

**Media-making matters: exploring literacy with young  
learners as media crafting, critique and artistry**

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## **ABSTRACT: Michelle Cannon**

### **Media-making matters: exploring literacy with young learners as media crafting, critique and artistry**

This research is a timely response to the widespread use of digital media in western social worlds, and a perceived gulf separating school practices from those in contemporary living. I argue for a dynamic educational experience that embeds digital media production in the curriculum. Of central importance is the investigation of a wider conception of literacy that includes the manipulation of moving image and sound through time, as a means of creative expression that also shows critical understanding. By drawing out the particular characteristics of learning with digital media, I identify the ways in which traditional pedagogies could be transformed in order to accommodate more social and collaborative ways of working. In relation to this I explore discursive tensions, including current educational reform measures, perceived as hindering the development of dispersed digital media-making practices.

Qualitative ethnographic methods were chosen for their capacity to engage with the complex tensions and textures of modern pedagogy. Photographic, audiovisual and interview materials were gathered in formal and non-formal school settings which, through the adaptation of a values-driven hermeneutic framework, inspired critical and reflexive narrative interpretations. The discussion draws on theories related to cultural studies, media literacy, and film and moving image composition to explore our 'performance' with digital media in a networked society, under the prevailing social conditions of possibility.

This study positions media-making in schools as a core entitlement which adds to and enriches, rather than supplants, traditional literacy. Given the complex ways in which modern social actors use media representations to negotiate identity, and their relationships with each other and the environment, it is argued that providing primary learners with opportunities for creative digital media-making will create a more relevant, engaging and critically-oriented school experience. Practical media work nurtures the skills, competencies and disposition for praxis-oriented socio-cultural participation, of benefit to the individual, and the local and wider community.

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“To lose the appetite for meaning we call thinking and cease to ask unanswerable questions [would be to] lose not only the ability to produce those thought-things that we call works of art but also the capacity to ask all the answerable questions upon which every civilization is founded.”

Hannah Arendt (1981/1971, p.62)

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## Chapter I – Introduction

### A. Background

This research explores teaching, learning and the practices of making as they relate to digital film and moving image work in schools. My engagement in this field grew from experience as a ‘new media’ professional with an interest in education. From 2000 to the present I have been working part-time in East London primary schools in a role that has transformed over the years from that of web designer to creative media practitioner. As digital media and distribution platforms evolved, I began to take an interest in the particular learning affordances of what were then described as multimedia projects. One particular school was unusual at the time in that its Head Teacher had invested in a suite of iMacs, upgrading hardware and software as it became available. He saw the value of a weekly slot for a freelancer such as myself to build the school website and involve the children in its maintenance. After some software training via CPD (Continuing Professional Development), I began making simple edited video clips in iMovie with small groups of Key Stage 2 children (aged seven to eleven).

Media production work in schools largely takes place outside the formal curriculum in the *non-formal* spaces of extracurricular arts activities or after school projects, however, my experience as a practitioner-educator began with coordinating audiovisual projects that were integrated into *formal* cross-curricular subject areas. I remember noticing the children’s enthusiasm for learning related to: intellectual and social engagement; a willingness to experiment with new digital modes; and a strong motivation linked to public displays of their work. My impression was that they were experiencing a hitherto elusive sense of delight in and control over a creative process, in a medium which was at once strange and familiar. My sessions differed from their regular classes in a number of ways: there was a sense of shared purpose and ownership, social arrangements were less hierarchical, their work was publicly valued and critiqued, and many were committed to iterative and improvisational revisions to make it the best it could possibly be.

The personal disclosure with which I begin this account serves as a blueprint for much of what follows. These early experiences of making texts or ‘writing’ with digital media – experiences which were, importantly, as much a learning process for



me as for the children – raise questions not only concerning school cultures and the premise on which mainstream practices are based, but also how learning with digital media might warrant an evolved concept of literacy and alternative classroom practices (Bazalgette 1989, 2000; Sefton-Green and Sinker 2000; Marsh and Bearne 2008; Bazalgette and Bearne 2010).

## **B. Research Problem**

The ways in which we make meaning and interact socially are changed by the participatory affordances of digital media (Ito et al. 2013; Jenkins et al. 2006, 2016; Ito 2009; Kafai and Peppler 2011; Reid 2014). These thus present a challenge to traditional educational institutions, as well as to the Media Studies discipline, whose priorities and practices are, for some, outdated (Burn 2009a; Potter 2012; Merrin 2009, 2014) and fraught with bureaucratic and political interventions (Pring 2004; Ball 2013). Their view is that while other sectors variously adapt, the school sector - increasingly shaped and monitored by central government - is not only slow to respond to changes in the social and media landscape, but is hampered by retrogressive reform measures that cleave towards ‘the basics’ and marginalise media (Buckingham 2014a).

The traditional versus the progressive in educational discourse is nothing new, and with the uptake of ‘democratised’ and agentive media technologies, the debate re-emerges with renewed vigour and a spread of agendas. At the same time as consecutive Secretaries of State for Education and their acolytes push through anti-progressive reform (Gove 2013), a number of other competing lobbies complicate the field of media education: there are those tending towards technological determinism and vocationalism (Shirky 2009; Hagel and Seely Brown 2005), towards a protectionist frame (Livingstone 2009; Livingstone and Bulger 2014) and those questioning (Banaji et al 2006; Readman 2010) or upholding the ‘rhetorics’ of creativity (NACCE 1999; Gauntlett 2007a, 2007b, 2011a; Robinson 2006, 2011, 2013). The fallout sees film and digital media production in schools developing unevenly in ‘pockets of excellence’ (Mumford et al. 2013) around the country, located in extra-curricular programmes or on the margins of mainstream curricula, often as a function of wealth, geography or luck.

I look at the ways in which some cultural agencies and public bodies in the UK have advocated, and indeed implemented programmes of moving image literacy within and beyond formal school curricula, as a means of ensuring learners' critical, creative and cultural participation in social processes (Reframing Literacy 2008; Film 21<sup>st</sup> Century 2012; FLAG 2013, 2015; Northern Ireland Big Picture<sup>1</sup> 2014). If this wider view of literacy is to become as universal an entitlement as print literacy (Bazalgette 1989, 2000, 2011; Dezuanni 2011) it will be necessary to investigate alternative pedagogies (Thomson et al. 2012) and the function of media production in schools seen through a range of perspectives - the personal, the social, the academic, the vocational and the economic (Sefton-Green 2013a).

### **C. Research Questions**

In order to throw light on the interrelated and conflicted dimensions outlined above my research explores deeper understandings of the following questions:

*How does creative media work constitute a wider literacy in formal and non-formal school spaces?*

*What can traditional pedagogy learn from moving image production processes?*

*How do social discursive factors determine practical media work in schools?*

Whilst examining my own and others' creative media practice for relevance and any potential benefits to the individual and community, this study seeks a balanced understanding of what actually happens in the processes of making with digital media. I do this by reviewing the micro practices of digital video and film production in both formal and non-formal school settings and the tensions arising from macro discursive forces and related rhetorical claims.

### **D. Methodology**

Unlike some educational research my methodological choices do not set out to prove hypotheses or measure effectiveness in learning statistically (Hattie 2012; Hattie and

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<sup>1</sup> Much could be learned from the devolved nations: the revised Northern Ireland curriculum (NI DOE 2010) implemented since 2007, mandates 'media rich' and 'active, hands on' learning experiences. Equally, within Welsh (Donaldson 2015) and Scottish (Curriculum Review Group, 2004) curricula, the expressive arts, including digital media and moving image, are of central importance.

Yates 2014, EEF 2015a), rather, social experience is explored and interpreted using qualitative research methods. I weave into my account insights from over ten years' experience in schools' creative media practices, adopting an auto-ethnographic approach informed by the principles of critical visual anthropology (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Pink 2013; Rose 2006). My methods will be disclosed in more detail later in the introduction but suffice to say at this point that, in line with other recent research activity in the field (Potter 2012; Parry 2013, 2014), the audiovisual capture of directly observed media-making and teaching methods in schools accounts for much of the empirical research material to be discussed.

My overall motivation to research digital media use in schools stems from my belief that the capacity to understand and participate in media production supports democracy and social justice (Buckingham 2003). In line with this principle, my methodology is imbued with stringent ethics towards participants and a commitment to transparency in the presentation of the findings. I choose an arts-based narrative mode to present my data, followed by a critically-oriented reflective commentary. Narrative methods foster rich accounts of social phenomena and embrace complexity, which are an appropriate fit with the uniqueness of the school environment (Clough 2002; Jones 2006; Clandinin and Rosiek 2007; Thomson and Gunter 2011; Bold 2012). The critical component relates to the importance of articulating the discursive forces influencing school media activities (Rose 2006; Buckingham 2014a) and the ways in which the concept of literacy is determined (Rosen 2012; Yandell 2014).

My material will be interpreted through perspectives drawn from Cultural Studies, from classical Greek thinking, and through the application of newer theories related to digital making and the 'web of relations' across and through which we 'perform' our daily interactions (Reid 2007; Dezuanni 2014). Applying these theories to my empirical data as explanatory devices, generates new ways of approaching literacy, learning and pedagogy in the post-analogue age, and unearths enabling and constraining social factors.

## **E. Justification**

The thesis abstract refers to the timeliness of this research: it is justified not only in relation to evolving digital landscapes and the need for pedagogy and learning to

adapt to digitisation, but also on account of patchy prescriptive trends in educational reform (Husbands 2015). This lack of holistic thinking is mirrored by a gap in the literature that fails to account for currently scattered and largely non-formal production projects (Sefton-Green 2013b). The revelations of my research add to and enrich speculation over what Sefton-Green (2013a) has identified as a missing set of theoretically underpinning educational values. He calls for longitudinal research that examines correlations between practical media production experience at school – involving the creative composition and editing of digital video material and other audiovisual resources - and everyday living and working as adults. This research builds capacity around such a proposal.

## **F. Thesis Structure**

### ***Chapter II – Review of the literature***

My literature review will first situate the research in the context of the current educational climate. I go on to locate the study in the fields of ‘traditional’ literacy and media education, taking into account the wider socio-cultural landscape. Given the focus of my account, particular attention will be given to the precarious positioning of media *production* in schools (McDougall and Berger 2012) and its implications. For primary and early secondary children the idea of making is often aligned with practical arts activities, with associated gains in cultural, critical and creative engagement (Sefton-Green 2008). I examine the claims made in support of these assumptions as they pertain to practical media work. Such work often takes place in the non-formal spaces of extracurricular programmes, thus necessitating a critical engagement with the practices of creative practitioners and the pedagogic climate in which such projects are conducted (Loveless 2012; Thomson et al 2012).

Crucial to a comprehensive review is an account of how research in the field documents the relationship between formal segmented curricula and the fluid non-linear affordances of digital media that favour collaboration and plurality (Burn 2009a; Loveless 2006). Some commentators claim that spaces of learning are myriad - no longer fixed geographic domains, but ones that benefit from processes of digital exchange and reciprocity (Potter 2011; McDougall and Potter 2015). Furthermore, traditional roles and hierarchies between and amongst experts, academics, teachers

and students are potentially upended, propelled by interest-driven and autonomous creative agency (Ito et al. 2013).

Attempts will be made to extract pragmatic value from rhetorical discursive commentary from ideologues with influence, such as: the creativity ‘expert’ (Robinson 2011, 2013); the pro-social participatory maker (Gauntlett 2007b, 2011a; Jenkins 2006, 2013, 2016); the technophiliac (Anderson 2012); the market-oriented magnate (Bennett and Doherty 2010); the popular positivist (Bennett 2013b); and the ‘back to basics’ knowledge and skills supporter (Christodoulou 2013). My account examines the relationships between these different standpoints, and in the mêlée of discourses jostling for position, reveals the attitudes and dispositions of young people, whose interests it is argued, are often sidelined in the service of other more questionable agendas (Bazalgette et al. 2011; Potter 2012).

There is an urgency to this research that advocates for educational experience to be made more relevant to young people and their everyday lives. A review of the literature seems to broadly reflect this recommendation, but points to a lack of empirical evidence with which to aggregate the good practice in scattered media projects (Sefton-Green 2013a). The main thrust of the material covered in the literature review interrogates the academic and social discourses relating to imaginative reconceptualisations of literacy, and the skills and dispositions that both teachers and young people require to negotiate a digitised networked society.

### ***Chapter III – Methodology and methods***

My roles in different educational contexts have seen me variously positioned in relation to schools’ hierarchical structures. This multi-perspectival experience drew me to qualitative research, whose hermeneutic dimension I believe offers the most appropriate strategy to answer my research questions. Given the complexity of school environments, contextual awareness is key to an understanding of constituents’ viewpoints and the overall ‘conditions of possibility’ within the setting (Scott & Usher 2010). My choice of an auto-ethnographic approach allows for a deep level of engagement with participants and an intimacy with research data, concerns with which quantitative methods are traditionally less engaged. That said, given my ‘insider’ status as a practitioner-educator and Participant Observer (PO), my account

is imbued with a reflexive voice to counter what some may construe as the weakening effects of partial positioning (Le Gallais 2008, p.149).

My intention is that teachers in particular be inspired to replicate aspects of my methodology so as to create research-oriented, self-determined communities of practice within their own environment. Indeed many of my research instruments are drawn from a repertoire of widely available open source software and online services, that relate directly to the tools of ‘dissemination’ alluded to in my conceptual framework to be explained shortly. In this connection, one of the key methodological dimensions to my research engages with what Law and Urry (2003) have termed ‘ontological politics’ in which they claim that research outputs inevitably construct or ‘enact’ one’s object of study. Such a perspective would complicate a realist view of social phenomena, a paradigm which is not relevant to this research as it fails to align with my study’s embrace of subjective representation.

Epistemologically speaking my worldview is influenced by social constructionism (Gergen 1995) whose precepts chime with a belief in socially ‘produced’ realities and the rejection of objective universal truths (Pring 2004). A mindset eager to totalise would undermine the aim of providing a rich, evocative and multi-perspectival account of a complex environment. My research approach is anthropologically inspired - an orientation towards the study of cultural, material and ritualistic practices, movement and physicality, and the ways in which meanings and artefacts are produced, exchanged and dispersed (Hendry 2008, p.62). As such, visual anthropology in particular is an appropriate methodological fit with research related to new pedagogy and digital making in schools.

As highlighted earlier, my study casts a critical eye on assumptions made in relation to the uses of new technologies and the reification of creativity in education. As a counterpoint to essentialising discourses and the behaviourist paradigm to which anthropology is often linked, I draw on Rose (2007) who advocates the systematic critical perspective of Cultural Studies, and on Hall’s (1999) plural and pro-social thinking. Much of my research material is visual in nature: photos and video clips of participants engaged in doing and/or making digital texts. Both Rose and Hall resist causal scientific analyses, regarding them as reductionist, and insist on attending to

contextual notions of ‘visuality’ and the ‘scopic regimes’ in which visual data are embedded.

In other words, it is important to account for the socio-political and cultural construction of what it is possible to see and by whom, and to how and why such research material should come to light at all (Rose 2007, p.2). My approach, then, pays particular attention to relations of power and representation, and sensitive handling of these dimensions have a direct bearing on the integrity and the comprehensiveness with which I can answer my questions. For many, conducting research as a constructionist exercise inclusive of participants, constitutes an equitable and critical engagement with the research process (Rose 2007; Grey 2003; Hall 1999).

#### ***Chapter IV & V – Presentation of research materials***

In line with principles of transparency and a commitment to interpretive epistemology, I present my research material as a narrative (Jones 2006; Barone 2007; Bold 2012; Loveless 2012). I offer two main reasons for this approach: a) a more arts-based method openly embraces the constructed nature of our perception, providing both an efficient and holistic means of creating meaning out of complexity and b) readers are invited into open-ended interpretations, dialogue and critique (Harris et al. 2015). Consciously ‘performing’ the display of research material resonates with the ways in which young participants make meaning from digital resources. There is a cyclical sense of unity to both my object of study and my chosen methods, which is further underlined by the ways in which some participants generated some of the material to be studied themselves, as if slipping into the current of cultural and academic production.

I develop reflective narratives (Clough 2002) from audiovisual observations and interviews captured in two *non-formal* and two *formal* school settings. I present edited material of young people’s DV (digital video) production activities for analysis, on both DVD and online, if more convenient. In order to offer cogent and trustworthy accounts of alternative literacy practices, my material is triangulated with semi-structured interviews with teachers, children and commentators, and with other research material: drawings, blog posts, field notes, video footage and photographs captured either by myself or the participants.

I divide my data presentation into two chapters. Chapter IV portrays an auto-ethnographic study in which my research persona was that of an immersed and participative practitioner-educator-observer over eighteen months. This experience with a small group of ten-year-old film-makers functioned as a blueprint for much of my theorising, requiring a personal register that was less pronounced in the other three settings presented in Chapter V; hence as the research progressed, my position was increasingly objectively defined.

### ***Chapter VI – Discussion***

My narratives do not claim to be transparent transcriptions of events as they occurred, and are acknowledged as always-already interpreted accounts; as such they are partial descriptions of a ‘fictive reality’ (Clough 2002; Jones 2013). Recognition of these texts as ‘composite’ accords with the constructionist modality which underpins my method. These composite narratives are subject to critically and theoretically engaged reflective commentaries that tease out possible explanations of relevance to current thinking on new literacies and pedagogies related to digital media production.

Material is interpreted through a critical visual anthropological lens (Rose 2007) engaging with the following: the social and economic context of the sites of learning, observed human and non-human interactions whilst making digital artefacts (Dezuanni 2014), and the ‘performance’ of makers as they negotiate meaning-making with material and symbolic resources (Burn 2009a). Producing a coherent and faithful account of these strands of experience, whilst exposing any contradictory assumptions, allows us to move forward with debates on literacy, media composition practices, progressive pedagogies and the productive agency of young learners.

### ***Chapter VII – Conclusions and recommendations***

The final Chapter draws together the evidence arguing for the ways in which traditional conceptions of literacy and pedagogy might start to accommodate a range of expressive resources and mediating platforms: the digital and the analogue, the oral and the aural, the moving and the still image, the hand-wrought and the algorithmic, the page and the screen, and the material and the virtual. I argue that to be a literate social actor in a networked environment is as much about cultivating a productive disposition as it is about acquiring knowledge, skills and competences.



Further, my account suggests that a generative orientation towards media composition opens up specific pathways to creative and conceptual learning.

The way this research has been designed and implemented constitutes a stepping stone in a necessary cultural shift in pedagogic thinking. Its findings suggest the need to deliver more inclusive and relevant school experiences for young people that include moving image production. This being the case, the practical implications for change and additional research are legion, pointing to further discussion in relation to methods of teaching and learning, the curriculum, formative and summative assessment, and the ongoing professional development of teachers.

### **G. Definitions**

In public discourse, the word literacy is applied in a range of learning domains that go beyond simply knowing how to read and write. Being ‘literate’ traditionally assumes a grasp of a certain body of knowledge, and competence in a set of pertinent skills, so as to be able to demonstrate understanding and apply it productively. By using the term ‘traditional’ literacy I refer more to the *functional* practices of meaning-making with print, to which substantial parts of the curriculum are committed and for which schools are held accountable. At the same time, it is important to recognise the foundational, pre-digital literacy theory (Street 1984, 2003) on which digital media practices (Gee 2004, 2015) are predicated (see Chapter II, section B).

Linked with ‘traditional literacy’ I also make reference to ‘traditional pedagogy’, by which I mean the established classroom practices that form around the implementation of national curriculum content and procedures, and the covering of exam specifications. While there are many exceptions, this system often results in vertically designed pedagogy, namely highly structured predictable lessons and top-down ‘content delivery’, with little in the way of self-determined teacher or student agency, nor open-ended collaborative relations between classes or with the outside world.

Literacies of a digital nature germane to this account are understood as follows:

- *media literacy* is an outcome achieved as a result of media education and assumes the ability to access, explore, critique, evaluate, enjoy, create and share media texts

in all their forms, and engagement with the same on a variety of digital platforms (Buckingham 2003).

- *still and moving image literacy* is a subset of media literacy, understood as the ability to access, explore, critique, evaluate, enjoy, create and share digital audiovisual resources - specifically the photograph, film, video and sound – also on a variety of digital platforms (Burn and Durran 2006, 2007; Bazalgette et al. 2011).

- the phrase *new media literacies* subsumes the previous two literacies, with an emphasis on the multimodal, productive, participative and social affordances of new media technologies and their use on a variety of digital platforms (Street 1984, 2003; Gee 2004, 2015; Lankshear and Knobel 2003; Potter 2011; Burnett et al. 2014).

- the phrase *a wider literacy* is borrowed from some collaborative work between the Northern Ireland Film and Television Council and The British Film Institute (NIFTC / BFI 2004). The resultant paper details a holistic and cross-disciplinary view of communicative strategies in formal education, highlighting moving image literacy, which supports my thesis:

Although print literacy is immensely important, it is no longer enough to ensure our full participation in the culture, social life and politics of the 21st century.  
(NIFTC / BFI 2004, p.6)

Throughout my account reference is made to *digital media production, media-making, digital and multimodal meaning-making* - terms which encompass the creation of and engagement with a variety of media texts, assets and processes as outlined above. I also refer to *media composition practices* denoting the *aesthetic* and *critical* arrangement of symbolic digital resources.

My research activities take place in *formal* and *non-formal* educational environments. *Formal* refers to those school spaces whose practices are accountable to institutional structures. *Non-formal* refers to less accountable school practices taking place beyond formal structures but still under the aegis of the school, such as after school clubs and extracurricular programmes (Sefton-Green 2013b). *Informal* educational activities are those that take place externally such as in the home, cultural institutions, cinemas, galleries and community spaces, which are

unconstrained by regulatory school procedures. It is important to make the distinction between the latter two terms because a case is made supporting particular practices in the liminal non-formal learning space between home and school.

## **H. Delimitations**

Discourse on children's media use and consumption is often aligned with a safety /protectionist agenda (Livingstone 2009), however this approach, albeit an important aspect of media literacy, is less salient to my account which has a progressive orientation. Neither does the study introduce methodologies for teachers related to 'what works' (Bennett 2013a; Hattie 2012; Hattie and Yates 2014; EEF 2015a) or engage with cognitive neuroscience on how the brain retains and mobilises knowledge (Willingham 2012). These approaches are more sympathetic to causal, positivist thinking and the testing of theories and interventions.

Consideration will be given to schools' recent mandate to engage with computer programming, in so far as it relates to creative media production and curriculum reform (Williamson 2014), however, a full briefing as to the use and effectiveness of coding and scripting practices in the classroom is considered beyond the remit of this study. The scope of this work permits light to be cast on teaching and learning practices in particular school settings and the production of specific digital media texts, linked to which certain socio-cultural, facilitating and inhibiting factors are identified.

## **I. Concluding Thoughts**

This Chapter's overview has lain the foundations on which the thesis can proceed in greater depth. I have given the background to my interest in children's interactions with digital media production, and delineated the research problem and attendant questions related to schools' interface with the audiovisual vernacular. My methodology, methods and modes of presentation have been briefly described, as have the frames for the interpretation of my material. The following Chapter offers a thorough examination of the literature related to creative media production in schools and moving image literacy.

## Chapter II - Literature Review

My literature review develops a theoretical framework that grounds debates on the value and practices of practical media work in schools in relation to ‘traditional’ literacy theory and, in order to contextualise the study, within the socio-cultural landscape (Section A). I then review current media production practices in schools (Sections B & C) examining their positioning and status. I follow this up with an assessment of schools’ digital making environments, for a deeper understanding of the conditions which shape pedagogic practice with media (Section D). By detailing the relationships between production practices in schools and the ways in which possible benefits are framed in relation to literacy and evolving media technologies, I am able to examine the tensions that imbue my research questions:

*How does creative media work constitute a wider literacy in formal and non-formal school spaces?*

*What can traditional pedagogy learn from moving image production processes?*

*How do social discursive factors determine practical media work in schools?*

### A. Socio-cultural landscape

Putative claims as to the social, educational and economic benefits of making with digital media are on the increase in several social spheres. It is witnessed variously in discourses related to: creativity and the arts (NACCE 1999; Gauntlett 2011a; Robinson 2011, 2013; Shirky 2011), craft and the vocational (Sennett 2008; Crawford 2009), the global Maker Movement (Bennett and Doherty 2010), and the STEM<sup>2</sup> lobby (Livingstone and Hope 2011; Truss 2013; Gibb 2015a; Morgan 2015). Moreover, the skills and dispositions that practical activities are said to mobilise are considered valuable assets in a workforce for the so-called ‘knowledge economy’.

So, if educational and economic value *can* be derived from processes of making and experimentation, questions must be raised as to why the worth of such activities

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<sup>2</sup> STEM refers to the academic subjects Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths. Although a preferred acronym in some circles is STEAM, propelling the Arts back into the acceptable academic canon, particularly in the US. See the campaigning site: <http://steam-notstem.com/> [Accessed 17 October 2015] (Also Maeda 2013; Cultural Learning Alliance 2014)

seems to be eroding in school curricula. Why is practical work, and practical media work in particular, often set in opposition to understandings achieved through ‘academic’ thought and language? (Wolf 2011, p.6; Buckingham 2014a). Why are the ‘softer skills’ often ascribed to collective making experiences, such as collaborative team work and the building of self-esteem, relatively undervalued? Why are students’ critical thinking, evaluation and reflection disregarded as ‘amorphous skills’ (Gibb 2015a) that dilute the ‘rigour’ of academic knowledge?

In order to contextualise the study and clarify the possible impediments to a wider conception of literacy which is inclusive of digital media and the audiovisual, I explore the dichotomies at work in relation to classical perspectives on the abstract, the visual and the material. This is followed by a review of the socio-cultural context of digital media-making practices, and of relevant discourses on craftsmanship and vocationalism.

### ***The empirical and the mind***

Recent educational policy reform (Bassey 2013) has re-kindled debates on the perceived gulf between: the merits of academic knowledge acquisition on the one hand (Hirsch 2006; Willingham 2012; Abrams 2012; Christodoulou 2013) and those of social, cultural and aesthetic learning through the creative arts on the other (Sefton-Green 2008; Bragg and Manchester 2011; Thomson et al. n.d). Like many suspicious of binary modes of thinking (Pring 2004), in this instance between the ‘packaging and delivery’ of content and the appreciation of expressive and sensorial experience, Eisner (2005/1985) suggests this is a misleading dichotomy.

The latter draws on the long term legacies left by Plato’s ‘hierarchies of knowledge’ (Eisner 2006), relating them to the present day and the ways we make sense of experience. Far from reinforcing the polarities referenced in C. P Snow’s ‘Two Cultures’ (1961)<sup>3</sup>, Eisner draws attention to the continuities between the arts/sciences schism (as does Burn 2013, p.60) seeing the practitioners of both as ‘form-makers’:

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<sup>3</sup> This refers to British scientist, C. P. Snow’s Cambridge lecture in 1959 (see C.P. Snow 1961), whose polarising perspective lives on in Western discourse via the separation between science and the humanities. Snow’s thesis sought to favourably re-position science in intellectual circles.

Both scientists and artists ... are makers of order - the former through the relationships created between theoretical material and the other through the ordering of the qualitative. Our sense of rightness ... is rooted in that ineffable experience to which the word “aesthetic” is assigned.  
(Eisner 2005/1985, p.100)

For Plato it seems there was no room for the ineffable in the pursuit of truth; the only dependable knowledge was that associated with the ‘episteme’, that is, with sustainable and enduring rationality and abstraction. Hence, concrete product and the visual were untrustworthy, finite and subject to contamination:

Sensory information is dependent on the stuff of which our universe is made, namely material things. Since material things are in a state of constant decay, any knowledge derived from them must, of necessity, be short term at best and misleading at worst.  
(Eisner 2005/1985, p.100)

Equally the domain of feelings was thought to sully the purity of the mind which should function “unencumbered by emotion or by the misleading qualities of the empirical world” (Eisner 2005/1985, p.101). By re-visiting these formulations we can begin to see how thinking from antiquity continues to inform modern educational agendas in terms of the ways in which the visual arts in particular, a discipline to which creative media is often annexed, are secondary in status to epistemic, propositional knowledge.

Eisner, in a critique of hierarchical Platonic values, and in the context of discourses on qualitative research methodology, welcomes more granular Aristotelian thinking. The latter concerns the derivation of knowledge from differentiated perspectives: from the *theoretical* (out of necessity or perceived inevitability, such as that found in the natural sciences), from the *practical* (taking into account local social contingencies) and from the *productive* (from considerations in relation to the processes of *making*):

With Aristotle, we get an effort to draw distinctions in the service of conceptual clarity. This aim is wholly congruent with current efforts to make distinctions between types of research, even to redefine the meanings of research so that they are no longer singular, but multiple.  
(Eisner 2008, p.4)

Eisner goes on to argue that this more discursive view of the formation of knowledge proposes that a greater understanding of the epistemological - the ways in which knowledge can be *shaped* rather than *discovered* – would enable a wider appreciation of the value of *aesthetic* forms of knowing implicit in creative acts across the disciplines. The next section addresses the challenges that are perceived as standing in the way of such a vision.

### ***Making, instrumental learning and the socio-economic***

Arguably education systems are devised to maximise the potential for leading a life this is personally fulfilling, socially rewarding, culturally enriching and economically beneficial whilst being of benefit to the wider community (Pring 2004; Bruner 1990; Lave and Wenger 1991). Working towards this and widening the parameters of experience, means aspiring towards a more integrated educational offer. This would enable young people not only to demonstrate their learning using all available means of expression - digital or otherwise (Buckingham 2003; Bazalgette 2010, 2011; Bazalgette and Bearne 2010; Potter 2012) - but also to learn and create through a different medium.

The above commentators propose an alternative educational paradigm which is rich in *productive* engagement with media and learners' personal, cultural and social environment (Street 1995). Tensions arise when policy makers and interest groups champion specific curricular components with campaigns, 'interventions' and assessment procedures, which effectively divert resources, privileging favoured 'useful' subjects and de-privileging others (as raised by Aberdare (2015) in a House of Lords debate, in relation to the newly mandated EBacc<sup>4</sup> qualification, which excludes the arts).

I offer an example of a current educational intervention (Morgan 2014, 2015) that functions expressly in the service of workforce development and global competitiveness. Science, technology and maths (STEM subjects) are mobilised as 'facilitative' subjects (Adams 2013), with more perceived instrumental value than

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.baccforthefuture.com/> [Accessed 15 September 2015] - a campaign to reform the EBacc and 'save creativity in schools'.

those of the arts and humanities - the area in which creative media production, if it is present at all, is currently located. In fact, it is claimed by the incumbent Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, that choosing to pursue arts subjects could be detrimental to young people's career prospects:

... maths, as we *all* know, is the subject that employers value *most*, helping young people develop skills which are *vital* to almost *any* career. And you don't just have to take my word for it - studies show that pupils who study maths to A level *will* earn 10% more over their lifetime. These figures show us that *too many* young people are making choices aged 15, which *will* hold them back for the *rest* of their life.  
(Morgan 2014, my emphasis)

I cite this passage from a speech delivered by Morgan at the Google Offices, London (10 November 2014) as it exemplifies the managerial, means-to-an-end culture (Sinker 2000; Pring 2004; Ball 2013) that imbues educational policy. The benefits of earnings-related education is expressed with a rhetorical modality of certainty.

Further contextualisation reveals an ironic twist related to my object of study. The speech was given at the launch of a three year government-backed campaign, *Your Life*, sponsored by a group of global corporations "to ensure young adults in the UK have the maths and science skills needed to succeed in the current competitive global economy" (Dunn 2014). Spearheading the campaign is a competition – *Formula 100* – aimed at eleven to eighteen year olds, for which entrants are asked to submit thirty seconds of *video* describing an imagined innovatory artefact.

In order to participate in this high profile competition, there is an implicit assumption that teachers and students have access to and are proficient in a variety of media practices from authorship to social media distribution. In an appeal to schools the Powerpoint 'lesson plan' simply lists the competition rules and a series of STEM advocacy messages, with no guidance on the practices of film-making itself. This intervention is flawed in a number of ways: it extols the winner-takes-all ideology; its reach is limited and appeals to certain types of schools with certain types of priorities and resources; and the home page explicitly targets young people with global banking aspirations. It is a highly instrumental, government-backed initiative explicitly driven by corporate interests, and at the very least represents a lost



opportunity to introduce digital media-making as a new, relevant and inclusive literacy practice.

By inviting digital participation from 11 year olds, the *Formula 100* organisers implicitly support ‘digital native’ (Prensky 2001) discourses that assume the innate competence of most young people (and teachers) in a range of production practices (Bennett et al. 2008). The implication is that adequate media expertise accumulates informally in young people’s leisure time in neutral and automatic ways.

Buckingham (2003) challenges the homogenisation of young people and he characterises assumptions about universal access and skills related to creative practice, as nefarious. Indeed, the closing lines of his 2003 opus warn that market-led forces, with interests in profit rather than public service imperatives, could result in “a privatised educational dystopia ... and the emergence of an educational ‘underclass’ (Buckingham 2003, p.203). He makes the point, supported by this account, that practical media education alone, is not the silver bullet that will lead to universal social participation. However, the need for a critical perspective on the prioritisation of business interests in education is paramount, if social inequality, with regard to assumed competence with digital expression, is not to proliferate subtly (Selwyn 2006).

### ***Maker Faires and human capital***

My socio-cultural perspective now moves further afield by exploring the international Maker Movement which links with digital media, and promises to unsettle traditional learning paradigms in ambiguous ways. Whilst the ‘bleeding edge’ of UK educational reform reinforces the primacy of intellectual ‘rigour’, the purpose of the Maker Movement (most prominent in the US, but global in scope and gaining momentum in the UK), is to stimulate technical, electronic and robotic maker activities in formal and informal education. Attended by leaders in education, science, technology and the arts, it began as a ‘Maker Workshop’ in The New York Hall of Science in 2010, attracting a panoply of hackers, crafters, coders and DIY enthusiasts. The Movement’s principles and practices subsume a number of discourses pertinent to my questions: the STEM initiative, practical work with new technologies and the progressive principles of learning-by-doing (Dewey 1997/1938; Peppler and Kafai 2007; Cantrill et al. 2014).

Reports of events from the US and the UK (Bennett and Doherty 2010; Maker Media Inc 2014; Maker Faire NYC 2014; Maker Faire UK 2015) indicate enthusiastic public support for now global phenomena known as *Maker Faires*. Despite the family-friendly ‘Greatest show (and tell) on earth’ tag line, events under this ‘carnavalesque’ brand are another commercial wing of *Maker Media Inc* - owners of *Maker Magazine* and *Maker Shed*, and formerly a division of *O’Reilly Media*. Their values are hence more likely to be profit-driven, and less likely to be apolitical:

Part science fair, part county fair, and part something entirely new, Maker Faire is an all-ages gathering of tech enthusiasts, crafters, educators, tinkerers, hobbyists, engineers, science clubs, authors, artists, students, and commercial exhibitors.  
(Maker Media Inc 2014)

The title of the New York Hall of Science (NYHS) 2012 report makes the aim of the movement explicit: *Growing the Next Generation of Science Innovators*, as well as establishing:

a framework for assessing design, making and play as methodologies for reforming and improving STEM education as a first step toward meeting the need for a more plentiful and diverse STEM workforce.  
(NYHS, Maker Faire 2012, p.1)

Investment in design, making and play is a laudable pursuit in the sphere of arts and science education, nevertheless the overt utilitarian economic agenda complicates any sense of intrinsic worth that might otherwise be attached to such activities.

