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Professional Resource:

*International Perspectives on Youth Media:
Cultures of Production and Education (2011)*

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International Perspectives on Youth Media: Cultures of Production and Education. Edited by JoEllen Fisherkeller. (2011). New York: Peter Lang.

Media production is an essential part of media literacy, which is reflected in increasing youth media production, education projects, and programs worldwide. Despite the differences in aims, practices, and cultural and social contexts, many questions are similarly relevant to the majority of these initiatives. To what extent does opportunity to produce media empower young people? How do we balance media production as an enjoyable, valuable activity for civic participation, community development, or future job acquisition with protection and prevention against negative media experience and effects? How do we make the learning process effective while dealing with low support from stakeholders along with time, resource, and space difficulties? Or as Buckingham (2011) asks, what difference does the support of youth media production make in terms of wider social and cultural environments? The volume *International Perspectives on Youth Media: Cultures of Production and Education*, edited by JoEllen Fisherkeller, collects nineteen contributions addressing these and other equally important issues.

The book is divided into four parts. It begins with a regional analysis of youth media programs, continues with critical views on youth media identities and voices, followed by cross-cultural youth media comparisons, and concludes with proposals and suggestions for the future. Each piece includes a rich literature review and illustrative case studies, which make the reading appealing to a wide audience, including researchers, educators, and policy makers. Diverse practices, research methodologies, and analyses

of youth production work within a variety of contexts and genres, from dominant video production, to video games, social media, radio broadcasts, and photography productions, can be found in the volume.

The book covers a large age range, because as Fisherkeller (2011; citing Buckingham 2000; James and Prout 1997) explains, what constitutes youth is given by social and cultural constructions rather than by biological determination. The first contribution by Kathleen Tyner, mapping the missions and initiatives of youth media organizations in the United States in the year 2008, reveals that most of the projects are for adolescents, almost three quarters for middle school students, and less than half are for children under twelve years old. The book contributions discuss different age groups in similar proportions to Tyner's results (2008, 2011), which also reflect common youth media production and education trends across borders (Buckingham and Domaille 2009). An interesting study within the field of young children's media production is established in chapter nine, written by researcher Damiana Gibbons, nine-year-old Téa Drift, and her mother Deanna Drift. The in-depth analysis of Téa's video about Anishinabe traditional dance serves as a case for the authors' dialogue about personal and cultural identity representation and expression through filmmaking. Moreover, Téa's work is available on YouTube, which offers a unique cross-platform experience to the reader.

Bringing international perspectives, the majority of studies are consistent with Masterman's (1985) and Buckingham's (2009) opinion that media literacy, including media production, is inherently connected to participants' cultural dispositions and tastes. Similarly to Gibbon et al.'s (2011) work, several other contributions' discourses are about the role of media production in young people's gender, social, and

cultural identity development and awareness within mainstream society and their own communities. For instance, Sanjay Asthana applies Ricoeur's (1996, 1998, 2004) framework of narrative identity while exploring Palestinian youth media imaginaries positioned to "mediate across the local and global contexts" (51). Wendy Luttrell, Jeniffer Dorsey, Carla Shalaby, and Julia Hayden tell a story of a Kenyan girl, Angeline, living in the United States. Angeline took a number of photographs representing her self-identification and her relationships. While explaining the pictures' meanings, Angeline was addressing concerns about money and poverty on one side, and the American dream of glamour and luxury on the other. Other cases in point are *Cosmopolitan Imaginings of Self and Others: Youth and Social Networking in a Global World* (Stornaiulo, Hull, and Sahni 2011) and *Media and Christian Youth Groups in Brazil* (Bellotti 2011), where the authors argue that communication across diverse cultures or religions through social networks may strengthen both the feeling of belonging to their own group and an empathy for and tolerance of others.

Producing media is commonly argued to enable youth to find, express, and reinforce their voices (e.g., Bazalgette 2010; Hobbs 2009; Livingstone 2004). As Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1989) states, everyone has the right and freedom to "impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." In chapter sixteen of the book, Stuart Poyntz and Michael Hoechsmann recommend a number of questions that should be addressed by educators while planning and implementing media production projects that, among other goals, aim to empower and liberate youth to benefit from emerging technologies and distribution platforms. Media production programs serve youth from poor, disadvantaged, and minority families and communities most extensively (FisherKeller 2011), and most recently with children and young people suffering of chronic illnesses, which can be read about in the study by Richard Chalfen and Michael Rich. The authors highlight the positive impact of participant-created youth media about health and medical issues, pointing out improvements in their own lives in particular, and in the healthcare system more generally.

Among many valuable recommendations and proposals for formal education and informal projects, Sun Sun Lim, Elmie Nekmat, and Shobha Vadrevu suggest in chapter four that state-led media production education "highlighting young people's awareness of

and competencies for media production," should be "complemented by private-sector-run programmes" offering more space for creativity (84). Steven Goodman (citing Bhabha 1994; Hull et al. 2006; White 2009) describes specialized youth media projects as "liminal" or a "third space" positioned between school and home. Karen Orr Vered additionally argues that afterschool and day-care programs should "acknowledge the creative and productive potential of children playing with media" (FisherKeller 2011, 15) and criticizes adults' views on what constitutes children's media play as based on commercial stereotypes instead of knowledge of children's practices. Advocacy for play and entertainment, relevance of the tasks to young producers' media cultures, and acknowledgment of what young people would like to gain penetrates the entire volume. As Poyntz and Hoechsmann (2011) write:

[T]he pleasurable is a kind of glue that binds together the affective relationships between media productions and kids' personal, social, and cultural lives... [T]he pleasures of creative work are a significant part of the appeal of media production in education (Buckingham, 2003)... [and] certain forms of pleasure can also function as codes of belonging among diverse groups of youth. (311-312)

Although many of the case studies are not current in terms of the year conducted, the problems and opportunities they portray persist, and therefore are still applicable. For example, Antonio López's piece "Practicing Sustainable Youth Media," arguing for organic media education termed as *mediacology*, is even futuristic. In a similar way, most of the contributions are based on examples from the United States that often lack of contextual background. This greatly contrasts with other non-US pieces that provide rich insights supporting cross-cultural understanding. On the other hand, all conclusions and discussions are rather general and open to various interpretations, which can serve as an inspiration for youth media research and practice within distinct cultural and social contexts. The Afterword by David Buckingham sums up the volume's omnipresent thoughts, suggests follow-up questions and actions, and states that "the kinds of critical reflection provided by the contributors to this book should provide a much-needed impetus for the further development of the field" (379). To conclude, *International Perspectives on Youth Media* is a valuable resource that can be of use to anyone interested or involved in youth media

production and education projects and programs around the world.

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