, (i) Public Voice Project, and (j) Top 5! Project. Unlike most digital media projects of this nature, I did not impose the content of my projects on the participants; instead, I encouraged them to work on themes they were interested in through social justice issues that affected their lives.

I encouraged the participants to work on the projects in whatever ways they felt comfortable; this meant that they could listen to the music of their choice, watch videos, chat, and occasionally check and update their social networking sites while they worked on their projects. I noticed that the music they listened to and videos they watched on YouTube motivated them and kept them engaged in their work. The online chatting and status updates were frequent, however these activities did not interfere with the quality of their projects; in fact, this process confirmed the participants' ability to multi-task when they are engaged with digital media. These projects were not merely a matter of isolated

digital practices, but a comprehensive totality of supplying and obtaining information and examples of digital practices within social justice pedagogy.

Digital Youth Praxis Typology

My results show that dialogue and collaborative learning enabled the participants to create digital media productions that were informed by social justice principles. These productions not only became a means of empowerment, but they also demonstrated the various levels of participation that occur when a learning space is grounded in dialogue and reflexivity. Due to the flexible nature of the six phases of Digital Youth Praxis, the typologies reflect a non-hierarchal system where participants have the opportunity to enter one phase and, depending on their level knowledge (Head), emotional involvement (Heart), and technical skills (Hand), they will stay and explore a phase, or move on to another phase. No matter which phase a participant is engaged with, their digital practices — posting an image, updating a status, or exploring a particular feature of YouTube—can be understood using a three-pronged typology. Each project was created in such as way that it offered the opportunity for each participant to enter at either Plug, Play, or Praxis.

Plug. When conjuring mental images of the word *plug*, I thought of a young person plugging in their headphones to the mini-jack of an MP3 player and then placing them over their ears. *Plugging in* is a way to connect to something and take in the energy or information that source provides. There is a rather passive demeanor associated with the aforementioned visual metaphor: a sense of carelessness, of escaping from the reality of everyday life. However, in the context of this study, *Plug* represents a participant's casual attitude toward digital practices with only a slight willingness to engage with a

project. This level involves minimal amount of critical thinking skills and emotional engagement.

Plug includes basic digital practices such as surfing and logging into a website (including social networks), watching videos, and updating a status or micro-blog. In terms of specific projects, Plug was apparent not only in the social media interactive components of the curriculum, but also in the production design aspect; the amount of energy invested in the shaping of the "look" of a project was deeply rooted in the participants' Heart and Hands.

The most important characteristic of Plug is that the engagement with the digital media takes place in such a way that the participant has the opportunity to move beyond Plug, to one with greater levels of consciousness (Play, and Praxis). Most participants were able to make the transition from *Plug* to *Play to Praxis*, but I observed that for the most part, it was a difficult, yet rewarding challenge for them.

Play. The best visual metaphor is one of a young person who already is plugged in to an MP3 player and who selects, sifts through, presses *play*, and enjoys the songs that they have chosen. *Play* includes digital practices that are informed by some level of critical thinking and social awareness; the participant can enters play when they have even the slightest intent to create a worthwhile project that deals with social justice issues. Such an approach to a project implies a certain level of critical consciousness and emotional investment in social aspects such as racial and gender equality, justice, human rights, poverty, and child labor.

Play includes the following digital practices: adding a social cause application to a social networking profile, joining groups to raise awareness online and adding

applications that promote social causes that are meaningful to that person (peace, environment, health, diversity, etc.). In terms of my work with the Freire Social Media Project, the interesting aspect of play was the degree to which the participants played with digital media to create a text that had an important social message: some participants pushed themselves to explore very specific topics like racial profiling and Internet censorship, while others decided to engage with broader social justice topics like human rights and violence.

Praxis. This represents the most advanced level of a participant's ability to apply their existing critical and social awareness to a project. Participants who enter and engage in a project through the praxis are equipped with a solid understanding of social justice and using that knowledge and their lived experiences, they create projects that not only challenge and inform social justice issues, but they also contributed to a change in themselves, among their peers, in their community, and eventually worldwide.

Some examples of praxis include creating special interest groups for social awareness, updating a status with a social message, donating your status for a cause, creating applications to drive social awareness, and organizing an online petition and real world gathering for a cause.

The most important aspect of the Praxis level is that although it is the most advanced level of engagement, there is still space for participants to learn and explore more through their digital practices. Praxis also incorporates the ability to transfer these digital practices to offline spaces in order to continue addressing social justice issues.

Plug, Play, and Praxis in the Freire Social Media Project

Each project in the FSMP offered unique insight on the typology. Through their dialogue and their actual output, I witnessed the participants scaling up their digital practices in order to create digital projects that dealt with social justice issues on local and global levels. In this section, I focus on the practical aspects of Digital Youth Praxis and the typology, and how participants translated and applied theory and practice to create their projects. These digital projects offered the participants a chance to develop their social awareness using digital technologies and digital practices that are common to most youth.

The digital gap caused by the advancements in digital media, and the struggle for educational sites to keep abreast, has limited the pedagogical approaches afforded by social media in the lives of young people. As a way to exploit the potential of social media in the context of social justice pedagogy, "youths' participation in this networked world suggests new ways of thinking about the role of education" (Ito, 2008, p. 2). In an effort to mind this gap, these projects were envisioned with the purpose of being applied in a wide variety of community and school settings and are suitable for educators and participants who have limited access to digital media. The projects require little technical knowledge, and are fluid in the sense that they do not rely on one specific website or technology. For example, when we started our Digital Photovoice Project, we used Bubbleshare, a free website; however, several days later, the participants were notified by Bubbleshare via e-mail that the website would be shutting down in a few months and their projects would not be accessible. Therefore, we took a few minutes to explore other possibilities, and several students suggested VoiceThread as an alternative.

The fact that digital media constantly changes was a valuable enough reason for me to create projects that are as flexible in terms of the digital media they require.

Digital Hub Project. With the use of an open-source, blog-enabled website, such as Wordpress (see Figure 2), each participant created a personal website that functioned as a hub for all the projects they created throughout the Freire Social Media Project. We choose Wordpress because its platform is the most user-friendly website in terms of sharing online content, such as bookmarks, status updates, and slideshows, with other websites. In using this project as our starting point, it was clear to the participants that they did not need advanced technical skills to engage with the various projects.

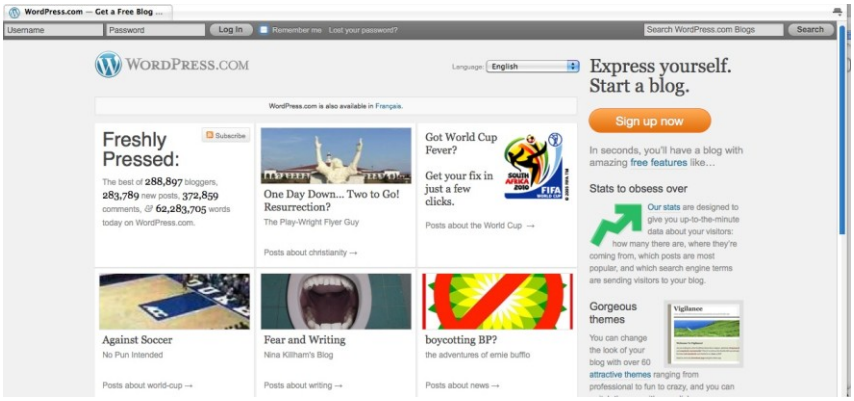

Figure 2. Screenshot of a Wordpress.com website, which shows the standard login page to access all of the participants' websites.

Due to the nature and function of this project, there were only two ways for participants to engage at the praxis level: the participants could choose a header image (an image that is located in the top portion of the website) and a page tagline (a short

phrase that sums up the tone and premise of the website that is often placed over the header image that had some relevance to a social justice issue (see Figure 3).

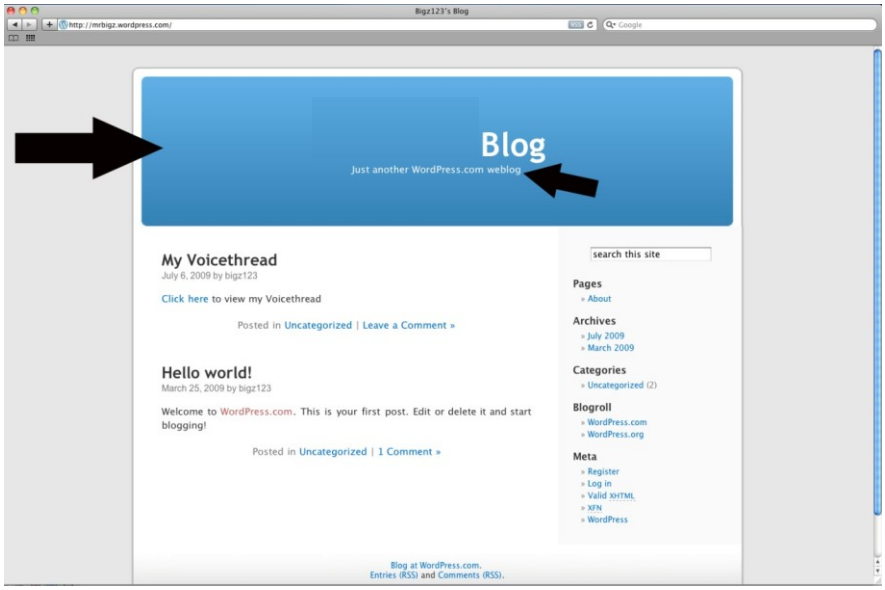

Figure 3. Screenshot of a Wordpress website, in which the large arrow indicates the website image header and the small arrow indicates the website page tagline.

Image header. Samantha, Erika, and Melissa paid a great deal of attention to the overall style of their websites, but their choice of images indicated no connection to any social justice issues. As shown in Figures 4, 5, and 6, all three participants chose a similar layout and colour pattern. They used the camera function on the computers to take digital photographs of themselves to use as their image headers. Both Samantha and Erika looked directly at the camera and had playful and colourful self-portraits, whereas Melissa captured herself in a provocative black and white image, in which she puckered her lips and looked off to the side of the screen. She shot the image in black and white

because she felt it made her appear sexier. The image that Melissa chose to use on her website maintained her hypersexual online image (she used similar images in her social networking profiles). While ~~Maria~~Melissa claimed that she had no real reason for the use of that specific image, she did inform the group that she preferred to use an image of herself instead of something else, like a favorite artist or brand. ~~Maria~~Melissa was initially uncomfortable when other participants questioned her about the provocative nature of her image within the context of the project's goals; however, she replied with a shoulder shrug and informed everyone that she felt it was more important for everyone to see who she was. Similarly, ~~Sabrina~~ Samantha and ~~Elvira~~Erika explained to the participants and me during our conversations that it was important for them to use a self-portrait as an image header because it informed the viewers who they (~~Sabrina~~ Samantha and ~~Elvira~~Erika) were and what they looked like. They continued to reassure us that their choice to use a self-portrait image header should not be interpreted as a lack of concern for social justice issues, but as a way for readers to know who the creator of the website was. In all three of these examples, we can see a missed opportunity for ~~Elvira~~Erika, ~~Sabrina~~Samantha, and ~~Maria~~Melissa to engage at the Play or Praxis level because of their concern with self-image over the chance to relate or express their opinion to issues of social justice.

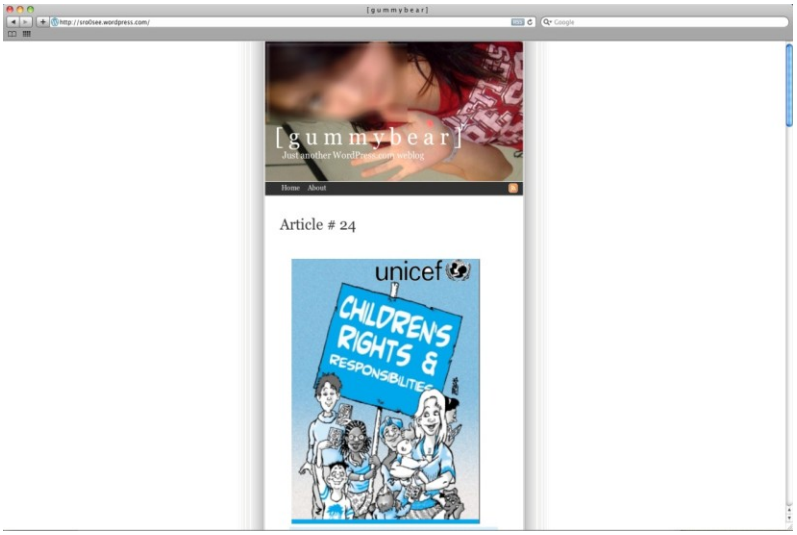

Figure 4. Screenshot of Samantha's website image header with her playful and simple self-portrait photograph.