Possibly as a function of its corporately-sanctioned inception, the document takes the liberty of referring to ‘human capital’ being squeezed through pipelines. The pipeline is assumed to represent the education system which is malfunctioning and not producing ‘the right type of worker’, due to human flow ‘dropping out’ (Figure 1):

Assuming that one outcome is engagement and persistence in STEM, the STEM pipeline is leaking badly. Pipelines are about *pressure and constriction*, but we really don’t know much about the junctures or the dynamics along the way. And we need a better sense of what the workforce needs to look like. Those are the levers that policymakers have to work with.  
(NYHS Maker Faire 2012, p.15 my emphasis)

Along with references to tightening up the junctures to prevent leaks<sup>5</sup>, it should be noted that the Maker Movement conceives of curriculum reform as shifting from a transmission model, to one that attracts young people into certain areas perceived to be of interest to them. Or as they put it, “moving ... from ‘pushing’ what students need to know to ‘pulling’ them into innovative and engaging content that is personally relevant” (NYHS Maker Faire 2012, p.16; Hagel and Seely Brown 2005). Both these motivations are based on values which leave little room for independent critical judgement. Whether ‘human resources’ are being pushed or pulled in certain curriculum directions, the implication is that young people, as they are *making*, are being systematically interpellated and objectified by pre-determined political ideologies, so as to mould ‘the citizen-worker-of-the-future’ (Kaplan 2008, p.176, drawing on Williams 2004, p.408).

This said, despite questionable allusions to growing, leaking and wasting human capital, paradoxically, other outcomes of the Maker Movement – such as their seven learning goals (NYHS 2012, p.20) could be lifted directly from progressive accounts of connected learning and social media-making experiences. We see in the above referenced text, for example, support for inter-disciplinary, inter-generational dialogue (Ito et al. 2013), community building (Sefton-Green 2013a), agency, collaboration (Burnett and Bailey 2014) and experimentation (Potter 2012; Burn and Durran 2006, 2007). Furthermore, an emphasis on learning through knowledge *exchange* as opposed to the implied stasis in its transmission and preservation, goes some way to attenuating polarised discourse.

I have quoted at length from this document as it seems to rehearse the contradictions inherent in making practices with new technologies and ideological problematisation. It could be that the ways in which acts of design, making and play are framed in informal educational fora are becoming increasingly determined by external forces

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<sup>5</sup> The same industrial metaphor is used in NESTA’s *Next Gen* report (Livingstone and Hope 2011, p.7) in relation to keeping the ‘talent pipeline’ flowing. In addition, NESTA’s *Young Digital Makers* report (Quinlan 2015), whilst being a comprehensive UK audit, seems in part, to have been conceived to address the perceived shortfall of technological skills.

with interests beyond the ideals of public service and personal fulfilment.<sup>6</sup>

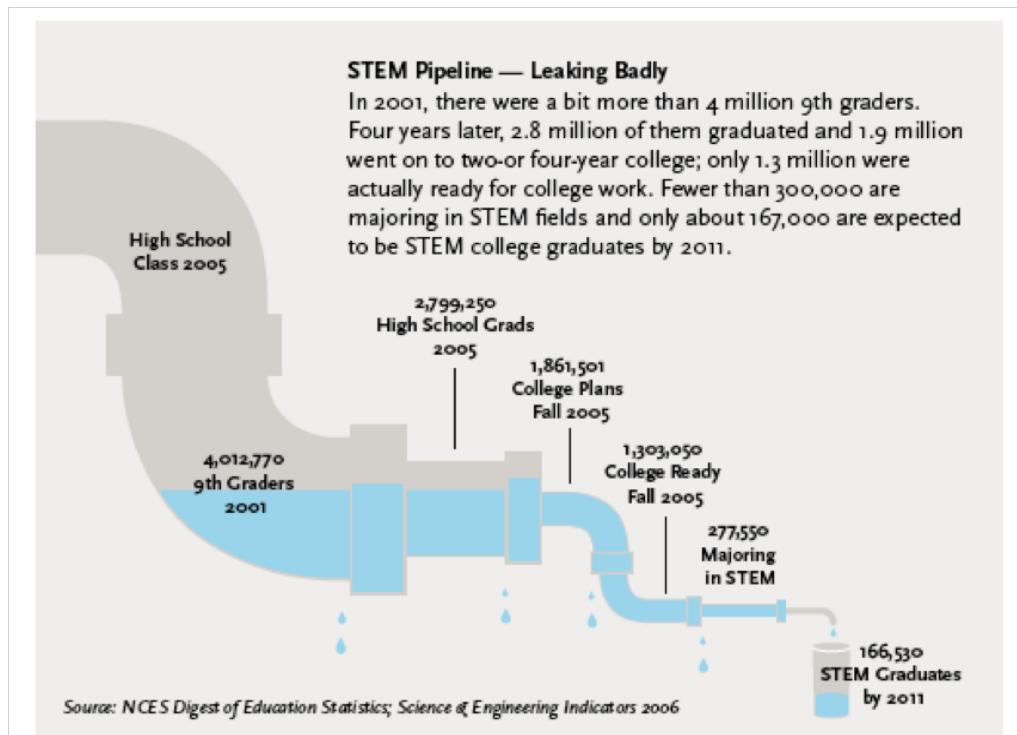


Figure 1: STEM Pipeline in NYHS Maker Faire report (2012, p.15)

This sub-section has addressed ‘making trends’ as they obtain in *informal* making spaces, as a way of questioning the reification and marketisation of the concept of making, which, if it proceeds unchecked stands to ‘naturally’ align with government and corporate priorities. From an example of the instrumental positioning of the practical, the focus of this analysis now moves to *formal* media-making in schools and the ways in which it is often delivered, as a form of vocational training.

### ***Media and vocational training***

Both Sennett’s (2008) and Crawford’s (2009) interest in the benefits of craft-like practical work - to be discussed in more depth in the next section - reinforces the idea of pragmatic maker-experts meeting objective *standards*. Although they focus more on the personal and moral dimensions of pragmatism, it seems their respective

<sup>6</sup> It is also worth noting that the Maker Movement has been supported by the research wing of the American military (DARPA - Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency), to the tune of over \$13 million (Williamson 2014, p.12), indicating alternative motives for its activities.

exegeses fit readily within the parameters of competitiveness and the neoliberal agenda (Monbiot 2016). So too did Livingstone and Hope's (2011) *Next Gen* report, which partly functioned as an entreaty for urgent government action to address a perceived skills deficit in the 'creative industries' (or perhaps more precisely in the *video effects* industry). The Department for Education conflated this dearth of talent with the unconscionable, that is, with 'UK plc' losing the perceived 'global race' (Bagehot 2013; Williamson 2014), so damagingly advertised in the triennial international OECD PISA<sup>7</sup> league tables:

... what really matters is how we're doing compared with our international competitors. That is what will define our economic growth and our country's future. The truth is, at the moment we are standing still while others race past. (DfE 2010, p.3)

One of the consequences of the *Next Gen* report and other corporate appeals (Schmidt 2011) was the rapid reform of the UK ICT curriculum, which has mutated from competence in Microsoft software, to 'training' in coding and computer programming (DfE 2013).

The outcome is a mixed blessing. On the one hand young learners can now experience computational thinking at primary level - a welcome evolution with implied opportunities for creative media engagement, on the other, it invites narrow and partial industry constituents into school practices with unprecedented pace and penetration. Livingstone himself is the former Chairman and CEO of *Eidos Interactive Ltd* – a key global player in the video and special effects industry. There are also strong implications for school infrastructure and training, and given the speed with which this intervention was made, it remains to be seen how adequately the logistics, resources and success criteria have been thought through.

More socially framed responses to socio-economic change and advances in communicative media are emerging from such countries as New Zealand<sup>8</sup> and Finland (the New Zealand approach becomes more salient later, as it informs one of

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<sup>7</sup> Starting in 2000, the OECD's (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) PISA (*Programme for International Students Assessment*) tables test over half a million fifteen year olds in '65 economies' for their reading, maths and science ability and publishes the results globally.

<sup>8</sup> See the 2007 New Zealand curriculum's key competencies which are stipulated as both ends and means. Available from: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum/Key-competencies> [Accessed: 18 September 2015].

my studies). Finnish education has become something of a talismanic touchstone globally, in terms of its regular appearance at or near the top of the PISA league tables mentioned earlier. There is no scope here to to examine the premise of the international league tables, nor to account for Finnish achievements in any detail, except to say that the their education system is perceived as ‘successful’ at the same time as professing an intrinsic commitment to equity, well-being, teacher professionalism and digital participation, imbued with cross-disciplinary, critical and creative media literacy<sup>9</sup>.

Routes to media learning which are less partially framed and more meaningful to the *learner* (Peppler 2013; Cantrill et al. 2014; Sefton-Green 2013a, p.45), particularly in relation to programming, may counter the potential for the reproduction and testing of grammar-like computer code to ‘grow the workforce’. Of relevance here is Crawford’s observation on the deleterious effects of learner commodification:

If occasions for the exercise of judgment are diminished, the moral-cognitive virtue of attentiveness will atrophy.  
(Crawford 2009, p.101)

For Crawford, attentiveness to interactions between elements and the capacity to make immediate material adjustments on the fly are key characteristics of craftsmanship. Applying judgement and making open-ended choices are equally as important in the creative process, skills which would be adversely affected in the event of media-making in schools becoming narrowly conflated with right or wrong coding decisions.

Arguably, the current swing towards vocationalism (Wolf 2011) is a reaction against putative over-indulgence towards progressive learning strategies under the former Labour government (such as the intervention known as SEAL - Social and Emotional

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<sup>9</sup> The Finns produced a specific media education policy booklet: <http://www.mediakasvatus.fi/publications/mediaeducationpolicies.pdf> (Lundvall 2010) [Accessed 20 September 2015] and further comment can be found in my MA Dissertation: <https://fashioningandflow.wordpress.com/2011/11/09/international-perspective/> (Cannon 2011) [Accessed 20 September 2015]

Aspects of Learning, DfES 2005 - and the expansive Creative Partnerships<sup>10</sup> programme) to the perceived detriment of knowledge and skills acquisition. However, my thesis proposes that to narrow media-making down to the unambiguously functional needs of industry, is to forego opportunities for young people to engage with the aesthetic and the conceptually complex, as well as with more pastoral concerns. Having said this, the following section examines school media production's contested relation to discourses on creativity and to policy-making.

### ***Media production, creativity and policy***

Media production's alignment with creativity is something of a poisoned chalice: whilst distancing it from utilitarian 'skills and training', the tendency is for media production to be re-assigned as an extracurricular marginal activity, estranged from core literacy strategy. Some headway was made during Creative Partnerships (Sefton-Green 2008), during which the idea of *creativity* blossomed as a transcendent theme, and school film and digital media projects began to develop. However this diffuse and discursive concept, often aligned with practical media work, is not uncomplicated, as Banaji et al. (2006) have expounded. Creativity is commonly over-determined - either yoked into the service of specific interest groups (Readman 2010), or reified as an all-purpose, universally 'good' human trait with almost balm-like qualities.

Robinson's claims (2011, 2013) in support of creativity and the imagination in learning, bemoan the antiquated nature of the education system and his assertions now seem to have been absorbed into western public consciousness, if over thirty six million views of his 2006 TED talk<sup>11</sup> - as at December 2015 - are any reliable index. Indeed in many respects, his seductive views are a welcome antidote to current narrow reforms, however it is questionable the extent to which the emotional and totalising appeals of "charismatic educationalists on the conference circuit" (Gibb

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<sup>10</sup> From 2002-2011 the Creative Partnerships programme worked intensively with over 2,700 schools across England, 90,000 teachers and over 1 million young people, building partnerships with creative workers, such as artists, scientists, architects, and cultural organisations, and generating numerous reports (Lord et al. 2007; Sefton-Green 2008)

<sup>11</sup> See [https://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_says\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity?language=en) [Accessed 30 November 2015]

2015a) translate beyond the rhetorical in the political arena. As creativity rides high in popular discourses related to social and emotional well-being, the easier it is for it to be de-railed and re-routed by neo-liberal factions, and ‘operationalised’ (Readman 2010) into more ‘useful’ areas, like coding.

In contrast with the cultivation of ‘active, technical co-producers’ (Williamson 2014), Robinson (2013) proclaims the potential for creative education to assist in the search for personal fulfilment. Similarly, other commentators (Claxton 2003; Gardner 2009) support pro-social aspects of learning, by promoting the personal qualities said to be ‘essential’ to ‘digitally literate 21<sup>st</sup> century learners’ (Belshaw 2012). There may well be a place in media production settings for Belshaw’s (2011) *Eight Essential Elements of Digital Literacies* in pursuit of broader notions of literacy. Many of these scientifically styled ‘elements’ pepper my account too, namely the: Cultural, Cognitive, Constructive, Communicative, Confident, Creative, Critical and Civic<sup>12</sup>. Perhaps the difference being that my account frames these attributes contextually, within narratives of disposition, that is, as preconditions as well as outcomes of creative processes (Loveless 2012), rather than as the proposed constituents of digitally literacy.

Other creative media research projects and interventions use similar vocabulary (Scottish Screen 2006; Bazalgette et al. 2011; Mumford et al. 2013; FLAG 2013, 2015). So where does media-making hover along the slippery continuum of cultural evaluation? Some would like to see moving image inscription as commonplace and unassailable as the technology known as cursive *writing* (Burn and Parker 2001; Bazalgette 2010b), that is, as a function of the complex social mediascapes inhabited by most western young people (Ito 2009; boyd 2014). However, because of the embattled status of the arts (Cultural Learning Alliance 2011; DfCMS 2013, paragraphs 117 and 118), the ambiguous relationship policy makers have with media

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<sup>12</sup> I quote the C’s here as a welcome counterpoint to what might be described as students’ required ‘Conservative Compliance’ with curriculum diktats.



education (Buckingham 2014a), and the ‘discourses of derision’ (Barker 2001) aimed at Media Studies, creative media production in schools is tainted by association<sup>13</sup>.

Wider public debates seem to ignore the creative and critical potency of media education, seeing it as “a byword for triviality, for the dumbing down of education, for the degenerate, celebrity-obsessed, loser-take-all culture that modern Britain has (apparently) now become.” (Buckingham 2014a, p. 7). But as Buckingham points out, it is perhaps time to be less defensive and more pro-active at school level. The summer of 2015 saw much activity on the part of the Media Education Association (MEA 2015) to re-write specifications and save GCSE and A’ Level Media Studies from simple ‘deletion’ by the current Schools Minister. This is indicative of the status of creative and media-related educational activity in government circles, and the need for a concomitant shift in local strategy if film and digital media production are to gain traction in the lower years of schooling.

Creativity, then, in the Robinsonian sense, is a part-time ally of media production, which, for any long term benefits to materialise, has to be viewed critically in conjunction with hegemonic forces and celebratory rhetoric. Reid et al. (2002) pragmatically observed in early research on young people’s DV editing in schools (supported too by findings by BECTA 2003), that without a mandate for inclusion in core curricula, unless they can be ‘re-branded’ as a communicative craft, practices such as these will remain unevenly located around the country. An investigation into the principles and processes of craftwork, a discipline that embraces cognitive, creative and utilitarian dimensions (Frayling 1993), may illuminate current evaluations of digital media production and draw it closer to the social modes of literacy that this thesis supports.

### ***Media-making as craftwork***

Discursive commentary on utilitarianism and its relation to personal absorption conflate in recent publications around the notion of craftsmanship. As video production and editing in particular have been distinguished as craft-like activities (Murch 2001; Bordwell and Thomson 2010) I contemplate related rhetorical claims.

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<sup>13</sup> So hostile to the *digital arts* is the current administration that the line ‘digital texts shall not be included’ features in the English GCSE specification. See page 4 here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/206143/GCSE\\_English\\_Language\\_final.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/206143/GCSE_English_Language_final.pdf) [Accessed 9 October 2015]

Notably Sennett (2008) and Crawford's (2009) accounts of the benefits of working with one's hands relate to centuries of stigma around craft (Frayling 1993). These writers re-assert positive pragmatic philosophies with respect to manual activity and the pleasures therein. Crawford – office worker-turned-academic-turned-mechanic - laments the obsolescence of 'shop class' in schools (the US equivalent of Woodwork, Textiles and Resistant Materials), and sets up a somewhat romantic dialectic between the economic imperative for 'mindless' clerical employment and the offices of 'mindful' fixing.

More helpfully, he conceives of his relationship with raw materials as a dialogue, and references to tinkering and iterative exchange are useful in transposing the dialogic to the context of media production. There is however an overall sense in which Sennett and Crawford, in their recruitment of the traditional principles of craft, are invoking discourses of *authenticity* that cleave questionably towards nostalgia and essentialism. Like Robinson (2013), both authors adopt a totalising tone in the manner in which they refer to *all* humans' capacity to develop a life-affirming manual skill - if only the *conditions* were right (Sennett 2008, p.11).

This latter observation recalls Hall's sobering dictum on our 'historicised situatedness' that "Men and women make history but not under conditions of their own making." (Hall 1991, p.11). This is something of a reductive assessment on the human condition with which it is difficult to argue, and aggravates any sense of reassuring and oversimplified 'solutionism' that can build up around belief in 'back to basics' agendas, 'innate' giftedness or ed-tech panaceas (as so roundly critiqued by Selwyn 2006 and Watters 2015). Might it be the case that discursive commentaries erring on the celebratory, paradoxically set up conditions that seem to secure winners and losers rather than tackle inequality?

In light of Halls' related assertion that there are no values other than those constructed within discourse (Hall 1991), a connection can be made here with Eisner's critique (2005/2002a, p.206) of western hierarchical constructions of knowledge, which are played out in perceptions of *talent* versus *intelligence*. Talent is often associated with the corporeal and the affective, to the makers and the doers in art, craft and sport; whilst onto the cognitive is conferred intelligence, an attribute assigned to the 'superior' wielders of language and logic. The latter is accorded

greater value scholastically with a sense of intelligence having been earned, whereas the former is often framed as intuitive or genetic in origin and thereby “not a function of thinking” (Eisner 2005/1985, p.100).

Sennett would arguably align himself with Eisner’s critique in that, for him, practical craftwork is an iterative *cognitive* process of problem-finding, problem-solving and Deweyan “flexible purposing” (Eisner 2005/2002a, p.209). Assuming that such craft principles can be grafted onto the processes of media production, one might start to ponder on the nature of the *talented* media-maker and that of the *intelligent* media-maker. Do they share similar dispositions, skills and knowledge? Should such a distinction even be made?

In a shift to recruit the ideas of Sennett and Crawford, it is proposed in this account that despite the suspicion accorded inorganic, numerically-derived audiovisual assets as raw materials (Burn 2009a, p.18, 2011), attentive media-makers focused on precision and qualitative refinement, may be compared with Sennett’s apprentice violin makers or Crawford’s mechanics. Furthermore both theorists argue against perceptions of craftsmanship as an ‘unthinking’ occupation, identifying an agility of mind alert to innovative syntheses, thus bolstering Eisner’s thesis in support of the role of aesthetic learning in matters of cognition (Eisner 1986).

Some scholars have advanced the notion of ‘critical making’ (Somerson and Hermano 2013) to capture and critique what happens in the often tacit interstices of design and ‘artistic’ production, a multi-perspectival theory which will be unpacked in Chapters VI and VII. Craftwork (as defined by Sennett and Crawford) and media-making share similar inward and outward perspectives. Attention is given to: the *material* in hand in the mode of a dexterous expert; the *product* in the mode of an artist working with integrity; and the expectations of an intended *audience* or *recipient* in the mode of performance (Craft Council 2014). The tension between these modes might serve as the locus for a more holistic conceptualisation of media composition and alternative literacy practices. These practices would be less vested with the subjective and/or corrective assessment of canonical texts by an authority, and more engaged with makers’ vocal and reflective accounts of context and decision-making (Ross et al. 1993; Orr and Blythman 2002). Film and digital media composition processes, like much creative practice, embrace experimentation and

ambiguity; and the articulation of the ways in which these have been negotiated are key capacities in the proposed wider literacy (Street 1995 p.133; Sefton-Green 2000 p.228; Lankshear and Knobel 2003; Reid 2009).

Above I have articulated some thoughts from antiquity and their relation to contemporary debates around digital and video production in schools. Young makers seem caught in a traverse between cultures of technocratic and functional ideology at one end of the spectrum, in tension with rhetorical appeals to harnessing one's creative potential and fulfilling personal dreams at the other. I have also introduced a practical craft dimension to the discussion of media production as a means of attenuating unhelpful polarised thinking and moving creativity debates forward. Section B analyses the challenges to 'traditional literacy', that which constitutes *practical* ways of knowing and the ways in which these have a bearing on a broader literacy offer. I then move on to detail recent media production research carried out in concrete school settings.

## **B. Approaches to (moving image) literacy in schools**

### ***'The New Literacy Studies' and the 'ideological' model***

In an earlier section I made reference to 'traditional' and schooled literacy and the important intellectual work that contests this pillar of the curriculum. Of relevance here is Street's thinking on 'The New Literacy Studies' (NLS) and the socio-cultural dimension of literacy (1984, 2003). He and others (Gee 2004, 2015; Belshaw 2011; Potter 2012) continue to argue that literacy, in addition to the acquisition of cognitive skills and technical competencies, is a social practice necessarily involving situated cultural interactions that bleed with specific purposes into context and relations of power. As such, Street's 'ideological' model of literacy<sup>14</sup>, and the ways in which he invokes social theorists such as Bourdieu, Dewey and Freire (2003, p.81, p.83, p.84 respectively), grounds the wider literacy debate on which my thesis is based.

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<sup>14</sup> Street (1984) introduced two models of literacy: the 'autonomous' and the 'ideological'. The former remains relevant in schooled literacies of the moment and refers to the blanket teaching of decontextualised functional skills - such as phonic recognition - that are believed to be *automatically* empowering, 'inevitably' enhancing cognition and life chances. The 'ideological' model is culturally sensitive to variable contexts, taking into account the uses and valuing of multi-literacies, and a large number of associated socio-economic factors.

The premise is that literacy is not simply a mental phenomenon, but an achievement based on “changing patterns of participation” (Gee 2015, p.36) that are:

always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. It is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being ... It is not valid to suggest that “literacy” can be “given” neutrally and then its “social” effects only experienced afterwards.  
(Street 2003, p.77-78)

Street claims that increased critical engagement with social theory and practical educational applications since the inception of NLS, have seeded debates across formal and non-formal learning contexts, and also within policy-making circles. Here lies the relevance of his theorising to my research, in that media-related literacy events and practices in the primary and early secondary years are largely confined to the non-formal, and necessarily implicate understandings of the social, the contextual and alternative representational modes of address. The widespread use of digital media tools and technologies across contexts makes explicit NLS advocates’ original insight that “literacy relates to more general issues of social theory regarding textuality, figured worlds, identity and power” (Street 2003, p.87).

Another member of the initial NLS group was Gee, who has recently reflected on its seminal work (2015). He proposes that a new movement called ‘The New *Literacies* Studies’ carries over the NLS argument about written language into the digital age: rather than ‘new ways of studying literacy’, it is about “studying new types of literacy beyond print literacy, especially ‘digital literacies’ and literacy practices embedded in popular culture” (Gee 2015, p.44). Drawing on Scollon and Scollon (1981), Gee raises the problematic and garlanded dominance of ‘essayist-prose style’ (or ‘essay-text literacy’) in contemporary schooling, and its constraining impact on modern consciousness. In summary, it is proposed that the insular focus on lexis and the relationships between sentences exacts a cost:

With the heightened emphasis on truth value, rather than social or rhetorical conditions, comes the necessity to be explicit about logical implications.  
(Gee 2015, p.39)

My account reasons that meaning-making with media, not least because of the audience factor and the material embodied nature of its tools and processes, goes some way to addressing the limitations that prose places on both ‘perceptual

intelligence’ (Gee 2015, p.37, drawing on Hawkins 2005), and the provocatively identified “effacement of individual and idiosyncratic identity” (Gee 2015, p.39). Albeit that media production helpfully diversifies literacy, I now go on to investigate approaches to media education that seem to mirror socially constructed divisions between perceived types of intelligence.

### ***Media-making, phronesis and rhetoric***

Media education has defined sets of practices when it comes to theory and practice: rather than conceived as two facets of the same coin, they are more often taught with monocular vision. By and large Media Studies is concerned with the conceptual, and Media Production with practical industry training. This section of the thesis assumes a more holistic binocular view by looking at theories of practical media work in the lower school years, and how these could inform deeper understandings of junior multimodal capabilities and associated pedagogies.

Section A of this Chapter alluded to Eisner’s commitment to plural ways of knowing, and in so doing a link between the Greek ‘episteme’ – the rational pursuit of ‘true’ and universal knowledge – and present-day scientific research was suggested. There are two other constructs from the classics that can be affiliated with media composition practices, namely *rhetoric* and the less familiar *phronesis*. The former relates to practices of outward expression, the latter to knowledge drawn from practical wisdom, and both relate to themes in current progressive and socially-oriented teaching and learning discourses. These approaches are largely based on social constructivist learning theory (Freire 1996/1970; Dewey 1997/1938; Vygotsky 1978) and the development of media-rich ‘Connected Learning’ programmes developing in the US<sup>15</sup> (Peppler 2013; Ito et al. 2013; Cantrill et al. 2014). By uniting old and new thought on teaching and learning, I hope to advance some sobering theoretical continuity with history, which may check the volatile pendulum-like swing of fashionable or retrogressive ideologies.

Aristotelian thinking proposes that subject matter within practical life is contingent rather than necessary, and Eisner (2005/2002b p.193) uses this observation to argue

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<sup>15</sup> ‘Connected Learning’ is defined by three Learning Principles that are: a) interest-powered, b) academically-oriented and c) peer-supported, and three Design Principles that are: a) openly-networked, b) production-centred, and involve c) shared purpose (Ito et al. 2013)

the case for improved *artistry* in *teaching*, through deeper understandings represented by *phronesis*. The concept is also useful for articulating the kinds of knowledge gained in an aestheticised view of media production. This is understood as a practical domain in which seeming (audiovisual) inevitabilities could in fact be otherwise:

Practical reasoning is deliberative, it takes into account local circumstances, it weights tradeoffs, it is riddled with uncertainties, it depends upon judgment, profits from wisdom, addresses particulars, it deals with contingencies, is iterative and shifts aims in process when necessary ... It is not enduring and it is not foundational. Its aim is to arrive at good but imperfect decisions with respect to particular circumstances.  
(Eisner 2005/2002b, p.193)

The passage rehearses the kinds of dispositions often exposed at the video editing interface, as decisions are made ‘in flight’ (Eisner 2005/2002b, p.202). As Crawford (2009) and Sennett (2008) have argued in support of craft practices, practical knowledge is pragmatic and reflective: the to-ing and fro-ing between local and corrective action, and the exercise of judgment therein, are the defining qualities of *phronetic* knowing. As will be seen, the making and editing of short form video clips requires precisely this kind of negotiation and experimentation with audiovisual materials, in order to achieve what Goodman describes as “the rightness of fit” (1978) for particular meanings and effects.

Inspired by a prescient observation from Green (1995, p.400), Burn (2009, p.9) recruits *rhetoric* as an enriching and politicising strand in the understanding of moving image education (see also Robinson, M. 2013, for elucidation on rhetoric in modern curricula). To explore this further, it is worth noting that Greek philosophy was rooted in oral tradition which privileged language and demoted the status of the image as ephemeral (Eisner 2006). Forms of material *making* were then, and to an extent still are accorded the lower status of artistry, mimicry, craft or manual labour, categories which even amongst themselves are invested with sliding scales of cultural value (Frayling 2011). Writing on the other hand as a form of knowledge demonstration, has over centuries accrued academic value in contrast with the image. Burn (2009a), however, asserts that the technical and social affordances of digital media are set to unsettle the ‘natural’ order of cultural expression, claiming that

oracy (or orality - Ong 2002/1982) and rhetoric are in the ascendant. If true, then a reassessment of literacy and its communicative tools is overdue.

Burn argues for a mediating modality some way between reading modes of suspicion for ‘factual and untruthful’ *media* texts, and appreciation for ‘fictional and truthful’ *literary* texts (2009a; see also Burn 2011). A rhetorical approach seems to subsume both, and is rather:

more even-handed. It allows us to recognise duplicity, exploitation, and misrepresentation ... but also the stylistic properties of a text or an oral performance: how an idea is conveyed with passion and conviction, how an audience believes in a representation with its head and its heart .. how a text makes a truth claim, and what a reader makes of this ... [it] invokes the immediacy, performance and context of speech ... [in fact] orality and oracy may often be better metaphors for the communicative processes of new media than literacy, with its associations of the fixity, abstraction and temporal deferral of print.  
(Burn 2009a, p.9)

Burn’s appeal for even-handedness is welcome and reflects the tone and purpose of this enquiry. This research aspires to influence educators from all sectors to engage with digital media production with ‘head and heart’: thinking beyond *useful* knowledge and skills agendas, and in more critical and imaginative ways about the nature of communication.

Building more outward-facing educational experiences with media, acknowledges a potential audience and the school could be a safe practice ground for un-simulated digital interactions with ‘the outside world’. Clearly there is no imperative for an audience for learning to take place, but offering opportunities to communicate understanding in more dialogic and ‘participative’ ways represents for many, a more personally engaging and memorable experience. As Jenkins observes:

Media education needs to be framed for participants, a role distinct from yet closely related to both producers and consumers as they were classically conceived.  
(Jenkins 2011)

Burn and Durran sum up their understanding of how a person can become a literate media practitioner and speculate on the nuts and bolts of stewarding such an educational practice:



If media literacy allows us to engage in cultural practices through which we make sense of and take control of our world and ourselves, in expressive practices in which we represent ourselves and our ideas, and in critical practices in which we interpret what we read, view, play, then the final question is *how* does all this take place?  
(Burn and Durran 2007, p.16)

Their question introduces the following section that offers theories on the more granular aspects of audiovisual inscription.

### ***Media composition***

Media production seen as a form of active cultural expression through the metaphor of writing is an established analogy in the field (Sefton-Green 1998), however media *composition* (Reid 2007) is perhaps a more apt term for media inscription practices. The word is already strongly redolent of other art forms – music, painting, dance, photography and *mise-en-scène* in film production – and embraces the idea of the ‘artful’ combination and layering of audiovisual elements. Indeed, from a technological point of view, the recent conflation of expressive functionality into a tablet such as the iPad (used as a creative tool in mine and others’ research studies - Cannon et al. 2014; Potter and Bryer 2014) could be seen to materially occasion ‘synaesthetic experience’ (Sefton-Green 2005, p.109) on a mobile ‘multimodal mixing desk’ (Burn and Parker 2003, p.23).

Burn and Durran (2007) claim that cultural, expressive and critical processes related to literacy are bound together through an understanding of social systems of signification and the use of semiotic tools. However, semioticians’ preoccupation with the text, make it less of a useful analytical tool for my study, which is concerned with people and processes. A more anthropological approach to ‘writing’ with media, inspired by Alexander Reid<sup>16</sup>, will be grafted onto my understanding of production processes. A. Reid’s work on new media composition, digital rhetoric and the evolution of writing (2007) are relevant to my research questions in so far as they help to advance literacy as a social discursive practice. Wider and cross-disciplinary perspectives alleviate the potential for educational instrumentalism and narrow technologically deterministic practices.

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<sup>16</sup> For clarity from here on, I refer to the American Professor, Alexander Reid, as A. Reid and Mark Reid at BFI Education simply as, Reid.

Inspired by Massumi (2002) and poaching from other disciplines, Reid, A. develops the relation between cognition, ‘behaviour with symbols’ and social hierarchy, dating back to Paleolithic times. He claims that:

the adaptation of symbolic behaviour was largely about being able to gain a social, competitive advantage – both individually and socially (for one’s kin group). In short, symbolic behaviour has always been discursive and rhetorical ... it is our ability to store and process information in spaces outside our body that allows us to engage in the complex thoughts on which consciousness is founded.  
(A. Reid, 2007, p.25)

Importantly, for this author and for the purposes of this study, it is claimed that “modern consciousness and symbolic behaviour emerged together ... and that consciousness is indeed a product of the exteriorization of embodied mental processes” (A. Reid, 2007, p.25), rather than a product of the private rumination of the individual. This is not the forum for further discussion on consciousness but I include these deliberations here as they not only entwine cognition with making, they also re-locate the compositional process into “a material-historical-cultural-space” (2007, p.25). In this view, technologies become actors in these processes (along with human actors), neither reified nor objects of suspicion, but regarded “as elements in a distributed network of cognition” (2007, p.26). These ideas will be expanded in Chapter VI, congruent as they are with Jenkins et al.’s 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (2006) to be discussed shortly (most notably *Distributed Cognition* and *Collective Intelligence*). They help to frame the processes of media composition and literacy in a networked environment, as illustrated in my theoretical framework to follow.

Before concluding this section I would like to explain my adaptation of A. Reid’s term - instead of describing human expressive acts as ‘symbolic *behaviour*’, I prefer the term ‘*rhetorical performance*’. The word ‘performance’ is free from scientific associations of insular animalistic behaviour, conveying rather the conscious public enactment of identity through audiovisual representation and rhetorical expression. To be clear, I invoke the kinds of ‘situated identity performances’ related to Goffman’s (1990/1959) front stage / back stage selves, rather than that related to the market-oriented delivery of results. ‘Rhetorical performance’ is apposite as it

embraces the perceived agentive capacities of the maker, and the enabling and constraining factors related to: process, raw materials, hardware, software, textual conventions, audience, sites of production and sites of reception. The next section addresses learners' performance with new technologies, DV editing and the ways in which young people manipulate digital resources.

### ***Moving image literacy and editing***

Of the various forms of media production, my study focuses on DV and film, chiefly because the manipulation of time, image and sound is a levelling pursuit whose production processes function without bias towards the capacities of any particular social group. One of the defining creative acts in the production of moving image is the coherent editing of a film's 'assets' and resources, or as Potter describes it: "the organisation of intertextual space" (2012, p.141). Most Western individuals from infancy to adulthood, assuming they have access and resources, possess an accumulated repertoire of implicit moving image 'expertise' from years of 'passive' media viewing (Bazalgette 2010, p.7). In my experience, most people can draw on this knowledge to make simple still and moving image montages, but the seeming simplicity of unscrambling and cutting clips belies the open-ended artistry of what it is possible to achieve as one's skills develop. Potter's young participants identified (2012, p.141) that DV editing is an activity as rich in constructive frustration as it is in visual eloquence:

This process is more than the simple act of placing things in the right order and joining them together; it is an act of authorship and marshalling of key meaning-making resources into a cohesive whole.  
(Potter 2012, p.141)

As Potter notes, drawing on Loveless (2006), the *provisional* always unfinished nature of the digital draft is an enticing draw for children, and it is this very elasticity and reversibility that becomes a source of fascination. Iterative doing, undoing and redoing is routine in DV editing but young people's experience of the same in writing practice is a cause for shame, a visible reminder of rightness and wrongness, of competence and incompetence, followed by finite procedures to rectify that wrongness.

Potter's experiences editing with young children mirror my own, in that the grasping of even the most minor functionality produces quasi-euphoric feelings of control and satisfaction, at least initially. Indeed 'mistakes' are formative and more often experienced as play and fun, rather than failure. For those inclined to lock on to the 'possibility thinking' (Craft 2013) and guesswork inherent in editing, it is a practice that allows for processes of finessing and *oscillation* between modalities and modes of thought.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of DV editing is that its practitioners are liminally positioned, in active negotiation with elements in an 'in-between state' constituted by: the made/unmade, the complete/incomplete, the familiar/strange, play/work, determination/improvisation, fantasy/reality, front stage/back stage, and intuitive/conscious reckoning. Lanham, in a percipient text, expresses these tensions as 'binary' or 'bi-stable oscillation' (1993, p.81). He puts forward the idea that digitisation destabilises texts, which more easily enables Western culture's predisposition for oscillating between looking AT / THROUGH them. Looking AT refers to the stylistic surface of texts, while THROUGH refers to the putative world of abstractions that 'lie behind' them. Printed text makes these processes separate, controllable and finite, which he claims, "interfere[s] with our integrative powers" (Lanham 1993, p.81), whereas 'electronic text' combines and blurs them with rhetorical effect:

Rhetoric as a method of literary education aimed to train its students to toggle back and forth between AT and THROUGH vision, alternately to realise how the illusion is created and then to fool oneself with it again.... To feel that characteristic oscillation is to understand the decorum of that work ... *from the inside*. Such dynamic knowledge puts us *inside the work looking out*. (Lanham 1993, p.81, original emphases)

My thesis transposes Lanham's 'decorous trickery' (1993, p.81) of the 'electronic word' to the realm of the audiovisual, and re-casts production of this nature as a form of 'education in rhetoric'. It offers precisely that sense of inside out perspective, where perhaps *INTERACT* / THROUGH represents more apt terminology for digital meaning-making. It is possible that children from Key stage 1 (6 year olds upwards and possibly younger) can experience this irresistible oscillation to make meaning, in for example the process of DV editing, in ways that the process of writing arguably,

for some, delays, obscures or at worst, obstructs.<sup>17</sup>

In Section B I have discussed ways of conceptualising media composition and highlighted some possible frames for deeper understandings of its workings: the practical reasoning of *phronesis*, the affective potential of *rhetoric*, the modern relevance of *performance* with symbols and the ‘oscillating ontologies’ of Western perception as they pertain to DV editing. By articulating these frames I hope to suggest improved learning experiences for young people as they negotiate their relationship with the world and the media in which most of them bathe.

### **C. Media-making processes**

With technological innovation comes a reconfiguration of social arrangements, especially concerning new technologies related to the visual (Jewitt 2008). New communicative media enable us to perceive, assimilate, embody, transform and publish our understandings and identities in complex ways, that include and extend reading and writing. In terms of understanding the production and circulation of texts, theoretical frameworks drawn from Media and Cultural Studies, such as that espoused by Buckingham (2003, p.53) seem insufficient now as tools for explaining the nuances of digital interactions. Buckingham’s schema comprises four concepts: Production, Language, Representation and Audience which are comprehensive as regards understanding the codes, conventions and political economies of broadcast models, but seem lacking in terms of engaging with the affective, the aesthetic and the participative dimensions of digital media (Jenkins et al. 2006, 2016; Burn 2009a, p.6; Reid 2009; Thomas 2011).

### ***Approaches to literacy with ‘new’ media*<sup>18</sup>**

Perhaps it is the rate at which media tools and practices are successively and rapidly updated that fuels literacy traditionalists eagerness to sustain analogue ‘back to

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<sup>17</sup> Burnett et al. (2012) expound the concept of ‘(im)materiality’ in relation to digital meaning-making practices that may be helpful in this context. The term conveys: the recursive relationship between the physical and the representational; the importance of ‘siting’ in literacy events as an ongoing fluid negotiation (p. 8); and the salience to literacy of ‘de-centring situatedness’ (p.10) - all of which becomes significant in later discussions on spaces for transitions and translations of meaning.

<sup>18</sup> I describe media production as ‘new’ with some hesitation, as it inadequately describes communicative tools and practices that have been quotidian for many for more than a decade; only in the sense that they are continually *renewed* is the term useful.

basics’ tactics. In order to demonstrate the gulf that separates old and new ideation, I look at facets of the standard approach and then at alternative practices that address play, collectivity, the social and the nurturing of engagement.

Much current educational discourse on literacy pivots around ways of improving pupils’ competence in reading - mainly through mandatory phonics interventions and systematic testing therein (EEF 2015b; DfE 2015a), arguably easing the processes by which ‘the best that has been thought and said’ can be handed down (Alexander 2014, p.161; Gibb 2015b). This study seeks to loosen literacy from the grip of narrow definitions and imposed schemes, and to locate it firmly within the dynamics of everyday experience. A theory maintained by Potter, who upholds:

the ideological nature of literacy [with] its roots in lived culture, and in what people actually do and say as part of their daily existence ... which has unrecognised value and worth in narrow systems of education.  
(Potter 2012, p.3, drawing on Street 1995)

The view that “cultural practices are also literacy practices” (Potter 2012, p.3) necessitates a re-think of our ‘historical conjuncture’ (Grossberg 2013) and the classical ‘hierarchies of knowledge’ legacy alluded to earlier.

The entanglement of everyday digital media use, lived experience and the structures of mainstream educational practices is problematic, creating a locus of tension between teachers, students and stakeholders with other interests. Institutional structures such as: the national curriculum, SATS (Standard Assessment Tests), SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar) and phonics testing, textbook publishing, print-based examinations, and analogue assessment procedures, may start to be destabilised by grassroots local initiatives and digital innovatory practices (Pendleton-Jullian 2009; Cannon et al. 2014; Waugh 2015). In short, narrow and *measurable* directives stemming from common-sense ideologies (Abrams 2012) look to become increasingly irrelevant in flatter, digitally networked educational environments, where teachers and learners are able to create collaborative ‘literacy events’, many of which are rooted in the aesthetic of popular culture (Marsh 2010; Potter 2012, p.22; Buckingham 2014b; Parry 2014; Burnett and Bailey, 2014).

Jenkins et al.'s influential paper *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (2006) lists the social *skills* and cultural *competencies* with which the literate citizen, it is claimed, should be equipped to understand, engage with and produce media texts.<sup>19</sup> I absorb some of these concepts for use in my theoretical model to follow, as they chime with a more sophisticated and inclusive form of literacy, relevant to young people's lived lives. The elements asterisked below denote dimensions with particular resonance in my field of study. Jenkins et al. elevate human capacity for:

**Play:**\* experimenting with one's surroundings as a form of problem-solving

**Performance:**\* adopting alternative subjectivities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery

**Simulation:** interpreting and constructing dynamic models of real-world processes

**Appropriation:**\* meaningfully sampling and remixing media content

**Multitasking:** scanning the environment and shifting focus onto salient details

**Distributed cognition:**\* interacting with tools that expand mental capacities

**Collective Intelligence:**\* pooling knowledge and consulting with others toward a common goal

**Judgment:** evaluating the reliability and credibility of different information sources

**Transmedia Navigation:** following the flow of stories and information across multiple platforms and modalities

**Networking:** searching for, synthesizing and disseminating information

**Negotiation:** travelling across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms

(Jenkins et al. 2006, p.xiv)

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<sup>19</sup> There's an allure to creating and citing lists, and media education specialists are not immune to their putative power to sum up and simplify. I include them here as I am struck by the accumulative potential of these capacities to improve the life chances of many young people.

The capacity for: **Play** (Vygotsky 2002/1933; Marsh 2009; Koh 2014; Wohlwend and Peppler 2015), **Performance** (Merchant 2006; Potter and Gilje 2015), **Appropriation** (Manovich 2001; Knobel and Lankshear 2008, 2010), **Distributed Cognition** (Loveless 2006, p.7, 2008, p.64; A. Reid, 2007) and **Collective Intelligence** (Burn 2009a, p.20; Kafai and Peppler 2011; Thomas 2011; Ito et al. 2013) all foster dispositions for social, material and virtual interactions with local and wider communities, suggesting the need for radical shifts in thinking in relation to literacy, pedagogy and practices of consumption and production.

Jenkins and others (Potter 2012, p.29; Merchant 2010) urge that alternative learning paradigms and pedagogies be sought to cultivate *engagement* in addition to skills, to secure full participation as transmedia social actors. Furthermore, Merchant (2010) asserts that media literate practitioners rely on cross-platform competencies and on “the spirit, habit and skills of inquiry” (Merchant 2010 p.105, citing Qian 2009) in equal measure. So literacy constitutes far more than just the ability to (mechanically) read and write, it is a condition and a disposition to engage with a range of social and digital environments. Later I will examine the ways in which pedagogy might develop so as to manage the necessary ‘climate change’ in the classroom, precisely to propagate such a spirit. Before this, I look at the importance of ‘signal’ discrimination amongst the ‘white noise’ overload of digital information.

### ***Media composition and curation***

This research embraces the above capacities linked to media production by offering participants the freedom to experiment with the digital tools and software at hand, and by encouraging the use of audiovisual language to shape and order form out of a perceived chaos of possibility (Eisner 2005/1985, p.100; Potter 2012, p.43). Potter sums up the form-making processes of selection, composition and distribution of media texts both as an important ‘new’ media practice and as an act of *curation*. For him Curatorship is the fourth C, after the Cultural, Critical and Creative<sup>20</sup> social functions identified by various agents and commentators (Burn and Durran 2006,

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<sup>20</sup> The 3 C’s framework is deployed in ongoing EU-funded research into ways of supporting film literacy in various film education settings (FLAG, 2013, 2015). See Appendix F, for a one-page summary of an envisaged comprehensive framework for film education initiatives in Europe and beyond.



2007, p.11; BFI 2008; Bazalgette et al. 2011; Potter 2012 p.38). The notion of curation attends to the iterative and performance aspects of digital media-making, as well as to the impermanence and fragility of digital identities formed in online spaces:

It is a new form of cultural production that is pitched part way between making and sharing, creating temporary collections for specific purposes, and then dismantling them again.  
(Potter 2012, p.181)

My account does not intend to engage specifically with relationships between *identity* formation and media-making, but there are two further dimensions appended to curatorship that are relevant to my questions, namely the critical and the affective. This is on the basis that the practice of creating and assembling digital resources often involves making specific critical choices for specific emotional or narrative effects.

The DV editing process in particular teems with tiny judgements based on ill-defined emotional, aesthetic and cultural sensitivities, which unite to offer a sense of what ‘feels right’. Learners can be encouraged to articulate these choices and make explicit these sentiments, to bring about a reflexive learning experience. It is in these ways that media composition can be seen to support literacy and learning, distinguishing itself from traditional practice, as social and embodied. Audiovisual embodiment plays an important role in the development of an inclusive approach to literacy, whereby meaning-making processes are rendered concrete, accessible and personally-involving (Blum-Ross 2014).

### ***The Affective***

This narrative suggests that the plasticity of digital media promotes enhanced meaning-making opportunities in terms of the potential for revising and remixing content (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001; Knobel and Lankshear 2008). Leander and Franks (2006), however, in their study of young people’s online practices with images, question a primarily *semiotic* orientation to learning with media texts. Firstly, they claim that multimodality as a discipline tends to elide particular digital resources (linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial) under one umbrella, which fails to attend adequately to the specificity of each mode; secondly, they argue that

multimodality focusses on meaning-making at the expense of ‘aesthetic attachment’. For them, multimodal advocates operate a deficit model in which:

The relations of persons to texts are strategic and rational, involved in ‘design’ and ‘work’, including the ‘design’ of ‘social futures’ (New London Group 1996), rather than embodied, sensual, and involved in personal attachments and cultural affiliation.  
(Leander and Franks 2006, p.186)

So Leander and Franks call for a uniting of media texts with a differentiated aesthetic dimension, that is, with the sensorial, the affective and the corporeal. An additional observation supports what has already been argued above in relation to the dynamics and constitution of socio-cultural phenomena:

Greater attention to aesthetic attachments helps us understand how imaging practices, in addition to expanding the canon of traditional literacy, constitute social relations and social capital.  
(Leander and Franks 2006, p.185)

Arguments relating ‘imaging practices’ to social equity are supported by Potter (2012, p.28), and are reflected in Burn’s call for an inclusive ‘poetics of media education’ (2009b). For these commentators, as one makes media there is a need for a balanced understanding between the semiotic, the aesthetic, the ludic (the playful), the popular and the critical dimensions of the work in hand (Bazalgette and Buckingham 2013).

Further, Dezuanni (2014) develops a related and possibly overlooked aspect of media production which foregrounds the affective and physical relationships between the human and *non*-human (but notably *man-made* and commercially driven) elements within digital making settings. Whilst Dezuanni regards digital makers as ‘actors in a network’, which could seem constrained and sterile, he is mindful of agentive relations between the affective and the haptic (related to touch) in the *networked* teaching environment. For this study these become important factors in consideration of the optimum conditions for reaching new complex, literate states of being.

It does appear then, that digital making engages with various aspects of everyday living and social phenomena from the creative and the cultural, to the affective, the

cognitive and the material. My account suggests that a combination of these factors comes into play in the construction of film and media texts, and occasions the exercise of critical thinking (Buckingham 2003; Burn and Durran 2006, 2007). Moreover, marginalising this more abstract strand of media education makes for less personally meaningful, and perhaps more ‘*re-productive*’ practical tasks. Similarly on the academic circuit, less critically-oriented commentary on media function, use and production in society stand to hinder traction of the same, in core school curricula. The next section addresses my third question related to discursive factors affecting media-making in schools, by offering a critique of idealistic, populist portrayals of everyday media production.

### ***Cyber-libertarianism and media production***

The subtitle of this section refers to an academic standpoint that rallies around the alignment of human development, democracy and technological advance. As there are powerful social and commercial forces that stand to gain from the promotion of such a view, and as schools are implicated in this nexus, the cyber-libertarian trajectory merits some interrogation. For commentators such as Gauntlett (2011a) and Shirky (2009, 2011) the performance of online ‘show and tell’, such as that displayed on many YouTube channels, is a cause mainly for celebration, while criticality and political engaged commentary seem to be consciously bracketed. A version of social reality is painted in which many seem to be already superior crafters and media-makers, possibly already equipped with many of Jenkins et al.’s (2006) 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

Some potential macro repercussions of the populist approach number as follows: determining forces go unquestioned, ideologies become entrenched, and monolithic ‘self-evident’ patterns of thought are given credence and built into the social firmament (Manovich 2001). At micro level, rhetorical and universalising Web 2.0<sup>21</sup> discourses (coupled with the endemic discursive ‘derision’ mentioned earlier), help to render media-making inevitable and obvious. So much so, that studying media texts of any kind equates to ‘soft subject’ fun and triviality in the wider public debate

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<sup>21</sup> ‘Web 2.0’ refers to the shift from user consumption of web content and directory searches (taxonomies) to user-generated content, tagging (folksonomies) and participatory practices, such as blogging and wiki development.

(Buckingham 2014a, Laughey 2012). In later Chapters, my material illustrates the ways in which young people give unwitting ‘consent’ to common-sense thinking in relation to film-making practices, the ‘cinema-dream’ (Furstenau & MacKenzie 2009) and the world of work.

Williams (1961) asserts that a cultural practice, text or artefact cannot be understood in isolation from the historically situated ‘structure of feeling’ from which it emerges. The ‘structure of feeling’ is a key formulation in Cultural Studies, describing the relationships between constantly shifting cultural production and the fixity of socio-cultural institutions. Discursive processes, Williams claims, are paradoxically both fugitive and defined within a framework: they encapsulate both the rigidity of institutionalised codes, “[whilst operating] in the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity” (1961, p.64). It is the very elusiveness of discourse that makes its articulation an important part of intellectual work. ‘The structure of feeling’ will be revisited in Chapter VI as a useful analogy related to the tensions in contemporary classroom practice.

In his book *Making is Connecting* (2011), Gauntlett gives voice to both on and offline creative communities and celebrates social engagement through new technologies. However, his view has been critiqued for neglecting socio-economic structures and conferring agency-giving powers on technology. Both sides of the argument are discussed in a conversation with contributors to the journal MERJ (Gauntlett 2011b), during which Gauntlett claims to be redressing the imbalance caused by more sceptical colleagues’ critique of Web 2.0 celebratory rhetoric (Buckingham 2010). My thesis argues that choosing not to engage critically creates a layer of insulation between rhetoric and social change. Although he concedes that creating and participating online *is* a political act, he opts to engage with social ‘conviviality’ (Illich 1973) rather than with social equitability, and the political implications are questionably secondary:

Taken bit by bit, it’s small stuff. Each little pebble of creative activity is easily lost in the general landscape, which is dominated by various big beasts such as social institutions... But those pebbles all add up, and *cumulatively* could reach as high as any of the big beasts.  
(Gauntlett 2011a, p.233, original emphasis)

Gauntlett frames the ‘pebbles’ (media texts) as the effects of democratic emancipation, rather than as rich pickings in a global web of socio-economic interrelations. There is some confusion over the target audience for this text, but overall, my contention is that as an optimistic thesis on digital ‘creativity’ takes holds in public consciousness, this perspective simultaneously feeds the bracketed ‘big beasts’ (Gauntlett 2011a, p.233) and fails to improve the profile of media education in terms of curriculum development and pedagogy.

While disagreeing with some of Gauntlett’s arguments, McDougall offers a more conciliatory assessment by drawing out the ways in which *Making is Connecting* offers a welcome counterpoint to prevailing ‘technological moral panics’:

[taking] us beyond instrumental notions of assessing creative practice or teaching with new media into a more far-reaching and political view of how human beings are finding new ways of making their mark on the world, contributing to culture and ‘doing it for ourselves’.  
(McDougall in conversation with Gauntlett 2011b, p.120)

Despite McDougall’s affirmation that the text is cogently argued ‘essential reading’ for media educators, Buckingham (2010) critiques several aspects of Gauntlett’s work. For example Buckingham re-affirms: *consumption* as the primary pattern of digital media engagement; the commercial gains to be made on account of ‘loser-generated content’ (2010, p.7, drawing on Petersen 2008); the uneven levels of participation; and finally the ‘usual (middle class) suspects’ as the primary digital content *creators*. Moreover, Buckingham questions the sophistication, abundance and creative potential of ‘home-mode’ (2010, p.6) output and denounces ‘populist cyber-libertarianism’ (2010, p.4) as a form of technological determinism: “a view of technology as somehow autonomously producing social change” (2010, p.4). Contrary to what the rhetoric around ‘digital natives’ suggests (Prensky 2001), access alone does not equate to aptitude in textual production, nor to social fulfilment or the inevitable desire to share.

According to Buckingham, and from my own informed subjectivity, it falls to schools to deliver the opportunities, competencies and motivation for media craft skills to be distributed more evenly, furnishing opportunities that students may not

otherwise encounter (Buckingham 2007). My enquiry takes its cue from Williams (1961), by unpacking both structure (civic and semiotic) *and* feeling. These are understood as *interdependent* elements in relation to the processes of media composition and those of investigating social phenomena. As such, this multi-perspectival approach goes some way towards elucidating my research design, as well as issues related to composition and pedagogy with digital media, and the prevailing social conditions of possibility.

In Section C, I have explained some of the characteristics that distinguish digital making as a new literacy practice, drawing out specific aspects – the compositional, the affective, the critical – for more detailed commentary. The next section engages with the work of teachers and the potential within digitised spaces of practice. I look at the ways in which pedagogy might benefit from more fluid and dynamic relationships between its epistemological, ontological and axiological dimensions (Thomson et al. 2012, p.9) - terms which will be explained in more depth towards the end of Section D.

#### **D. Media pedagogies and sites of learning**

In the introduction to an early text on media teaching and learning, Buckingham identifies media education as an embattled practice straddling the disciplines (Buckingham 1990, p.14), an observation as applicable now as it was then. Media production is variously housed within Computer Programming (ICT), Film and Media Studies, English, Drama and Art & Design, often down to random ‘teacher-film/media-enthusiasts’. This discursive positioning, and indeed the earlier conflation of aesthetic dimensions of learning with social capital (Leander and Franks 2006), animate debates over the value and function of media production. Section D investigates the ways in which this very reach is both problematic and generative, by looking at the nature of production spaces and possible philosophical paths to new pedagogies.

A central issue twenty-five years ago that still inheres, was how to manage media learning’s relation to other curriculum areas, and to ‘subject English’ in particular (Bull 2012). Freedman, recognised that *reading* texts is a context-bound social activity for which:

...we need to offer a greater plurality of possible forms of response. What is needed is an area in which students can transform texts without an externally imposed gulf between reading and responding.  
(Freedman 1990, p.211)

Personal subjective response, Freedman lamented at the time, was something to be recognised but *moved beyond*, so as to re-produce more ‘valued’ prescribed readings, often of the kind required to pass exams.

Freedman’s misgivings were grounded in a pre-digital pedagogy, but now that textual responses *can* be mediated in multiple modes, the ‘area’ in which young people can ‘transform texts’ with ‘plural responses’ is tangibly realised through the composition and distribution of digital media on virtual platforms (Potter et al. 2009). Here lies the tension with the ways in which teaching and learning are traditionally managed. Orthodox pedagogy revolves around individual, linear and mono-modally realised ‘progression’ towards prescribed standards. The relevance of many of these practices is at odds with living in a social, multimodal ‘networked public’ (boyd 2008; Ito 2009) and many teachers live with this ‘ontological schizophrenia’<sup>22</sup> on a daily basis. The following sections look at ways of reconceptualising the teaching environment and roles within it.

### ***Habitus and the borderlands***

Burn and Durran’s (2006, 2007) research based on classroom production practices with secondary students, asserts the potency of ‘interstitial’ space, that is, the space between perceived primary objectives and actual practices. They posit that it is in these transitional spaces that student knowledge and aspirations could be ‘mobilised’ to encourage social ‘participation’ through the processes of digital making. The fertile interstices, it is claimed, are “exactly the space education is best suited to occupy” (Burn and Durran 2006, p.274). At the time the authors referred to virtual space, as that located between domestic and professional video camera usage, but with the mushrooming of amateur digital devices, ‘the interstitial’ could now accurately describe the space between home and school. Many children and young people become familiar with media production in the home context, practices which

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<sup>22</sup> The phrase ‘ontological schizophrenia’ comes from Lanham (1993, p.81) who uses it to describe the ironic tension between Plato’s ‘rant’ against writing as an expressive output, and - his prose output.

are largely ignored by school systems. As Burn and Durran's research indicated, the need to draw on this implicit knowledge and expertise is now more pressing as the differential between school and domestic practices widens (Instrell 2011).

The fact that the default state for the development of new technologies is '*in flux*', means those teachers interested in the liminal zones might be the professionals in the social sphere most suited to engage with what Sennett has described as "a live edge, a porous membrane" (2008, p.234). The analogy is developed by Potter (2011) and McDougall and Potter (2015), who advance that traditional top down pedagogies – with teachers positioned as experts - may need to adapt to contingent shifting terrain. Their proposal is that edge conditions could be made more supple and permeable to the media skills, dispositions and consumption habits many young learners acquire beyond school parameters.

The current *boundaries* between school, home and the outside world, could be re-conceived as *borders*, with all the generative ambiguities that permeability introduces. For Sennett, both are 'sites of resistance': whereas boundaries "resist contamination, exclude and deaden ... borders [are] a site of exchange as well as of separation" (2008, p. 231). For example, a Cultural Studies emphasis would invite and value popular culture into media composition and pedagogic practice, in ways that critically integrate what students have assimilated from public discourse (Buckingham and Sefton-Green 1994, Buckingham 2014b). An Arts and Humanities emphasis would invite aesthetic and cultural affiliations into media composition in ways that creatively integrate students' personal interests (Burn 2009b, 2013).

An additional example of the ways in which sites of learning with media can be imagined is offered by Pendleton-Jullian (2009), who adumbrates the design of a network of technical innovation hubs, and the manner in which they might interact with traditional social institutions. She uses a metaphor from the natural world – the *ecotone* - to describe the juxtaposition of disparate cultures. The ecotone is a fertile edge-zone where different eco-systems collide, such as estuarine deltas or the borders between rivers and mangroves. Organic life at these junctures is said to be rich in biodiversity, a zone where organisms *adapt* in order to sustain and/or create new life. The metaphor is a useful analogy for explaining the potential at the intersection between media ecologies of everyday life and the often ponderous



workings of the education systems. Could it be that the ecotone is nature's equivalent of Bourdieu's (1984) *habitus*?

Burn (2009) recoups *habitus* to describe the school territory in which media texts – especially those drawn from *popular* aesthetics - meet educational experience. This is a zone where objective procedures:

meet, merge, collide with subjective, embodied experience, aspiration, desire ... In Bourdieu's scheme [*habitus*] is the system of dispositions in which objective structures meet subjective thoughts, actions and perceptions. (Burn 2009a, p.11)

Following Buckingham and Sefton-Green (2003), he adds a simple suggestion that a route through the complexity of this environment might be facilitated through the agile guidance and intuitive sense of a teacher:

A mediating force in an otherwise endless speculation about the determining effects of structure or agency is *pedagogy*, conceived broadly here as an intervention to promote *critical* understanding. (Burn 2009a, p.11, my emphasis)

The learners' dispositions referred to above are those that embrace creative possibility in relation to the criticality, aesthetics and pleasures of media production. Rather than servile clerks (Crawford 2009) or technicians (Ball 1995) who deliver approved versions of literacy, Burn conceives of English teachers in particular, as dynamic facilitators whose embrace of media's potential fosters flexible and responsive formal learning environments. In non-formal 'third spaces' (Bhabha 1994; Soja 1999; McDougall and Potter 2015) the 'semi-permeable membrane' (Potter 2011, p.175) between school and home is a space for the transmedia 'translation' of cultural sensibilities. The protagonists in the field cited in this section are proponents of an inclusive and critical media education that 'levels the playing field' in terms of social and cultural participation.

### ***Mobilisation and participation***

Consistent with McDougall and Potter's 'verbs of pedagogy' and in contrast with the prevailing 'nouns of the curriculum' (2015, p.206) some suggest that '*doing* text' is a more apposite way of describing pedagogy with digital media and (subject) English

(Waugh 2016, in press), which raises the issue of place and context. Spaces of learning are no longer necessarily fixed in geographic domains structured with hierarchies of expertise, but they are variously located sites of exchange and reciprocity, more akin to Wenger's 'community of practice' (1998) or Sennett's 'joined skill in community' (2008, p.51).

The after school club could and often does offer a valuable site for discovering "relations between different patterns of thought" (Sefton-Green 1990, p.150), through the use of home-spun media expertise, creative experimentation, play and display. Non-formal 'third' spaces of learning offer more 'wobble-room' to make new and tentative connections, and to accumulate and express tacit knowledge (Eisner 2005/2002a, p.210; Polanyi 2009/1967). Such knowledge can be construed as a form of incremental 'intuitive wisdom' - cited as valuable in craft processes (Sennett 2008, p.51) and reminiscent of Eisnerian practical *phronesis* – forms of knowing which are routinely denied value in more academic systems of education.

At the end of Section C, I alluded to three dimensions in the teacher habitus that might help articulate a climate conducive to the development of learners' intuitive or tacit knowledge. I refer to Thomson et al.'s *Signature Pedagogies* (2012), which reported on teaching strategies in the Creative Partnerships programme. According to the report, creative practitioners were found to combine the *epistemological* – the building of new knowledge and know-how; the *ontological* – our orientation to being and meaning-making in the world; and the *axiological* – an intrinsic commitment to the value of collaboration and co-operation (2012, p.9). To underpin a report on pedagogy by drawing on wide interdependent dimensions of human experience – or 'life-worlds' - is a bold and necessary step to restrain instrumental trajectories and to anchor our understanding of ethical and successful learning environments.

As the report acknowledges, it is difficult to separate the three dimensions in practice but it is important to spell out the theoretical relevance of this approach to my research. *Signature Pedagogies'* findings resonate with media composition pedagogies as they are understood in this thesis, in a number of ways:

- teaching and learning are seen as both participative *and* acquisitive, presenting a challenge to 'default pedagogies'

- the authors acknowledge the parts played by history, tradition and policy regimes in the makeup of ‘schooling spaces’
- they stress the importance of ‘sociality’ (Bragg and Manchester 2011) and ‘collegial’ practice
- mobility, hybridity and permeability (Haas-Dyson 1997) are prerequisite elements in an inclusive creative learning space
- there was a dual commitment to the present and future ‘horizons of possibility’ (Thomson et al. p.9)

The report took much of its analytical inspiration from Delors’s ‘four pillars of learning’ (1996) - summarised here as learning how to know, to do, to live together and to be – fundamental aspects of living which invoke “in-the-moment-ness” (Thomson et al. 2012 p.32). This key finding is salient to my account as it brings to mind the self-conscious and tacit present-ness of shooting film and DV editing. These activities sit in stark contrast with school priorities, such as curriculum compliance, future-oriented tests and inspections, experienced by some as punitive, and by many as remote and impersonal (Potter 2012, p.13).

In an earlier section I drew on the duality of Williams’ metaphor for culture - the ‘structure of feeling’ - in relation to the critical and affective aspects of media education. I suggested that these were two sides of the same coin which were difficult to analyse in isolation. It is interesting to see *Signature Pedagogies* extract similar significance from Williams’ articulation (1977, p.132), citing it at length and using it to explain:

presentism through art forms: “meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations... characteristic elements of impulse restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity” ... It is this newness, Williams suggested, that makes activities meaningful on an affective as well as an intellectual level.  
(Thomson et al. 2012, p.32)

There is an ‘in solution’ (Williams 1977, p.133) quality to the nexus of practice and structure, and thought and feeling described here that invites comparison with

Lanham's AT (*INTERACT*) / THROUGH meaning-making construct recounted earlier. Oscillation between the elements in spaces of learning relies on fluid, permeable relations. Feeling alert to present patterns of thought, sensitive to the material environment, and competent with the digital tools in hand, is a potent mix for the advance of new thinking about literacy and its link with media expertise (Burnett et al. 2012).

The dynamics of media composition pedagogies and practices can be traced back to the 'learning-by-doing' and 'reflection and action' principles of the progressive movement (Dewey 1997/1938; Freire 1993/1970), and these pertain in the post-analogue age, but commentary from the field suggests that the time is ripe to enable more sophisticated mutual engagements between teachers and learners than even those for which progressive pedagogies advocated<sup>23</sup>.

We have seen that the advent of digital media and associated technologies diversifies concepts of literacy, fragments learning spaces and hybridises tools:

There is more to be literate about and, because of the connection with pedagogy, more to educate about and more to be educated by. (Potter 2009, p.64)

The attendant implications for pedagogy require leaps of faith from all stakeholders (teachers, students, families) in an environment less driven by adherence to standards and outcomes, and more by choice, agency and opportunities for learners to take responsibility for their own learning, with digital media participation a central component. What follows is a strategy for organising these discursive constructs into an intelligible frame and for clarifying how media-making in schools connects with broader social cycles of cultural production.

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<sup>23</sup> A network of educators, academics and youth workers in the US called the *Connected Learning Alliance* (2015), supported by public/private partnerships and the MacArthur Foundation, work with these very principles to create a network of 'Cities of Learning' - "a world where all young people have access to participatory, interest-driven learning that connects to educational, civic, and career opportunities." Available at: <http://clalliance.org/why-connected-learning/> (Connected Learning Alliance 2015) [Accessed 3 October 2015] (See also, Ito et al. 2013).

### E. Cycle of Digital Making: a theoretical framework

This section elaborates a theoretical model for viewing contemporary understandings of literacy and pedagogy enhanced by digital making and sharing practices. In the first instance I was inspired by Ross's (1993) theoretical model, which was in fact a reprisal of psychologist Harré's (1983) *Social Reality Matrix* (Figure 2). Harré's original matrix details stages of 'personal development' as a sequence of unceasing 'identity projects' (Ross et al. 1983, p.51; see also Giddens' 'reflexive project of the self', 1991, p.5), coupling personal development with the *expressive* dimension of human behaviour. More currently, links between identity 'performance' and digital media production have also been made by Potter (2012); to wit, the contemporary usefulness of Harré's model.

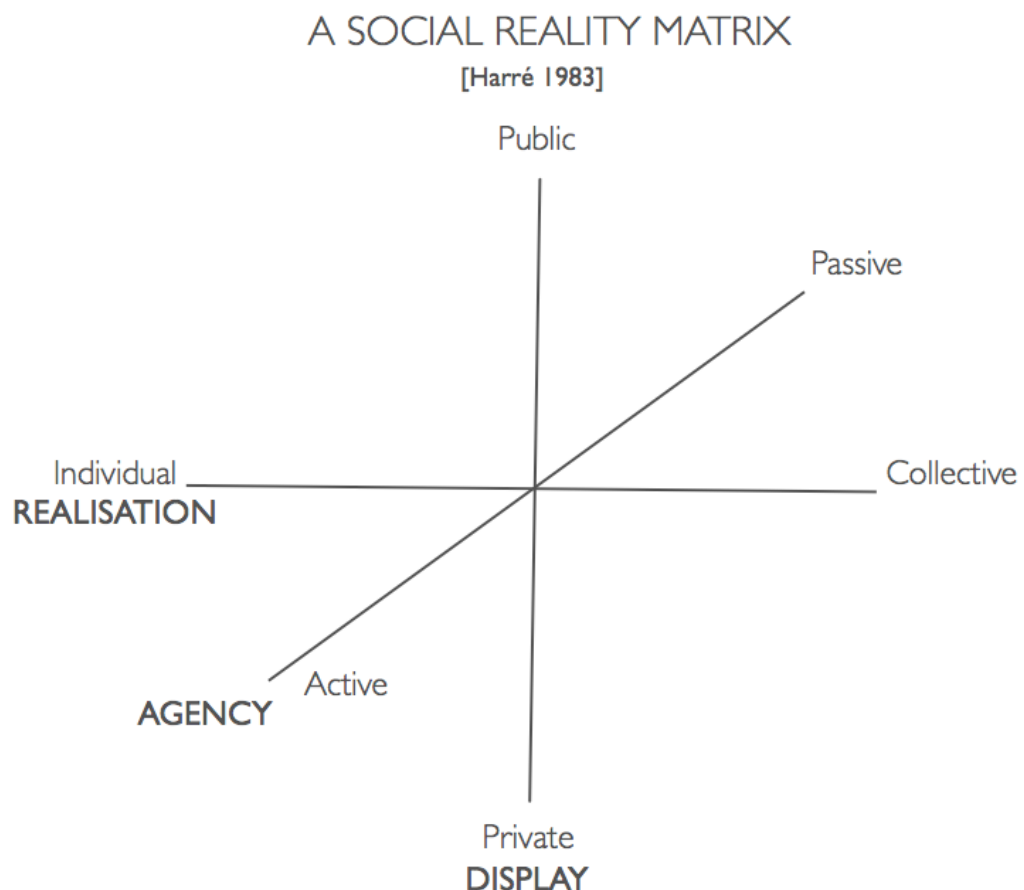


Figure 2: Harré's (1983) Social Reality Matrix (cited in Ross et al. 1993, p.51)

The horizontal, vertical and transversal axes in Figure 2 recall familiar paradigms for understanding the media landscape - **Private/Public display** (Goffman 1959; boyd 2008), **Individual / Collective Realisation** (Gauntlett 2011a) and **Active/Passive Agency** (Buckingham 2003; Buckingham and Sefton-Green 2003). It is proposed here that with some adjustment the matrix may help interpret the processes of digital making and eventually point to the ways in which literacy and pedagogy might be re-conceived for the digital age. Before describing this, I explain an important interim adjustment. With a prescient leap Ross (1993) deployed Harré's matrix as a premise on which to base improved ways of assessing artistic achievement in schools (Figure 3). A similarly embattled domain, the perceived ambiguities in measuring 'artistic merit' in the visual arts correspond with those in assessing media texts (Sefton-Green 2000, p.228). For Ross the appeal of Harré's matrix lay in "his emphasis on the *processes* of individual growth rather than the outcomes" (1983, p.51, original emphasis) which chimed with their mutual interest in aesthetic education and "*the development of the pupil and not the fate of the product*" (1983, p.51, original emphasis).