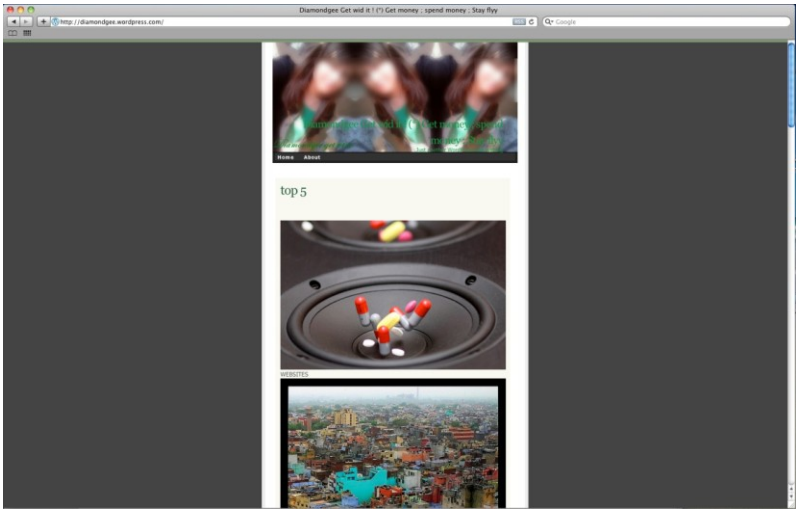

Figure 5. Screenshot of Erika's image header with her three provocative self-portrait photographs.

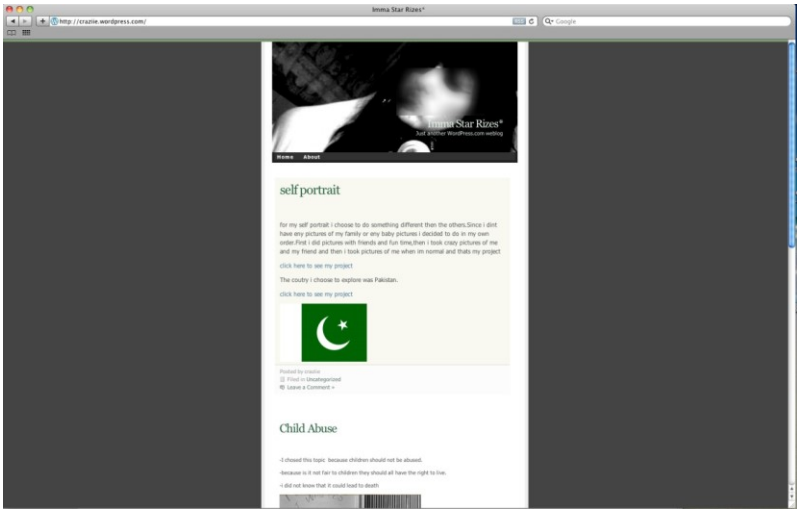

Figure 6. Screenshot of Melissa's image header with a self-portrait photograph in which she is puckering her lips and starting provocatively. She felt that a black and white image made her appear sexier.

For the most part, the other participants used Creative Commons photographs found on the Internet, while a few others opted not to include images as their headers. Marcel entered at the Praxis level by using a photograph of the Haitian National Palace as his image header (see Figure 7). The photograph had a dynamic composition and evoked a sense of power because of the low angle camera placement, which, according to Zettl (2005), makes the subject and image appear stronger, more dominant, and more powerful. Marcel's choice reflected his ability to recognize the action of using an image to display the concept of power. He explained in his group's discussion that he used the image because he felt it represented the power of the Haitian people to overcome social issues such as poverty and access to health care. He stated that he felt an image of his

home country was more important than one of himself. He continued to engage in Praxis as he changed his website's colour scheme to colours of significance for the Haitian people: blue, black, and red. He explained that he chose red as his primary color because he felt it best represents his pride for the country, and it reflects the Haitian flag's red section, which is symbolic of the multi-ethnicity of the country.

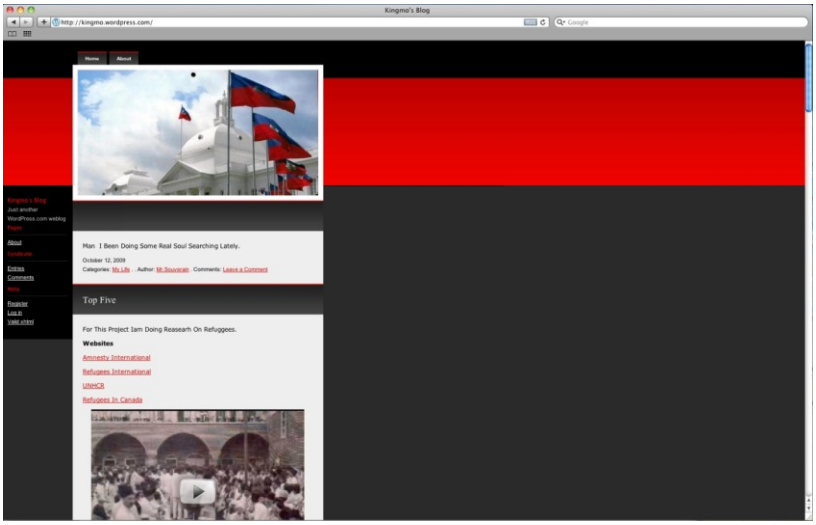

Figure 7. Screenshot of Marcel's image header with a photograph of the Haitian National Palace, which he explained was a symbol of power.

Taglines. The second opportunity for content to be connected with social justice issues was with the participants' use of their website tagline, which was placed over the image header.

Erika was meticulous about including her nickname on all images of herself that she used on her website and went as far as using it as her tagline: "Diamondgee Get wid it ! (*) Get money ; spend money ; Stay flyy" (transcribed exactly as it was written).

Melissa choose not to include her nickname, however she used a statement that she often include on her images as well: " Imma Star Rizes*". Both Erika and Melissa explained to the group that they used those taglines because the lines amused them, and they enjoyed writing in leet (Internet slang) because of the look of the symbols and typography. This was another indication of their concern with how their online image appears and their lack of engagement with social justice in this task.

On the other hand, Ryan engaged with the project through the Plug level, which was evident through his choice to include no image header. However, he moved from Plug to the Play by altering his tagline to read in lowercase: "speaking out for justice". Although the tagline is barely visible due to the small font size and dark gray colour that he chose, it reveals Ryan's ability to use a simple, yet compelling message to express his concern with social justice. He explained in one discussion that he feels passionate about "speaking out" for others who are unable to do so due to local or global political restrictions.

Summary. While it was impossible to understand all the choices the participants made during this particular project, it was interesting to see that most engaged through Plug, which is most likely due to their unfamiliarity with structured projects of this nature. Due to this being the first project, several of the participants proceeded cautiously and observed each other's actions and reactions to the topics and discussions. The discussions during this project made me realize that several of the participants were comfortable speaking out about their personal experiences with issues of social justice; however, most of them did not see how they could use their website header or tagline as a way to represent that. Marcel's explanation about his use of a political photograph as his

image header generated new knowledge for the participants who had previously underestimated the power of photographs within a specific context.

Say What? Project. Through the use of their Wordpress websites, the participants were each encouraged to maintain a blog. They were occasionally asked to answer specific questions generated by the group discussions that included topics such as racism, racial profiling, gender discrimination, representation, poverty, religion, violence, and same-sex marriage. The format and style of the blogs remained open, which allowed each participant to engage with the project in a way they felt most comfortable. This choice was also a way for me to level the playing field for the participants: If I had certain expectations about their writing, it would put those participants with strong writing skills at an advantage. I also did not impose specific expectations about such aspects like word count, titles, images, links, font type and color, and writing style (formal and informal). This encouraged the participants to engage through the typologies. The most important aspect of this project was to get the participants to express their ideas, knowledge, and experience with social justice issues, using their blogs in a way that was comfortable for them.

While some participants focused their time on researching topics for background information, others quickly engaged in personal narratives on their blogs.

Keeping it simple. Stephanie showed her ability to engage in blogging through Praxis by using her keen research skills and demonstrating her emotional investment in the subject matter. During the introductory discussion of this project, Stephanie quickly put her hand up and asked if she could run to her computer and begin the project—she had an idea and wanted to start, and she said "I am soooo inspired right now!" (FSMP

Participant, 2009). As I watched her work on her blog, I noticed that she was frantically searching for facts, and when I asked her why she was so captivated by the subject matter, she replied by telling me that her friend's mom was refused a job because she was a woman. She continued to explain that this situation led her friend to feel very distressed and caused this friend health complications. This was a clear indication that Stephanie was drawn to her chosen subject matter on an emotional level and felt compelled to express herself.

As Figure 8 indicates, Stephanie chose to format her blog in point form with statistics related to gender discrimination around the world. She ended her first blog with J. Howard Miller's iconic image of Rosie the Riveter with the slogan "We Can Do It!" Stephanie stated later in that session that she admired this image, but she wished there was an equivalent for women of color. Despite the fact that several participants encouraged her to create her own version of the image, she decided instead to "pump her triceps" as a tribute to the image whenever she discussed issues related to women. Her blog's text and images were minimal, yet the content was provoking and meaningful to a girl who (indirectly) experienced discrimination and wanted to express her concern about it.

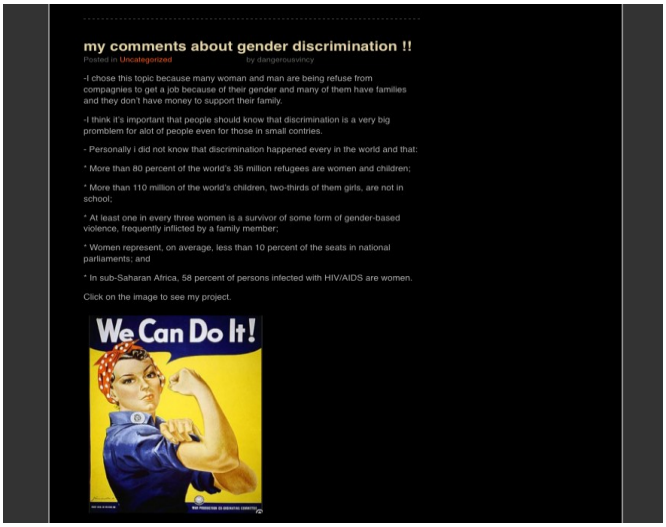

Figure 8. Example of Stephanie's Say What? Project with an image of Rosie the Riveter, which became an important photograph for Stephanie because of its powerful message about gender equality.

Ryan also engaged in the blogging project from Praxis. He expressed his frustration with police brutality in Montreal by writing the following on his blog (transcribed exactly as it was written):

> Cops dont care if your black, white, yellow or green, if your not wearing the same blue uniform as them, then you're worthy of their abuse. Its a constant power stuggle in the streets. Police want to control us and we respond with more crime. The fight has been going on since before I was born and will continue long after im gone.

His blog was informed by his lived experiences with street activities and police brutality, and is steeped with doubt about the possibility for meaningful social change. However, in

his discussions about this project, Ryan was hopeful in terms of police and youth coming together to discuss issues of power, race, stereotypes and respect. Ryan suggested to other participants who had encountered acts of police brutality to record them using their mobile media, and to post them online so that the government could understand the impact of racial profiling and police brutality and the need for real solutions. Following up on this discussion, I showed the group a video activism website called The Hub, which is the world's first participatory media site that focuses on human rights. I pointed out that the concept behind this website was similar to what Ryan had suggested about capturing acts that violate human rights and posting them online for others to see. Many participants spent a great deal of time surfing this website and watching videos posted by people around the world. This website functioned as an eye-opener for some participants who were unaware of problems such as elder abuse, the violation of Indigenous people's rights, child soldiers, and sex slaves. Ryan's ability to express his desire for offline action fostered a lot of discussion within the group and emphasized the importance of conversing and sharing information.

Keeping it too simple. During these discussions of human rights abuses, Marcel was interested and shared his own stories; however, his point of entry to this project was from Play, as opposed to Praxis, because his blog was "too simple": unlike his website, Marcel spent very little time writing his blog because he was more interested in the next project and actually started it without letting me know. When I approached him about this, he apologized and told me that he'd rather spend the time looking for powerful images for his photovoice project. I could have assumed that he did not want to write a blog due to personal reasons or because of a lack of writing skills, but his blog indicates

that he has solid writing skills (see Figure 9). Instead, he felt that the upcoming photovoice project was more important to him than the blog. I was fine with that and watched as he returned to his photo research.

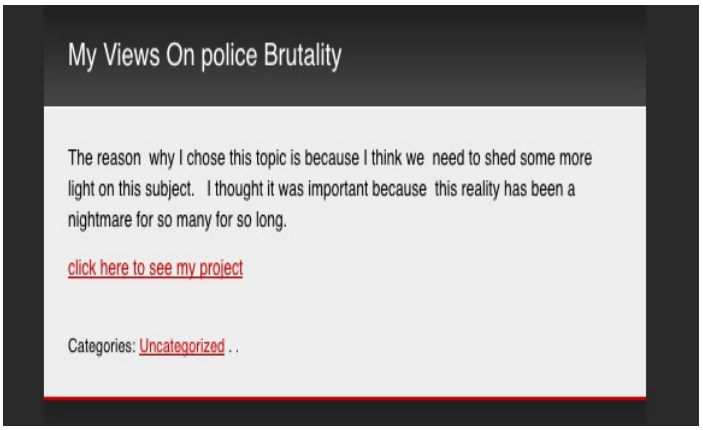

Figure 9. Screenshot of Marcel's Say What? Project, which contains a well-written short blog that explains his opinion on police brutality.

Erika and Melissa provided further examples of keeping it too simple. Both participants struggled to complete a brief blog because of a lack of interest in the written component of the project. Erika told me that she preferred to spend time working on visual media rather than writing because she expresses herself better in images than written text. Melissa also struggled with this project; however, she expressed her ideas in point form. Her engagement moved toward Play when she searched for photographs depicting child abuse on the Internet. She spent close to 40 minutes searching for what she felt was the "right" image that represented all forms of child abuse (psychological, verbal, physical, and sexual). Melissa settled on a black and white image of a young boy

sitting on the ground (see Figure 10) because she felt it gave a sense of loneliness and unhappiness. Melissa added that the fact that it was in black and white made it feel "more real . . . like you were standing in front of him." Her ability and desire to search, find, and include this particular photograph was what allowed her to engage more deeply in this project and further express her concern for human rights. Consequently, she functioned in Play, and remained there.

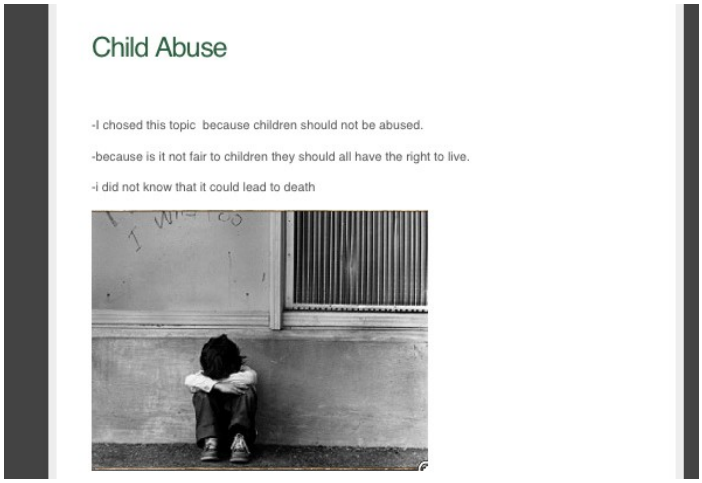

Figure 10. Screenshot of Melissa's Say What? Project with a black and white image of a boy that she felt conveyed the sadness and pain of children who are abused.

Summary. This project offered insight on aspects of writing in the lives of young people. I noticed that although several participants had excellent writing skills, they opted to write less and say more with their choice of images on their blogs. While Stephanie, Ryan, and Marcel were the ones who created the most advanced projects because of their engagement through Praxis, I felt that Melissa learned the most from this project: Seeing her break away from Plug to Play made Melissa aware of the implications of her choices

and it sparked her critical consciousness. Melissa came to understand the potential she has for engaging with social justice issues and making a change through small, but important projects.

Pixel Pusher Project. This project was envisioned as a way for participants to engage with social justice through video logging. Video logs are created by recording video using a webcam and then positing the video on a video sharing website. Each participant was asked to create one to five personal video logs on issues of social justice. Due to scheduling constraints, this project fell short on time and was not fully explored. Instead, I spent time with the participants searching for interesting and educational video logs on websites such as YouTube and Vimeo.

Samantha and Melissa were the only two participants who attempted to engage with this project; however, the project was unsuccessful. Although they used the video option on Facebook to post videos on each other's wall, the content of these videos had no relation to social justice. Rather than following the project's guidelines, both participants created video logs of themselves making funny faces and cracking jokes. Although they engaged with using digital media, their practices were not informed by issues of social justice, therefore they entered the project at Plug and did not move beyond that.

Rethinking the Pixel Pusher Project. I was disappointed with the overall process and outcome of this project because I had considered it to be the most challenging, yet also the most rewarding and educational project. After evaluating my experience and the participants' feedback, I feel I underestimated the required duration (timeline) to fully participate and create a rewarding experience with video logging for the participants. But

besides this lack of time, I also felt that several of the participants were hesitant about recording their comments online: When we discussed this matter, they spoke up about issues of privacy and their fear of not "sounding stupid" because they felt they were not ready to verbally express comments this early in the process of the ten projects. They suggested engaging with this as one of the final projects instead of proceeding with it as the third project. I considered this valuable feedback and understood that by working on this project at a later time, it would provide the participants with more experience and knowledge of social justice and digital practices.

Digital Photovoice Project. Digital photography among youth has been popularized by the increase in photography -- enabled digital mobile media such as cell phones, game consoles, and audio players. This project was based on the assumption that most youth enjoy photography and the artistic freedom of the medium.

This project covered the traditional focus of photovoice, which is a method that enables participants to use photography as a way to address world issues from a visual point of view. According to Larkin, Mitchell, et al. (2008), photovoice is a well-established approach to "accessing" the voices of groups that are marginalized. This project started with a participant-led discussion about social issues related to their community. Then, each participant was asked to create a photovoice project related to an important social issue in his or her community using VoiceThread or Bubbleshare. While the traditional form of photovoice has participants taking their own photos, I encouraged the participants to either take their own photographs or search for Creative Commons images that they felt expressed their thoughts or feelings.

Hairstyles. A simple project about various hairstyles around the world turned out to be one of the most informative and entertaining projects. Shanice, who has a passion for hairstyling, began her project by gathering as many photographs of different hairstyles as she could find on the Internet. Her intention was to create a photovoice project that showed how different people choose their hairstyles. However, through her discussion with other participants, Shanice added a new layer to her project: representation and stereotypes. She realized through her online searches that most of the photographs she found were somehow associated to issues of gender and race representation. Shanice's shift from Plug to Play became clear when she chose to discuss how dreadlock hairstyle photographs and are often associated with lower culture and "stoners." Shanice explained that she feels hairstyles are a way for individuals to express themselves, and it isn't fair to associate a person with a specific culture or sub-culture based on their hairstyle. Through her project, Shanice was able to vocalize her concern with youth who stereotype people because of their hairstyle choice. She explained that, a few months previously, she had witnessed a group of young boys beating up another young person because of his punk and emo hairstyle.

House parties. With his project on house parties, Aaron followed the same path as Shanice, which began at the Plug level and moved to Play. Aaron is an avid party person and has a particular interest in house parties. Aaron informed the participants that he often organizes house parties at his friends' houses. Aaron started this project by uploading some of his own house party photographs and then gathering colourful graphic photographs from the Internet (see Figure 11). Midway through his project, he stumbled across a photograph from his own collection of two police officers arresting one of his

friends at a house party that he organized. He explained to me that there was nothing illegal or wrong with the house party; in fact, there were fewer than twenty people in the home at the time of the arrest. Aaron expressed his anger with the police officers because he felt that his friends were being racially profiled. What stemmed from our discussion was Aaron's ability to recognize that he was able to engage with this project from a critical perspective that offered insight on racial profiling in the context of his life. He continued by reviewing his project and adding more pictures that depicted racial profiling of youth of color.

Figure 11. Screenshot of Aaron's Digital Photovoice Project, in which he paid special attention to his selection of colour, graphics, and font because of his love for technology.

Hip hop music. It was not surprising that Braz chose to explore issues in hip hop music and culture because of his emotional involvement as an artist and avid music lover. Braz began at Play because he seemed more concerned with the photographs that he chose than the overall message of his photovoice project. Once he was finished collecting his images, he began placing them in order, with a specific structure in mind. His move toward Praxis came about when he began to add verbal and written comments to certain photographs: he commented on a series of three images, using the visual comment tool on VoiceThread (see Figure 12, Figure 13, and Figure 14). Each of these three images has a comment explaining Braz's views on how the media and society unfairly generalize and stereotype hip hop music and artists.

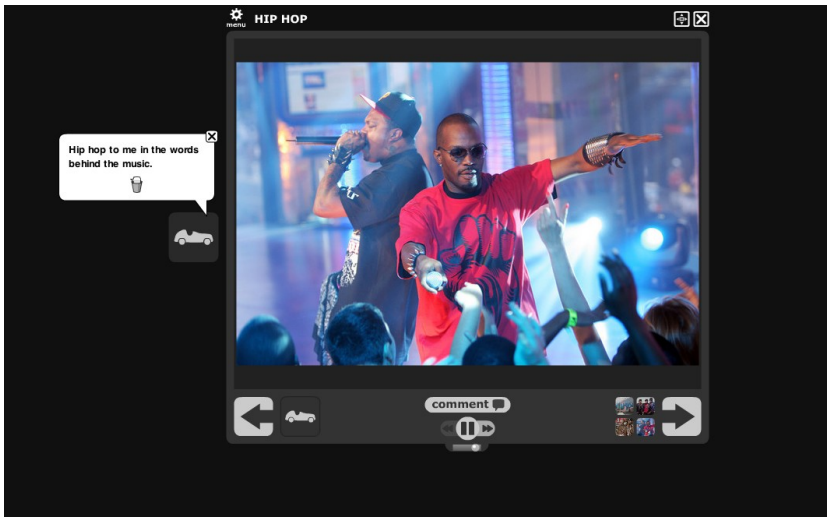

Figure 12. Screenshot of Braz's Digital Photovoice Project with his comments to the left about the importance of hip hop music in his life.

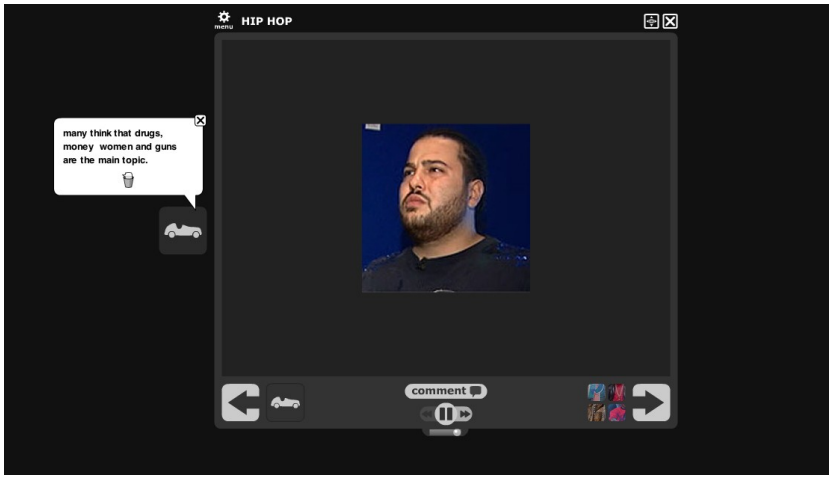

Figure 13. Screenshot of Braz's Digital Photovoice Project with his comments to the left about how people negatively perceive hip hop culture.