Crucially, Ross incorporated Harré's understanding of the cyclical phases of personal development and their association, with the life of circulating cultural products:

conventionalisation > appropriation > transformation > publication > conventionalisation

Ross laid this formulation over his 'arts curriculum cycle' and dispensed with the Agency transversal, resulting in a two-dimensional matrix (Figure 3), with arrows representing interaction between and amongst the quadrants. He argued that this provided "a means of mapping both productive and contemplative aesthetic activities" (Ross et al. 1993, p.52) through teacher-pupil dialogue.

Ross's cycle, highlighted in red, mirrors the now more visible processes of digital production, and his statement above emphasises the importance of pedagogy in heightening states of awareness and articulating processes of analysis, dialogue, reflection and action. In addition, there's a political and emancipatory inflection to Ross's model recalling Freire's (1993) concept of *conscientização*, or consciousness raising, a pedagogic approach supporting reflection and action - which is congruent with aspects of my research methodology to be discussed in Chapter III.

## ASSESSING ACHIEVEMENT IN THE ARTS

[Ross et al. 1993]

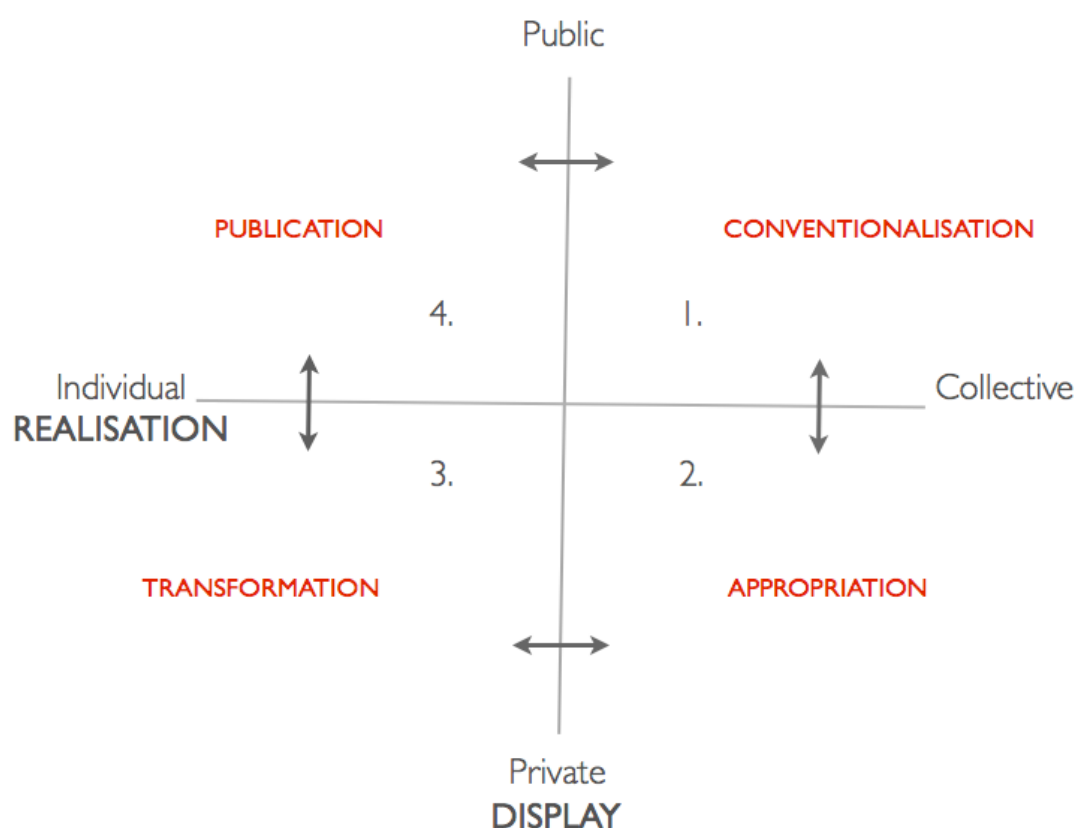


Figure 3: Assessing Achievement in the Arts (Ross et al. 1993, p.52)

### ***Cycle of Digital Making***

Figure 4 is my adaptation of Ross's work, reflecting the changes digitisation has wrought on cultural production. One of the main differences locates the learner at the centre of the cycle. Before interpreting the diagram any further, it is worth noting that matrices can seem either inherently rigid or enticingly unproblematic, however its subdivisions merely serve to contextualise this study. The schema is not intended as an infallible representation of a fixed and natural order or sequence, it is rather a heuristic onto which social processes might be provisionally mapped for the purposes of a considered 'version of events' in relation to the function of digital making.

As a consequence of converging, participative digital technologies (Jenkins et al. 2006, 2016; Thomas 2011; Merchant 2009) there has been a lowering of barriers to the production and dispersal of media texts, hence the removal of *Realisation* on the

horizontal axis and the re-insertion of Harré's *Agency*, which reflects, for some social actors, increased levels of social participation. Extra detailing such as dotted lines denote non-linear cross-pollination of domains and the proposed porous quality of social and pedagogic boundaries (McDougall and Potter 2015). The potential for the dissolving of traditional educational divisions as a function of digitisation was discussed earlier and the rationale for my 'digital adaptations' are outlined below.

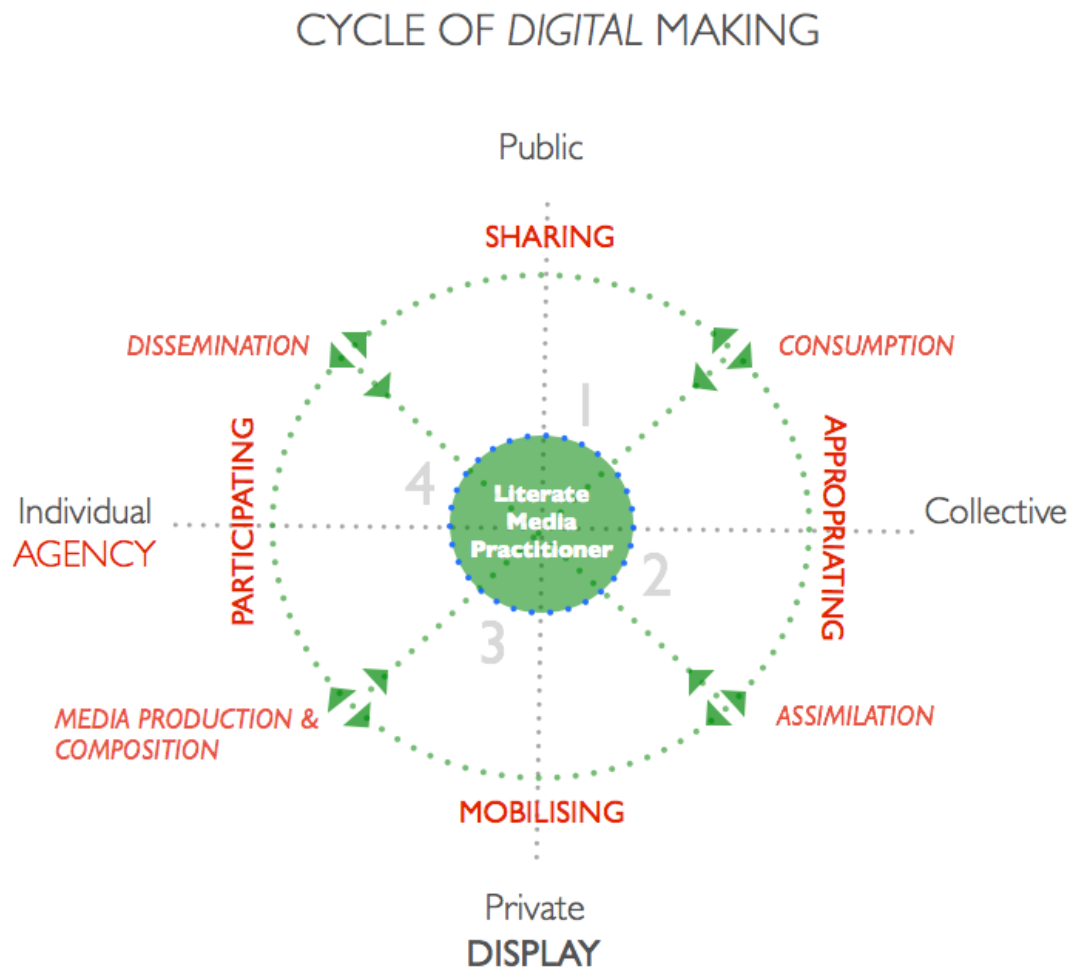


Figure 4: Cycle of Digital Making, adapted from Ross et al. 1993

Participants' actions whilst making with digital media are socially and publicly embedded in discourses associated with:

- **Consumption** – which replaces Ross's *Conventionalisation*, the latter being textually-oriented and the former process-oriented (Buckingham 2003)



- **Assimilation** - understood as a process of internalisation (Vygotsky 1978; Loveless 2006; Peppler 2013) and a perceived progression from selective acts of *Appropriation* (Jenkins 1992)
- **Production / Composition** – a key dimension of this account in which symbolic resources are selected, assembled, remixed, composed and curated on makers’ own terms for public display (Burn and Durran 2007; Knobel and Lankshear 2008; Potter 2012; Potter and McDougall 2015)
- **Dissemination** – replaces *Publication* as more apt terminology to describe the seed-like scatter of digital modalities on multiple platforms (Manovich 2001; Gauntlett 2011a)

Media practitioners – both teachers and learners - are perceived as active stakeholders operating along lines of continua, engaged in social iterative processes in the ‘raggy realm’ of actual practice. In line with the previously mentioned ‘verbs of pedagogy’, and in order to link the discourses, I have added gerunds that help to explain activities in the *transitional* spaces between quadrants, which correspond with agentic literacy and pedagogic practices and dispositions:

- **Sharing** – of symbolic resources in active engagement with texts and social practices in the public realm (Jenkins et al. 2006, 2016; Gauntlett 2007b; Merchant 2009; Thomas 2011)
- **Appropriating** – or ‘poaching’ of texts and practices in public discourse with which ‘affinity’ is felt by individuals or groups (Lévi-Strauss 1966; Jenkins 1992; Gee 2004)
- **Mobilising** – of a disposition for experimentation and action with multi-sensory resources, guided and coaxed by facilitative mentors (Vygotsky 1978; New London Group 1996; Cope and Kalantzis 2000; Burn et al. 2001; Burn and Durran 2006, 2007)
- **Participating** - in ways that augment social interaction and create diverse meanings and identities across different contexts (Merchant 2009; Bazalgette 2011; Burnett 2011; Potter 2012; Reid 2014)

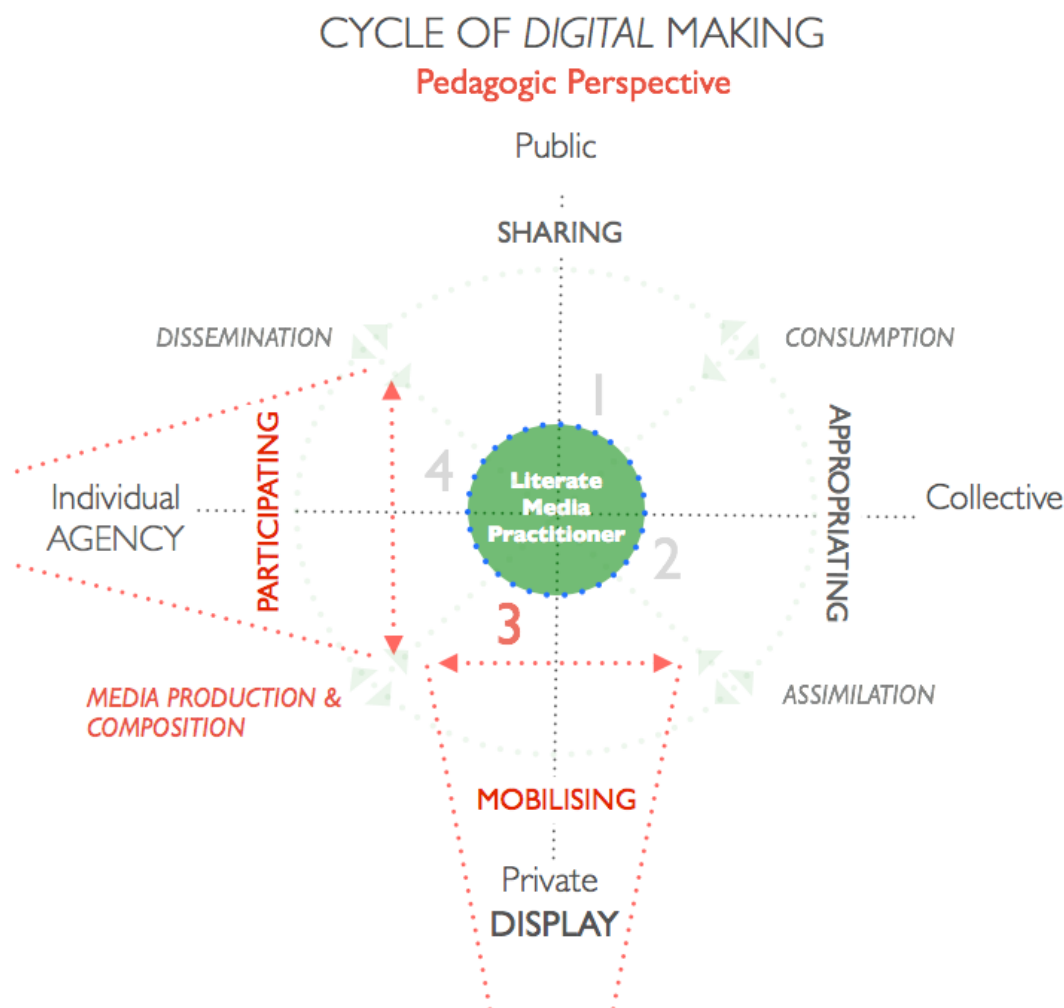


Figure 5: Cycle of Digital Making, pedagogic perspective, adapted from Ross et al. 1993.

This section has presented a productive distillation of the literature and the conceptual framework that grounds my thesis, namely the dimensions of a culturally situated cycle of digital making. Although it is anticipated that all dimensions of the cycle in Figure 4 will to some extent inform my study (especially with respect to my third question relating to discursive impact), I largely limit the scope of this research to Quadrant 3 (*Production and Composition*) and its boundary spaces (*Mobilising* and *Participating*), as graphically illustrated in Figure 5. These transitional areas marked out in red, represent the interstitial, ecotonal spaces (as described by Burn and Durran 2007, and Pendleton-Jullian 2009, respectively), where the dynamism of new literacy practices and pedagogies is best placed to flourish.

## F. Concluding Thoughts

One of my guiding impulses whilst compiling this literature review, drew on Burn's 'critical utopian' standpoint (2009), and this study aspires to maintain the same oxymoronic tension<sup>24</sup>. This means steering a middle course between on the one hand, cautionary scepticism towards "the extremes of cyber-optimism and Luddite denial ... [and] a world of technological determinism" (2009, p.23) and on the other, guarded optimism in support of a discernible groundswell of teacher empowerment and innovative creative practice (Teachmeet Wiki 2013; NUT 2014).

I have sought to examine the mêlée of discourses and theories related to pre-digital and moving image literacies, media composition and new pedagogic practices. The ways in which the socio-cultural context affects the function of literacy, the positioning of media production and cycles of digital making have been taken into consideration, as has academic commentary on craft, creativity and vocationalism. I have foregrounded certain traits of digital media production distinguishing it from traditional writing practices, and counselled approaches to learning more relevant to building media-making expertise. Finally, I have offered a reconceptualisation of the teaching milieu and put forward suggestions from the literature as to how it might become more attuned to the ebb and flow of social phenomena in the digital landscape.

Sefton-Green's *Mapping Digital Makers* (2013a) makes the case for developing:

an overarching conceptual framework to underpin curriculum thinking and innovation across discrete fields of action ... and creative production disciplines.  
(Sefton-Green 2013a, p.60)

My research seeks to fill the relative silence identified by his report, and others' accounts (Burnett 2009) that signal an absence of empirical evidence, suggesting that:

there is a real problem of collecting evidence about learning in the cutting-edge projects, of securing the status of such research, and of building up a broad-based, theoretically informed body of knowledge in this field.  
(Sefton-Green 2013a, p.60)

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<sup>24</sup> Delors' introduction to UNESCO's 'Learning – the treasure within' (1996) is entitled 'A necessary Utopia' which he conceives as a vital imaginary "if we are to escape from a dangerous cycle sustained by cynicism or resignation" (1996, p.20).

The next Chapter lays out the philosophical thinking that girds my methodology for constructing that ‘body of knowledge’, along with a rationale for the manner in which I have chosen to conduct my research.

## **Chapter III – Methodology**

### **A. Reflections on methodology**

I have examined the literature concerning media education practices in schools, and found production projects scattered throughout the curriculum and geographically dispersed in disparate agencies with differing agendas. It remains to establish a methodology that moves towards a holistic understanding of the digital environment and the processes involved. Such an understanding will help to explore my questions, which, to recap are:

*How does creative media work constitute a wider literacy in formal and non-formal school spaces?*

*What can traditional pedagogy learn from moving image production processes?*

*How do social discursive factors determine practical media work in schools?*

In pursuit of more clarity on what happens when young people engage in DV and film production in schools and the circumstances in which it takes place, a qualitative ethnographic study was conducted using a critical visual anthropological approach.

This Chapter begins with some reflections on my overall research approach and on formative scholarly influences. I discuss the ways in which epistemological and ontological issues have informed my methodological decision-making in relation to research principles, and offer an overview of current trends in educational research. I then outline the educational values that underpin my study, followed by a rationale for using techniques of Participant Observation and narrative representation. The rest of the Chapter is taken up with an explication of research settings and procedures, and the tools and techniques that were found to be most appropriate. The Chapter concludes with the limitations of my chosen methods, and issues of ethics and credibility that have been taken into consideration.

My research principles and methodological approach rest on a belief in interpretive multiplicity articulated through critical and imaginative reflection, rather than on a belief in a single re-presentable objective reality (Pring 2004; Lather 2006; Law and Urry 2003). This conflation of the reflexive and the interpretive links with Hall's writing on open-ended research practice. He refers to it as 'wrestling with conundra'

(1992, p.280) which expresses for him the infinite intractability of intellectual work, involving:

... contested, localized, conjunctural knowledges, which have to be debated in a dialogical way... a practice which always thinks about its intervention in a world in which it would make some difference, in which it would have some effect. Finally, a practice which understands the need for intellectual modesty.  
(Hall 1992, p.286)

I position my research, then, at the intersection between explorations of action-oriented praxis (Freire 1970/1993; Lather 1991; Mäkelä 2007) and tentative contextual understanding, irresolvable as it is. This entails: identifying my methods in such a way that other researcher-educators might respond to or adapt the actions taken (Bassey 1998); and deploying a reflexive stance to help counter researcher bias and “permit criticism” (Pring 2004, p.134). Both these measures are consonant with Hall’s dynamic epistemology whose precepts throw into question current educational research trajectories, many of which seek definitive solutions for improved school performance. The following section supplements the socio-cultural reflection above with a philosophical rationale and then situates the study within current research trends.

## **B. Methodological Justification**

### ***Ontological and epistemological reflections***

One might expect that research whose object of study concerns the processes through which we construct ‘mediated realities’ be conducted within a constructionist worldview, and indeed it is the case with this study, though it need not necessarily be so. A constructionist ontology is allied to an interpretivist epistemology, that is, it rejects deductive approaches to research that *test* theory, in favour of inductive strategies that tend towards its generation. Social ‘reality’ is viewed as a “constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation” (Bryman 2008, p.20), as further explained by Pring:

The world researched is affected by the research itself; our knowledge is a ‘construction’, reflecting the world, not as independent of our deliberations, but as something constructed by them.  
(Pring 2004, p.44)

As attested in the digital making cycle in Figure 4, my research predominantly concerns the tools, practices and human dimensions related to mediated meanings with which social phenomena are interpreted and understood. I thus subscribe to the above view that it is an “ongoing accomplishment by social actors” (Bryman 2008, p.20) rather than an external objective entity to be ‘acted upon’.

Particular world views affect research design. Some media education research is quantitative in nature, for example, it might set out to statistically prove the effectiveness of film and moving image literacy as a tool to improve writing, (Bradford City of Film 2010-2015) or assess progression in the reading of texts (Hill Bulman 2014). Such deductive research raises the axiological question of whether film education has intrinsic value. Is moving image literacy a worthwhile pursuit in and of itself in the pursuit of “human flourishing” (Heron and Reason 1997, p.275) or must it, to gain status and funding, be instrumentally positioned? There are benefits to this type of research in the short term, but it is not a good ontological fit with my study whose purpose is to reach rich understandings of the meanings that emerge through sustained interaction with young people and teachers engaged in media production.

Further, my researcher stance is shaped by a tripartite paradigm: constructionism, a participatory worldview, and a critical perspective. This is supported by accounts already mentioned - Thomson et al.’s (2012) commitment to a more transactional pedagogy, Jenkins et al.’s (2006) observations on participatory culture and Pring’s (2004) critique of dominant structures, respectively. Each of these scholars exhibit axiological concerns: the values-driven dimension to educational enquiry which is less theorised, and which ethnography is well suited to explore as a function of its concern with social relationships. This is acknowledged by Conteh et al. (following Heath 1983):

ethnography aims to provide a ‘cultural grammar’ or description of a group not individuals within the groups.  
(Conteh et al. 2005, p.xxi)

The participatory paradigm, presented by Lincoln and Guba (2000, p.168, drawing on Heron and Reason 1997), is of particular significance ontologically speaking, as it questions constructionism's perceived sidelining of the experiential, of practical knowing and relations within the learning environment (Heron and Reason 1997, p.275). This is relevant to my study in so far as media production is collaborative and has to do with the *interface* between material tools, practical skills, co-constructive assembly and the in-the-moment-ness of everyday living:

The participatory worldview allows us as human persons to know that we are part of the whole, rather than separated as mind over and against matter ... It allows us to join with fellow humans in collaborative forms of inquiry. It places us back *in relation* with the living world—and we note that to be in relation means that we live with the rest of creation as *relatives*, with all the rights and obligations that implies.  
(Heron and Reason 1997, p.277)

There is an analogue here with the more recent theories on practice of Dall'Alba and Barnacle (2007), whose work supports an emphasis on the ontological, on 'being' and 'becoming' in higher education. They claim an over-emphasis on epistemology, that is, on ways of developing "unproblematic knowledge transfer" (Dall'Alba and Barnacle 2007, p.680), a strategy that leaves the student to work out how best to integrate this knowledge into skilful practice. Their observation resonates with my account of narrow curriculum reform measures, and reflects the ways in which teachers' 'skillfulness', and the related ontologies of digital-media-enabled classrooms, remain under-theorised. Ethnography helps uncover the contradictions and common-sense assumptions which appear to underpin school practices and which determine the habitus of the social actors involved.

Dall'Alba and Barnacle reclaim what they consider to be a lost sense of wonder, passion and responsiveness in education (Loveless 2008b), in ways which conflate knowing, being, and acting (Dall'Alba and Barnacle 2007, p.686). This social, generative orientation parallels the mood of the media production environment and could revitalise pedagogical research agendas:

we do not primarily access things conceptually or intellectually, but, instead, through being constantly immersed in activities, projects and practices with things and others.  
(Dall'Alba and Barnacle 2007, p.681)



Law and Urry also note a shift in emphasis in research practice:

from epistemology (where what is known depends on perspective) to ontology (what is known is also being made differently). It is a shift that moves us from a single world to the idea that the world is multiply produced in diverse and contested social and material relations.  
(Law and Urry 2003, p.6, original emphasis)

They reflect on the political implications for research methods of social world enactments that can be made, unmade and re-made. Arguing that social inquiry is performative in nature, Law and Urry claim that it produces, at least partially, the object of which it speaks. This creates the conditions through which it is possible for social 'reality' to be multiple and flowing: a shape-shifting 'pluriverse' (Law and Urry 2003, p.8, cited as attributable to William James) in which movement, texture and the visual become part of the sense-making process. Such arguments imply:

the possible need to imagine a fluid and decentred social science, with fluid and decentred modes of knowing the world allegorically, indirectly, perhaps pictorially, sensuously, poetically, a social science of partial connections.  
(Law and Urry 2003, p.8)

The implications for formal, and particularly non-formal, school environments of a view of meanings as hybrid and workable are substantive. Lending formal ballast to the importance of different ways of *making* the known world, suggests that we are doing young people a disservice by underexposing them to wider, more dynamic epistemologies. These philosophical reflections on the liquid composition of social life point to more arts-based methodologies to understand and represent them (Harris et al. 2015).

### ***Creative Methods***

Law and Urry's support for a rapprochement with the arts suggests a sense in which enquiries are becoming un-tethered from traditional methodological moorings. This is reflected in the affirmations of Roberts (2008) and Denzin (2001). The former recalls the latter who likens:

... the role [of] researcher/ethnographer to a "literary and intimate" public

journalist—a view ... that strengthens the idea of ethnography "as a performer-centred form of storytelling" and adds that "a shared public consciousness is shaped by a form of writing that merges the personal, the biographical, with the public".  
(Roberts 2008, p.99, citing Denzin 2001, p.11)

Appeals to ethnography as constitutive of social life and to the blurring of the public and the private are evident here in Denzin's formulation. Such discourses feature in the field of media education in relation to issues of technological convergence, participatory social practices and increasingly the public, digitally mediated curation of identity (Potter 2012). For my purposes, a more flexible and creative approach to method, adds breathing room to my already hybrid participant-observer-practitioner-educator role, and in turn offers a fresh diverse perspective.

Just as Jones sees the role of sociologists moving towards artists/narrativists, "collage-makers, narrators of narrations, dream weavers ... [becoming] natural allies of the arts and humanities" (2006, p.67), there is latitude for media education researchers to follow a similar path, by incorporating and interpreting the moving image in their research. Not simply "'because the method should follow the object'" (Buckingham 2009, p.634), but because tools for the rich and varied collection and representation of material associated with young people's media learning, remain largely print-bound or in academic penumbra. It is time for media education researchers in particular to push the boundaries of the interpretivist paradigm and offer arts-based 'versioned meanings' not only of interview data, but also of still and moving image material. Research would thus include more visceral and embodied dissemination practices, with the audiovisual moving beyond the merely illustrative (Prosser and Loxley 2008), and towards a more reflexive modality into which performance might be incorporated (Orr 2013).

The argument that there is a proliferation of overlapping and interacting 'realities' to be explicated (Lather 2006), suggests it is incumbent on researchers to make an axiological commitment - to ground their interpretation in an ethical framework of educational values (Pring 2004, p.134). Indeed intrinsic guiding principles are often missing from utilitarian educational research whose methods are frequently geared towards conclusions decided a priori, rather than being open to contingency. With

the conspicuous exception of the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander 2010), the values and assumptions on which research questions are premised often remain unchallenged.

### ***Current educational research trends***

Some organisations and factions within educational research (Hattie 2012; Hattie and Yates 2014; EEF 2015a<sup>25</sup>) are concerned with determining the most efficient *means* of *measuring* learner ‘progress’ and relating that to both teacher and economic ‘performativity’ on the national and international stage (Pring 2004, p.115, drawing on Lyotard 1984; Barone 2007; Kaplan 2008, p.176; Ball 2013, p.57). Instrumental objectives largely underpin the popular *ResearchEd* (2015) conferences emerging from a UK grassroots teacher-led social media base. Their URL, *workingoutwhatworks.com*, gives a clear indication that consensus on *the ends* has already been established. One of the research methods advocated by this group and the Education Endowment Fund (EEF 2015a) is the use of quantitative Randomised Controlled Tests (RCTs) to gather evidence for improved academic results through positivist ‘interventions’<sup>26</sup>. The ‘grand narrative’ of ‘performativity’ and the narrow measurement targets inherent in RCTs seem at odds with the open-ended ‘intellectual modesty’ advocated by Hall (1992), and with the ten sharp, socially-grounded, public-facing suggestions for future educational research urged by Selwyn (2012a, p.213).

More evidence of the latter qualities in research would arguably go some way towards “addressing questions about the qualities which constitute or lead to a

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<sup>25</sup> In 2010, £110 million was diverted from the Free School Meals fund to set up *The Education Endowment Fund (EEF)*. This ‘independent grant-making charity’ is designed to distribute money to those who claim to be able to raise standards in ‘underperforming’ schools and reduce the (academic) ‘attainment gap’. It is also part of the government’s ‘What Works Network’ with a remit to “ensure that policy makers, practitioners and commissioners can make informed decisions based on impact and cost effectiveness.” <https://www.gov.uk/what-works-network> [Accessed 20 September 2015]. According to Halpern (2015), to date the EEF has conducted 90 large scale studies, of which 87 were RCTs, involving half a million children in 4,000 UK schools, with little to show for it in terms of establishing ‘what works’. See @ 19:00’ <https://vimeo.com/133550647> [Accessed 20 September 2015].

<sup>26</sup> I attended Furedi’s session at the first ResearchED Conference in 2013. He went against the grain of the conference, calling into question the adopted procedures of scientism, namely: RCTs, ‘interventions’ and children ‘as patients’, language he sees as misplaced. See @ 11:00’: <http://www.workingoutwhatworks.com/en-GB/Resource-library/Videos/2013/rED-v-frank-furedi-9-2013> [Accessed 20 September 2015]

worthwhile form of life” (Pring 2004, p.15). Pring goes on to challenge what he considers to be myopic trends, such as targeted managerial interventions (2004, p.55) that fail to tackle the purpose of education, a pursuit that requires:

careful examination of what it means to be a person and to be so more fully. It is one of the absurdities of much research into the ‘effective school’ that these issues are ignored. ‘Effective schools’ are those which produce specific outcomes. But there is rarely any explanation why *these* outcomes are constituents of a worthwhile form of life, or whether the process through which the outcomes are produced transforms the learner in a significant way. (Pring 2004, p.15, original emphasis)

Pring calls for more values-oriented research in contrast with short term utilitarian approaches. My research is more long term in scope in that it seeks an in depth understanding of primary and early secondary school environments that participate in digital video production, in order to generate credible theory. Rather than quantifying the effects of research interventions, I am researching educational media experiences of ‘worthwhile’ pertinence to young people and their visceral engagement therein; that is, the ways in which an integrated sense of being, knowing and acting in the classroom can, at least partly, be facilitated through digital media production (Dall’Alba and Barnacle 2007, p.686).

If social research methods ‘produce’ reality, as Law and Urry (2003) claim, then social enquiry participates in an ‘ontological politics’ from which no researcher can escape with a ‘pristine’ account (Benedict 1934; Scott and Usher 2011, p.101) – it is an ‘intentional state’ (Bruner 1996, p.136). However local and provisional, the responsibility to produce multiple ‘versions of the truth’ (analogous with Reason and Hope’s ‘rights and obligations’ with *relatives* above) necessitates comprehensive ethical underpinning to count as credible.

### ***Research principles and educational values***

I believe my own research principles and educational values are linked, not only to each other but also to my methodology and my object of study. The following five conceptual tools, devised by Finnish academics Heikkinen et al. (2007), were originally identified as ways of assessing the validity of Action Research. Although this is not a method I am adopting (mainly because my study is not about collaboratively finding solutions to problems in the work place or routes to best

practice), my feeling is that the Finnish criteria work in a number of scenarios. I am inspired to use them as foundations for a set of guiding research principles and educational values, which in turn underpin both method and interpretation.

Hence, this study acknowledges the importance of:

- **historical continuity:** or temporal context, and the ways in which knowledge accretes and spirals within specific local conditions (Bruner 2009/1960; Hall 1992).

When the specificity of our historical moment is articulated in relation to past and present circumstances, this leads to deeper discursive understandings. Developing an awareness of the permeability of social contexts and the ways in which they are linked, helps learners identify the shifting nature of knowledge and how their lives are culturally situated. This brings to mind the cyclical nature of social phenomena and the ways in which methods of learning and media composition could be implicated in this cycle.

- **reflexivity:** or personal critical response as a result of reflection on constructed meanings, and the ways in which texts are re-presented both in research and in everyday social practices (Le Gallais 2008).

Holistic and reflexive approaches to learning encourage the questioning of ‘inevitable’ social assumptions and discursive power relations. One of the ways in which criticality can be achieved is through creative media production conceived as a new strand of literacy, including the curation of sound and the moving image (Buckingham 2003; Ito et al. 2013; Potter and Gilje 2015).

- **dialectics:** the recognition that meaning is made through transactional and dialogic experience (Dewey 1997/1938; Bakhtin 1981).

It is possible for researchers and learners to become competent with audiovisual meaning-making for particular audiences. The value of this educationally relates to the proliferation of digital platforms for multimodal social participation and the questioning of ‘literacy legitimacy’, as evidenced

in the third quadrant and transitional spaces within my digital making cycle (Figure 5).

- **workability:** what may transpire in the processes of interaction brought about by researchers' and participants' engagement with tools, practices and environments.