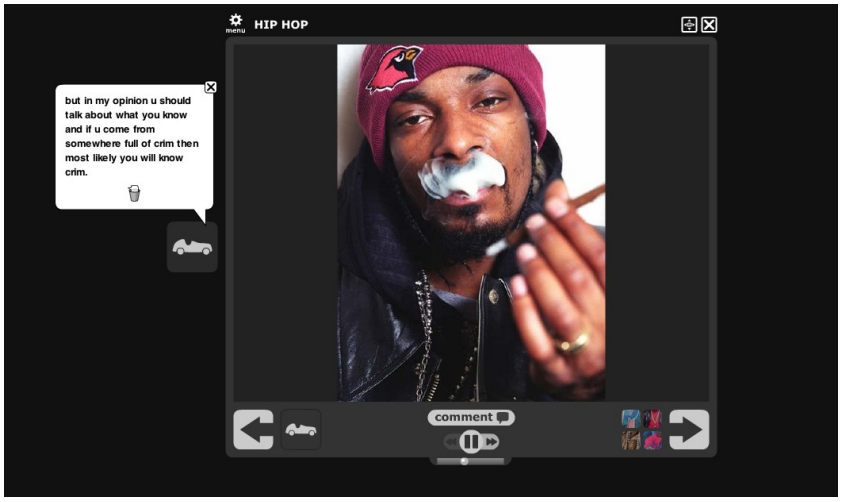

Figure 14. Screenshot of Braz's Digital Photovoice Project with his comments to the left about his feelings for hip hop music and why he feels most people do not understand it.

LGBITQ. Very few participants in the project volunteered to address issues of equality and rights for the LGBITQ community (lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex, transgendered, questioning, and queer). Samantha decided to explore this subject matter and immediately engaged with the project at the Praxis level: First, she addressed a topic that most youth tend to shy away from, and second, she specifically explored issues related to hatred toward a member of the LGBITQ community. Samantha explained that she often sees moments of hatred toward her gay relatives: "People stare at them as if they are from another planet" (FSMP Participant 2009). She expressed her compassion, her sense that their rights were being violated, and her feeling that the media often used distorted images of people who identify as LGBITQ, which makes matters worse. Her message was challenging and hopeful.

Summary. The most exciting aspect of this project was to see the participants respond positively and effectively to the photovoice method. Most of the participants engaged through Praxis and the few who entered Plug or Play moved quickly to reach Praxis. The participants developed projects that demonstrated in-depth understandings of their chosen social justice issues. Based on my own conversations with the participants and through the group discussions, I felt that this project so well received because of its simplicity and its use of images as vehicles for awareness.

Digital Mashup/Remix Project. In recent years, remixing has become a form of Internet currency; it is a way for netizens to share, exchange, alter, and play with media texts made available by the Internet. Furthermore, user-generated and open source material accessible through social networking and Web 2.0 sites such as YouTube and Remix.vg, have enabled people to contribute to remix and mashup cultures. The histories

and paths of remix and digital mashup are rich and complex, but nonetheless it is important to note that they are two distinct items. Often, the term "remix culture" is used to include both remix and digital mashup practices, and is described by Laurence Lessig as a "society, which allows and encourages derivative works" (Lessig, 2009, p. 56). By definition, remixing is an alternative version of an existing music piece, whereas a digital mashup is "a visual remix, commonly a video or website which remixes and combines content from a number of different sources to produce something new and creative" (O'Brien & Fitzgerald, 2006, p. 1). Because of this project's use of other people's work, discussions surrounding copyright and legal and ethical problems were raised by several of the participants, which led them to researching these issues and developing their own opinions.

Remixing hip hop. With the use of YouTube and other video sharing websites, each participant was asked to research, view, and create a digital mashup/remix that offered social commentary on the topic of their choosing. Due to a lack of time, this project became optional and only one participant created a mashup/remix. Braz was passionate about this project because of his musical skills and his previous experience with live remixing. He immediately engaged with the project at Play as he searched for songs to download and remix. Once he had collected the songs he wanted to use, Braz searched and downloaded images that depicted positive aspects of hip hop music and culture, and he edited sections of songs to include, such as a part of Tupac Shakur's song "Better Dayz": "I'd love to see the block in peace . . . With no more dealers and crooked cops, the only way to stop the beast . . . And only we can change." The juxtaposition of these lyrics with images of successful young men of colour created a kind of visual

poetry for social justice. Unfortunately, Braz did not upload his project on to a video sharing website because he wanted to continue working on it.

Rethinking the Digital Mashup/Remix Project. I found this project to be the most challenging because it required the participants to have prior knowledge and skills associated with video and audio editing. Additionally, I realized that I allocated too little time for the participants to complete this project. The complexity of remixing and mashup required a relatively longer production timeline because the purpose of a remix or digital mashup is to bridge together as many sources as possible to create a unique mix of media texts that offers social commentary. Regardless of my disappointment, I was impressed by Braz's project because it was creative, challenging, and offered a message of hope for the hip hop community. Additionally, Braz commitment to the project was displayed by his choice to continue to work on this project well past the allocated timeline from the FSMP.

Digital Self-Portrait Project. Through the process of self-exploration, this Digital Self-Portrait project required everyone to examine how society has shaped who he or she is. Each participant was asked to create a one-minute self-portrait, using their choice of images, video, and audio that could either cover "a day in the life" or it could be an exploration of important life events. Once their self-portrait was complete, each participant had to choose a country in the world and create a hypothetical self-portrait, as though they had grown up in the country they selected instead of their real home country. Before they began their projects, we discussed living conditions around the world, and how housing, work, education, human rights, access, and shelter differ in each country. I asked everyone to write down the name of what they consider to be the best countries in

the world on the white board. They generated a list of 15 countries: Canada, United States, France, Italy, Australia, United Kingdom, Ireland, Japan, Egypt, Spain, Russia, Brazil, Germany, Trinidad and Tobago, and Finland. I followed this by telling them that the only restriction they had was that they could not choose any of these countries for the second part of their self-portrait. I also encouraged them to explore countries they felt had problems with particular social issues.

From Haiti and the United States to Central African Republic. For his "true" self-portrait, Junior integrated images of himself with ones of Haiti and the United States to create a poignant and visually stunning project. Because of the information he offered about his experience as a refugee youth, I believe he engaged with the project through Praxis. His first image in his self-portrait reveals his muscular upper body with a short voiceover saying, "this is zoe boy" (see Figure 15). He later explained that "zoe boy" means a real Haitian boy, someone who works hard to earn respect and stands tall because he is proud to be Haitian. The rest of his self-portrait included images of Haiti, the United States, and Canada.

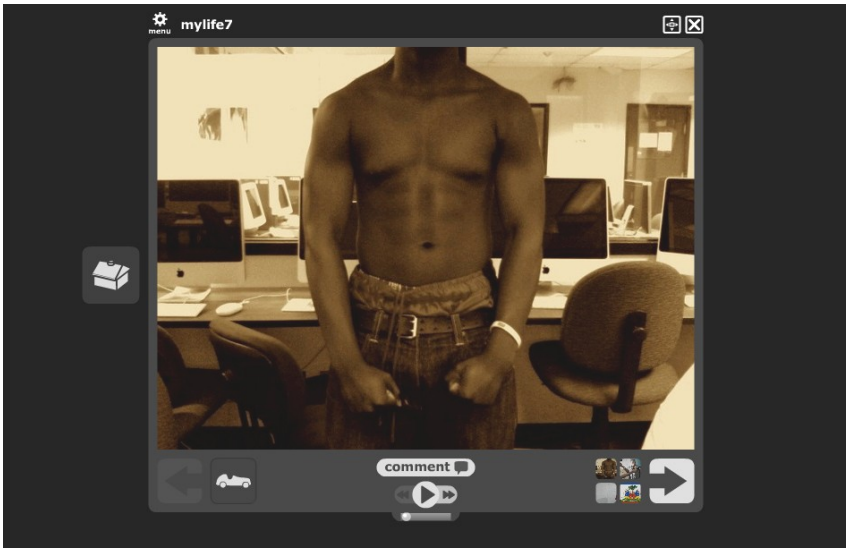

Figure 15. Screenshot of Junior's Digital Self-Portrait Project with a self-portrait photograph taken in the computer lab; he purposely cropped his face out of the photograph because he wanted the emphasis to be on his body.

Junior chose to explore Central Africa Republic for the second part of his self-portrait because he knew very little about the location and its people. Through his thorough online research, he discovered that it was one of the poorest countries in the world and he expressed his concern by juxtaposing breathtaking images of the country with the poor teaching conditions in schools (see Figures 16 and 17). He explained through his discussion with the group that he chose those images because he wanted to show the beauty of a country that remains so financially unstable.

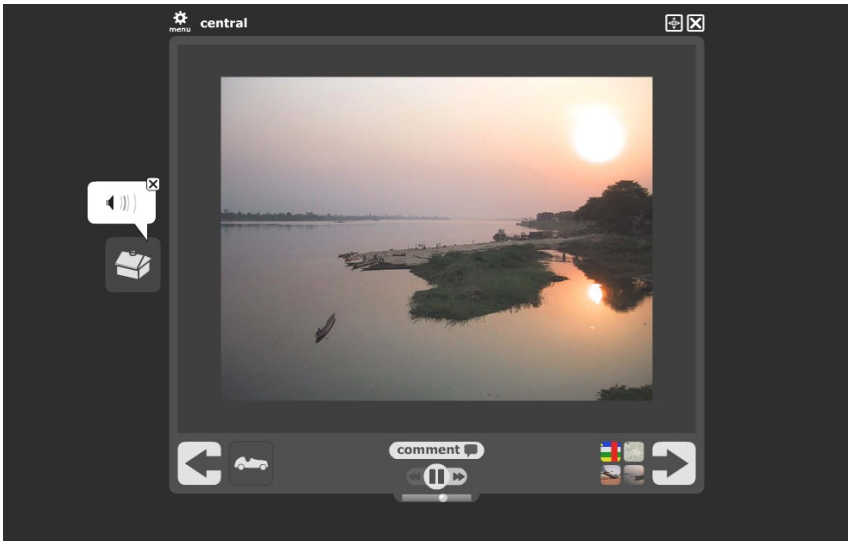

Figure 16. Screenshot of Junior's Digital Self-Portrait Project with an image of a river in the Central African Republic, which he used in contrast to another image (see Figure 17) to juxtapose the beauty of the country against its poverty.

Figure 17. Screenshot of Junior's Digital Self-Portrait Project with an image of schools and children living in the Central African Republic. Junior used this image against another image (see Figure 16) to juxtapose the poverty of the country against its beauty.

From Canada to China. Through the use of Bubbleshare, Stephanie created a chronological self-portrait with images of her from her childhood to the present day. Stephanie decided on China for the second part of her self-portrait because she recently learned about China's extreme control over its citizens' use of the Internet and the censoring of specific websites.

Stephanie's initial level of engagement was through Play because she seemed only interested in social networking aspects related to human rights. It was after a group discussion that Stephanie went back to her project and began to research workers' rights in China and found information concerning children's sweatshops and the exploitation of

women in the workforce. By exploring these issues, Stephanie was able to recognize the importance of human rights and the way they are violated in China. This simple action enabled her to move toward Praxis. One of the most interesting discussions surrounding Stephanie's self-portrait was an image she created of the Facebook logo with a large red line over it; this image represented the Chinese government's censorship of sites that are widely used in the Global West, including Facebook and Google (see Figure 18). Many of the participants were unaware of this Internet censorship in China and the ensuing discussion became important because the participants articulated that the government had no right to take away the Internet or to violate any basic human rights.

Figure 18. Screenshot of Stephanie's Digital Self-Portrait Project with an image she created concerning Internet censorship in China.

Summary. The most important aspect of this project was to witness the growth in awareness for each participant as they researched countries and their human rights issues. I noticed that several of them were aware of many of their local community's problems, but that they were unaware of problems in their global community. The feedback for this project was positive and a great deal of that is due to the way we approached the project: By encouraging the participants to start with their real self-portrait, it allowed them to realize that despite the fact that they are considered marginalized in Canada, they still have access to the basic necessities of life, unlike millions of people living in other countries.

Wiki-Wiki Info Project. One of the most frequented websites on the Internet is Wikipedia, a free open-source user-generated encyclopedia. This was one of the few ongoing projects for the participants. The purpose of this project was to challenge them to search for information using Wikipedia and then navigate and cross-reference with other websites through search engines such as Google, and Yahoo. As part of the process, participants were asked to research different social justice topics and read various pages on Wikipedia and compare the information they found there to other information they either knew or they found elsewhere, such as on other websites, in books, or magazines. It was a way for them to realize that Wikipedia is an excellent starting point for research, but because of inaccuracies with all websites (especially user-generated ones like Wikipedia), it is important to compare and contrast online information with information available elsewhere. The typologies were difficult to analyze because of the project's basic level and simplicity. Most participants seemed able to search for information on

Wikipedia and compare it to other data before making a claim; therefore, I believe Plug and Play were the most noticeable with this ongoing project.

Person Portrait Project. In collaboration with residents of the St. Raymond Residence in the Notre-Dame-de-Grâce district, the participants were asked to create a short video portrait of an elder. Part of this process was to reach out to other elders and talk to them about the person they chose. The participants had to write interview questions, record the interview, search for archive material online, and edit the video portrait.

There were three elder portraits created in groups of two: (a) Portrait of Carmen created by Aaron and Anthony, (b) Portrait of Liane created by Kevin and Braz, and (c) Portrait of Maude created by Ryan and Shanice. This project proved to be a challenge for several of the participants because they became emotionally involved and recognized the elders' painful, yet inspiring life paths.

Portrait of Carmen. Aaron and Anthony approached this project with little knowledge of the complexity of Carmen's life. Anthony had previously helped her with some renovations and carpentry work around her apartment and was drawn to Carmen's warmth. The process began with Play for Aaron and Anthony as they met with Carmen for the first time to chat about her favourite music and hobbies. Both Aaron and Anthony took notes as Carmen spoke and ended the discussion by settling on a day for their next meeting.

After their initial meeting, they realized that in order to make her portrait effective they would need to ask her more personal questions. This led to a group discussion about ethics and representation in portrait storytelling and the issue of exposing too much

personal information. After their second meeting, they decided to begin recording their interview with Carmen, and Aaron began to ask personal questions about her marriage, family, and current living situation. Carmen opened up and informed them about her divorce, her children, and her friends. When Anthony followed up on the conversation with questions about her late ex-husband, Carmen became silent. Aaron and Anthony were taken off guard and became uncomfortable with her reaction. Anthony was quick to follow up with a humorous comment to break the silence, which made Carmen laugh as she began to tell the story of her husband's fatal car crash. This was a special moment for Aaron and Anthony because they were able to show their compassion for an elder who experienced a life-changing event. This was also the first time I witnessed Aaron engage emotionally with a situation in the Freire Social Media Project and be completely engrossed with the task at hand. This represented a major shift for Aaron, who was able to move from his technophile perspective to see that media can have a social impact.

Portrait of Liane. Drawing upon Liane's intense commitment to the community through her leadership role as the president of the Resident home, and her endless volunteering for community activities for elders and youth where she met Kevin and Braz. They approached this project with the single goal of portraying Liane as a fun-loving, caring, and devoted human being. Rather than asking Liane questions over several meetings, Kevin and Braz opted to record their interview with Liane during their first session together. It was interesting to see them pay attention to camera placement because they wanted to interview Liane where she felt most at ease, in the residence courtyard. Within 15 minutes, they had set up the camera and audio equipment, asked Liane to join them, and begun the spontaneous conversation, which was being recorded.

Kevin, a rather shy young boy, asked several questions about where she grew up, where she lived, her family, and her children. Braz followed up by asking about her caring and nurturing nature and Liane replied by telling them about how she had adopted several children because their parents had abandoned them for financial reasons. Both Kevin and Braz continued with their discussion for thirty minutes. It was obvious that Kevin and Braz were at ease and confident about their ability to conduct a thirty-minute interview on the fly.

During the post-production stage, Braz took the lead in editing the portrait, while Kevin spent time searching for archives and photographs to use as b-roll (secondary footage) during the interview. Together, they spent time searching for appropriate music and creating titles and graphics. The final version of the portrait revealed a fun, intelligent committed, and compassionate Liane.

What was remarkable about this portrait project was to see Kevin open up and become involved with a project that required a certain level of technical skills as well as commitment. It was the first time I saw him respond in such a positive manner to any of the Freire Social Media projects.

Portrait of Maude. For the initial meeting with Maude, Shanice was absent, which left Ryan to question Maude alone. The next time they met Maude, both Ryan and Shanice were present to conduct the interview. Shanice asked several questions while Ryan operated the camera and audio equipment. The following day, Ryan began to edit the portrait while Shanice worked on searching for images and music.

Although both participants engaged at the Play level, their progress toward Praxis occurred at different times: Ryan was engaged through Play until he began the editing

stage in post-production. At that point, I noticed how involved he became with the material. With his headphones on, he zoned out, ignored everyone in the room, and committed fully to editing Maude's portrait. On the other hand, what moved Shanice from Play to Praxis was her ability to ask challenging questions during the interview process. Her questions ranged from childhood to present, however she added questions about racism, discrimination, and poverty.

The final version of the portrait was lengthy, but informative and emotional. Through Shanice's questions about social issues, we watched Maude tell stories of her past experiences as a poor citizen in Jamaica, which she had scarcely spoken about to family and friends.

Summary. Once the portraits were completed, the participants organized a small celebration for the elders and screened the portraits for them. The elders' reactions were joyful, and they thanked the participants for taking the time to listen to them. One of the most important aspects that both the participants and elders drew from this experience was that they had the opportunity to see and know each other through a different lens. The elders saw past the participants' baggy jeans and ripped T-shirts, and appreciated the experienced and time with the young people. In turn, the participants caught a glimpse of the pain, sorrow, hard work, and dedication of each elder, and how they struggled throughout their lives due to financial and societal issues that were out of their control. It was an enriching experience for both the young participants and the elders.

I realized how important and enriching it was to reach out to various members of one's community on such collaborations. Through this project, the participants and I noticed that the gap between youth, community, and elders diminished. This project

showed the participants that social issues are longstanding and people have been fighting the same issues for years. Despite the fact that many elders do not have the same kind of access to digital media that young people do, media served as a bridge to discuss the past, present, and future of these issues with elders that were allies in the pursuit of social justice. This time transpired into an astonishing experience for the participants as well as for the elders.

Public Voice Project. One ongoing part of the entire process of the FSMP, the participants were asked to keep abreast of events, media activism, and news concerning social justice issues. I suggested the websites of such organizations as UNICEF, Teachers for Social Justice, Avaaz, Democracy Now and sites like Freepress and The Hub and Witness, to name a few. The participants were encouraged to share stories they found interesting and to inform the group about current events. Several of the participants joined the UNICEF Magic (Media Activities and Good Ideas, by, with and for Children) e-mail list and were notified about a video contest for UNICEF's 20th Anniversary Convention on the Rights of the Children. The criteria for the competition was as follows:

> Video content must be related to children's rights, either by illustrating one of the rights or referencing children's rights as a whole. Videos must capture the mission of Voices of Youth—to promote and protect every child's right to know more, say more and do more about the world they live in. (UNICEF Voices of Youth, 2010, para. 1)

After a long discussion on how to approach this competition, four participants decided to create a video together. Junior, Stephanie, Samantha, and Marcel formed a group and started to brainstorm ways to explore the theme of children's rights. After a

few meetings, they decided to create a collaborative PSA (public service announcement) on children's rights. They engaged with this project by Praxis because of their ability to recognize the effectiveness of a PSA, and because of the topic they chose to explore. They asked questions about how to use the video camera and audio equipment that I had used for my research collection, and began to sketch out ideas on the white board. After a few days of brainstorming, researching, collecting images, and audio clips, they decided to use themselves in the video and created a short text.

They began to shoot the video by setting up the camera so that it was facing a white board. They walked in front of the camera one by one to write words related to social justice on the board (see Figure 19). Each participant then stood in front of the camera (see Figures 20, 21, 22, and 23) and read the following text in its entirety:

I am a child, I am lucky,

I am healthy, I am aware,

I have shelter, I have family,

I have love, I have food,

I have medicine, I have rights, I have life.

Not all children in the world have what I have.

Let's change this.

Let's work together so all children can live to see tomorrow.

Figure 19. Screenshot of the FSMP participants working on their Public Voice Project for UNICEF. In this scene, each participant freely wrote on the whiteboard words that they felt related to social justice, including health, culture, respect, and homosexuality.

Figure 20. Screenshot of one of the four FSMP participants reading the "I Am Life" text in front of the social justice–related words on the whiteboard for their Public Voice Project for UNICEF.

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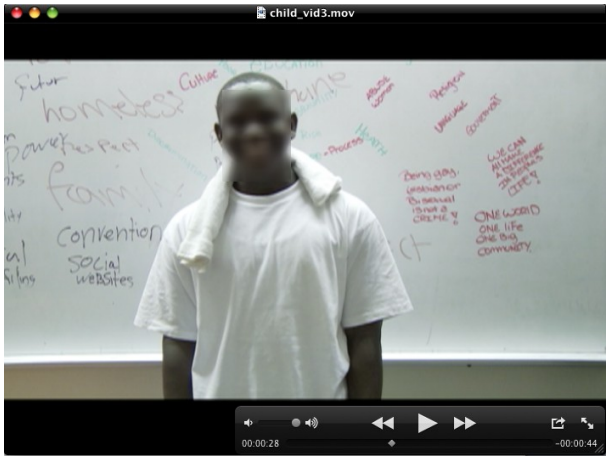

Figure 21. Screenshot of one of the four FSMP participant reading the "I Am Life" text in front of the social justice–related words on the whiteboard for their Public Voice Project for UNICEF.

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Figure 22. Screenshot of one of the four FSMP participant reading the "I Am Life" text in front of the social justice–related words on the whiteboard for their Public Voice Project for UNICEF.

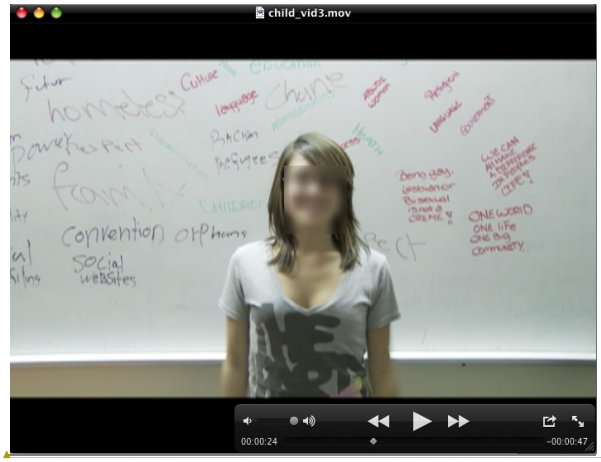

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Figure 23. Screenshot of one of the four FSMP participant reading the "I Am Life" text in front of the social justice–related words on the whiteboard for their Public Voice Project for UNICEF.

Once the entire video recording was finished, they transferred it to a computer and started to edit the sequence together. Within a few days, the visual and sound editing were completed: The final version showed each person reading a fragment of the text and with the use of fast cuts, the text became one fluid sentence read by four voices. The group entered their video in the UNICEF contest and a few days later, we were notified that their video had been selected as one of the top ten submissions. It was made available for viewing on the UNICEF website and people were encouraged to watch the submitted videos and vote for their favourite (see Figure 24). The video with the greatest number of online votes would win; therefore, the four participants e-mailed and sent Facebook message to all their friends in order to achieve the highest number of votes. While their video did not win the contest, the amount of positive feedback the participants received

from their friends, colleagues, and strangers was overwhelming. The participants' sense of empowerment was obvious by their pride, confidence, and their positive attitudes.

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Figure 24. Screenshot of the UNICEF webpage that the participants sent to their friends so that they could vote for the "I Am Life" video.

Summary. Because the participants had their voices heard by a global audience through the PSA they created, it is safe to say that my expectations for this project were exceeded. However, and perhaps more importantly, the participants' process was filled with challenges that they were able to overcome because of the collaborative learning environment they were working in. Through Play and Praxis typologies, each participant was able to contribute their knowledge, skills, and life experiences to create a unique project. The video is still available to watch on the UNICEF website, and since then, the participants have received e-mails from the contest organizers congratulating them on the originality and effectiveness of their piece. The participants expressed their disappointment about the loss; however, they were pleased with how well the project was

received and how rewarding an experience it was to have their voices heard and responded to by a global audience.

Top 5! Project. The goal of this final project was for the participants to draw from their previous project experiences and knowledge to bring together valuable information concerning social awareness. Participants were asked to choose a social justice topic and search for the top five websites, videos, Wiki pages, and social network groups they felt had the most information on the subject.

Teamwork. The participants generally expressed concerns for issues that they felt the most emotionally drawn to and there was recognition that, with knowledge and experience gathered from previous projects, they were able to acquire and use online information to gather resourceful and powerful resources. I noticed for the first time that all the participants engaged through Praxis. As I stood in the back of the room, I witnessed the collegial manner in which the participants were sharing links and helping each other with information they had been previously made aware of from their projects. There was a real sense of teamwork that emerged from this individual project, and it showed them the underlying importance of working together and sharing knowledge amongst youth.