A transformatory sense of pragmatism imbues this study in relation to the emancipatory roots of its inception, as explained in Chapter I (Freire 1993; Conteh et al. 2005, p.ix; Anyon 2009). Nevertheless, workability is a term that carries with it a tension between potentiality and practicability: in order to effect change one has to work within the constraints of what is possible, whilst testing the boundaries. Educationally speaking, whether something is workable or not, is played out in the ambiguities inherent in key areas of my study: the creative process and learners' grasp of aesthetic possibility; institutionally situated innovative pedagogic practices; and contested issues related to 'what works' in terms of creating the "citizen-worker-of-the-future" (Williams 2004, p.408).

- **evocativeness:** the appropriateness and relevance of aesthetic design and remix, and the use of rhetorical devices to provoke an emotive response in an audience.

Research wise, arts-based presentation of data invites a sense of pluralism and inspires connections with other disciplines. From the point of view of learning with digital media, 'evocativeness' refers to crafting symbolic resources in purposeful ways that complement traditional foci on reading and writing. I go on to suggest that '**everyday artistry**' might be a more suitable term for the purposes of this study as it evokes practices of composition that retrieve a sense of the ordinary from the rarified remoteness that monolithic constructs related to 'art' can often summon.

To this list I add a *sixth* principle not present in Heikkinen et al.'s original text (2007) - one which informs my methodology and the educational values that propel my research interests:

- **equitability:** the adherence to democratic principles of fairness, inclusivity and flattened hierarchical relations.

As regards research, this concerns the extent to which sensitivity is extended to participants' input and fidelity to the material. In parallel with ethics of equality, my creative practice as researcher and practitioner embraces a spirit of co-operation and empathy, both of which sit well within an epistemology of co-construction and the collaborative digital composition work outlined in my theoretical framework.

An ethnographic approach to research is cognisant of the above foundational values based on human interests as well as being a form of enquiry that embraces contradiction and complexity. The next section outlines why this approach is appropriate for exploring issues related to digital making in school spaces.

### ***Ethnography***

Geertz's (1973) model of ethnography as 'thick description' has become axiomatic in the ethnographic lexicon. However, ethnographies do not just depend on evocative descriptive language for their 'thickness' but on the recognition:

that what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to ... [we are] explicating explications. Winks upon winks upon winks.  
(Geertz 1973, p.9)

The idea of accumulative 'truthful' winks projects the discursive importance of the narrative approach, to be discussed in the next section. Geertz suggests that participants' and ethnographers' accounts emerging from social observation are *stories* then, that ought to be mutually, if tacitly, recognised as such for accounts to be made with integrity.

Not only is there an element of collusion in presentation and reception, but he offers a vertiginous definition of the muddled phenomena the ethnographer is faced with, one that might put off all but the most resilient of researchers in search of coherent 'truth claims':

[the researcher negotiates] a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render. And this is true at the most down-to-earth, jungle field work levels of his activity: interviewing informants, observing rituals, eliciting kin terms, ... Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of “construct a reading of”) a manuscript — foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior.  
(Geertz 1973, p.10)

The school environment is indeed ‘knotted’ and ‘shaped’ with discursive structures and personal trajectories, that the ethnographer must first make strange and unravel, and then render explicit and comprehensible.

Of relevance to this study in particular is Geertz’s reference to the fleeting and shaped nature of behaviour which I aimed to capture in my fieldwork through close observation, photography and film. Schools are among the most institutionalised of social settings, barely is there anything of the ‘natural ’ in it, so prescribed and contingent are its standards and regulations. To enter this overbearing realm as a critically and visually attuned ethnographer is both a privilege and a necessity which brings to mind Hymes’ (1981) statement that ethnography is the methodological approach “most compatible with a democratic way of life” (cited by Conteh 2005, p.97). Hence my ethnography, although only a partial exposé of young people’s relatively unseen, unheard, implicit understandings of the moving image, throws light on the harsher contradictory ideologies that tend to obscure them. To de-mist the discursive smoke-screen then, a critically inflected visual anthropological approach was considered an appropriate way of forging new understandings of the under-valued media interests and skills of children and young people, and building capacity around them.

### ***A critical visual anthropological approach***

I believe that one’s choice of methods relates to one’s life experience as much as to ‘rightness of fit’ (Goodman 1978) with respect to research questions: if these two dimensions mesh, then arguably the output is more persuasive. The ways in which my life experiences have influenced my choice of critical visual anthropology as a method relate to lengths of time spent teaching English abroad in Europe and South



America. Living on the edge of different cultures as both a non-native observer and quasi participant, meant continually negotiating shifts between my English identity and that built within other cultures perceived as ‘exotic’. This may have created a sensitivity towards the liminal insider/outsider researcher status, as identified by Le Gallais (2008, p.148). Particularly during two years working in Rio de Janeiro in the late eighties, I became interested in documentary style photography. I developed an alertness to the ‘decisive moment’ at which to press the shutter (Cartier-Bresson 1999) which nurtured a sensibility towards visual cultural nuance and a nascent anthropological perspective<sup>27</sup>.

The use of still and moving image in anthropological fieldwork has a long history, chiefly as a tool of reinforcement. I distinguish my approach to gathering visual research materials by claiming for them not only a supportive role but also their constitutive capacity, that is, they “conjure up synaesthetic and kinaesthetic effects” (Edensor 2005, p.16, cited by Rose 2007, p.248) through which some images create a unique visual agency. Rose articulates how those researchers’ interested in:

precisely how the practices within which the materiality of social life is embedded can exceed their spoken or written expression, have turned to photography as a means of evoking such excess.  
(Rose 2007, p.248)

During the course of my own fieldwork certain photos and movies seemed to fit into this ‘excessive’ category in useful and surprising ways – some captured by participants, arguably exemplifying new cultural forms of literacy ‘in action’, and others taken by myself, offering a dynamic portrait of creative digital media learning.

Some commentators extend the agency of visual material in research, inscribing them with ‘a social life’ of their own. Rose points out (drawing on Appadurai 1986) that images, like people and cultural artefacts, have a biography (2007, p.217) –

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<sup>27</sup> Attempts at actively capturing this blend of photographic and cultural nuance can be found on my blog from an MA module. I began posting old photos of my time in Rio from 1988-89 looking for meaning and questioning my motives for taking them. See: <https://shelleuk.wordpress.com/2010/05/10/galleria-carioca-1990/> [Accessed 20 September 2015]

digital images even more so, in terms of the relative ease with which they are disseminated, re-contextualised and re-interpreted. The fourth quadrant of the digital making cycle<sup>28</sup> becomes more salient here, as it is in the social dispersal and exchange of still and moving image ‘objects’, that their materiality, mobility and translatability are brought to light. These are characteristics of digital texts as much as they are anthropological empirical touchstones. Rose (2007, p.223) cites Appadurai who explains further:

It is only through the analysis of [artefacts’] trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things. Thus, even though from a *theoretical* point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a *methodological* point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context.  
(Appadurai 1986, p.5, original emphasis)

This signals that the anthropologically sanctioned capture of texts, people and processes ‘in motion’ are conduits to an illuminated understanding of young people’s film and DV production. In practice this means photographing and videoing the interactive processes of production, and examining the social embeddedness of these and participant-generated texts (their ‘social life’), so as to be able to theorise about distinct forms of digital meaning-making. Furthermore, the ‘biographies’ of my research ‘objects’ gain traction and meaning as they locate themselves within my thesis, within media education scholarship, and ultimately within discursive digital making cycles.

In terms of analysis, strict attention ought to be paid to the point of view of the maker, in the making of texts about texts. To productively participate in this cycle, in whatever role, capacity or medium, is to experience some form of empowerment, which is why scrupulous ethical and reflexive practices should underlie critical visual anthropological methods (Rose 2007 p.262). Historically anthropology has been associated with practices of objective ‘othering’ in the context of colonial exploration, an academic practice in which the everyday routines of ‘exotic others’ would be observed and reported (Benedict 1934). Adults’ othering of children in

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<sup>28</sup> See Figure 4 and 5, and the *Dissemination* of texts after Consumption, Assimilation and Production.

research is a phenomenon I mitigated against, by being mindful of power imbalances along the way. In practice this meant neutralising any assumed adult superiority which, if exercised, risked skewing the findings and losing “specific and unique insights ... which can easily slip below the horizons of older inquirers” (Thomson 2008, p.1). This is particularly true of research exploring the non-formal media ecology of young people and the ways in which it can be incorporated into orthodox educational practice.

Whenever possible, child participants were afforded opportunities to engage in activities ordinarily perceived as ‘adult-like’, such as: filming in the ‘forbidden zones’ of school or beyond the school gates, being handed the camera to record events, being interviewed by a group of professionals seeking their advice on film-making with tablets, contributing to a Q and A session in a public arena about their work, or simply having their personal responses listened to regularly and attentively. Rose advocates that attention be paid during fieldwork to the discursive relations of power that saturate all research texts and processes, *visual* texts being no different in this respect from the *words* emitted by participants and interpreted by researchers (Rose 2007, p.262). Above all if a visual and anthropologically infused ethnography is to support emergent understanding, it is “the relationship between the subjectivities of the researcher and research participants that produces a negotiated version of reality” (Pink 2013, p.37) – and the evocative construction of the same - that remains the researcher’s challenge to articulate and communicate.

This is an observation corroborated by Buckingham who cautions against “naïve empiricism” (2009, p.633) and the so-called ‘empowerment’ experienced by participants who indulge in creative visual methods. Buckingham is skeptical about a recourse to the expressive arts specifically to mine participants’ depths to reveal notional rich seams of hitherto unreachable ‘real data’; for him, this is a deficit approach signalling the need “to understand how research itself establishes positions from which it becomes possible for participants to ‘speak’” (2009, p.635). In other words, systematic reflexivity must be built into visual methodology specifically in relation to researcher identity and responsibility, the briefing of participants and the nature of the technology being used.

I have some sympathy with Buckingham's critique, in that young participants can tend to 'perform' responses they know will 'please the adult', but I have more faith in visual methods' capacity to shape the mood of research encounters. Given time for mutual trust to develop, young participants' familiarity with film and moving image can support a willingness to make sincere contributions. Moreover, a knowingness accrues on the part of the researcher to be able to detect signs of "empty verbalism ... covering a vacuum" (Vygotsky 2012/1934, p.159; see also Cannon et al. 2014, p.26).

How these theories translate into my research practice is explained below in Section C in more detail, but suffice to say at this point that all my studies involved watching and listening to young people's film-making and DV production, capturing it audiovisually through still and moving images, with occasional field notes to retain fleeting impressions, insights and un-filmed snatches of dialogue. In one case, regular blog posts and photos of each after school club session were published to track progress and preserve a certain chronology to the data. In keeping with the qualitative research tradition, I also conducted both unstructured and semi-structured interviews with young participants and their teachers, and semi-structured interviews with key commentators in the field and related disciplines<sup>29</sup>. Throughout I maintained a critical perspective on the local and wider socio-cultural conditions which affected the ebb and flow of production activities. Material is interpreted in Chapters IV and V using a framework derived from the educational values (Heikkinen et al. 2007) listed earlier, and from thematically triangulated material, to establish credibility and render a robust 'versioned vision' of events.

Moving on to the rationale for the presentation of my material, Rose (2007, p.255) alerts us to the inherent paradox of visual anthropological methods' staple recourse to *written* contextual narratives to produce evidence of their effects, even as these methods claim to offer meanings unique to their medium. It is with this anomaly in mind that I explore the implications of my choice of narrative to present the data

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<sup>29</sup> Dr. John Potter (Senior Lecturer, Education and New Media, *University College London, Institute of Education*); Mark Reid (Head of Education, *The British Film Institute*); Professor Susan Orr (Dean of Learning, Teaching and Enhancement / Professor in Creative Practice Pedagogy, *University of the Arts, London*) Ian Wall (Founder & Director of *Film Education 1985-2013*); Sarah Horrocks (Director of the *London Connected Learning Centre*); Nathalie Bourgeois (Director of Learning, *Cinémathèque française, Paris*).

complemented and supplemented by photography and the moving image.

### *Narrative methodology*

In this section I explain the ways in which my narrative method achieves Goodman's 'rightness of fit' with my research questions, a methodological approach that propagates deeper understandings of young people's media composition practices and the attendant social and pedagogic environments. I also articulate how narrative can mobilise evocative and provocative (Jones 2012, p.16) prose in the service of advancing scholarship and critical thinking in the field. This frame of reference is consonant with my theoretical framework (Figure 4), in the sense that the nature of recycled popular digital texts parallels that of theoretical texts: theories are consumed, assimilated and partially apprehended from academic discourse, to then be re-construed in specific ways, and re-distributed anew. My study posits that processes of nuanced modification, whether in the context of DV editing or the narration of research, entail the artistry of a composer.

Barthes (1977) vouched for the universality of narrative, identifying its presence in forms from ancient myth and mime, to stained glass windows, comics and conversations:

under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative ... [it is] international, transhistorical, transcultural ...  
(Barthes 1977, p. 79)

Read on this level, the 'inevitability' of story-telling suggests that it is not only a ubiquitous cultural practice, but that it also helps to fulfil a deep human need to create order and promote social understanding. In rather less metaphysical and more down-to-earth language, Jones and Fenge (2016) call narrative the "bread and butter of qualitative work" - the documentary and imaginative storying of experience is as vital a tool to the qualitative investigator as metrics are in the quantitative paradigm. Importantly for this study, Jones and Fenge, and others (for example, Bold 2012) point out that "narratives allow experience to unfold in a *temporal* way" (2016, my emphasis), and given the attention my account gives to processes of change in the educational realm, and to time-based media in my fieldwork, story-telling would

seem an appropriate mode of address to facilitate understanding and generate new knowledge.

One further quality of the sequential re-telling of research as narrative is that it “permits dynamics to reveal themselves in the actions and relationships presented” (Jones and Fenge 2016) which resonates with Polkinghorne’s definition decades earlier:

It is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite.  
(Polkinghorne 1988, p.13)

The interrelatedness of social phenomena and their ‘fictive’ reconstruction are demonstrably important elements in the research process (as mentioned earlier, ‘fictive’ refers to composite wholes that are part fiction, and part based on ‘real’ data). The composition of data fragments is inescapably rhetorical, and no matter one’s preferred techniques - such as, the gold standard of semi-structured interview ‘probes’ (Jones 2004 p.36) and the sole use of ‘the apparatuses of the interview machine’ (Jones 2004 p.36, drawing on Denzin) – there is an enduring truism that all research needs to tell ‘a good story’ (Bold 2012, p. 22).

As distinct from traditional qualitative methods, Jones again invokes Denzin by reiterating the latter’s claim that the ‘narrative turn’ in the social sciences is now a ‘fait accompli’ (2004 p.35); if so, then the properties of ‘a good story’ need to be explored. One recent definition, in the context of the diversification of *literary* forms across media, suggests that:

Narrative at its most basic is a movement from one state of affairs to another resulting in a transformation of the central character, which also often brings about change in the world he or she inhabits.  
(Thomas and Round 2014, p.6)

Arguably, the research narrative functions in similar ways, sensitive as it is to the unique characteristics of human experience in social settings. My testimony offers linguistic and audiovisual evidence of movement, transformation and change in specified time and space. Furthermore, the intertextual and polyvocal nature of my

representations strives towards Sikes and Gale's (2006) qualities of 'good' research renditions, to which Clough (2002) also subscribes:

- liminality – providing spaces in which the reader can open their thoughts to something new
- transgression – moving beyond the actual to the emotional responses to experiences and future dreams about the world
- evocation – being emotionally moved by the communication
- complexity – interweaving of ideas, repositioning of the creator to explore layers of ideas
- creativity – creating concepts, representing fluid and multiple views
- audience engagement – capturing attention by communicating in a particular way

(Bold 2012, p. 22, drawing on Sikes and Gale 2006)

Many if not all of the above constructs feature in the literature review and my theoretical rationale examined in Chapter II. Ultimately, this research entails looking at things differently and using alternative procedures from traditional research. My interests lie in presenting multiple stakeholders' viewpoints in multimodal ways to render my account more accessible and immediate for the reader, and narrative fulfils this aim more effectively, perhaps with more validity, than a conventional ethnographic approach. It remains to explore what might result in the 'white heat' of inspiration using the above criteria, in conjunction with the more specific protocols explained at the end of this Chapter.

### ***Pragmatising the imaginary***

Eisner (1997) has written extensively on the virtues of arts practice in relation to qualitative research:

The arts teach students to act and to judge in the absence of rule, to rely on feel, to pay attention to nuance, to act and appraise the consequences of one's choices and to revise and then to make other choices ... Artists and all who work with the composition of qualities try to achieve a "rightness of fit."  
(Eisner 2005/2002, p.208)

To present, or rather 'curate', ethnographic data is to qualitatively compose a compelling argument, and much of this relies on a creative as well as a critical

orientation. Pursuing this line of thinking and in the context of encouraging new reporting mechanisms, Eisner elaborates a metaphor in which scientific verification (instrumental research) is perceived as a process of recording the *temperature* of phenomena, in contrast with the examination of experience (ethnographic narrative research) which corresponds to the exploration of the underlying *heat*:

... we report the temperature even when we are interested in the heat; we expect a reader to be able to transform the numbers representing the former into the experience that constitutes the latter. New forms of data representation signify our growing interest in inventing ways to represent the heat.  
(Eisner 1997, p.7)

So the representation of ‘heat’ in my study equates to the embodied, human and non-human interactions that constitute the teaching and learning environment related to media-making, such as: pedagogic and pupil trial and error, participants’ vexations and celebrations, and the undulations of creative endeavour in constrained institutional spaces. In other words, narrative is suited to explorations of hermeneutic warmth – the textures of and frictions within messy educational terrain – but it comes with caveats, as narrative researchers struggle to:

... represent the fluid, changing, multiple, necessarily incomplete, always partial, “for now” nature of experience.  
(Clandinin and Murphy 2009, p.601)

Just as Law and Urry (2003) acknowledge both the instability of social understanding and the agency of arts-oriented methods as anti-reductionist, Clandinin and Murphy endorse narrative methodology as a means of questioning dominant *metanarratives*, in order to:

... change how we imagine and live out the storied structures, such as schools, that shape our lives ... narrative research offers the possibility of prompting “new imaginings of the ideal and the possible”.  
(Clandinin and Murphy 2009, p.601, drawing on Barone 2001, p.736)

Furthermore, Barone talks of ‘pragmatising the imaginary’, by which he means embellishing researchers’ capacity to lift the veil of conventionality from an



audience's or a reader's eyes in order to question familiar, comfortable discourses (2001, 2007, p.465).

Challenging presuppositions in relation to conceptions of digital media in schools is indeed one of the proposed aims of my research. Whilst harnessing narrative's potential to explore the dislocation between young people's media worlds in and beyond school, a simultaneous objective is to neutralise discourses forming around celebratory ed-tech evangelism and technological determinism (Shirky 2009; Prensky 2001, 2012; Anderson 2012). 'Pragmatising the imaginary' is fitting for my mode of narration, as it encapsulates an interpretivist approach to 'chalk-face realities' and political critique. This is a methodological standpoint supported by Van Manen's wide-ranging treatise on curriculum design, where he calls for a still "higher level of deliberative rationality" (1977, p.226, see also p. 214) in relation to interpretive work and practical action, than that manifested by the supporters of quantified learning.

### *Storying children's lives*

Researchers' principled deliberation, to which Van Manen alludes above, is all the more important when producing representations of children. Some might question the premise on which research with children is based and the validity of its findings, and in answer I would emphasise the transparency and reflexivity with which this particular research was undertaken. In the Clip Club setting each child is fleshed out in a 'pen portrait' as advocated by Hollway and Jefferson (2000)<sup>30</sup>. A short crafted portrait aims to:

[make] the person come alive for a reader. It [is] largely descriptive and provide[s] enough information against which subsequent interpretations [can] be assessed ... a pen portrait serves as a substitute 'whole' for a reader who will not have access to the raw data but who needs to have a grasp of the person ... if anything said about him or her is going to be meaningful. (Hollway and Jefferson 2000, p.70)

The portrait approach is cognisant of the personal relationships that developed between members, and presents the reader with a series of sensitive summaries

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<sup>30</sup> This approach was also adopted by renowned anthropologist Daniel Miller in his evocative account of residents on a particular London street (2008). From his observations on the belongings on display in their homes and his interview data, he constructed sensitive and compelling tales of their past and present lives.

which I believe are faithful to the ‘wholeness’ of the children’s subjectivities and experiences. The sustained nature of the Clip Club facilitated the construction of a storied ‘sense of truth’ (Miller 2000, p.24) for each participant, which in turn acted as an aid to holistic interpretation. As far as the other settings are concerned, the extent to which I was able to extend faithful representations in the portrait format is perhaps more speculative, given these particular studies’ limited time-frames. I can however say with certitude that there was no lapse in ethical considerations; as stated throughout the thesis, these are open-ended renderings that often remain invisible and unaccounted for in public spaces.

Perhaps a more pertinent issue than the ‘authenticity’ of the ‘story’ is the cost of *not* listening to, representing and disseminating the marginalised voices of children, a point forcefully asserted by both Kaplan (2008, p.190) and Burke (2008). The latter links Freirian thinking, visual methodologies with children, and the importance of the multiple “layering of re-interpretation” (2008. p. 34), concluding that:

without a recognised political voice and presence, children will continue to be seen as less than equal to the adult in participatory projects.  
(Burke 2008, p. 34)

Nevertheless, it is difficult to defuse the tension between research perceived as carried out *on* and *with* participants, especially *on* and *with* those who are deemed vulnerable. Thomson and Gunter (2007, 2011) recognise this and embrace the fluid identities of researchers and the researched. They propose a ‘standpoint’ for research with children that resonates with my own, namely one which:

- addresses issues of importance to students and is thus in their collective interests
- works with students’ subjugated knowledges about the way in which the school works
- allows marginalized perspectives and voices to come centre stage
- uses students’ subjectivities and experiences to develop approaches, tools, representations and validities
- interrupts the power relations in schools including, but not confined to, those which are age related, and
- is geared to making a difference  
(Thomson and Gunter 2007, p. 331)

These are the precepts on which my narratives concerning children's media interactions are based, and many of the ensuing bold statements and concluding recommendations towards the end of Chapter VII issue from this critical standpoint.

Section B has offered a philosophical justification for my methodology; an overview of those research trends running counter to my own; an affirmation of the values I believe are important not to lose sight of, when planning and implementing educational research; and a rationale for using critical visual anthropology and narrative methodologies as the most efficient means of gaining deep, critical understandings of young people's media composition practices. This said, it must also be conceded that even adherence to worthy principles and appropriate methods, is no guarantee of 'success', and that the ethnographic research process entails:

[learning] to live with doubt and uncertainty and – always at the back of your mind – the lurking suspicion that you might be totally wrong.  
(Conteh et al. 2005, p.98)

Conteh references Alasuutari (1995) who spoke of 'unriddling' (2005, p.108) ethnographic data rather than seeking certitude (Barone 2007). So bearing Hall's modest approach (1992) to research in mind, along with an open-ended, methodological 'rightness of fit', I will now describe my research settings and processes.

### **C. Research Settings and Processes**

I begin with a reminder about the research questions that ground my investigation of DV and film production in my chosen settings, probing the ways in which productive practices with the audiovisual are framed, catalysed or inhibited:

*How does creative media work constitute a wider literacy in formal and non-formal school spaces?*

*What can traditional pedagogy learn from moving image production processes?*

*How do social discursive factors determine practical media work in schools*

In addition to building context around my individual studies, I give an account of how they came about and my relationship with the settings. I specify what materials were gathered and how they help answer my question, along with a rationale for my interview technique. The section concludes with an explanation of my interpretive strategy and issues concerning the credibility, transferability and dependability of the same.

In my Introduction I explained that my motivation for working with young children and media related to my perception that learning through making with digital technologies offered an engaging and levelling route to authorship, especially for those struggling with traditional literacy practices. As my professional role in schools evolved more into one of a technical practitioner-educator, and latterly researcher-evaluator, this gave me access to a wide variety of school environments in the UK and abroad that use screen-based media in creative ways.

The four research locations below represent a range of school settings with varying degrees of enthusiasm for media-making from their respective senior management teams. This is an important element in my study as there is a degree of risk associated with media production in schools as discussed in previous Chapters. In all cases the participant school children are aged between nine and twelve years old and attend state primary or secondary schools in north, south and east London. I had prior experience during my Masters research (2009-2011) with some of these schools, and my thoughts and experiences over that two-year period are further developed and contested in this thesis. As Hall states:

one moves from one detotalized or deconstructed problematic to the gains of another, recognizing its limitations. That, I think, is the infinite open-endedness of critical work, why critical work is always dialogical. It does have the capacity to establish some important conversations on some ground. That's what I mean by the gain; it gains some ground where thinking can go on around a particular set of problems.  
(Hall 1992, p.290)

And as technology beyond the school changes the ways in which we access, create and communicate understandings to ourselves and to each other, schools' 'particular set of problems' regarding digital media-making is a 'conversation' that becomes

increasingly pressing to have and maintain, in a range of contexts, with a range of people (Peppler 2013; Sefton-Green 2013a; Burn et al. 2014, p10).

### ***Researcher role***

In the interests of reflexive commentary, I will explain my researcher role within the research settings and the sense of insider/outsider status that coloured my perception and capture of events and materials. Broadly speaking my research took the form of various intensities of Participant-Observation in two protracted *non-formal* after school settings over a period of a few months, and two *formal* curriculum-linked activities that were considerably shorter in duration, over a few days. This discrepancy in length is indicative of the respective rhythms and time allocations accorded media-related projects in non-formal and formal school environments.

Because of my prior history with some of the settings and the nature of my practitioner-educator skill set, my role did not fit so neatly into traditional research categories, problematised further by the messy and unpredictable norms of research on school terrain (Law 2004; Le Gallais 2008, p.146; Thomson and Gunter 2011). My stance within each fieldwork space moved along an ‘Involvement > Detachment’ continuum of participation, inspired by Bryman (2008) and illustrated in Figure 6:

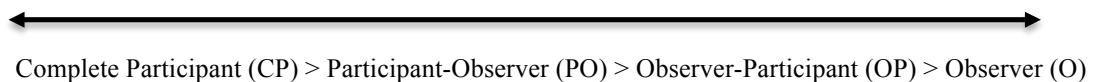


Figure 6: Gold's (1958) classification of participant observer roles (Bryman 2008, p.410)

My understanding of each of the above positions is paraphrased from Bryman (2008, p.410):

- *The Complete Participant* (CP) is wholly embedded in the social setting to the point of covert operation: none of the participants know the researcher's identity. This is not applicable to my research as I openly make my position clear to participants
- The *Participant-Observer* (PO) is regularly involved with participants who are aware of the researcher's role. The nature of the material collected is ambiguously sourced – neither intended to be naturally-occurring nor the sole fabrication of the researcher

- The *Observer-Participant* (OP) mainly interviews, observes and listens with little participation. The material collected will be as naturally-occurring as possible
- The *Observer* (O) does not interact with participants and is as unobtrusive and ‘invisible’ as possible

The elasticity of my role is unusual and within each setting I indicate where I sit on this continuum. I argue that as a function of my practitioner-educator-researcher status the findings are enriched with multi-perspectivity, which in Hall’s (1992) terms could be said to perpetuate and productively complicate ‘the conversation’.

### ***Gathering materials***

Where possible or via self-selection, some participants contributed to the creation of ‘research visuals’, reinforcing a sense of social collaborative endeavour and reducing, though not eliminating, the potential for researcher bias. Research material took the form of:

- my own and participants’ photos/audio/video footage during film and creative media preparation and production
- field notes (and blog posts)
- participants’ texts and drawings
- loosely structured group and individual (mainly) audio interviews with teachers, practitioners, participant children and commentators in the field

To give an idea of the scope of my study, a comprehensive audit of all the research data – for example numbers of photos in certain milieux, sound and moving image files, and analogue materials - is audited in Appendix (A) by study and by medium, detailing timings, locations and interviewees. As in similar studies (Scottish Screen 2006; Burn and Durran 2007; Lord et al. 2007; Selwyn et al. 2010; Burn et al. 2012; Potter 2012; Parry 2013; Mumford et al. 2013; Cannon et al. 2014), my material is triangulated with the literature, with interview transcripts and with pertinent observations from other studies, exposing explanatory thematic patterns, so as to produce a cohesive and evocative account (Rose 2006; Jones 2006; Pink 2013).

Throughout my research I have been conscious of the tactility and materiality of media texts, thinking of them as temporary assemblages of cultural materials, ‘thing-like’ artefacts mediated through concrete objects, rather than mere virtual ephemera (Burnett et al. 2012). Reflecting on concrete textual qualities has helped me concentrate on young people’s interactions with audiovisual texts and the making of them. Rose paraphrases Gell (1998) who writes of visual anthropology’s interest “in the practical mediatory role of visual objects in the social process” (Rose 2007, p.217); indeed it is what is *done* and *felt* during audiovisual production, the manner and circumstance of digital fabrication, that is the focus of my ethnography. It is argued that this strategy prioritises digital *making practices* rather than the texts themselves, as Pink counsels in her appraisal of participatory video work:

it is not simply the final film document that is important, but rather the collaborative processes by which it is produced, and it is through these processes that both new levels of engagement in thematic issues and of self awareness are achieved by participants and ethnographic knowledge is produced.

(Pink 2013, p.118)

### ***Interview technique***

The tone of participant interviews was informal and their semi-structured nature made for a conversational style of enquiry more fitting with dialogic and equalising epistemologies (Scott and Usher 2010). So overwrought are educational environments in terms of rigid systems of accountability, that to do otherwise may have compromised the integrity and credibility of the findings. I conducted interviews with children either in the round or in ‘informal huddles’, (Cohen et al. 2007, p.375) which are altogether less intimidating, and in which they were less inclined to be searching for the right answer. Questions that required a loose ‘here and now’ personal response, often prefaced by ‘Tell me about...’ rather than closed interrogatives (eg. How, What, Why) often generated the most useful answers with children (Bazalgette 2010) - although at the beginning I was less adept at questioning in this way.

For children I worked around specific themes asking them what they enjoyed about film and media-making, what was surprising or memorable and what they felt had changed for them personally, if anything. With adults, I devised a rough interview

schedule thematically related to my theoretical framework on: Time & Space / Pedagogic Processes and Roles / Outcomes as regards their film-making experiences with children and the external ‘conditions of possibility’ related to their context (see Appendices for an example schedule of questions). To complement my fieldwork, I chose to interview a range of ‘expert’ commentators with a pedagogic perspective, who I felt reflected the discursiveness of creative media practices.

### ***Setting 1 (non-formal): East London Primary School - The Clip Club***

In February 2013 I started a non-formal after-school film-making club called The Clip Club<sup>31</sup> at the school in which I still work part-time as a creative media practitioner and website developer. Clip Club was set up as part of my research design, aiming to create a space where children could explore moving image and film-making as an alternative expressive means. This was based on the understanding that film is a familiar medium to primary children, and on the proposition that their *implicit* knowledge could become a rich fund of *explicit* and productive knowledge in the film-making process.

The school is a co-educational Catholic primary school in East London located in a relatively economically deprived area<sup>32</sup>, with children from a wide range of nations and ethnicities. I have worked part-time at the school for several years and can report that it has experienced many challenges, not least of which is a lack of sustained leadership. Despite there being a collective sense of community support for the school, change and instability seems to have had a detrimental effect on its academic ‘performance’, and it continues to struggle with official OFSTED (Office of Standards in Education) inspections and a ‘Requires Improvement’ status (formerly called ‘Satisfactory’).

There have been four Head Teachers over the past several years and each brought a new vision and a different outlook on digital culture. The incumbent was supportive of the Club: there was no financial outlay for the school nor for the children; it took

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<sup>31</sup> The Clip Club’s blog is available here: <http://www.theclipclub.co.uk> [Accessed 20 September 2015] and documents its activities over an 18 month period. The Club was set up for research purposes and as such operated as a separate entity, distinct from the formal arrangements of the school.

<sup>32</sup> In the Index of Multiple Deprivation – see <http://dclgappp.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html> [Accessed 22 October 2015] - the school falls within the 20% most deprived areas in the country.



place outside formal hours; the children came voluntarily; and mutual trust built up over several years meant that the leadership team had faith in my management of it. I had built a strong relationship with the two Learning Mentors responsible for the social and emotional well-being of the perceived ‘troubled’ and ‘trouble-making’ pupils. There was a mutual feeling that film and media production work may offer new channels of expression for the more vulnerable children, and a small group was invited to sign up. Bar one Year 6 girl who left for secondary school, the same members continued to attend the Club over the eighteen months of its duration. There were two Year 5 girls, five Year 5 boys (aged nine to ten years) and one girl from Year 6 (aged eleven). The year prior to my research I had worked extensively with four of the mentored boys: *G-man*, *Wizard 23* (henceforth *Wizard* in this account), *Dual 2*, and *Leonardo*<sup>33</sup>. Their personal issues related variously to anti-social behaviour, low literacy, lack of confidence or social awkwardness.

At this point I digress slightly from the particulars of Clip Club, to recount a foundational event in 2011 pertinent to these four boys. The former national charity *Film Education* ran a film review competition for schools alongside their annual *National Schools Film Week*, whose award ceremony took place at BAFTA headquarters (British Academy of Film and Television Arts). Having seen some small print inviting *filmed* rather than *written* reviews, the then Year 4 boys (aged eight to nine) submitted a two-minute edited *DV* film review of the animation *Ponyo* (Miyazaki 2008). There were very few filmed entries (about six out of several hundred) and theirs was the only *group* effort<sup>34</sup>. The film was officially recognised and the boys were given an award in a newly invented category.<sup>35</sup>

The event inspired me to pursue moving image as an access point to meaning-making with these boys – one that included multi-sensory and intertextual elements. I include this anecdote here as, although on one level the event may have been an elite industry-related public relations exercise - inaccessible to the majority, and attended

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<sup>33</sup> Members all chose pseudonyms for the purposes of online anonymity. The children are familiar with creating user names and this was deemed a continuation of this practice.

<sup>34</sup> The boys’ *Ponyo* (filmed) review is available here: <https://fashioningandflow.wordpress.com/2012/03/25/film-educations-young-film-critic-competition-2011/> [Accessed 20 September 2015].

<sup>35</sup> *Wizard* had sketched the film’s Director, Miyazaki, as part of the *DV* entry - a drawing which ended up on the big screen at the BAFTA in central London. *Wizard*’s interest in drawing becomes significant later in this account.

by celebrities, and the great and the good of BFI board members - it did give the boys feelings of success in literacy. Literacy is understood here as a participative social practice in the service of making meanings, and making understandings public, rather than as a set of skills associated with isolated reading and writing tasks, often with limited personal relevance or investment.

The girls: Cara and Clara, were new to me: the one quiet and introvert with a propensity for reflection but lacking assertiveness in class, the other ebullient and extrovert but with little interest in literacy. The girls in their different ways, acted as gelling agents for the group, such was their dedication and determination to make the most of the project. Another boy, Nimbus, was something of an anomaly in that he was the Learning Mentor (Mr. P)'s son. He was regarded as one of the most academically gifted boys across Year 5, and as a DIY computer programmer, independent blogger and self-confessed 'computer geek'. His auto-didactic qualities meant that, within the school's social groupings, he did not 'fit' readily into the above group of children.

Given his relationship with the more vulnerable boys, Mr. P had agreed to help me run the Club, and logistically this meant Nimbus joining too. I felt that Nimbus - assertive, articulate and socially confident in all the traditional ways - would add an interesting dimension to the group on various levels. Computer skills notwithstanding, he eschewed 'creative' activity in the formal curriculum, and on a social level, from interviews, we learn that these children would not ordinarily have had anything to do with each other. I believe negotiating the sampling in this relatively fluid way exemplifies the contingencies at work in educational ethnography, and the judgements involved whilst building relationships that embrace the local. More will be revealed in Chapter IV about how the group worked together, their initial mutual suspicion and growing sense of camaraderie, and finally about the ways in which their preferences and dispositions aligned with the different roles that film and media production offers. In an organic swell, the eclectic nature of the group allowed the different strands of moving image literacy to surface for a rich interpretive enquiry.

### *Setting 1: Researcher Role and material gathering*

In this setting I was a Participant Observer (PO) indicated by the vertical arrow in Figure 7. As already stated, the Complete Observer (CO) role was irrelevant to my research, but it has to be said that such was my sustained level of involvement with the children that for much of the time my research role was invisible. For them, I was Michelle - the ‘computer person’ - who facilitated film-making and occasionally taught them things. In many ways they were unaware of “the ups and downs, the blockages and breakthroughs and the messiness of the whole endeavour” (Conteh et al. 2006, p.xxiii).

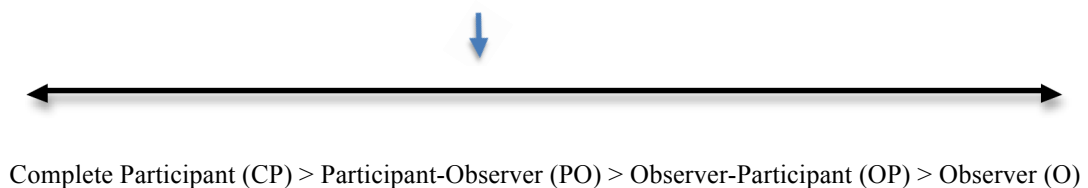


Figure 7: Participant Observer Researcher role in Setting 1 (adapted from Bryman 2008)

The Club lasted approximately eighteen months every Tuesday after school during term time. Each session was an hour in theory and about fifty minutes in practice, once the after-school initial ‘scrum’ had subsided. We watched and analysed movie clips, practiced elements of film ‘grammar’ with Flip DV cameras and made two short films (*Run School Run!* achieved success at the National Youth Film Festival 2013, and the sequel *Run School Run 2!* won *Into Film*’s<sup>36</sup> ‘Film of the Month’ in October 2015).

At the beginning of the project I created a Wordpress blog: theclipclub.co.uk. This was originally conceived as a digital space to which all participants could contribute; but it was quickly realised that writing posts and crystallising thoughts were appealing activities for only two of us, those with the requisite skills – myself and Nimbus. The blog became a place for storing field notes, photos, video clips and capturing the whole process, but it is likely on the basis of my research interpretations, that it will also come to serve as a bank of Clip Club memories. The

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<sup>36</sup> *Into Film* is a grant issuing charity formed in 2013 from the ashes of the disbanded UK Film Council and the legacy of two film education charities, FILMCLUB and First Light. Its aim is to put film at the centre of children and young people’s learning and cultural experience.

discipline of posting was the activity in which I felt the most ‘researcherly’ as opposed to ‘teacherly’. Despite the child-oriented register of the posts, my observations were often anthropologically-inclined – recording how moving image texts were made and the effects of them having been made - and were therefore useful in my research design.

I exercised more specific qualitative methods at the end of the eighteen months by a) introducing photo elicitation (Kaplan 2008, p.177) involving having the children write words and impressions on printed photos taken over the preceding months and b) a more structured interview technique involving words, questions and incomplete phrases written on cards that they could select and then discuss in the group without any overt questioning. The prompts for discussion were based on my blog entries and those aspects of the Club’s activities that had emerged as meaningful over the months. For example, FUN, PROUD, TEAM, MAKING STUFF, PLANNING, MY FAVOURITE SHOT IS ..., THE MOST SURPRISING THING WAS..., THINGS WENT WRONG WHEN... This strategy was intended as a less intimidating way in which to elicit impressions of their time in the Club and spark memories and insights.

The photographic had been a key communicative and accessible dimension of The Clip Club, as recognised by Burke:

An important, and overlooked, levelling dimension of photography as a research tool is that, unlike traditional forms of literacy, it captures perspectives on experience in a format that adults and children can produce with similar levels of technical skill.  
(Burke 2008, p.25)

to which I would add, similar levels of observational skill. These two techniques arose from an effort to lessen the need for children to be articulate in order to express themselves, and prompt expression of their feelings and attitudes in ways that were more associative than propositional.

Focussed research activities such as these often felt like I was intervening in the normal course of events, which was a chore for some but tolerated by most.

Habitually I hovered between Participant Observer and teacherly practices. The role of lead practitioner-facilitator meant that my attention was often drawn in divergent

directions by the demands of the moment. It felt like I was feeling my way through a weekly thicket of “chaotic assemblage” (Conteh et al. 2006, p.xxiii), but it is precisely this embedded state that enriches the crafting of a trustworthy and credible ethnographic narrative (Bryman 2008, p.377, drawing on Lincoln and Guba 1985). Indeed, the latter two scholars invoke Geertz’s ‘thick description’ (1973) when they suggest that context-rich research provides “a database for making judgements about the possible transferability of findings to other milieux” (Bryman 2008, p.378) – which is an important consideration as one of my objectives is to bring out the researcher in the teacher.

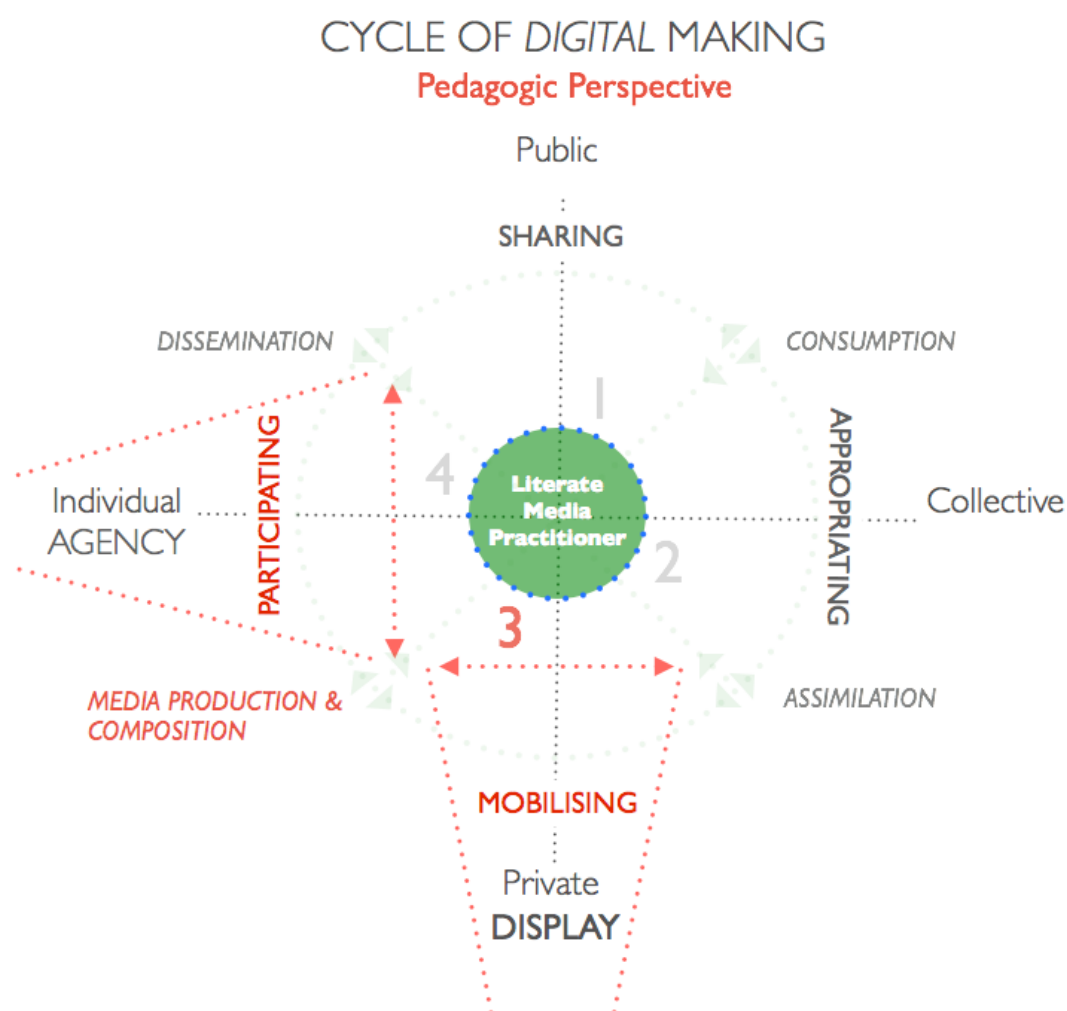


Figure 5: Cycle of Digital Making, pedagogic perspective, adapted from Ross et al. 1993.

One of the issues here is the possibility of the PO ‘going native’ as the result of being immersed in the setting, and as a consequence researcher bias shaping the outcomes. On the other hand, the advantage to the PO mode is that over time more profound relationships, understandings and insights can be forged. In practice, my teacher and PO roles pulled in opposite directions, literally, and I felt I never quite managed to do full justice to either.

A return to the pedagogic territories marked out as boundary / transitional spaces on either side of the ‘Production/Composition’ quadrant in Figure 5 above might help articulate this tension. As a researcher, I was assimilating social experience and processing rudimentary impressions - through observation, measured participation, film and photography for later interpretation. Simultaneously, as a teacher, I was facilitating the children’s meandering assimilations for later editing. Teaching is already a visceral practice<sup>37</sup> and having to toggle between present and future demands on two levels made for a challenging and intense engagement. My conceptual framework proposes that learners negotiate the assimilation of cultural material and can be encouraged to make and disseminate their own media texts, supported by the often improvisatory ‘skilful neglect’ (Loveless 2008a, p.68) of the teacher. I found that the oscillation in the media production environment between hands-on and hands-off pedagogy is analogous with the embedded researcher as Participant Observer.

Knowing when and whether to steer events in ‘data reaping’ mode, or let go and watch, was a continual struggle, especially considering that the well-being and positive educational experience of the children took precedence at all times. As will be discussed later, it was towards the end of Clip Club that I felt a release of that tension, which rendered some of the most powerful material.

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<sup>37</sup> This visceral quality was elaborated on by Mark Reid, former teacher and Head of Education at the BFI, in a personal interview: “teaching is an experience that engages all of your senses ... your heart, your soul and your brain, your gut feeling, your instincts, everything about your being which is lived and in the moment and three dimensional, and physical as well as mental.” Available from: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/mark-reid/s-wVzWW#t=5:50> [Accessed 5 October 2015]

***Setting 2 (non-formal): North London Primary School - Le Cinéma: Cent ans de Jeunesse [CCADJ]***

The second setting was unfamiliar to me - a Church of England primary school in North London located in an environment not unlike Setting 1, in that it shared a similar demographic only smaller, with a one-class yearly intake. There was a diverse ethnic mix typical in this part of London, and of its 168 pupils, approximately two thirds qualified for the Pupil Premium<sup>38</sup>. I tracked a weekly non-formal after school film-making project for ten Year 6 pupils over two terms, led by a Year 4 teacher. This was the fifth year that Ms. J had been running the club with different groups - she had been a film student at university and was keen to use these skills in the school environment. Over the two terms of the project I visited each ninety-minute session on ten occasions - including the screening at the British Film Institute (BFI) in June 2014 - during which I took notes and photos, and videoed film-making decisions and processes.

There was a significant extra dimension to this club in that the resultant short film was to be conceived, filmed, produced and edited by the children and then screened at the BFI months later, as part of a national film education programme. The programme itself originates in France and has been running for over twenty years as *Le Cinéma: Cent Ans de Jeunesse* (Cinema: a hundred years 'young', henceforth CCADJ) at the Cinémathèque française, Paris<sup>39</sup>. The BFI has been one of the CCADJ's cultural partners since 2009 and it has been developing its own national version of the programme, now with over twenty workshops here in the UK. The north London school where my study was based was one of these workshops.

Over the past two decades CCADJ in Paris has grown from a home-spun national celebration of one hundred years of French cinematic culture, into a yearly programme involving hundreds of teachers and young people across Europe (and beyond - with Guadeloupe, Brazil and Cuba now on board). The overall purpose is

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<sup>38</sup> The Pupil Premium (or PP) is government money made available to schools 'with disadvantaged pupils' that need extra resources to close 'the attainment gap'. With 98 pupils on the 'PP register' out of the 168 total, the school received £99,000 in the school year 2013-2014 which was spent on booster classes for 'low achieving' children.

<sup>39</sup> Every year the project develops a blog in which all pan-European participants are encouraged to participate: <http://blog.cinematheque.fr/100ans20132014/> and the UK equivalent: <https://markreid1895.wordpress.com/2013/07/23/plan-sequence-the-long-take/> [Both accessed 20 September 2015]

for young people and educators to watch, interpret, discuss and practise making film as *an art form* with intrinsic worth, as opposed to a medium with strictly entertainment or instrumental value. Over the course of fifty hours of contact time, participants are given a series of small, *low-risk*, highly structured production exercises guided by their teacher and a professional film-maker, culminating in a '*film essai*' - an eight-minute short film, or moving image experiment, to a given brief.

Apart from its international reach and longevity, the programme has other distinguishing features: film theory, professional development and pedagogy are taken as seriously as the children's learning; its content is different every year; there is no formal element of competition, nor any appeal to 'Hollywood movie glitz'; the age range of participants is from seven to eighteen years old; and many of the young film-makers unite in Paris for summer screenings of their work followed by a public Q & A on their authorial choices. But perhaps the most important characteristic is the focus on the *aesthetic affordances of film language* rather than on narrative or the exploration of social issues: script-writing and dialogue is de-emphasised in favour of visual meaning-making.

Every year the Creative Director and French 'cinéaste' Bergala (2002), creates a typology around one aspect of cinematic 'grammar' or filmic sensibility on which to focus participants' attention. Past themes have included: camera movement, colour, light, depth of field, mise-en-scène or the more conceptual 'hiding/revealing' in film. The CCADJ theme for 2015-2016 was 'le météo' or 'the weather in film'; for 2013-2014, and hence the one relevant to my study, it was '*le plan-séquence*', or 'the long take'<sup>40</sup>. This is defined as one sustained shot – moving or static – which mainly includes a sequence of events. The theme will be described in further detail in Chapter V, however, suffice to say that it was inspired by the century old practices of the Lumière brothers.

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<sup>40</sup> A 'long take' is distinct from a 'long shot'. The former describes *duration* while latter describes the *distance* between the camera and the subject, which is more commonly known as a 'wide shot'.



### *Setting 2: Researcher Role and material gathering*

For CCADJ I was positioned between Participant Observer and an Observer Participant status (see Figure 8 below). This takes into account my intimate knowledge of the programme internationally, having been an BFI collaborator attached to it over recent years. But my insider status in this particular study was attenuated by undertaking independent observations and interviews with participants who were unfamiliar to me. The children were initially interested in my ‘adult other’ status, calling me by my first name, asking me questions and occasionally looking at my visual data. My impression was that they got used to me tagging along and being part of their experience.

At times I had to fight off ‘teacherly’ instincts – such as reigning in unruly behaviour - but at other times such instincts were reassigned as research activities, for example by handing my iPad over to certain children in the group so that they could capture audiovisually what they considered to be important in the session. On one occasion which had been earmarked for interviewing children, one child asked if he could interview his peers instead. Going with the flow at such moments could offer ‘low hanging fruit’ in terms of data, as well as the possibility of dislodging power relations between researcher and researched. Then again it could represent a lost opportunity for more children’s voices to be heard beyond that of the most assertive pupil. By occupying the liminal zone between PO and OP I felt that I could choose between the two options rather than feel obliged to ‘do the right thing’ to get a certain type of data.

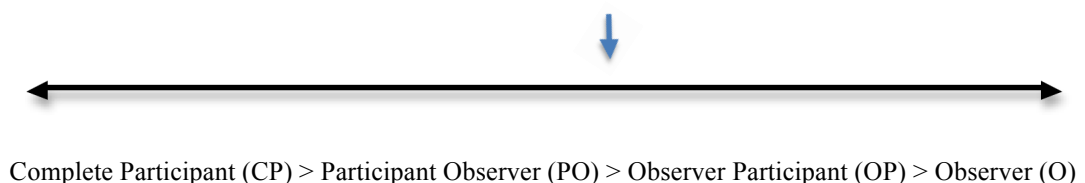


Figure 8: PO/OP Researcher role in Setting 2 (adapted from Bryman 2008)

This project seemed an appropriate setting to explore my research questions, on account of the bold autonomous primary teacher, Ms. J, reaching beyond the constraints of the school system, to give the young people in her charge filmic ‘making experiences’ of relevance to their interests. Ms. J did this ‘pro bono’, with

the occasional help of a professional film-maker, and with relatively meagre technical resources amounting to the DV camera I loaned her and a morning's use of a local secondary school's editing suite. Another salient facet of this study related to Ms. J.'s feelings of isolation as far as her school's interest in the project was concerned, and at times I felt I was providing the moral support felt lacking in other quarters.

***Setting 3 (formal): Riverside School & Institute of Education - Film in a Morning***

Setting 3 combines representatives from three institutions that joined forces and created a brief film-making experience over one morning, for some Year 7 boys and a group of student teachers. The project comprised:

- a class of Year 7 boys from a state secondary school with over 650 students located in central London just south of the river Thames
- two PGCE course tutors, an MA student, a technician and a dozen student teachers of English and Drama at the UCL, Institute of Education, (University College, University of London, henceforth IoE)
- learning spaces provided by the nearby BFI Education Department

Riverside school is a specialist sports college and has a well-thumbed, spartan 'old-school' air about it, with its many floors, irregular nooks and crannies, vertiginous Victorian stone stairs and peeling paint. The school is non-denominational and so the ethnicity of the pupils is more diverse than the previous two faith schools, and in terms of social grouping by income, the students come from families in the low to middle range, erring on the former.

The two IoE course tutors who coordinate this annual project, Theo Bryer and Morlette Lindsey, have been enthusiastic supporters of media production in English and Drama teaching for a number of years<sup>41</sup>. Since 2010 they have been developing an 'add-on' learning experience for student teachers interested in filming and editing short DV texts in response to literature. So, as an alternative to (or supplemental to) a *written* response to a poem or a novel, student teachers are encouraged to manage a

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<sup>41</sup> This project was written up by myself, Bryer and Lyndsey in the journals: Media Education Research Journal and Changing English [see Cannon et al. 2014 and Bryer et al. 2014 respectively]

critical and creative learning experience for their future pupils by harnessing the audiovisual and the performative. What was, in 2010, an initiative entitled *Film in a Day*, involving students and pupils editing in a BFI basement wired to a suite of iMacs, is now *Film in a Morning* involving a number of iPads, the iMovie app and a roving sense of mobility.

I took an interest in this project a year after its inception and began following its progress on an informal basis, filming and blogging about it, because I felt it marked two important trajectories. One related to the development of DV production and subject English in critical and creative ways, and the other related to the professional development of teachers and their digital creative confidence. The fact that small groups of student teachers and pupils were working together, learning to develop and communicate understanding audiovisually, and to be productive with media in tandem with each other, remains a unique feature of this project.

I chose it as a setting for several reasons: the links with the formal English curriculum; the collaborative, dialogic and interactive dimension; the flattened socio-pedagogic hierarchies and the proximity of thought and productive action as afforded by the iPad – all of which are consistent with my exploration of new media technologies, production processes, new pedagogies and the ways these can be folded into *formal* school practices.<sup>42</sup>

### *Setting 3: Researcher Role and material gathering*

In a series of research settings in which I seem to be gradually ‘letting go’ of a sense of insider status, I locate myself as an Observer Participant in this short film-making initiative. Despite being familiar with the project and the IoE tutors, I knew none of the children nor the adult participants. I observed the student teachers’ introduction to the project and their playful practice with the iMovie app; I then interviewed a small group of them. The Year 7 boys arrived and I observed the teachers and the pupils working productively in pairs or small groups on their interpretation of the literature. I interviewed the children in pairs a couple of weeks later in their school

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<sup>42</sup> The edited footage from the 2012 *Film in a Day* project is on my Masters blog, viewable at the bottom of this post: <https://fashioningandflow.wordpress.com/2012/02/20/film-student-teachers-the-london-nauticals/> [Accessed 20 September 2015] I am not officially submitting the film as research material, but watching this 5 minute edit contextualises the project in ways which are difficult to match in writing.

library and followed this by interviewing the IoE tutors, an attendant MA student and the pupils' English teacher. Interviewing all the stakeholders in this way yielded a rounded interpretation of the proceedings from a range of perspectives.

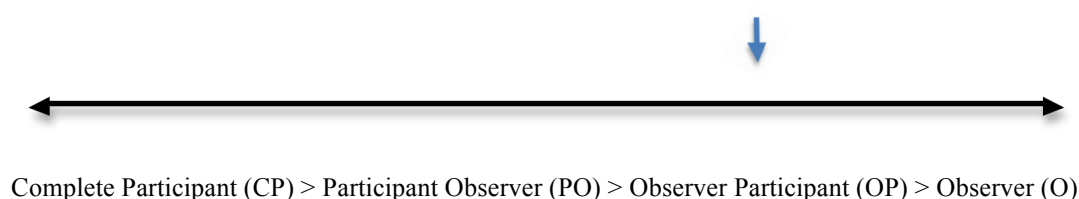


Figure 9: OP Researcher role in Setting 3 (adapted from Bryman 2008)

This was an intense piece of research on a short project, with a brief time span relative to my other settings. There was an unusually differentiated body of participants, generating a range of opportunities for triangulation, mainly in the form of audio transcripts and moving image texts. The interviews were short and concentrated, which may have been down to the formal school context in which they took place, physically and socially. There was a feeling that I had run parallel with participants through the morning's film-making experience, but had not fully integrated. The relationships that developed between myself, the student teachers and the Year 7 pupils, were however no less significant than in other settings, in terms of the richness of the data.

As illustrated in a published interview extract (Cannon et al. 2014, p.28) between myself and a young participant, it seems that by virtue of my more anonymous arm's length research status, a space emerged for snatches of insight. To the Year 7 boys, I was a one-off stranger, and perhaps because of this estrangement some boys felt they could disclose information with more intimacy. The more distanced stance also meant that I could observe freely, unencumbered with the type of responsibility that stretches the researcher's role, and watch student teachers and pupils interacting as they negotiated their creative media task in partnership, and unusually in *formal* lesson time.

The title of the above mentioned article: *Media Production and Disruptive Innovation: exploring the interrelations between children, tablets, teachers and texts in subject English settings*, attends to many of the constituent elements of my study

as a whole; particularly to the ways in which digital ‘disruptive innovation’ (Pendleton-Jullian 2009) can unsettle the prescribed ecology of classroom practices with its ‘randomness and riskiness’ (Burnett 2011). Perhaps this setting, and my OP role in it, more than any other had the potential to demonstrate the fertility of the ‘third space’ (Bhabha 1994; Gutiérrez 2008; Potter 2011) - a generative and permeable modality and physical space - between the life-world and the school-world (Potter and McDougall 2015). As referred to in Chapter II, Pendleton-Jullian (2009) usefully applies her ecotone metaphor (a fecund zone in the natural world, where distinct biodiverse regions meet) to hypothetical environments where pedagogic innovation meets institutional practices. As Setting 3 represents the site for one such ecotonal territory, it rehearses the dynamics of porosity that both inhabit and bracket the Production/Composition quadrant of the digital making cycle (Figure 5).

The fourth and final school setting demonstrates how multimodal communicative infrastructures coupled with a pedagogy committed to both the digital and the analogue, combine to form a rare productive tension in the ecotonal margins of mainstream education.

#### ***Setting 4 (formal): Riverside School English and Drama Department***

Setting 4 is located in the same school as Setting 3. I had originally thought that this fourth study would follow a formal Year 7 English class as it progressed through a project incorporating media production. However, after observing the English and Drama teacher and his innovative teaching methods, I moved the focus away from the students and their engagements with media, to the progressive practices of Mr. C, Head of English and Drama. I believe the formal pedagogy that he enacts indicates ways forward not only for English teaching, but for practice across the curriculum. Mr. C incorporates: digital, visual and moving image literacy; DV production with mobile technologies; blogging; and the use of an open-source social media platform, as routine interacting elements within the ecology of the classroom and department.

Mr. C has built a digital learning platform from which the entire department operates. It is as paperless an environment as can be manufactured in a traditional school setting, with few resources beyond a set of iPads. At the same time as developing a pioneering approach to teaching, learning and formative assessment (Black and

William 1998), the department runs parallel ‘OFSTED-friendly’ analogue classroom practices and has achieved above average results within the regular structures.

Despite the English department’s successes, the school has had frequent OFSTED inspections over the past few years as a result of its ‘Requires Improvement’ status, at the time of writing.

An ethos of transparency permeates the running of the department, in which agentic digital making is a quotidian, un-simulated social practice. My research relates to Mr. C’s enterprise in terms of how it is able to generate a pedagogic climate of collective ‘buy-in’, through policies of openness, trust and dialogue with its constituents; that is, it aspires to creating a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991) amongst staff, pupils and parents. This relates to my research questions with respect to the enactment of open pedagogic practices that incorporate dialogic ways of being, varied and inclusive modes of communication, mobile and social media technologies, and a commitment to the development of critical thinking.

By way of illustration teachers organise the content of their pupils’ termly work thematically so that the boys engage in a holistic project incorporating a range of textual production. More importantly, parents and pupils are offered the opportunity to collaborate on the design of these learning units, with the boys ultimately choosing (and committing to) which approach (and therefore which teacher) appeals to them. All the units are published on the online platform and the boys’ written or audiovisual work, is viewable and open for peer review. These are some of the more democratic pedagogies that characterise Riverside, constituting an appropriate environment in which to study teaching and learning practices that are cognisant of external influences and that embrace the affordances of digital media production. Some aspects of Mr. C’s practice function ‘under the radar’ which tends to lend the department a self-acknowledged subversive edge.

#### *Setting 4: Researcher Role and material gathering*

In this last setting I adopted my most unobtrusive role. I position myself in between Observer Participant (OP) and Observer (O) as seen in Figure 10. The latter can make no claim on participation, so given that the ethnographic nature of my research and the informality and inclusivity with which Mr. C operates, I took up more of an OP role than I had envisaged. This setting, the one in which I was most at liberty to

observe, offered dual benefits: a welcome relief from the responsibility of input and the freedom to indulge in acquiring audiovisual data as the eye, ear and mind saw fit. Moving in the direction of complete Observation was a refreshing challenge which rendered rich visual data.

The secondary English environment was the least familiar of my studies and I had imagined myself taking notes and the occasional photo of the ways in which digital media would be incorporated into the formal English lesson. My experience proved otherwise. Over three visits I came away with:

- an audio recording and photographs of an English lesson covering the visual analysis of a short film from New Zealand
- photographs and film of the boys practising camera shots with iPads in the playground during formal lesson time in the absence of the teacher
- a brief videoed interview with the boys in the above scenario
- an in-depth audio interview with Mr. C

The uniqueness of the data matched the uniqueness of the environment, and going with the flow never felt more important than in this setting.



Complete Participant (CP) > Participant Observer (PO) > Observer Participant( OP) > Observer (O)

Figure 10: OP/O Researcher role in Setting 4 (adapted from Bryman 2008)

Both in the forthcoming representations and in the actual practice of fieldwork, I occupied the role of Denzin's 'intimate public journalist' (2001) and Jones' 'collage-maker' (2006), such was the intertextual feast.

Some of the writers of the guest editorial prefacing the MERJ volume cited earlier (Burn et al. 2014) are familiar with Mr. C, and their summary of his practices

indicate the reasons for choosing this setting, in which the implications for pedagogies with digital making in the formal school sector are explored:

[This] head of English is fully aware of the ways in which the lines between director and enabler become blurred. In this context it seems that pedagogy is founded on a belief in agency and activity as well as an understanding of the wider lives of learners and of the media and cultural landscape. In a busy urban school this individual engages in flexible working practices which engage and involve learners and makes a point of building personal networks on social media and through TeachMeets which move across the boundaries between home and school and which sustain innovation in the context of a wider performative culture.  
(Burn et al. 2014, p.10)

On the whole, being more distanced in my approach within this setting, and staying with insights without distraction, allowed me to witness activities that constituted a playful merging of ‘school-not-school life-worlds’ (Sefton-Green 2013b).

In this subsection I have reflected on my role, interview techniques and the gathering of materials, as well as providing detailed descriptions of my research settings. It remains to explain how meaning can be drawn from this material and their contexts.

### ***Interpretive Framework***

Earlier I built on the ‘principles of validation’ devised by Finnish academics interested in narrative and educational Action Research – Heikkinen et al. (2007) - to construct a principled framework for research<sup>43</sup>. I suggested that these principles would inform my interpretations as part of a holistic methodology. To this end, I present the protocols through which I will convey my understanding of the settings described above, which leads to a discussion of research material and its ‘occasioned’ meanings. Figure 11 below is a visual representation of how the settings might be framed for interpretation based on inductively inspired reflection, familiarity with my data over the PhD period, and through years of immersive practice.

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<sup>43</sup> These principles are also referenced by Bold (2012, p.175) in her endorsement of narrative and the validity of ‘representative constructions’ (2012, p.162).



I begin by invoking Furstenau and MacKenzie's use of Merleau-Ponty's embodied vision being 'caught in things' (Furstenau and MacKenzie 2009, p.18). Merleau-Ponty thought of the body as:

Visible and mobile ... a thing among things; it is caught in the fabric of the world and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself.  
(Merleau-Ponty 1964a, p.163)

I envisage my material as being held within such a circular structure and within such fibres, like some arrested provisional moments whose integrity is kept whole. As such, I came to visualise a Möbius strip<sup>44</sup> or band encircling my research material, whose two singular features are its twist and seamless surface. With no discernible inner or outer side there is one surface that maps one topological space, whilst retaining its capacity to form endless shapes. To me these characteristics lend themselves to accounts of related but dichotomous phenomena; such as the contradictory role of the ethnographer as a situated social observer / constructor / performer, and the ways in which textuality and context are in continuously unfolding dialogue with each other as illustrated in my digital making cycle (Figure 4). The data are visualised as remixable (Manovich 2001; Knobel and Lankshear 2008) bundles of meaning surrounded by a malleable composite interpretative structure.

I propose that two overarching dimensions frame my material for the purposes of interpretation: our historical 'conditions of possibility' (Scott and Usher 2010) and participants' 'symbolic performance' - adapted from A. Reid's (2007) anthropologically rooted theories of media composition. These dimensions are interdependent and contingent, as rendered visually by the Möbius strip, and will be linked conceptually with Heikkinen et al.'s (2007) principles. Figure 11 below

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<sup>44</sup> The twist, the circularity and elasticity of the Möbius form articulate dynamic tensions in social formation and possible distortions as ideas circulate. The seamless surface offers robustness, while flexibility discourages any impulse to pin down one interpretation as 'truth'. I imagine it to be made of translucent man-made substance. Man-made denotes the socially constructed nature of the interpretive process while translucence invokes permeability and sensitivity to light. So there is a porosity to sense-making that invites alternative frames and interpretations.

categorises how my educational values, my literature review and emergent themes in my data have informed this study.

Interpretation will follow these frames: *workability*, *reflexivity*, *dialectics* and *everyday artistry* (in place of *evocativeness*, as previously explained), with *historic continuity* providing an underlying critical perspective on social context. Despite *equitability*'s inclusion as an integral value imbuing my approach to *research* and my *practice*, its sociological frame makes it less pertinent to my questions, and as such, it will not form part of my *interpretive* lens. Discussing the ways in which media production augments social well-being and levels of empathy, are ongoing sociological discourses, but are considered beyond the scope of this study.

Earlier in this Chapter, I referred to the tensions inherent in the concept of *workability* in research between the kinds of social change that are desired and those that are feasible in the prevailing circumstances. I relate this to *phronesis* – the Greek notion of practical contingent wisdom mentioned in Chapter II – and the to-ing and fro-ing involved in fixing and improving text or performance in some way.

Composing with media – from planning to filming and editing - entails negotiating a tooled-up and peopled environment in which physical and digital materials are recursively assembled and disassembled, offering a more textured and dynamic environment than that found in orthodox literacy practices. For this reason, during my research I have become aware of conditions that create opportunities for feelings of *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi 1990), and experiences of *iteration* and experimentation (Burn and Durran 2007). These concepts are key distinguishing traits of digital making related to challenge, mastery and judgement; and they combine to connect digital media-making to a wider conception of what it means to be literate.

I have suggested that digital media production is an activity that encourages metacognitive reflection – or *reflexivity* - in that it unpacks hitherto implicit visual understandings and renders them concrete in the act of making. Watching and then making moving image texts and articulating the process through specific typologies, nurtures a critical personal response and a disposition for (re-)productive action. This creative and questioning frame of mind is embodied in the term *praxis* which unites thought and action with purpose. As already suggested, finding alternative points of access to reflexive thinking is a potent tool in the development of children and young

people's autonomous critical responses. My research explores how young people borrow what is of interest to them in the 'cultural stock', and remodel it to reflect their own interests and identities.

Moving on to *dialectics*, the term is viewed in this context as an exchange of social meaning. The extent to which dialogic interaction is instantiated through digital media in and beyond the classroom, makes explicit a *disposition* to co-design, build and externalise meanings socially. Examining young people's apparent willingness to engage in these types of collaborative and reciprocal activities is an additional interpretive protocol with which to embellish understandings of the media production environment in school spaces and related pedagogies.

Finally, *evocativeness* is a concept readily associated with the humanities and rhetorical performance. It is rooted in the idea of 'calling forth' (from the Latin *evocat*) associative images, memories and feelings. As such it encapsulates much that is ambiguous and unquantifiable, those sensibilities related to the body, the affective and the imagination: in other words, the 'quality' constituents of qualitative relations, whose aesthetic arrangement aspires to the creation of coherent patterns. I decided to replace *evocativeness*, which is textually-oriented, with *everyday artistry*, which invokes the act of routine 'non-expert' production, whilst still retaining the textual and audience element. There is a synergy in *everyday artistry* with film-making and editing, activities that require perceptive sensitivities for the creation of mood.

In turn, mood in the digital media classroom is made manifest through continual adjustments to combinations of factors on the part of the teacher-facilitator. The latter is sensitive to learners' feelings of autonomy, mastery and purpose (Pink 2009), and their disposition to transition between the here-and-now and the imagined. These movements and those outlined above are redolent of Lanham's (1993) theory on the oscillatory AT (*INTERACT*) / THROUGH practices of meaning-making in Burnett et al's (2012) '(im)material' relations and social conditions. Research material is examined with reference to movement between online/offline spaces, people, creative media tools and practices - all of which are recurring phenomena in the processes of film-making and DV production.