Summary

Bridging the digital gap between schools and communities, rich and poor neighborhoods, young people and seniors, is impossible without the partnership of schools, universities, and communities. This chapter shed light on how participants moved within, between, and out of the ten digital media projects that comprised the Freire Social Media Project and how their movements can be understood through a

unique typology. The qualitative results of the Freire Social Media Project revealed that, through the ten projects, youth were able to create meaningful digital media productions informed by social justice issues and utilize these productions as a means of empowerment and collaborative learning.

This approach represented a significant departure from existing theories of formal and informal digital engagement in that it explored possibilities that went beyond the use of online gaming communities and civic engagement; it brought together community, school, and university members to actively participate in the learning process as educator researchers; the participants were youth with low socio-economic status who might not otherwise have explored digital media in an empowering way; and, it was grounded in empowering Freirian ideals that encourage youth to use their existing expertise to create something worthwhile. The combination of the ten projects, along with the six phases of Digital Youth Praxis, created a collaborative, safe space where youth, educators, and community members could come together and engage in digital practices for social awareness and change.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The wide range of educational applications of digital and social media is undeniable, however, more educators must be willing to engage youth and the Internet to use these media with their students in innovative ways.

Summary

As this dissertation indicates, Digital Youth Praxis is an effective, action-oriented approach that encourages educators and young people to engage in digital practices in order to address social problems that directly affect their lives. Central to this new pedagogical framework is a learning process, based on dialogue and participant-generated knowledge, that is grounded in Freire's (1970) problem-posing pedagogy in which "dialectical thought, world and action are intimately interdependent" (p. 53) This form of learning enables educators and young people to use their individual and collective knowledges and experiences to create digital media productions that can shape their global and local communities.

In this study, I utilized a participatory action research approach to address the need to engage young participants in a community-university partnership that would benefit their community and be pedagogically sound.

> Participatory action research is a social process of collaborative learning realized by groups of people who join together in changing the practices through which they interact in a shared social world in which, for better or worse, we live with consequences of one another's actions (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 563)

My three objectives were: 1. to establish a productive community-university collaboration; 2. to implement digital media projects that encouraged the participants to

address social justice issues while reflecting and discussing continuously about the process in order to promote sharing of knowledge and experiences; and 3. to thoroughly examine the external and internal factors that influenced participants' behaviours and levels of engagements to the projects.

By sharing the resources of the Paulo and Nita Freire International Project for Critical Pedagogy with young people from the Cote-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grace borough, I was able to engage with digital and social media as part of a social justice pedagogy to create opportunities for learning and empowerment. I created ten digital media projects that gave the participants opportunities to share their ideas about social issues and develop their digital skills. This study did not include isolated digital and social media activities, instead, it became a complex web of knowledge building in a social justice pedagogy context.

Throughout the process, it became crucial to examine each participant's ability to engage, and the conditions that influenced their engagement. For an educator/researcher, this involves two levels of analysis: analysis of each individual's actions, motives, abilities, and knowledge, which are influenced by their forms of capital (economic, social, and cultural); and analysis of the social systems in which the individuals are located, including neighborhoods, sub-cultures, and ethnic groups. During the process, the participants were engaged in cycles of reflexivity in order to contribute their knowledge to the project. By "focusing on [their] practices in a concrete and specific way [that] made them accessible for reflection, discussion, and reconstruction as products of past circumstances that are capable of being modified in and for present and future circumstances" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 565) I was able to create a conceptual

framework called Digital Youth Praxis. This framework allowed me to examine the participants' actions through various pedagogical dimensions grounded in both praxis and theory.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The next steps in the broader project of Digital Youth Praxis are: (a) the creation of SocialforSocial.org, which is an open-source website for educators who work with digital media in social justice pedagogies, and (b) the creation and fostering of additional local, national, and eventually international collaborations between different communities, schools, and universities that will use Digital Youth Praxis.

SocialforSocial.org. The website SocialforSocial.org will provide a pool of knowledge for educators, young people, community members, and anyone interested in youth, digital media, and social justice. Several websites have been established over the years to promote youth media productions, video sharing, knowledge exchange, and youth social justice media initiatives, including TakingItGlobal, UNICEF Magic, Witness, Youth Media Reporter, and NML Project, to name a few. Many of these websites offer examples of youth-produced work, teaching resources, blogspots, and wikis. SocialforSocial.org will be different from these other sites due to the content and resources it will make available, which are directly related to Digital Youth Praxis. . The material will be covered by a Creative Commons license in an effort to "provide free licenses and other legal tools to mark creative work with the freedom the creator wants it to carry, so others can share, remix, use commercially, or any combination thereof" (Creative Commons, 2010, para. 1). In order to make all material on SocialforSocial.org easily accessible, the website will "give authors free tools—legal tools (copyright

licenses) and technical tools (metadata and simple marking technology)—to mark their creativity with freedom they intend it to carry" (Lessig, 2009, p. 277). The envisioned website will be divided into four main sections:

1. Youth creations: This section will be where all youth-produced media texts will be uploaded under a Creative Commons license. This license will encourage young people to share and remix an original text for noncommercial use by attributing the work in the manner specified by the author distributing the derivative work under the same or similar license. The initial projects that will appear on the website will be projects completed in my research work with the Freire Social Media Project, as well as other projects submitted by users.

2. Interviews and field examples: This section will include audio and video interviews with those who are using Digital Youth Praxis in their social media work with young people. This will include interviews with community leaders, educators, students, participants, netizens, project leaders, academics, organizers, among others. There will also video footage of Digital Youth Praxis field work. This material will also be under the Creative Commons license.

3. DYP interactive model: It will include an evolving interactive Digital Youth Praxis H^3 model, which will allow users to input their own knowledge and experiences related to aspects associated to the Head, Heart, and Hand components of the model. This will be possible through a membership which will provide access to uploading and downloading features in an effort to generate a larger and global database of examples.

4. Other: This section will be subdivided into blogs, notes, vlogs, forum discussions, resource centre, and wikis. This part of the website will enable users to communicate

with one another publicly or privately to exchange information, knowledge, and experiences about their involvement with Digital Youth Praxis.

Due to privacy policies surfacing the Internet, it is important to mention that the website will be accessible by members only. The website will require members to join by completing an online membership form, which asks questions about their location, institution/school, community, and purpose for joining. They will have to check off an option stating that if they plan on screening, downloading, or re-editing the material they must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author, under the creative commons license for the country the work was produced. Once this form is complete, the user will have access to the website. Non-members will be able to view is the main page, which will include messages and blogs related to the work being created and researched, and they will be able to access the education resources.

This website will encourage substantial and diverse forms of engagement and utilization of small-scale digital and social media projects. The website will enable the building of insight into such collaborations, which will help move educators' thinking away from a negative view of digital and social media to a perspective where these technologies can (and should) be used as a challenging, but effective form of learning. The website will also be a repository of knowledge and insight on the digital engagement of youth in various locations around the world. The goal of this community is to gather as much indigenous knowledge and as many different perspectives as possible to ultimately enrich the users' experiences.

Additional collaborations. Bridging a community together with a university is only one of several collaborations that are possible through a Digital Youth Praxis

framework. Educators must explore further possibilities with partners, including non-profit organizations, online virtual communities, professional sectors, and primary and secondary schools, amongst others. The union of such groups on local, regional, national, and global levels by means of digital media can contribute to collective knowledge production about Digital Youth Praxis and the improvement of social justice issues.

Final Thoughts

In the creation of the Digital Youth Praxis framework, I have concentrated on factors that relate to community and university collaborations and the development of a digital practice and empowerment within social justice pedagogy. Partnerships at the local level can be constructed by educators in both formal and informal sites of learning, and can be facilitated by community members who are interested in social justice. Such collaborations are based on the premise that they bringing together various resources and pedagogical experiences that enrich the procedure. These collaborations are achieved through collaboration and dialogue.

Digital Youth Praxis provides an opportunity for young people and educators to engage in a wide range of social justice projects in a safe space that encourages them to learn, make mistakes, discuss, get experience, and empower themselves. The participatory nature of this framework offers the potential for young people to produce meaningful projects with messages that transcend the current harmful conditions that affect them most. These collaborations create not only an alternative space for young people and educators to gain access to resources, but the harness the potential of digital and social media activism. Digital Youth Praxis and its related practices offer a much-

needed measure of hope to those of us who work toward social justice and equality for all.

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Appendix A

Ethics Certificate

From: lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca
Subject: Notice of Ethics Review
Date: November 6, 2008 9:41:30 AM GMT-05:00
To: giuliana.cucinelli@mail.mcgill.ca
Cc: michael.hoechsmann@mcgill.ca, shirley.steinberg@mcgill.ca

McGill University
Research Ethics Board Office Tel: 398-6831
Lynda McNeil, Research Ethics Officer Fax: 398-4644
1555 Peel Street, 11th floor lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca
www.mcgill.ca/researchoffice/compliance/human/

Nov.6, 2008

Giuliana Cucinelli
Integrated Studies in Education

RE: The FSMP (Supervisor- M. Hoechsmann/S. Steinberg)

In accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement for Research Involving Humans the Research Ethics Board-III reviewed this project by expedited review and it is approved pending the following modifications:

1) There needs to be a greater level of detail provided in the parent consent form regarding the confidentiality of and use of identifiable data. Under Dissemination of Research it says that interviews, video and audio-taping will only be available to others after the researcher has screened their application. Who are these people and under what conditions would they have access? If they do get access, how are these other people restricted in their use and dissemination of what is identifiable data about these students?
2) The check-off options have to indicate yes/no options for observation, interviewing, audio-taping, video-taping and identification and it has to indicate under what terms this is for i.e. just for the researcher or for posting to the website or for presentation purposes? The line about not agreeing to participate can be deleted. People do not have to sign that they do not consent.
3) With respect to the videotaping as described in Section 6, it's not enough to say that if someone doesn't consent their image will be blurred or deleted. They have to give specific permission for this. There will have to be a separate release form for those who don't want to participate but they agree to the videotaping/photographing if image will be blurred or deleted. Those who do

not return this form can't be videotaped or photographed at all.

4) The sentence on concerns involving rights needs to be changed to 'If you have any questions or concerns about your/your child's rights as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Research Ethics Officer at 514-398-6831'. 'Parent/guardian' needs to be replaced with 'parent/legal tutor' for Quebec locations.
5) The parent and student forms need a sentence saying that whether not they participate will have no effect on their grades.
6) Minors can't legally consent, they can only 'assent' or 'agree'. This needs to be changed in the student's form. The options for being video-taped, photographed or audio-taped need to be separate yes/no options.
7) The form labelled 'Teachers' is Please provide a copy of the Teacher consent form taking into account the comments above for the Parent's form.
8) What is the age level of the students to be recruited?
9) The researcher is responsible for ensuring that all institutional approvals are obtained. Note that for public schools, school board approval is normally needed in addition to the school principal's approval. In First Nations and Inuit areas, there may be various levels of community approvals, such as that of a Band Council, that are needed in addition to school approval. If the research is to be conducted in either the NWT, Yukon or Nunavut, additional research licenses are needed.

The requested information can be sent by email. Each question should be directly addressed and revised forms attached as relevant. DO NOT send in a revised application form with changes embedded within. Please note that no research is to be conducted prior to review and approval of the requested information. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Lynda McNeil, Research Ethics Officer
REB-III

Cc: Prof. M. Hoechsmann
Prof. S. Steinberg

From: lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca
Subject: RE: Notice of Ethics Review
Date: April 17, 2009 11:35:37 AM GMT-04:00
To: giuliana.cucinelli@mail.mcgill.ca

Hello Giuliana,

Thank you for the revisions and everything is approved.

Lynda

From: Giuliana Cucinelli [mailto:giuliana.cucinelli@mail.mcgill.ca]
Sent: Sat 3/14/2009 4:30 PM
To: Lynda McNeil
Cc: Shirley Steinberg, Dr.; Michael Hoechsmann, Dr.
Subject: Re: Notice of Ethics Review

Greetings Lynda

Attached is a file entitled Cucinelli_Updated_REB_Checklist, which includes the list of changes the REB requested, including the revised text.

Also attached is the complete revised ethics document.

Thank you for all your help. I look forward to hearing from you.