Figure 11: Interpretive framework, informed by educational and research values adapted from Heikkinen et al. 2007

In other research contexts data is often atomised, coded and ultimately fragmented into units of meaning as in the operations of grounded theory (Charmaz 2014); a method which has some influence on my strategy in so far as its purpose is to *generate* theory and to use “inductive data to construct abstract analytic categories through an interactive process” (Charmaz 2014, p.15), however, I find its linear categorising rituals limiting, especially within an epistemology that embraces proliferation (Lather 2006), impermanence and plurality of interpretation. I resolve to interpret my audiovisual data and transcripts attentive to dynamics and practices that involve oscillation between social spaces, courses of action and frames of mind. Deliberation on these dimensions will help to clarify the relationships between digital media production processes, pedagogic environments and related socio-economic factors.

In this section I have accounted for my role within each setting which embodies levels of Participant Observation dependent on my experience and familiarity with the context. I have outlined the ways in which audiovisual and analogue materials were gathered and my preferred interview style. The settings have been described in a manner that makes clear their relevance to my questions and my theoretical framework; and finally, my interpretive strategy has been justified in relation to my questions and values. The next section considers the credibility of my methodological approach, its limitations and the ways in which I addressed ethical issues.

## **D. Credibility, Limitations & Ethics**

### ***Credibility***

In a keynote speech, whilst defining his five principles, Heikkinen makes a point of distinguishing between “ways for ensuring research quality through five principles for validation (not ‘validity’) of research” (2014, p.2). The difference lays claim to the ‘always-already valid’ nature of qualitative research in a postmodern view, the question is how to go about designing the validation process with transparency. I believe I have already spelled out this process by deploying six principles in Figure 11 as an organising structure. In terms of assessing the trustworthiness of the findings, I refer to Bryman (2008 p.377) who, drawing on Lincoln and Guba (1985), writes that *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability* are the most

appropriate evaluation criteria for qualitative research of this nature, with *transferability* being the most salient to my account. If this thesis provokes a response from teachers and other researchers, and they are inspired to replicate aspects of it or adapt content or methodology for their own purposes, then I propose this constitutes further extension of Hall's 'conversation'.

### ***Limitations***

My aim is to produce a well-grounded narrative supported by aptly chosen and interpreted material, however as I have already stated, these are storied reflexive accounts of a small number of ethnographic studies, derived from subjective observations, and audiovisual artefacts and experiences. As such, my study is as a provocative, multi-method microdot to be judged on its potentially wide-reaching implications, rather than a 'what works' project, valued for its short-term replicable '*workability*' at scale. This study is not instrumentally framed, nor does it test, prove or disprove a hypothesis. For this to be the case, a longitudinal approach would have been more appropriate, following the fortunes of participants and their subsequent media engagements, but the study was limited by the time available within the confines of the PhD process. Further, given the lack of appetite and funding for longitudinal research, and the primacy of positivist Randomised Controlled Tests in government sponsored educational research, it is at grassroots level that I believe my work to be most practicable.

It is the potency of a 'concentrated', experiential interpretation that matters, so that data are judged "by their aesthetic standard, their emotive force, their verisimilitude, and criteria of authenticity or integrity to the people they portray" (Bold 2012, p.144, drawing on Clough 2002). This said, and as Bold goes on to point out, my account does have a *pragmatic* edge, thus I would stretch the scope of my research to include the impact it might have on readers' own professional practice - its practical relevance to change-making in the present. In the end, the study represents one of several possible methodological constructs that attempt to represent understandings of 'others'.

### ***Ethics***

Ethical considerations have informed all aspects of my study. The research was undertaken in accordance with the revised guidelines published by the British

Educational Research Association (BERA 2011). Moreover, research involving children and young people carries extra risks and sensitivities (Greig et al. 2013, p.6; Cohen et al. 2007, p.374), as related in a previous section on negotiations with children in research. Measures were taken to build trust, minimise authoritarianism and to ensure junior participants' safety and well-being at all times. For example, attention was paid to the register of language used, and to time allocation for general questions and responses. Participants and their guardians were informed in advance, of the nature of the research, the benefits, the risks, if any, their anticipated role, and their right to withdraw at any stage.

The fact that the research featured photos and a range of digital material for different purposes, meant scrupulous attention to *informed* consent. Appendix C contains an example of a Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet, adapted versions of which were given to all participants. Parental/carers consent was sought where necessary and all adult participants coming into contact with children had up-to-date DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks. Some of the participants in The Clip Club were identified as vulnerable and/or as having behavioural issues, and these children were supported by a learning mentor at all times. Pseudonyms were used for all Clip Club members and anonymity was maintained for all participants apart from key commentators who agreed to be named. Overall, this study was conducted with an enthusiastic spirit of equity and frankness that was inclusive of young participants and sensitive to their interests.

## **E. Concluding Thoughts**

Chapter III has offered a philosophical and practical exegesis of my research approach closely related to a baseline of research and educational values. I believe that a visual anthropological approach is well suited to probing school media production environments, to hazarding an informed interpretation and thence to arguing for newly envisaged educational experiences including digital media-making. I conclude with a passage from Hughes (1971), which resonates with my working practices and sets the tone for the next Chapter. Reprising Wright Mill's (1959) encapsulation of social science's main instrument - the 'sociological imagination' - Hughes describes it as inhabiting a kind of transitional hinterland:

[of] free association, guided but not hampered by a frame of reference internalized not quite into the unconscious ... When people say of my work ... that it shows insight, I cannot think what they could mean other than whatever quality may have been produced by intensity of observation and a turning of the wheels to find a new combination of the old concepts, or even a new concept.

(Hughes 1971, p.vi, cited by Grady 2004, p.26)

As a creative digital media educator-practitioner since the turn of the century, the ‘wheels have been turning’ implicitly for some time. And so it is with an explicit and “alert consciousness poised for insight” (Grady 2004, p.26) that I begin the presentation of my research materials.



## Chapter IV – Interpretation of Material Part 1

### A. Interpretive framework

This Chapter offers an interpretation of interview and audiovisual material gathered during the course of an after school film-making club that I named Clip Club. The narrative for this setting and the remaining three settings will draw on the themes and values identified as crucial to understanding digital media composition processes and the related pedagogies identified in Figure 11. I redraw these criteria in a tidier integrated circular model (Figure 12 below), which introduces a sense of interactivity between the elements. The model serves as the interpretive lens with which to address my research questions:

*How does creative media work constitute a wider literacy in formal and non-formal school spaces?*

*What can traditional pedagogy learn from moving image production processes?*

*How do social discursive factors determine practical media work in schools?*

The model is designed as a heuristic to bring into relief the ways in which some current practices with digital media demonstrate alternative teaching and learning dynamics. This broadened frame supports social conceptions of literacy, mindful of social actors' 'rhetorical performance' within historically situated 'conditions of possibility'. The flexible *Möbius* strip at the centre of Figure 12 circumscribes my data in a way that recalls the contingent and shape-shifting nature of interpretative research and the tension between the personal and collective agency, and the external social forces that determine social acts and relations.

As a reminder, here is how I define the central dimensions of the model as they relate to creative media *Production/Composition* and *pedagogic* practices conceived as populating Quadrant 3 of the digital making cycle (Figures 4 and 5) and its boundaries areas:

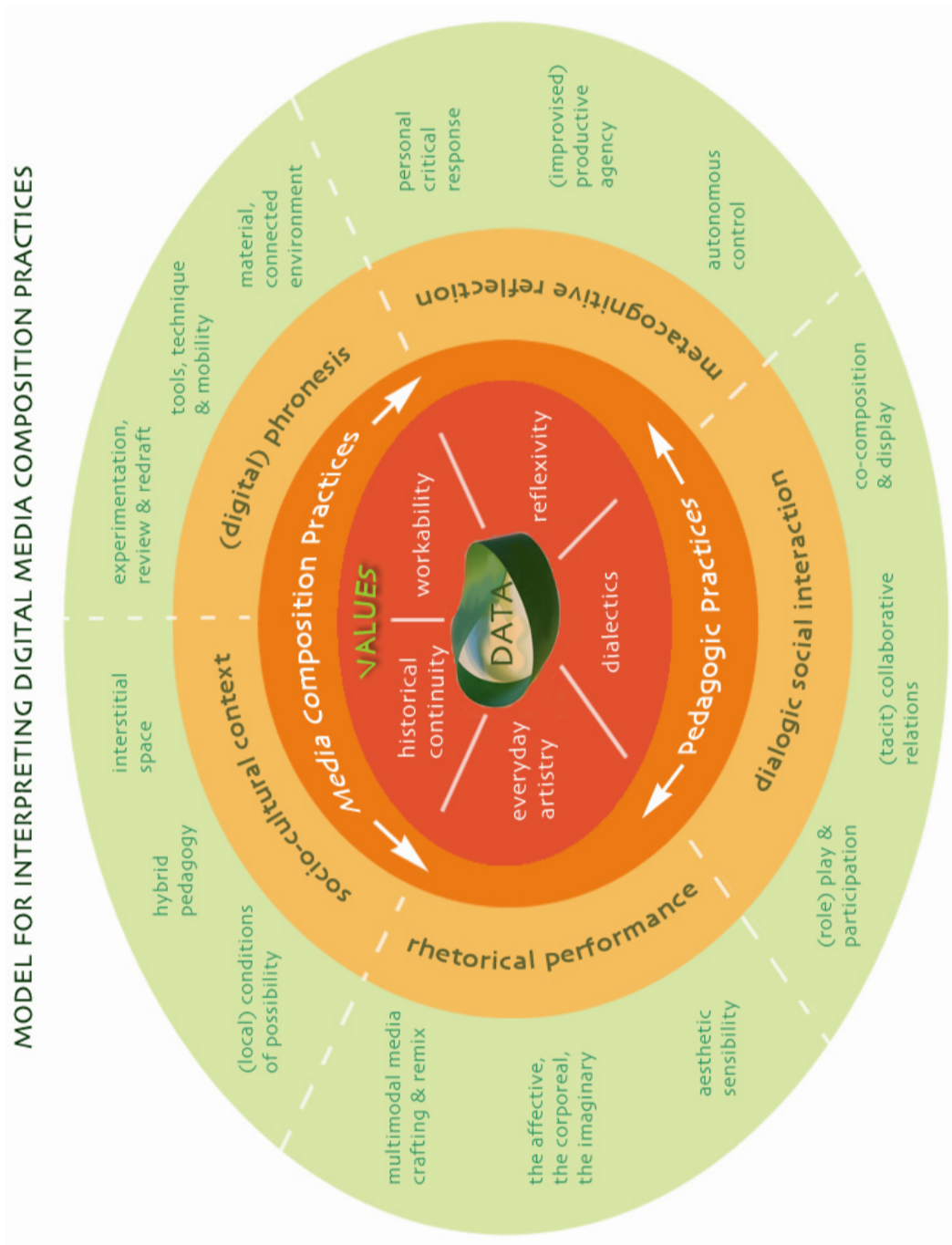


Figure 12: Model for interpreting digital media composition practices and pedagogy, drawing on Heikkinen et al. (2007)

- ***workability*** (phronesis) relates to provisional practical judgements made ‘in the absence of rule’ (Eisner 2005/2002), and material iterative experimentation with digital tools and assets in a networked environment
- ***reflexivity*** (metacognitive reflection) relates to opportunities for personal critical response, autonomous control of learning, and often improvised productive agency
- ***dialectics*** (dialogic social interaction) relates to flattened collaborative relations, (role-)play and participation, and processes of co-composition and display
- ***everyday artistry*** (evocative rhetorical performance) relates to multimodal media crafting inspired by everyday living, sensibility to aesthetic assembly, and sensitivities towards the affective, the corporeal and the imaginary, both in film and DV production and in classroom pedagogy
- all of which are mobilised within a paradigm that recognises contextual ***historical continuity***, that is, through transactional pedagogies permeable to popular culture, and specific local and wider conditions of possibility

I start with a ‘bricolage’ (Lévi-Strauss 1966; Turkle and Papert 1992) of moments from the Clip Club presented through a range of texts and interpreted through a practitioner’s *pedagogic* lens.

As previously noted, the interpretive model is the product of a multi-method approach predominantly *inductive* in nature; however, compelling observations from the literature, as well as years of teaching experience, introduce an inescapable *deductive* element to my interpretative protocols. To make a clear distinction between the categories as inductively or deductively derived would be almost arbitrary, as the two are entwined. What I hope to distil is the multi-insight of the embedded Participant-Observer-Practitioner-Educator, presented in a rich narrative. To this end, separate sections offering *practitioner’s* insights into participants’ words and actions accompany the data, for hermeneutic expression of what has hitherto remained either unexpressed or subject to more instrumental interpretations.

The Chapter concludes with a *contextual* interpretation reflecting on the social conditions from which the data is drawn so that discursive influences are kept close to my material. The concrete Clip Club data, the practical insight and the contextual reflection provide a foil for the interpretation of my three remaining studies in Chapter V. This latter material will thus be cross-referenced in a process of thematic and iterative triangulation based on empirical evidence. As discussed in Chapter III, the subjectivity of my Participant Observer status recedes as my research progresses, and my field of vision as a researcher becomes less fraught with competing responsibilities. Once presented, my material is scrutinised further in Chapter VI, in order to offer an overarching perspective on conceptions of literacy and new pedagogies, in relation to situated media composition practices.

To be clear on issues of formatting and referencing, digital video files that are integral to the thesis, (by which I mean specifically included for interpretation rather than simply illustration) are supplied both on the accompanying DVD and online as private material on Vimeo (the password is *wizard*). Links to full audio interviews are available on SoundCloud (conveniently, SoundCloud links include time-stamps that locate specific moments on the audio timeline for immediate playback). Website references in the footnotes are intended as material that amplifies or further illustrates the points being made.

### **B. Setting 1: East London Primary School - The Clip Club**

In the Clip Club setting I was a Participant Observer running an after school film watching and making club with a group of seven Year 5/6 children (aged ten to eleven years). This was a protracted project and the material gathered was rich and voluminous. However, the job of selecting and presenting data was made easier by focusing on the children, their relationships, and the different ways in which each contributed to my understanding of media composition processes. Participants' actions and contributions are mined, presented and mapped onto Figure 12 above, which tie them squarely to my interpretive and theoretical frameworks.

Interwoven are interpretations of videoed material taken during the sessions where we witness the dynamics of the group and their interrelations. In terms of Eisner's hermeneutic 'heat' generated in the reporting of findings, this is the warmest of my studies. By this I mean that the level of empathy and trust that accumulated between

participants, amid the sometimes messy friction of our encounters, led to significant insights and personal disclosures. This approach maps a field of detailed exploration as opposed to one that defines a narrow gauge of measurement.

I begin with a series of ‘pen portraits’ as recounted earlier, based on interview material with: 1) Nimbus, 2) Nimbus, Leonardo and Mr. P (Learning Mentor) and 3) Leonardo. These exchanges and the more visual material to follow have been chosen because they demonstrate how the media composition themes and dimensions in Figure 12 emerged through practical experience and indicative research data.

### **C. Nimbus**

Nimbus is a self-assured ten-year-old, proud of his self-styled ‘geek’ status and keen to be able to apply it. He is unusually eloquent and therefore not entirely representative of the group, but he gives us a view of what a young media author might look like, as well as some pointers as to how he may develop. I asked him what he was enjoying about the Club a few weeks into the process.

Audio available at: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-thesis-interview-1-nimbus-march-2013/s-BakNN> [Accessed 20 September 2015]

**Nimbus:** What I really like about Clip Club is the fact that you’re with all these other people and instead of being limited to being enclosed in this one ... well... medium sized room, you can just wander round and film with your team mates or peers, and then share it with the rest of the group without being like ashamed that you had to take two shots of something or anything like that. It’s quite good.

**Michelle:** Mm, nice, yeah, erm, and ... what do you think, erm, what do you think you’re learning in the editing process?

**Nimbus:** Well I think I’m learning how to... how like ... like before I did this, I thought they did all the sounds and everything on location like. And they just did it while they were filming. But now I found out that basically lots of the times, they get rid of the sound in the clip and they put new sound over it to make it sound like it’s real, when actually it’s just a sound effect.

**Michelle:** Cool yeah OK, and what about all those camera shots and things, are you interested in those?

**Nimbus:** Um, yes I like them, I found a really good website that tells you about all the different shots and all.. different types of

media and everything like that, it's really interesting. And like who.. before this, someone mentioned to me... or something... they just mentioned something like "oh that's a really good establishing shot" and I was thinking "What?" and it's like... it's like.. "Oh yeah, that was a quite good establishing shot actually, it really brought the tension into the moment".

[Michelle sniggers]

**Michelle:** OK, excellent. And do you think you might look at TV programmes or adverts or films in a different kind of ..way?

**Nimbus:** Yes.

**Michelle:** In what way?

**Nimbus:** Like, I would... instead of just sitting back, relaxing, watch...watching it and let it all sink in and have the information going out your ear ... erm...I would like.... endure [laughs] it you could say... and might think "OK, that's an establishing shot" or for fun I could like count the pans or the close-ups or something like that. And in adverts, I like, sometimes I count how many times it changes between views.

**Michelle:** Mm, how many cuts... Yeah Yeah...

**Nimbus:** Yeah.

**Michelle:** Cos there's a lot.

**Nimbus:** Yeah.

**Michelle:** Quite a lot in adverts, isn't there?

**Nimbus:** Because adverts are usually fast, cos you know,.. yeah...yeah.. buy this, buy this!

(Interview with Nimbus, 2013)<sup>45</sup>

### *A media practitioner's core practices and values*

Nimbus begins by affirming the social significance of Clip Club for him, albeit that at this point his peers are referred to distantly as 'these people', rather than the

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<sup>45</sup> For conference presentation purposes, I experimented with a videoed version of this interview with Nimbus standing silently, looking directly at the camera, 'addressing' the audience with a voiceover: <http://theclipclub.co.uk/2013/03/20/points-of-view-1-nimbus/> [Accessed 8 November 2015]. I also videoed Leonardo using the same technique: <https://vimeo.com/127138677> [Accessed 8 November 2015]

friends they would become. As someone who spends hours at home on the computer, the fact of physical collaborative teamwork and the sharing of texts, are appealing features of the Club for him. Nimbus does not view himself as a ‘creative collaborator’; his forte is solo computer programming and looking under the bonnet of digital technology, a set of skills he regards as separate from those related to ‘creativity’. Indeed the ironic inflection in his voice when describing ‘the tension of the moment’ signals that it feels odd for him to be alluding to ‘the evocative’, but somehow he recognises the importance.

Cinematic techniques for building tension and suspense had been the overarching theme for a few weeks and Nimbus had assimilated much of this new visual film grammar<sup>46</sup> - for example how certain sounds, camera shots, movements, angles and distances achieve the effects they do – with particular reference to a scene in *Wall-E* (Stanton 2008). As if to test out his imaginative capacity he whimsically projects himself into an imagined dialogue, in which he is called upon to make explicit his newfound knowledge on the merits of a particular establishing shot. Possessing knowledge is a marker of Nimbus’ identity; indeed ‘not knowing’ is a potential cause for shame in his reality.

Not having an immediate ‘real-life’ community with whom to share his knowledge of computer science, and finding a receptive one within Clip Club revealed to Nimbus sides of himself that had previously been in shadow. This discursive schism between informally acquired skills perceived as high value beyond school, and the dearth of outlets in which school children can formally practice them in school, all embroiled in illusory divisions between creative, academic and technical subjects, are apparent in one guise or another in this short exchange with Nimbus.

***Practitioner insight: tools, iterative technique, dual contexts***

Nimbus’s use of the word ‘ashamed’ indicates that either *he* has felt shame and/or that he has been sensitive to *others*, on account of the perceived public failure at having got something wrong in class, or rather, for him, *not* having got something *right first time*. The ways in which digital filming and editing a) lessens the

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<sup>46</sup> <http://theclipclub.co.uk/2013/02/05/7-tell-me-a-few-things-about-this-shot-in-a-comment/#comments> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

likelihood for ‘mistakes’ to be felt as such, and b) recasts repeated attempts at ‘correction’ as pleasurable and sometimes irresistible processes of *refinement*, are a revelation for young learners. The benefits of informed and iterative redrafting as a key element of media composition was an important theme uncovered in my Masters dissertation (Cannon 2011<sup>47</sup>). Furthermore, school systems condemn failure at all costs on account of academic achievement targets and prevailing competitive cultures. My data suggests that these priorities are parsed to the students with negative consequences. Nimbus in particular experiences the sweet dissonance of ‘failing well’ as he picks up on the intrinsic benefits of review and redraft processes so characteristic of creative media production.

As someone who is unusually alert to the possible continuities between the ‘home-life-world’ context and that of school, Nimbus revels in his insider knowledge about the artificiality of media constructs, alluding to texts with recorded sound other than the diegetic. In other words, you can *cheat* when film-making by removing the original recorded sound and by importing additional more evocative soundtracks and effects that artfully mesh with the content. This is useful information for him, the inference being that he would be able to implement this new knowledge quickly, not only in the Clip Club but also at home and with his friends. Activities at the Club inspired him to expand his ‘visual toolkit’ by independently researching camera shots, which links with a newly acquired critical perspective on audiovisual texts in his non-school life.

#### **D. Nimbus and Leonardo**

I conducted an interview<sup>48</sup> with Leonardo, Nimbus and Mr. P one lunchtime in the third term of the Clip Club. Leonardo generally expressed himself well but was rather less assertive and found it difficult to integrate socially. He was relatively new to the school and gravitated towards Nimbus in group work, however, his

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<sup>47</sup> Hear young research participant Daniel’s words at 03:20’ on the second movie: <https://fashioningandflow.wordpress.com/category/case-study-data-analysis/case-study-c-st-elizabeth-primary-school/the-critical-creators/> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

<sup>48</sup> As my research progressed I refrained from asking the ‘What?’ and ‘Why?’ questions evidenced here, which were too pointed and overly related to my research. I began asking open-ended questions of a ‘Tell me about...’ nature, allowing for more fluid, less directed responses, about feelings and experiences.



estrangement gradually changed for the better with the passage of time. I asked them about issues of control when film-making:

*Nimbus, Leonardo & Mr. P interview*

Audio available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-thesis-interview-2-mrp-leonardo-nimbus-march-2013/s-uhdHC#t=03:29> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

*Part 1:*

**Nimbus:** Control?

**Michelle:** If I were to throw that one at you? Does it give you control?

**Nimbus:** Yeah. Yeah, it does, because like, if you were doing a lesson; how to make a film, then what they're going to do is they're going to give you some software, they're going to give you a subject and they're going to say, "Make a film on this", although in Clip Club we had more control over what we did, so like we didn't have to do some sort of particular subject. Well, during the movie-making process we did, because it was making a movie, but we got to choose what the movie was about, instead of someone saying, "Here's your movie. Make a film", and then you've got to work out how to do all this stuff with this just particular subject you might not even be particularly interested in said subject.

**Michelle:** Right. Okay, well they're great points, thank you. Mr P learning mentor, what would you say, what have you got to say about maybe the social aspects of this process; this experience?

**Mr.P:** I would say one of the key elements of the group as a whole has been how they've learned to work with each other, and support each other, not just through the process of making the movie and the process of learning how to make films and all that encompasses, it's also elements that I've seen in and around the school with the group. So yes, when they're all in a room, working together, they have a goal; they have an aim; it's very obvious that they want to make this movie, they want to make it well, and to do that they have to cooperate with each other, they have to support each other, they have to find who is strong in certain areas, experiment a little bit and try different things. So all of that is I would say contained but it's there; you're there for an hour on a Tuesday night and you have a common goal. What I've seen around the school outside, which is... I think comes from the strength of Clip Club and the group is their... how they behave to each other

outside, in their lessons and in the playground and how they've been very supportive. They're a much stronger group than they ever would have been, and they're all very different individuals that potentially would not have had anything to do with each other before Clip Club. So I've seen a real camaraderie that's stretched out into other areas of the school, and that for me as learning mentor obviously is a huge plus because, you know, it's enough to make you redundant really.

*Part 2:*

Audio available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-thesis-interview-2-mrp-leonardo-nimbus-march-2013/s-uhdHC#t=09:37> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

**Michelle:** Right. Okay. Just one more question I think. What do you think... has anything changed about you from the beginning until now?

**Leonardo:** Well, obvious... well, for me, independence. Independence...

**Michelle:** Confidence?

**Leonardo:** Confidence, and at the beginning like Nimbus said, he said that it's not like ... the teacher don't tell you, do this, and then make a film about it. It gives us free explanation, so it's not a fixed project.

**Michelle:** Right. Yeah, it gives you freedom?

**Leonardo:** Yeah.

(Interview with Nimbus, Leonardo and Mr. P, 2013)

***Autonomous control & social interaction***

It has already been made clear that Nimbus enjoys learning autonomy, and to be encouraged to indulge this predisposition in school is refreshing for him. Perhaps as a result of this, however, he is dismissive of the obligation to work with content of no interest to him. Even if the specified task were to include film-making, he speculates that the subject matter would be some approved 'learning topic' with a prescribed outcome. A point reinforced by Leonardo, who, referencing Nimbus' remark, offers the loaded observation that the nature of Clip Club 'gives us free explanation, so it's not a fixed project.' Both Leonardo and Nimbus appear to be equipped with a metacognitive sense and can make objective judgements on the predictable

mainstream practices of compliance. This is perhaps because their family lives are such that they have been exposed to certain experiences that develop independent creativity and/or critique. Whatever the case, it is implied that the open-ended and democratic ‘possibility thinking’ (Craft 2013) that Clip Club invited was an allure for these children.

It is unsurprising that Mr. P.’s comments on the social benefits of the project echo those of his son, Nimbus. Both recount how the group support each other in ways that move beyond the boundaries of the Club to affect relations in the normal school day. As a learning mentor, Mr. P has a broad perspective on the children and as such he occupies an in-between interstitial space. It is from this vantage point that he advocates for the Clip Club’s socialising influence which he puts down to a sustained collective purpose.

***Practitioner insight: review and redraft***

In this and future participants’ contributions, we hear Nimbus invoke the rubric of audiovisual language in ways that indicate possible routes to literacy work in which authorial choice, form, structure and artistry are the foci. Not only this but DV editing practices render iterative approaches to creative work a transparent standard procedure, as disclosed by Nimbus in his comment on feeling no ‘shame’ at taking several shots of the same thing. Traditional literacy exacts grammatically precise, linear and finished paper-based outcomes, with ‘monologic’ as opposed to dialogic appeal. The monomodal has its place in literacy practices, but this account argues for the relevance of provisional, non-linear, open-ended meaning-making and contingent decisions made ‘on the fly’ - activities that characterise media production. In the process of editing, media entities (DV clips and sounds in time) become malleable, quasi-tactile raw materials, ‘workable’ familiar symbols, which ordered in certain sequences, for certain lengths of time, to a certain pace and rhythm, wield an aesthetic power. Giving young people repeated opportunities for iterative digital redrafting gives them powerful control over their own learning, a luxury that few schools feel they can offer in any sustained way.

Clip Club members were ‘*free to explain*’ their story and allow it to unfold, in a language that was at once new and familiar to them, the language of film: familiar in that many have consumed it from infancy, and new in terms of them being handed

the intellectual resources and skills to interpret and produce it. Arguably one of the reasons why the children kept returning to the Club, beyond the social appeal, was precisely this fascination with the facets of artistry inherent to film-making and the audiovisual medium. Given the tools and sensitive pedagogic intervention, it is a process of inscription that builds on passive accumulated knowledge of the moving image, over which young people can exert autonomous and nuanced creative control. These are educational experiences that deliver a balanced sense of relevant learning in the service of self-determined ends.

### **E. Leonardo**

I interviewed Leonardo separately at the end of the project because he had missed the final session in which I had made some recordings of the children responding to prompt cards about their Clip Club experience.

Audio available at: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/leonardo-july-2014/s-ZeYgI#t=2:30> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

**Leonardo:** Well, the most surprising thing was when we... when we got to use the... when we... what... it's actually the film because you get to use all of each other's talents kind of, really, and make them interfused; connect them together to make one movie, or film, yeah.

**Michelle:** Really good, yeah. So what do you think your talent is; your particular talent?

**Leonardo:** Making people laugh because in the... when the school saw, it everyone was laughing --

**Michelle:** Mm.

**Leonardo:** yeah and especially in the blooper .. "bald head" *[laughs at private joke]* --

**Michelle:** *[Laughs]* yeah. Yeah, how do you think the screening ... was that a good thing for you?

**Leonardo:** Yeah.

**Michelle:** Yeah. Yeah. It's quite nice to hear everybody laugh. Okay. Any more?

**Leonardo:** Yeah, I like it when people laugh because like... like when they laugh --

**Michelle:** Mm.

**Leonardo:** -- the people who make it will appreciate it, because they've done something or changed... made *change*.

**Michelle:** Mm, what do you mean by that? That's quite an interesting thought.

**Leonardo:** By change, I mean like change their... say you watch a scary movie like they ... change, you know, when... after you finish, it might have been too scary that you change how you think and you become paranoid about it.

<https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/leonardo-july-2014/s-ZeYgI#t=5:22>

[Accessed 21 September 2015]

**Leonardo:** Well, I kept coming back to Clip Club because it's fun and you get to like take burdens off you from the day, like especially in the ... at the end of Year 6, there's SATS and tests and more tests and even more tests, and (sighs) it was... it made us stressed out and after we could just relax and make films and stuff, yeah...

<https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/leonardo-july-2014/s-ZeYgI#t=7:42>

[Accessed 21 September 2015]

**Leonardo:** What does that say?

**Michelle:** [reading from card] 'Things that I have found out about myself whilst doing Clip Club'.

**Leonardo:** What I found out about myself is that I achieved something and no one has said, "Do it". I've taken out one hour every Tuesday, once a week, to do something which is what I can use in later life, if I become a film-maker or anything in that department.

(Interview with Leonardo, 2014)

### ***Co-composition and display***

Leonardo had a developed sense of social awareness and seemed to appreciate the range of ability on offer in the group. This was odd considering he was on occasion socially awkward and disconnected from the rest of the children, apart from Nimbus.

Nevertheless, his idea of blending their talents – of ‘interfusing’ them – is a sensitive observation, reminiscent of the ecotonal metaphor discussed in Chapter II, and of the ways in which an environment that welcomes difference can give rise to a potent heterogeneity of expression. Arguably one of the drivers of imaginative project work, along with the artistry of the teacher, is precisely the blending of disparate elements to create new and unexpected forms. As has been mentioned, the children learnt to respect personality differences by experimenting with different roles, allowing talents and interests to surface and channel into a collective endeavour.

Beyond the obvious indicator of social well-being, Leonardo makes an insightful comment on the ways in which laughter creates change. Hearing his schoolmates laughing en masse at something they had created, makes a deep impression on him. He feels proud of himself: proud in a way that is intrinsic, rather than generated by some extrinsic reward. His proud sense of accomplishment is further suggested at the end of the extract where he mentions his independent decision to ‘take an hour’ of his time for his own purposes. Customarily the valuing of time is perceived as an adult preoccupation and not the concern of an eleven year old, whose time is irrevocably pre-carved in school systems. Furthermore, his qualification of the ways in which he brought about ‘change’ signifies a metacognitive capacity. In that moment of laughter, he realised that his and the Club’s independent efforts had generated an emotional communion with his peers, and to have made his mark in this way was a lasting triumph.

***Practitioner insight: ownership and public celebration***

As discussed above, from a practitioner’s point of view, the public staging of media and film events is often overlooked in the school context - like some extraneous add-on - perhaps because analogue literacy products or visual art pieces are traditionally paper-bound, confined to walls, notice boards or static exhibitions. Conversely, as was demonstrated in the Question and Answer sessions after each screening of the Clip Club films, the public screening is the arena where media authorship and craftsmanship are exposed, where ownership is claimed and celebrated, and where genuine dialogue between peers about learning is oxygenated.

## **F. Clara and G-man**

I couple Clara and G-man together in this section as they had a tacit and unlikely relationship: she the outgoing and passionate actress; he the quiet, introverted and self-conscious stills photographer (who spent long periods in formal school time in corridors, in trouble). Both were often disengaged and distracted in formal literacy lessons, whereas in Clip Club they appeared to find roles that suited their discrete skills and personalities. Clara's effervescence occasionally caused friction with some of the boys, however at no stage did anyone question her acting ability. For much of the time the crew wielded the film-making tools and processes around *her*, as she funnelled her talent down the lens. Her performance in front of the camera represented the spirit of embodied artistry in time and space, as will be seen in the interpretation of specific photos and green screen filming. Conversely G-man's meanings were conveyed through engagement with the still image, embedded in a modality of *phronetic*<sup>49</sup> and social interaction. Both children illustrate the ways in which commitment to meaning-making practices involving still and moving images, is well within the grasp of so-called 'lower achieving' children, who often exceed expectations.

***See Figure 13: Photo of Clara and Cara having watched short 'horror' clip***

### ***Iterative and critical approaches to understanding film language***

I took the photo in Figure 13 below after the group watched a short 'horror' film on Youtube: *He Dies At The End* (McCarthy 2010). We were discussing how the film's different shots and angles created tension (video footage was taken of this session by Mr.P whilst I ran it and took photos along the way<sup>50</sup>). The photo is a potted encapsulation of the ways in which moving image media can leverage and elicit nuanced understandings from the interests and personal approaches of the individual.

Cara (right) was generally not interested in performing in front of the camera, she was happy in a producer's role with a clipboard, a shot list to work through and people to organise. Below she waits to offer her observations on the horror clip, her

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<sup>49</sup> As introduced in Chapter II, *phronesis* describes the kinds of practical intelligence that informs improvised solutions.

<sup>50</sup> See third movie: 'IMG\_3668' at 03:10' - 04:15' available here: <http://theclipclub.co.uk/2014/01/22/he-dies-at-the-end-short-horror-clip/> [Accessed 21 September 2015]



Figure 13: Clara (left) and Cara (right) discussing film shots and angles

hand raised with the quiet compliance of classroom norms, her eyes temporarily distracted to the right, but she appears un-phased by the audiovisual documentation of the event. Clara (left) is hyper-aware of the recording and *performs* her definition of an extreme close-up, in which even her fingers are acting. She clamps them evenly around her face, exploring her emotions, as if imagining herself secured by some elegant cinematic brace. Indeed the previous year, in an early film trailer exercise exploring fear, she enacted this very shot, panting and with wild eyes in a dark classroom cupboard. Clara may have felt that she was on stage and her demonstration of the close-up, eyes askance, was a momentary meditation on the emotion of her prior performances:

*See Clip 1 in ClipClub-footage.mov, from 00:06 onwards on DVD or here:*

*<https://vimeo.com/142087018> [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]*

The photo points towards the possible different access points for critical understandings of moving image media, the one practical, expressive and embodied, the other functional and cognitive, as will be discussed in Chapter VI.