Giuliana Cucinelli

PhD Student
McGill University, D.I.S.E
514.994.3836 and 514.398.7242
giuliana.cucinelli@mail.mcgill.ca

McGill

Applicable Research Ethics Board
___REB-I ___REB-II ___REB-III

Application for Ethics Approval for Human Subject Research
(please refer to the Application Guidelines
(www.mcgill.ca/researchoffice/compliance/human/) before completing this form)

Project Title: The FSMP
Principal Investigator: Giuliana Cucinelli **Dept:** Integrated Studies in Education
Phone #: 514.994.3836 **Fax #:**
Email: giuliana.cucinelli@mail.mcgill.ca
(students must provide their McGill email)
Mailing Address (if different than Dept.):
Status: Faculty ___ Postdoctoral Fellow ___ Other (specify)
Ph.D. Student _X__ Master's Student ___ Undergraduate ___
Type of Research: Faculty Research ___ Thesis _X__
Honours Thesis ___ Independent Study Project
Course Assignment (specify course name and #)_____
Other (specify) _____

Faculty Supervisor (for student PIs):
Shirley Steinberg Shirley.steinberg@mcgill.ca
Michael Hoechsmann Michael.Hoechsmann@Mcgill.ca

Co- Investigators/Other Researchers (list name/status/affiliation):
N/A

List all funding sources for this project and project titles (if different from the above). Indicate the Principal Investigator of the award if not yourself.
Awarded: N/A

Pending: Macarthur Foundation (applied, waiting for decision)

Principal Investigator Statement: I will ensure that this project is conducted in accordance with the policies and procedures governing the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects at McGill University. I allow release of my nominative information as required by these policies and procedures.

Principal Investigator Signature: _____Date: _____

Faculty Supervisor Statement**:** I have read and approved this project and affirm that it has received the appropriate academic approval. I will ensure that the student investigator is aware of the applicable policies and procedures governing the ethical conduct of human subject research at McGill University and I agree to provide all necessary

supervision to the student. I allow release of my nominative information as required by these policies and procedures.

Faculty Supervisor Signature: _____ **Date**: _____

Respond directly on this form below each question. Do not delete the text under the question. Do not omit or reorder any questions. Answer each question.

1. Purpose of the Research

Describe the proposed project and its objectives, including the research questions to be investigated (one page maximum).

The purpose of this study is to conduct an investigation into the expanded range of digital literacy practices required in today's technologically evolving, globalized society. This project explores learning and living in an era of media convergence in an effort to understand the role of new media and its impact on youth culture. We hope to identify practices that capitalize on the digital literacies that students bring with them into formal and informal learning sites, and that expand students' ability to create and achieve the social futures they envision for themselves and their communities. This study draws on previous studies (New Media Literacy Project, 2005) of the multiple forms of youth cultural productions enabled by the World Wide Web and the Internet. We aim to develop an understanding of how and why young people use Internet tools and readily available media tools and outlets to create critical, important digital work. The main goal of the FSMP is to have students grapple in formal and informal learning sites (schools, afterschool programs, outreach programs, community centers) with the use of user-friendly and ubiquitous Web 2.0* applications within a critical framework, to produce work, and then be able to critically think about the message, the medium and the experience.

* Web 2.0 is a living term describing changing trends in the use of World Wide Web technology and web design that aims to enhance creativity, information sharing, collaboration and functionality of the web. Web 2.0 concepts have led to the development and evolution of web-based communities and hosted services, such as social-networking sites, video sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and folksonomies.

What is the expected value or benefits of the research?

The value and benefits of this project are multi-fold. We want to obtain a better understanding of best practices in the formal and informal learning sites by investigating multiple forms of digital literacy that students perform in and out of school. Digital literacy is the ability to read, write, and produce work with which is digital (computer, technology enabled products). For examples, to understand digital literacy we must evaluate youth produced work such as podcasts, digital videos, social networking envolvment, gaming, photography, digital photovoice projects, documentary productions, blogs/vlogs (online journals), etc. We would like to explore classroom activities, which support students' development of both traditional reading and writing skills and digital literacies.

How do you anticipate disseminating the results (e.g. thesis, presentations, Internet, film, publications)?

This research will be used for my doctoral thesis, which includes an online website (address will be provided on a later date). All the work and research will be posted on this website upon ethics clearance. Certain sections of the research (interviews, video taping, audio) will only be available via a private administered login to. In order to receive the rights to view these components, people will be asked to apply for a login and password, at which point we will screen their application and make a decision to grant access or not. Many projects which are similar to this have online websites where information is available for educators and people are working with media and youth (http://newmedialiteracies.org/). We will also share what we learn at national and international conference and publish results in professional and research journals and books. Reports based on these presentations and articles will be available to all participants

2. Recruitment of Subjects/Location of Research

Describe the subject population and how and from where they will be recruited. If applicable, attach a copy of any advertisement, letter, flier, brochure or oral script used to solicit potential subjects (including information sent to third parties). Describe the setting in which the research will take place. Describe any compensation subjects may receive for participating.

The study will be situated in schools and community centers across North America. We will also recruit inner city schools across Canada who are interested in participating. This recruitment will be done through formal emails, website (www.theMProject.ca) and visits.

The principal investigators and participating teachers will meet to design a structure for data collection that focuses on activities during the school term that promise to provide some insight into the multiple uses of digital literacy in the classroom during various parts of the school program. These activities will be the principal periods of data gathering for this project.

3. Other Approvals

When doing research with various distinct groups of subjects (e.g. school children, cultural groups, institutionalized people, other countries), organizational/community/governmental permission is sometimes needed. If applicable, how will this be obtained? Include copies of any documentation to be sent.

Each student and Parent/Legal Tutor will receive an information package with the following:

1) Research Project Description
2) Form A: Consent Form for Parent/Legal Tutor
3) Form B: Form for Refusal to Participate & Agree to Be Videotaped/Photographed If Image Is Blurred/Deleted
4) Form C: Publication of Student Work, Public Attribution of creative Authorship Licensed Under Creative Commons
5) Form D: Assent/Agreement Form for Students
6) Form E: Consent Form for Educator and/or Leader
7) Form F: Consent Form for Student/Participant (18 and Older)

4. Methodology/Procedures

Provide a sequential description of the methods and procedures to be followed to obtain data. Describe all methods that will be used (e.g. fieldwork, surveys, interviews, focus groups, standardized testing, video/audio taping). Attach copies of questionnaires or draft interview guides, as appropriate.

Each student will be assigned a personal website. On their website certain sections will be made private (only research team will be able to access these sections). Within these sections is where the students will be posting their research information in the forms of blogs/vlogs (online journals and audio-video taping). The research will also include fieldwork, individual and group audio-video interviews, surveys. Because of the comprehensive nature of this project, we will be employing a number of different methods, the primary ones we will be using include:

1. Audio-taped interviews with students, who give their informed consent, regarding their digital literacy practices (i.e. use of information, communication and media technologies and use of media tools, etc.) in and out of school. Interviews will be conducted individually or in focus groups depending on the logistics and participants preferences.
2. Interviews with teachers who are willing to be interviewed. Interviews will be conducted individually or in focus groups depending on logistics and the participants' preference.
3. Document analysis of student work.
4. A limited number of observations of classes. These may or may not be videotaped depending on preferences of teachers and students. The classroom teacher will assist in editing out the work and images of any student videotaped who has not given permission to participate in the study.
5. Potential involvement of participating teachers in the data gathering and analysis procedures includes document analysis of the students' digital literacy portfolios, and keeping literacy logs reflecting on their professional practice. Such involvement will be optional and depend on the individual teacher's preferences and interests.

5. Potential Harms and Risk

a) Describe any known or foreseeable harms, if any, that the subjects or others might be subject to during or as a result of the research. Harms may be psychological, physical, emotional, social, legal, economic, or political.

The activities outlined in this proposal constitute normal classroom activities and students will not be at risk in anyway. There is no inherent risk in the proposed research.

b) In light of the above assessment of potential harms, indicate whether you view the risks as acceptable given the value or benefits of the research.

Participating teachers – The nature of the research serves to better understand the use of digital media in formal and informal learning sites. Teachers will be given an opportunity to reflect upon their praxis; to share media, resources and materials; and to give voice to their principles concerning digital literacy pedagogy in the context of on-going economic, technological and societal change.

Students – Students will likely benefit from the participating teachers extended professional development experiences. In addition, those students who agree to be interviewed will be provided with a chance to discuss the digital literacy programs, their experiences with them and their perceptions regarding digital literacy with an experienced research team. These conversations provide the students with an opportunity/forum to give voice to the cultural and intellectual capital they bring to the classroom. The students will also benefic from creating stimulating digital work which may be available online and be shown at various national and international conferences.

c) Outline the steps that may be taken to reduce or eliminate these risks. If deception is used, justify the use of the deception and indicate how subjects will be debriefed or justify why they will not be debriefed.

N/A

6. Privacy and Confidentiality

Describe the degree to which the anonymity of subjects and the confidentiality of data will be assured and the specific methods to be used for this, both during the research and in the release of findings. This includes the use of data coding systems, how and where data will be stored, who will have access to it, what will happen to the data after the study is finished, and the potential use of the data by others. Indicate if there are any conditions under which privacy or confidentiality cannot be guaranteed (e.g. focus groups), or, if confidentiality is not an issue in this research, explain why.

Subjects will not be named and any video footage or photographs that reveal faces will be altered to obscure the identity of the participants. A separate form will be given to those who do not want to participate but they agree to the videotaping/photographing if image will be blurred or deleted. Those who do not return this form will not be videotaped or photographed at all. In the unlikely event that a participant is recorded uttering injurious or hateful words, the record will be immediately destroyed. Confidentiality will be ensured by the means taken in the below section:

Given that student participants will not be evaluated in any manner, this concern could only apply to teacher participants whose workplace practices will be observed. Only the co-investigators will have full access to all the data, and to those who apply online (not all the information and research will be available to online applicants).

All data (including any collected by the teachers) will be kept in locked filing cabinets in the secured project office. Computer log files will be kept on the computer in the project office under password protection. Data will only be made available to the co-investigators and student investigators. All student work will be photocopied and returned to the students. Individuals and schools will be identified, unless they choose not to (consent form) in this case pseudonyms will be used.

Apart from teachers who will have access to some specific data (i.e. particular pieces of work of participating students in their classrooms), only the co-investigators will have full access to all the data. Graduate student investigators will only have access to the data collected in the particular schools where they are research assistants.

The original data will be stored in designated locked filing cabinets in a secured location.

7. Informed Consent Process

Describe the oral and/or written procedures that will be followed to obtain informed consent from the subject. Attach all consent documents, including information sheets and

scripts for oral consents. If written consent will not be obtained, justification must be provided.

An announcement of the project will be made at a meeting of these teachers held by the schools. If the teachers are willing to participate, the teachers and students registered in their classes will be given informed consent forms to complete at the beginning of a unit of study. Both Parent/Legal Tutor and students will provide written consent on the form and keep a copy for their records.

8. Other Concerns

a) Indicate if the subjects are a captive population (e.g. prisoners, residents in a center) or are in any kind of conflict of interest relationship with the researcher such as being students, clients, patients or family members. If so, explain how you will ensure that the subjects do not feel pressure to participate or perceive that they may be penalized for choosing not to participate.

N/A

b) Comment on any other potential ethical concerns that may arise during the course of the research.

N/A

Appendix B

Sample of Consent Forms

FORM A

CONSENT FORM
PARENT/LEGAL TUTOR

Project Investigators

Giuliana Cucinelli
Tel: 514-398-7242
Email: Giuliana.Cucinelli@mcgill.ca
Faculty of Education, McGill University

Dr. Shirley R. Stienberg
Tel: 514-398-5168
Email: shirley.steinberg@Mcgill.ca
Faculty of Education, McGill University

Dr. Michael Hoechsmann
Tel: (514) 398-2473
Email: michael.hoechsmann@mcgill.ca
Faculty of Education, McGill University

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to conduct an investigation into the expanded range of digital literacy practices required in today's technologically evolving, globalized society. This project explores learning and living in an era of media convergence in an effort to understand the role of new media and its impact on youth culture. We hope to identify practices that capitalize on the digital literacies that students bring with them into formal and informal learning sites, and that expand students' ability to create and achieve the social futures they envision for themselves and their communities. This study draws on previous studies (New Media Literacy Project, 2005) of the multiple forms of youth cultural productions enabled by the World Wide Web and the Internet. We aim to develop an understanding of how and why young people use Internet tools and readily available media tools and outlets to create critical, important digital work. The main goal of the FSMP is to have students grapple in formal and informal learning sites (schools, afterschool programs, outreach programs, community centers) with the use of user-friendly and ubiquitous Web 2.0* applications within a critical framework, to produce work, and then be able to critically think about the message, the medium and the experience.

* Web 2.0 is a living term describing changing trends in the use of World Wide Web technology and web design that aims to enhance creativity, information sharing, collaboration and functionality of the web. Web 2.0 concepts have led to the development

and evolution of web-based communities and hosted services, such as social-networking sites, video sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and folksonomies.

PROCEDURES

If you agree to allow your child to participate in the research, he/she will be observed while the teacher delivers regular lessons. The lessons that will be observed are a regular part of your child's education. Your child's classroom activities and discussions will be videotaped and/or recorded only with your permission. Your child's participation or lack of participation will not affect how the classes are taught. We will make every effort not to disrupt the class routine because we want to understand what the teachers and students usually do.

Students may also be interviewed about his/her use of reading and writing in her/his personal and academic lives. Interviews with students will be videotaped. Interviews may be conducted individually or in groups depending on the participant's preferences. Your child will only be interviewed with your permission. You can review the videotapes and audio recordings at any time. Students' class work will also be collected. This may included creative and/or academic writing, artwork or models or materials that your child creates using a computer. We will also be asking teachers to talk about his/her ideas about reading and writing and what happens in the classroom.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your child's identity will be identified, unless they choose not to. In this case, pseudo names with be used. (see below, signature). If students chose to participate, but do not want to be identified, their image will be blurred and their voices altered (option to check off in Parent/Legal Tutor and Student Consent Form). In the unlikely event that a participant is recorded uttering injurious or hateful words, the record will be immediately destroyed. Student participants will not be evaluated in any manner, nor will their grades/evaluations be affected by refusing to participate or be videotaped.

A separate form will be given to those who do not want to participate but they agree to the videotaping/photographing if image will be blurred or deleted. Those who do not return this form will not be videotaped or photographed at all.

REFUSALS

You have the right to refuse to allow your child to participate at any time; it is not a problem if you do not wish your child to be interviewed, observed, or recorded (videotaped or audio recorded). Please see form B.

DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH

This research will be used for my doctoral thesis, which includes my online website (address will be provided at a later date). All the work (productions) and research

interviews, audio, images, field notes) will be posted on this website upon ethics clearance. The production work created by the students will be licensed under creative commons* and will be accessible by anyone who creates a profile and joins the website. They will have to fill out an online form providing information on who they are, the purpose of wanting to view the products, and other personal details. They will have to check off an option stating that if they plan on screening, downloading, or reediting the material they must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author, under the creative commons license for the country the work was produced (http://creativecommons.org/international/). Once this form is completed, the webmaster will decide whether or not to grant access.

Certain sections of the research (interviews, video taping, audio) will only be available via a private administered login to researchers, educational institutions, community centers, or anyone who is interested in the specific research. In order to receive the rights to view these components, people will be asked to apply for a login and password, at which point we will screen their application and make a decision to grant access or not. The audiovisual research material will also be licensed under creative commons, as Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 2.5 Canada**.

Many projects which are similar to this have online websites where information is available for educators and people are working with media and youth (http://newmedialiteracies.org/). We will also share what we learn at national and international conference and publish results in professional and research journals and books. Reports based on these presentations and articles will be available to all participants.

* Creative Commons (CC) is a non-profit organization devoted to expanding the range of creative works available for others to build upon legally and to share.[1] The organization has released several copyright licenses known as Creative Commons licenses. These licenses allow creators to communicate which rights they reserve, and which rights they waive for the benefit of recipients or other creators.

** Under an Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 2.5 Canada you are free to share (to copy, distribute and transmit the work) and to remix (to adapt the work). You may do so under the following conditions: 1) Attribution (you must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). 2) Noncommercial (you may not use this work for commercial purposes). 3) Share Alike (If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same or similar license to this one).For more information on Creative Commons please visit http://creativecommons.org/.

INQUIRIES

We will be happy to answer questions about the research at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact us either in person, by email or by telephone.

CONCERNS

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's rights as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Research Ethics Officer at 514-398-6831.

If you have any questions about the study, contact the investigator, Giuliana Cucinelli at (514) 398-7242.

CONSENT

Please complete the following and return it to your child's teacher.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above. You understand that your child's participation in this research is voluntary, and that you have freely and willingly consented to allow your child to participate in this research project. Your signature also indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. You may withdraw your consent at any time without any consequences to your child.

Please check the appropriate box for each line. You agree that your child:

	Research	**Dissemination on Website**	**Conference Presentations**
Observation	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No
Interviewing	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No
Audio/Video Taping	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No
Identification	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No

Name Student (please print): _____
Name Parent/ Guardian (please print): _____
Signature Parent/Legal Tutor : _____
Date: _____

FORM B

REFUSAL TO PARTCIPATE & AGREE TO VIDEOTAPED/ PHOTOGRAPHED IF IMAGE IS BLURRED/DELETD

PARENT/LEGAL TUTOR

Project Investigators

Giuliana Cucinelli
Tel: 514-398-7242
Email: Giuliana.Cucinelli@mcgill.ca
Faculty of Education, McGill University

Dr. Shirley R. Stienberg
Tel: 514-398-5168
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Faculty of Education, McGill University

This form is for participants who DO NOT want to participate but they agree to the videotaping/photographing if their image is be blurred or deleted.

Those who do not return this form cannot be videotaped or photographed at all.

Name Student (please print): _____

Name Parent/ Guardian (please print): _____

Signature Parent/Legal Tutor : _____

Date: _____

FORM C
PUBLICATIONS OF STUDENT WORK PUBLIC ATTRIBUTION OF CREATIVE AUTHORSHIP UNDER CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSING

PARENT/LEGAL TUTOR

Project Investigators

Giuliana Cucinelli
Tel: 514-398-7242
Email: Giuliana.Cucinelli@mcgill.ca
Faculty of Education, McGill University

Dr. Shirley R. Stienberg
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Dr. Michael Hoechsmann
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Email: michael.hoechsmann@mcgill.ca
Faculty of Education, McGill University

I agree to have my media production work licensed under Creative Commons. I will choose which attribution it will be licensed under. I wish to have my name included with the publication of my media production work. I have agreed to have my work included in the " The FSMP" project. By signing this consent, I am communicating my desire to have my work attributed to me in any print, digital or other media used to communicate the results of the research projects.

Student Name (please print): _____

Student Signature:_____

Date:_____

My child wishes to have his/her name included with the publication of her/his school work. I agree with my child's wishes. By signing this consent form, I give my permission for her/his work to be attributed to her/him in any print, digital, or other media used to communicate the results of the research project.

Name Parent/ Guardian (please print):_____

Signature Parent/Legal Tutor:_____

Date: _____

FORM D

ASSENT/AGREEMENT FORM

STUDENT

Project Investigators

Giuliana Cucinelli
Tel: 514-398-7242
Email: Giuliana.Cucinelli@mcgill.ca
Faculty of Education, McGill University

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Faculty of Education, McGill University

What is this all about?
You are going to be learning about digital media. We want you to create interesting and creative work. We want to help other kids in other places learn with digital media too.
What are we asking for from you?
We might ask you some questions and record them on a tape recorder and video camera. We will also videotape you in class sometimes. We will ask you to maintain your own website. Do you have to be tape recorded or videotaped?
No. Just tell us you don't want to. You can decide not to be taped or recorded even after the project has started.
Are you going to learn a lot?
Yup. Are you going to have fun doing it? Of course!!!

SIGNATURE

Please check one box:
I agree to participate in this study.
☐Yes ☐ No

I disagree to be audio/video taped in this study.
☐Yes ☐ No

Name (please print):_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

FORM E

CONSENT FORM

EDUCATOR AND/OR LEADER

Project Investigators

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to conduct an investigation into the expanded range of digital literacy practices required in today's technologically evolving, globalized society. This project explores learning and living in an era of media convergence in an effort to understand the role of new media and its impact on youth culture. We hope to identify practices that capitalize on the digital literacies that students bring with them into formal and informal learning sites, and that expand students' ability to create and achieve the social futures they envision for themselves and their communities. This study draws on previous studies (New Media Literacy Project, 2005) of the multiple forms of youth cultural productions enabled by the World Wide Web and the Internet. We aim to develop an understanding of how and why young people use Internet tools and readily available media tools and outlets to create critical, important digital work. The main goal of the FSMP is to have students grapple in formal and informal learning sites (schools, afterschool programs, outreach programs, community centers) with the use of user-friendly and ubiquitous Web 2.0* applications within a critical framework, to produce work, and then be able to critically think about the message, the medium and the experience.

* Web 2.0 is a living term describing changing trends in the use of World Wide Web technology and web design that aims to enhance creativity, information sharing, collaboration and functionality of the web. Web 2.0 concepts have led to the development and evolution of web-based communities and hosted services, such as social-networking sites, video sharing sites, wikis, blogs, and folksonomies.

PROCEDURES

If you consent to participate in the research, you will be observed while you deliver regular lessons. The lessons that will be observed are a regular part of your regular schedule. Your classroom activities and discussions will be videotaped and/or recorded only with your permission. We will make every effort not to disrupt the class routine because we want to understand what the teachers and students usually do.

You may also be interviewed about the use of reading and writing and media in your curriculum. Interviews with you will be videotaped. Interviews may be conducted individually or in groups depending on the participant's preferences. You will only be interviewed with your permission. You can review the videotapes and audio recordings at any time. We will also be asking you to talk about your ideas about reading and writing and what happens in the classroom.

CONFIDENTIALITY

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A separate form will be given to those who do not want to participate but they agree to the videotaping/photographing if image will be blurred or deleted. Those who do not return this form will not be videotaped or photographed at all.

REFUSALS

You have the right to refuse to participate at any time; it is not a problem if you do not wish to be interviewed, observed, or recorded (videotaped or audio recorded). Please see form.

DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH

This research will be used for my doctoral thesis, which includes my online website (address will be provided at a later date). All the work (productions) and research interviews, audio, images, field notes) will be posted on this website upon ethics clearance. The production work created by the students will be licensed under creative commons* and will be accessible by anyone who creates a profile and joins the website. They will have to fill out an online form providing information on who they are, the purpose of wanting to view the products, and other personal details. They will have to check off an option stating that if they plan on screening, downloading, or reediting the material they

must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author, under the creative commons license for the country the work was produced (http://creativecommons.org/international/). Once this form is completed, the webmaster will decide whether or not to grant access.

Certain sections of the research (interviews, video taping, audio) will only be available via a private administered login to researchers, educational institutions, community centers, or anyone who is interested in the specific research. In order to receive the rights to view these components, people will be asked to apply for a login and password, at which point we will screen their application and make a decision to grant access or not. The audiovisual research material will also be licensed under creative commons, as Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 2.5 Canada**.

Many projects which are similar to this have online websites where information is available for educators and people are working with media and youth (http://newmedialiteracies.org/). We will also share what we learn at national and international conference and publish results in professional and research journals and books. Reports based on these presentations and articles will be available to all participants.

* Creative Commons (CC) is a non-profit organization devoted to expanding the range of creative works available for others to build upon legally and to share.[1] The organization has released several copyright licenses known as Creative Commons licenses. These licenses allow creators to communicate which rights they reserve, and which rights they waive for the benefit of recipients or other creators.

** Under an Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 2.5 Canada you are free to share (to copy, distribute and transmit the work) and to remix (to adapt the work). You may do so under the following conditions: 1) Attribution (you must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). 2) Noncommercial (you may not use this work for commercial purposes). 3) Share Alike (If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same or similar license to this one).

For more information on Creative Commons please visit http://creativecommons.org/.

INQUIRIES

We will be happy to answer questions about the research at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact us either in person, by email or by telephone.

CONCERNS

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's rights as a participant in this research study, please contact the McGill Research Ethics Officer at 514-398-6831.

If you have any questions about the study, contact the investigator, Giuliana Cucinelli at (514) 398-7242.

CONSENT

Please complete the following and return it to the FSMP leader.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above. You understand that your participation in this research is voluntary, and that you have freely and willingly consented to allow your child to participate in this research project. Your signature also indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. You may withdraw your consent at any time without any consequence.

Please check the appropriate box for each line. You agree for:

	Research	**Dissemination on Website**	**Conference Presentations**
Observation	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No
Interviewing	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No
Audio/Video Taping	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No
Identification	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Project Investigators

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Identification	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No	☐Yes ☐ No

Name (please print):_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____