***Practitioner insight: embodying film grammar and power relations***

The above few seconds of footage evince Clara's fearless pre-disposition to being filmed close-up and in character from the off. This made an impact at the time as most children are at least a little self-conscious. Not so Clara, who embraces her role



body and soul, taking full stock of her material environment and the face-framing affordances of the camera to enhance her performance. As will be shown in later clips and photos, there is no compromise in her search for a shot's 'rightness of fit' in relation to both the elements within her control and her intention to deliver on 'whole body' emotion with every take.

As noted earlier, the Club's first film *Run School Run!* was runner-up in the National Youth Film Festival 2013 for their category. The Award ceremony at Vue Cinema in central London, screened a few seconds of the nominated films and the one chosen in this instance was a stairway sequence ending in an extreme close-up of Clara's face. The success of this style of shot for menacing impact, meant that it was once more put to work in the sequel. The point is that recursive approaches to working with film grammar marries an aesthetic sensibility with tangible meaning-making practices and outcomes<sup>51</sup>.

I notice that the colouring in Figure 13 above seems spliced in two, Clara (left) representing demonstrative ways of knowing related to the affective, the corporeal and outward performance, and Cara (right) maintaining normative school behaviour, and making an observation from composed inward reflection. I am also struck by the effect of the low angle shot from the point of view of an educator, who rarely assumes a physically submissive position in relation to pupils: Mr. P and I documented this event whilst sitting on the floor looking up at the children, casting them as the protagonists. This is the 'punctum' (Barthes 1979) of this photo for me - the diffuse and almost inexplicable appeal of or detail within a photo that pierces or arrests attention – namely, the unsettling of routine teacher / researcher question and answer power relations.

This is not to suggest that researchers or educators should invariably adopt a supplicant position, merely that it is worth experimenting with space and positioning in pursuit of eliciting understanding of moving image media, particularly if the

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<sup>51</sup> The final films, featuring a pupil-cum-film editor's Clone magically emerging from the iMovie interface and trying to get back 'home', are not intended to be analysed, as I am interested in the *processes* through which they materialised. Nevertheless, both films and the 'Making of' are available here, along with a wistful comment from a Club member, now at secondary school, made long after the project had ended: <http://theclipclub.co.uk/2014/07/11/run-school-run-1-2-making-of-on-youtube/#comment-1542> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

discussion orbits shot height, angle and distance. Similarly from a research point of view, having an ‘excuse’ to interview children from unusual angles could at once enrich the data as well as provide an arresting visual perspective.

***See Figure 14: Photo of Clara fainting (by G-man)***

### ***Social (non)participation***

G-man was rarely to be seen without my camera around his neck: from behind the material and functional nature of the still and DV camera his identity seemed secure. On a social level he felt comfortable with those with whom he was familiar but lacked confidence when in the company of strangers or in a large group of people, resorting to ‘gangster-style posturing’ and shows of disinterest. Somewhat paradoxically, he relished the dynamics of the Clip Club working group, as an outlier he could dive in and out of proceedings as the mood or impulse took him - the kind of behaviour well suited to an attentive photographer.



Figure 14: G-man in adjacent room, photographs Clara fainting in climax scene

There were a few occasions when G-man's outlying status had more to do with transgression, Figure 14 is one such moment. Filming had begun on the climax of *Run School Run 2* and G-man had been in trouble for most of the day for 'answering back'. Mr. P had been involved in resolving the incident, which was all the more tense in the context of May being SATS season. G-man absented himself from the shoot and chose to look in from the sidelines, defiantly 'stealing' a series of shots through the window - the reinforced glass a poignant reminder of his self-imposed estrangement and isolation.

A note in the blog at the time was a conscious effort on my part to integrate these shots into the Clip Club experience in a way that acknowledged his semi-participative decisions, but that also moved us on positively:

G-man takes a rest from taking photos [particularly like the ones from behind the window of Clara fainting, shown below] and joins the editing team the following week.

(Available at: <http://theclipclub.co.uk/category/shooting-the-film/>) [Accessed 21 September 2015]

I tried to take account of the pressures they were under during the day in a way that was neither counter to the school's behaviour policy nor complicit with teacherly admonition, this was a tricky negotiation given the space of respite that the Clip Club had come to represent for some of its members. Nevertheless, G-man found his own way of maintaining the dialogue with the group through photography, and this was publicly recognised on the blog; a fact that he may have had the foresight to realise, and that may have influenced him to take the shots in the first place.

### ***Practitioner insight: roleplay, mess & collaboration***

Film production and post-production offer different pathways to being and learning that take into account individuals' distinct inclinations within a community of creative practice. It offers opportunities to take on purposeful roles with defined responsibilities, be they acting, directing, producing, filming, editing or related to graphics or sound. Role-play has the advantage of masking or overruling normative behaviours and one is given the chance to try out new identities and responsibilities within safe parameters. Regularly swapping these roles taps into the children's developed sense of turn-taking and fair play, contributing to the cohesion of group work and its working practices. The fact that film production roles are highly

practical, that they yield tangible results and necessitate simultaneous group co-ordination, delivers an acute sense of ‘rightness of fit’ when the intended shot is achieved. Equally as potent is its corollary: the ‘wrongness’ of having to take multiple shots - frustrations were often felt when patience was depleted, leading to a surrender to impulse and collaborative collapse.

The Clip Club was hardly ever a seamless and exemplary learning experience and we tried to untangle the more acrimonious moments. One such was registered on the blog, for example this entry on 16 March 2015:

The last 2 sessions have been unfocussed and not very productive. We had hoped to get a few shots in the bag but it’s been very difficult to even get the 3 or 4 useable ones we have. There may have to be some changes...  
It could be that the sessions aren’t structured enough, but there was a hope the Clip Clubbers would be more focussed and organising themselves without as much adult involvement.  
It could be the fact that Michelle’s role at the school has changed and so planning and preparation time for the Club is much less than it used to be [eg. the batteries ran out in the stills camera, which was annoying, and wouldn’t ordinarily have happened]  
It could be that people are tired from the pressures of the day – it’s SATS time with lots of extra tests and drills and sitting still – and people come to the session with lots of stored energy to get rid of...  
(Available from: <http://theclipclub.co.uk/2014/03/16/shooting-problems/>)  
[Accessed 21 September 2015]

I thought it was important to discuss what was going wrong and try to resolve it collectively rather than resort to ‘reading the riot act’; this took at least half the session. It was a learning moment to be analysed, rather than one in which to pull recriminatory rank. The point being made here is that it was the sustained nature of the project and the relations that had had time to develop that facilitated such a dialogue – a space for a slow and collaborative resolution to emerge. The fact that it was a ‘diary-like’ entry onto the blog may also have had an effect, as the inner workings of the group were publicly and purposefully revealed. This episode was something of a watershed moment which was felicitously followed a couple of weeks later by a positive ‘real world’ intervention with educational researcher John Potter and local professional film-makers Xube. They were conducting preliminary research on children’s film-making with iPads ahead of their Into Film funded project at another school, and had come soliciting Clip Club advice.

The visitors were impressed with the (unbeknownst to them, newly restored) camaraderie, knowledge - and willingness to share it - that came across during the interview. Potter had this to say about the Club in an email sent to the Head Teacher, which was pasted into a subsequent blog post:

I think it is a unique after-school offering with a high level of commitment and fun all round and something to be really proud of. I've been working in the field for a number of years, researching children's digital authoring of all kinds and rarely have I come across such an awareness of film language and the potential of digital technology for media work ... The children are genuinely helping to pass their knowledge of working with iPads on. (Available from <http://theclipclub.co.uk/2014/04/03/clip-club-welcomes-john-potter-and-film-makers-xube-ltd/> ) [Accessed 27 September 2015]

Potter has been referenced throughout this thesis and is committed to the value of involving young people in the development of practices with digital media. The timing and nature of this visit precipitated a positive change in attitude in Club members that seemed to rehearse this very principle.

***See Figure 15: Photo of Clone Clara taken by G-man during corridor shoot.***

#### ***Flow, mobility and autonomy***

Taken in the thick of filming, the photo in Figure 15, is I believe, the most evocative of all those published on the blog, and it is no surprise that it was taken by G-man within the specific confluence of circumstances described above. There is much to discuss in Clip 2 concerning the collaborative ways in which the group worked, but for the moment I concentrate on G-man. In the clip we hear and see the photo being taken and witness how he manoeuvres himself in the practice of his craft. G-man understands that multiple shots express progression and the sound of the release button is heard several times in this take and at other points throughout my material. There is a sense in which he furtively adds a personal stamp to the film's soundtrack, like some visceral and enduring digital signature. Whereas Clara is central to the action, basking in the full glare of the lens, G-man finds his own idiosyncratic way of involving himself in the movie, occupying the visual documentarist's twilight zone:



in amongst the action but operating tangentially, nimbly and with stealth, in fact not unlike the *modus operandi* of the visual ethnographer.



Figure 15: Clone Clara seeking her human counterpart, taken by G-man

This was a shoot where the children were largely left to their devices (literally), as I was occupied with the editors elsewhere. Given adequate guidance, trust and time, as most media projects require, a group of young people will often find the necessary resources to independently produce work of quality by negotiating problems between themselves. Risk-taking is as much a part of school media composition for the teacher – in the form of ‘skilful neglect’ (Loveless 2008a) and allowing discord and debacle to run their course - as it is for the young participants (Sinker 2000, p.211). In this view, pedagogies with creative media might benefit from accommodating elements of the ‘carnavalesque’ (Bakhtin 1981), of felicitous messy rule-bending, in order for young people’s ideas to emerge and coalesce, and finally for them to own and share work of which *they* can feel genuinely proud.

### ***Practitioner insight: aesthetic composition***

The shoot in question produced some thoughtful and artful photography<sup>52</sup> from G-man in terms of composition and framing, as illustrated in Figure 15 above. It features *Clone Clara* searching for her human counterpart, and coming towards the camera along a corridor from a distance. There is a simple beauty to the configuration of the photo: G-man had captured her in ‘a movie-dream’ (Furstenau and MacKenzie 2009, p. 8) moment at the end of the take, when the light was caught coming in from a left hand doorway and streaming up from the shot’s x-axis, only to dissipate through large ceiling spots and diffuse along the floor. Centrally framing the subject is difficult at the best of times and here it is gracefully balanced, composed in such a way that we forget the boundaries of the image and stay with *Clone Clara*, portrayed as a light blue digital fish out of water, both menacing and vulnerable amid the quotidian, functionality of school cleaning and fire apparatuses.

Just as G-man had positioned Clara in the middle of the frame for his clandestine shoot ‘behind bars’ above, he does the same here, only this time, far from a self-imposed exile, he is ‘flowing’ with the whole team behind the camera – moments which were captured on film. G-man’s output and affinity with the visual demonstrate that *photographic* documentation of production (and storyboarding in fact) is a rich and unexplored dimension of film-making with young people, one that testifies to the importance of independent and mobile relations in the processes of media composition.

### **G. Wizard**

***See Clip 2 - Corridor shoot with Clone Clara***

***Michelle-Cannon-phd-movie-data.mp4 at 00:18’ on the DVD, or the same here:***

***<https://vimeo.com/142087018> [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]***

Examination of the ‘corridor shoot’ is an appropriate point at which to introduce Wizard. He was a sensitive boy with a complicated home life, prone to dissolve into tears if things did not go his way. At the same time he was a confident artist, actor

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<sup>52</sup> The post displays G-man’s strong photographic skill and also demonstrates the use of the Evernote app to wirelessly manage the shot list: <http://theclipclub.co.uk/2014/04/11/serious-shooting-earnest-editing/> [Accessed 21 September 2015]



Figure 16: Clip Club corridor shoot behind camera. Still from video clip.

and dancer: he loved being in front of the camera and could rarely keep still. His interest lay in what it was possible to evoke dramatically, physically and pictorially, and he found his expressive space in graphic art and rhetorical performance.

### ***Multimodal craftsmanship***

It is Wizard's turn to direct this scene (left, in Figure 16) and the photo shows him immersed in the moment and, acting on impulse surrounded by 'his crew', he performs an impish dramatic gesture behind the camera at 00:29', mirroring the gothic tone of the take. He then switches from a playful and 'evocative' mode to executive directorial mode, as the needs of the moment dictate, slipping into the industrial vernacular: 'Cut!'. This ability to switch between modes on the fly, is a useful skill in creative practice and one which might start to be conceived as integral to media composition practices and the reframing of literacy.

This study argues that in traditional modes of composition, such as writing, we learn to see-saw between two particular modes: the abstract conception of an intended meaning and – with varying levels of skill and articulacy - its graphic transcription performed largely in isolation. Film-making is an alternative 'writing' stage that operates with inclusive, social and embodied practices with no loss of sophisticated



intellectual investment. Wizard is able to act out his intended meaning and then ‘transcribe’ it immediately in film.

***Practitioner insight: the affective, corporeal and imaginary***

In this extract we feel the co-presence of the children and witness them attending intently to a joint imagined vision. Wizard’s expressive sensibility illustrates for us what that vision is through gesture, and then, through visceral teamwork they bring that meaning to life in ways that may be beyond them in traditional meaning-making practices with language.

Having completed their respective tasks with a unity of aesthetic intention, they clap and congratulate themselves on getting the shot they wanted: the full stop of the ‘film sentence’ (BFI 2012, Donaldson 2014, a metaphor attributable to UK film director Anthony Minghella, which will be extrapolated later). The familiar ‘post-successful-take’ release of tension was a culmination of artistry as referenced in my model in Figure 12. The scene’s shooting problems had been overcome and a ‘rightness of fit’ had squeezed through. By this I mean that the assembly of affective, corporeal and imaginative relations within the design of their shot had finally coalesced into a satisfying reproducible form.

The pedagogic principle at play in this scenario relates not only to being *hands-off*, but *absent* for a long period, so that textured independent exploration could be done, mistakes made, ownership tested, shots re-taken and ‘failure’ better unravelled. If I had been present for longer on this shot the climactic tension may not have been so intense, as I would have been keen to be moving swiftly through the shot list. This was a salutary learning curve, which brought home the function of trust and patience in ethnographic, pedagogic and mediating roles, in contrast with the sometimes authoritarian offices of an ‘expert’ practitioner, an omnipresent teacher or intervening participant-researcher.

***See Clip 3 – Wizard filming on table***

***Michelle-Cannon-phd-movie-data.mp4 at 01:07’ on the DVD, or the same here:***  
***<https://vimeo.com/142087018>*** [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]

### *Media crafting and the film sentence*

In the weeks prior to the corridor shoot, Wizard had found still other ways of recruiting movement and the corporeal into his performative palette by embracing the point of view shot, and conjoining the roles of camera operator with some evil presence. After watching the short film *He Dies At The End* (McCarthy 2010) I had



Figure 17: Leonardo and Wizard on the table practicing suspense shots

asked the group to practice different types of shots to maximise suspense. Wizard's two friends were absent from this session and it was unusual for him to be working with Leonardo whom he routinely ignored. Nonetheless, inspired by the short film and emboldened by his friends' absence, Wizard stepped up as camera operator in a way that had been eluding him. Forming an alliance with the camera, he assumed the role of the 'monster' and climbed onto the table for maximum domination effect. With an imaginative leap he was translating his new item of film 'vocabulary', the point of view shot, into a short embodied moving image form, or perhaps, a 'filmic phrase' (an analogy which will be unpacked in Chapter VI). For some, film-making

is perhaps felt as ‘story-dwelling’ as much as story-telling, in terms of its bodily investment.

***Practitioner insight: technique and iterative practices***

The point of view shot was first introduced to the children in a short ‘dark’ animation, *Alma* (2009), which was analysed in some depth. It was then put into practice in *Run School Run I!* (where G-man’s camera work had assumed the guise of the Clone approaching her ‘victims’) and it was noticed again in *He Dies at the End* (McCarthy 2010). Wizard’s table-top shoot sees him practising the shot and we witness a sophisticated series of film techniques: he establishes the scene with a wide shot, steadily pans round the space, slowly closes in from a high angle, and finishes with an extreme close up of the victim and a disembodied voice-over familiar to the horror genre.

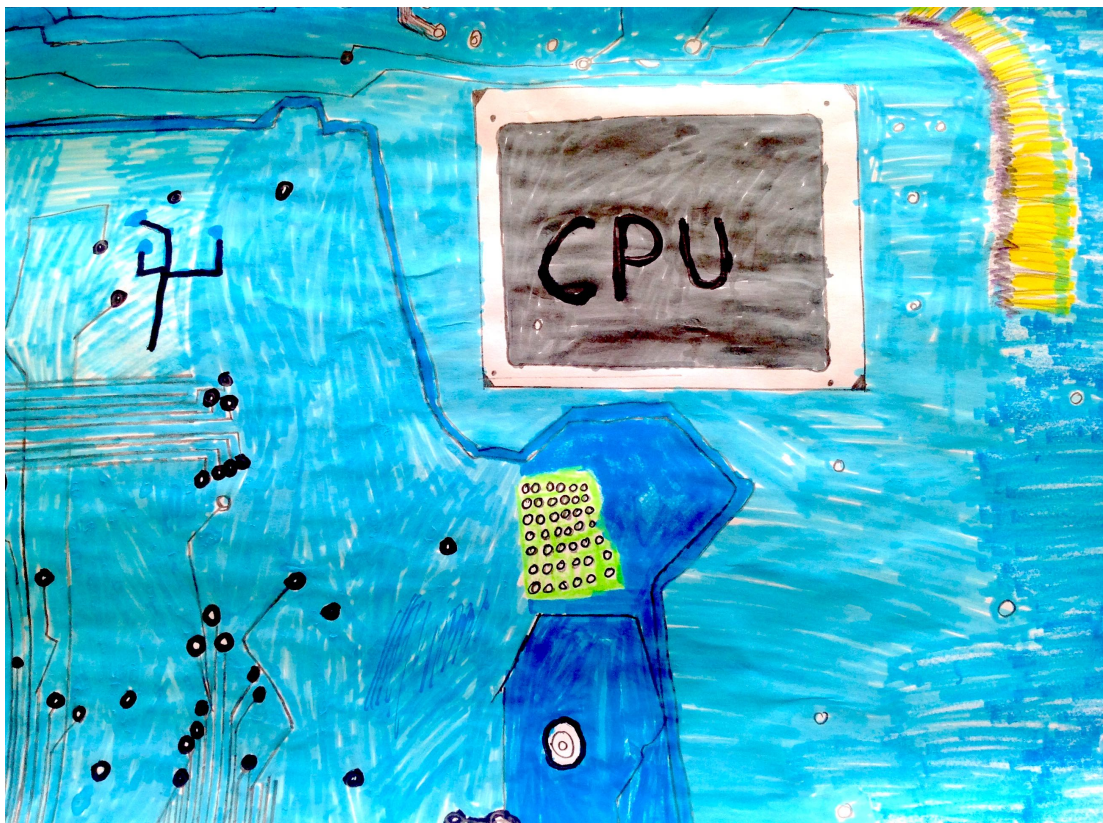


Figure 18: Clone Clara's home inside the computer, green screen backdrop drawn by Wizard. Original source: <http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-65322190/stock-photo-inside-the-computer-macro-image-of-a-computer-cpu.html> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

I chose this clip to demonstrate the relatively sophisticated sequence of filming technique born out of implicit knowledge made explicit through the iterative

processes of watching, analysing, discussing, practicing and making short clips. Some may construe that Wizard's everyday artistry might be achievable through regular informal consumption of certain texts, however, one of the fundamental findings of this study was the need for the minutiae of film language to surface, be *noticed*, acknowledged, experimented with, and their impact explicitly discussed. There will always be another way, another angle from which to tell a story, another route to the 'rightness of fit', it is a question of understanding qualitative relations and the clarity and boldness of one's intentions – all of which I believe are demonstrated in Wizard's clip.

### ***Material and digital connectivity***

As might be recalled in Chapter III's account of the mini 'BAFTA experience', media composition work is not exclusively digital in nature, Wizard enjoyed drawing and intertextual practices that meld the analogue with the digital. We needed a backdrop to represent *Clone Clara's* 'home' in the closing scene of *Run School Run2!* and an image search resulted in the above drawing in Figure 18. It also featured as the cover design of the DVD they all took home as a tangible memento of their Clip Club experience. There was value in offering the children a physical artefact to take home and I noticed how G-man in particular kept hold of his in the playground and in the stairwell outside his classroom, (where he was often sent to 'reflect on his behaviour'). 'Retro' as it might be, the DVD and its case functioned as a portable material embodiment of their co-designed production; the implication being that for some, concrete embodiments of the virtual can enhance positive feelings of pride, ownership and identity.

### ***Practitioner insight: intertextual remix***

The fluid textual translations between digital and analogue texts, software, hardware, digital platforms and material artefacts is indicative of literacy practices in a constant state of flux. Indeed the idea of re-creating a 'home' inside a computer came from watching a short Swiss animation, *Animatou* (2007), in which an animated cat finds refuge in the three-dimensional innards of the CPU - we used this as inspiration to conclude the film. It is argued here that a wider conception of literacy is cognisant of strategies that 'purloin' from discourse, adapting and remixing textual codes and conventions using different media for specific purposes. Wizard was not only a director, an actor and a camera operator, but a graphic artist and set designer too. The

more these roles and production processes can be explicitly revealed, experienced and valued, the more moving image literacy can be regarded as a multi-faceted social and participative literacy practice with relevance both inside and beyond the school gates.

## **H. Dual 2**

### ***Dialogic relations & porous pedagogies***

Dual 2 considered himself the ‘head honcho’ of the group. He too had a problematic family life and often behaved in class and around the school in ways that were considered unacceptable and anti-social; this is was not, however, my experience with him in Clip Club sessions. At the beginning of the second year we reflected on our film-making experiences and I asked them to record their thoughts. I suggested they frame it around what they would say to a new ‘recruit’ from their class. This activity was at once an educational and research strategy: by asking them to reflect on their learning it may also have yielded pertinent insights.

### ***See Figure 19: Dual 2 reflecting on Clip Club to camera***

The photo reveals that he set up the shot appropriately by propping up the iPad at an adequate height, and by choosing a uniform coloured background, in a way that hid the clutter of the typical ramshackle multi-purpose school cupboard with precarious shelving and ill-stacked boxes. His physical stance, back straight and hands behind his back, suggests the delivery of a composed, almost formal address and perhaps a quiet gathering of thoughts as he might adopt in a school assembly. As the clip progresses, he relaxes into a more conspiratorial tone as if he is letting his friends in on a secret.

By giving Dual 2 an audience of imagined peers to ‘speak to’, he is free to perform and communicate in a way that aligns with his identity, rather than in a way that he perceives might be appropriate to an audience of adults. His demeanour in this activity and in other instances suggests that he is accustomed to recording himself, and enjoys imagining an audience of equals. In one session he asked if he could take the iMovie source project file away so he could show people at home, or on his phone, how our film was being made. Sadly, logistics and software compatibility issues meant this was not possible but the willingness to cross-pollinate home and



school cultures was apparent in this simple request, and it represents a missing component in terms of more permeable relations between the two worlds. Dual 2 perhaps lacks opportunities to make links between home and school that other children with more support at home are able to make in other cultural and academic ways.

***See Clip 4: Dual 2 reflecting on Clip Club***

***Michelle-Cannon-phd-movie-data.mp4 at 02:02' on the DVD, or the same here: <https://vimeo.com/142087018> [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]***

### ***Participation & collaboration***

Dual 2 found the optimum studio-like space to record his observations, which seemed to indicate a certain seriousness of intent and sensitivity towards the private nature of what he was about to reveal. He discloses that this Club is actually OK,



Figure 19: Dual 2 filming reflections on Clip Club

because you learn things; in fact, he knows no-one who would think otherwise. His neologism - '*inspirative*' – like Leonardo's '*interfuse*' – suggests that he is exploring new (learning) territories of intense feeling that standard vocabulary fails to express.

There are two main thrusts to his hypothetical case for joining the Club: firstly, in a departure from the norm, you 'don't get told off', and secondly, it is a place of security and support: in his own words, it represents a surrogate and provisional 'family'. Dual 2's mode of address at these two junctures re-affirms the intensity of what appear to be deeply felt emotions. There is a point at which he pauses and scratches his head, as if his usual school identity had been short-circuited by some pleasing turn of events. Further, where he likens the Club to being in a team, 'a family', I am persuaded by his integrity and interpret this exclamation as Dual 2 enjoying the security and stimulation of an alternative habitus - a new and regular community of learning.<sup>53</sup>

### ***Practitioner insight: agency and autonomy***

The commonly accepted features of a 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991) became part of the fabric of the Club on the basis that we were a group of people with a shared interest in film-making, who met regularly and who improved with practice (Wenger-Trayner 2015). Dual 2's commitment to the Clip Club community derived from a sense of agency that was missing in formal education; much of his energy in the school day was spent maintaining a certain social identity and negotiating frustrations. Film-making is a challenging creative practice that treads a fine line between structured agency and disciplined autonomy, between the planned and the improvised. When facilitated with attention to these tautological elements, pupils like Dual 2 are attracted to the freedoms on offer within the safe constraints of a recognisable and familiar art form. The self-direction and intrinsic motivation that many teachers seek to develop in their students is witnessed in Dual 2's clip and the one to follow involving editing.

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<sup>53</sup> In another enthusiastic piece to camera, Dual 2 reveals the importance of his local community. He was more thrilled with Clip Club's film festival success 'out of the whole of Tower Hamlets' (his home London borough) than with the fact that it was a *national* competition. See: <http://theclipclub.co.uk/2013/11/12/stoney/#comment-173> [Accessed 11 October 2015] and his accompanying Comment: "Please have to look this video [sic] I could not write it so I did it in a video".

*See Clip 5: Dual 2 and Nimbus editing*

*Michelle-Cannon-phd-movie-data.mp4 at 04:02' on the DVD, or the same here:*

*<https://vimeo.com/142087018> [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]*

*Co-composition and editing as an iterative craft*

Anyone watching the clip with insider knowledge would recognise the anomaly of Nimbus and Dual 2 working together; there were few circumstances in which this would have happened in the normal course of things. The clip sees them editing footage in which 'Clone Clara' emerges from her 'sleeping status' and explores her environment, throwing objects around unpredictably.

They make a series of collaborative decisions, fine-tuning what is going to make it into the cut and what needs to go. Theirs is the language of trial and error, review and redraft as they negotiate their way through footage to obtain the required effects and move the story along. There is a point at which they look to me for advice, but then realise that they are the editors and I am in researcher mode. What is interesting is Dual 2's deference to Nimbus, which seems difficult for him as he fidgets his way through certain moments and his patience is tested. Dual 2 is keen to make changes there and then, while Nimbus, perhaps more familiar with delayed gratification or perhaps enjoying 'calling the shots', suggests making a mental note of possible changes, seeing the whole clip first, and then making the changes at the end.

Digital editing is the ultimate iterative inscriptive process, and going backwards and forwards between abstract thinking and practical adjustment is the essence of *phronetic* activity. To demonstrate this, there are points where the boys appear to be experiencing mutual feelings of flow, control and absorption whilst trying to execute the cut with precision, so that the artifice of the story is maintained. It is often the case in professional or academic settings, that editing is a process involving two people – the Director directs and the Editor delivers<sup>54</sup>. Here the boys are performing both tasks in collaboration, conflating the roles, making for a rich dialogic exchange.

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<sup>54</sup> In a private interview with Susan Orr, (Dean of Learning, Teaching and Enhancement / Professor in Creative Practice Pedagogy, University of the Arts, London), she expressed how she was not sure to whom the work should be credited, when she had been 'directing' the editing of a short piece of film alongside a professional editor, indicating the necessarily collaborative nature of the process.



***Practitioner insight: phronesis and rhetorical performance***

I describe the artistry of DV editing as rhetorical performance in that the boys are engaged in a task that actively combines aesthetic sensibilities with pragmatic intention, and which expresses the sophisticated and often contradictory thinking that editing entails. There is no right and wrong way to proceed but their different approaches signal a difference in character and mode of operation: the one cautious and systematic with an eye on future action, the other impulsive and focussed on the now. Despite their differences, they manage to share the keyboard and listen to each other's ideas, sometimes the one instructing the other, negotiating the software as they go. Audiovisual meaning-making at the interface – re-ordering, cutting and re-assembling digital assets - is thus rendered a dialogic and tangible craft that caters to both the mercurial and the constant. Again these are the kinds of skills that a literate media composer might be expected to have, and the reasons why schools could be encouraged to pursue these practices across the curriculum as a relevant mode of narrative expression taking its place alongside writing.

**I. Media composition practices in action**

***See Clip 6: Filming with green screen effects***

***Michelle-Cannon-phd-movie-data.mp4 at 06:31' on the DVD, or the same here: <https://vimeo.com/142087018> [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]***

***Whole group collaboration***

Clip 6 involves a brief montage of the children's engagement in green screen manipulation, that is, in that perceived 'professional' dimension of film-making related to video effects. Historical continuity, which is important for linking their activities to the outside world, is present in the sourcing of their shot know-how. The split screen whereby Clara is face to face with her Clone, had been Dual 2's idea a few weeks before, and they had researched how to achieve the effect on YouTube. Filming it, however, had not been altogether successful, as it required more precise alignment than was possible to achieve without a tripod. The green screen was a workaround suggested by Nimbus: that we cut out a misaligned background and superimpose the figure of the Clone onto the original footage. This was *phronetic* intelligence in practice. After several attempts the resultant effect was not perfect, in that the Clone is perceived on screen as smaller than her mirror image. However,

with a pragmatic leap of the imagination, it was deemed that this could in fact fit the plot, as her otherworldly powers were on the wane.

In a similar fashion the last green screen sequence (from 08:31' in Clip 6) involving the Clone arriving 'home' inside the computer, sees the team working together intuitively to achieve the visual objective. At first Clara resorted to lurching rigidly across the screen, suggesting she was at a loss as to how her character should behave - her improvisation skills, so in evidence in other scenes, seemed to have forsaken her.

Nimbus suggested that she interact with the imagined scenery on the bare screen 'so that it would look as if she's in her house.' The rest of the sentence was barely audible because I started talking over him. Nimbus meekly reclaimed the idea as his own under his breath: 'That was my idea' all of which went unnoticed until watching the footage back - so concentrated was I on Clara's performance and on getting a decent shot. What *was* heard was G-man's response after my: 'Oh yeah, a bit of interaction with the ...Nice.', whereupon he affirmed: 'It's her *home!*'. He and the others were actively engaged in imagining the clone's home. Indeed G-man's tone implied the sentiment 'why would she be doing anything else?' as Clara explored the vertical axis of her backdrop, tweaking her fanciful, familiar domestic apparatus.



Figure 20: Clone Clara interacting with green screen, still from video.

Time constraints and the visceral, ‘in the moment’ quality of film-making increase the likelihood of this type of metacognitive refinement, or ‘possibility thinking’. In this instance, they were not only all having to imagine how the shot would eventually turn out, but they were also de-centering themselves sensitively enough to be able to imagine how a rationalising audience might be thinking when it was eventually screened. These leaps of the productive imagination are a feature of putative ‘higher order’ thinking in the literary world of written composition, but for some they can remain distant and unarticulated if language is the preferred mode of encoding it. Moving image production manifests conceptual thinking in concrete ways, hence the ‘literacy value’ for those who struggle to articulate themselves in the spoken or written word.

What is clear from these clips is the children’s mobile and material improvisation, their determined and purposeful agency, and their social agility. There were no lesser roles in the production of these shots, they were pulling together to make them work – rhetorically, dialogically, reflexively and *phronetically*.

***Practitioner insight: technological constraints***

In this last section of green screen montage I found myself being more ‘teacherly’ for the sake of expediency; but this, and the fact of directing Clara to walk across the screen felt odd. I had gradually been relinquishing control of the Clip Club sessions, and throughout the project Clara has displayed a reliable, consistent and creative autonomy in her acting, as well as an uninhibited desire to explore and interact with her ‘found’ mise-en-scène. Her movements, which in prior scenes had exploited the z-axis (long depths of field) and a sense of freedom and expansiveness, were limited to walking several steps along a blunted horizontal axis - reminiscent of a rudimentary theatrical set - within the narrow confines of a static letter box format, against flat ‘scenery’.

In pointing this out I draw attention to the fact that for all the sensationalism that appends the special effects now within reach of the amateur, they can at the same time constrain the ‘performance’ and dampen the agency of actors, which is as relevant an observation in the microcosm of school practices as it is in a macro sense in the wider social world. As will be discussed later, algorithmic software design necessarily determines the creative agency and autonomy of users, which suggests

the importance of encouraging users' own creative strategies, where possible, and making them aware of the non-inevitability of having to select from a database.

## **J. Contextual interpretation: Clip Club findings**

### ***Social & participative forms of literacy***

My research with the Clip Club children and elsewhere professionally over the past decade, suggests that many young people have unexplored and undervalued knowledge and skills related to media, film and popular culture, along with a ready disposition to make, communicate and be part of a productive team. The boys involved in the 'filmed' film review award ceremony at the BAFTA headquarters, testify to an enthusiasm to participate in ways that are familiar to them and over which they feel they have some mastery. Furthermore, Nimbus and Leonardo were able to reflect on the merits of learning that involve social interaction and the sharing of complex film-making processes. Indeed the Clip Club's longevity and two resultant short films are a testament to the children's collective and hitherto unrecognised interests and capacity to commit to sustained literacy practices.

It is in these respects that my work is redolent of the thoughts and opinions of popular 'creativity guru' Robinson (2011, 2013) whose entertaining and influential promotion of 'everyone's hidden artistic talent' appears to have accrued public and cross-sector endorsement. Though sceptical of his essentialising tone I concur with some Robinsonian rhetoric in as much as many young people's talents remain undervalued and redundant in formal school contexts, rather than uniformly undiscovered. And as Robinson's popularity is likely the result of a backlash against reductive curricula and a lack of opportunity for young people to express their interests and preferences, my findings become laden with political significance.

Both thoughtful individuals, Nimbus and Leonardo in particular articulate the deficit elements of their school experience – a lack of relevancy and autonomy. Clip Club created a space in which participants exhibited dispositions for reciprocal relations, for productive action, and for rhetorical communicative performance – arguably the required attributes of a new literacy practitioner.

### *Conditions of possibility*

My material draws attention to the constraints under which primary children operate in the formal curriculum. Leonardo articulates the stress related to SATS (Standard Assessment Tests) and heaves an audible sigh<sup>55</sup> in the process. He sees Clip Club as a release from the strictures of the formal system, rather like some form of compensation for what he calls ‘the burdens of the day’, whereas a holistic grasp of this relevant expressive art form should constitute more of a core entitlement. Such are the constrained conditions of possibility in much formal schooling that this level of collaborative and autonomous interaction with digital media *as routine*, is unlikely to be a popular choice amongst teachers, nor even a legitimate practice in the eyes of the inspectorate. Many teachers are overburdened and unskilled in media production, and formal assessment procedures are set up to audit the quality of exercise book marking and levels of individual progress in tests. Indeed there is a boldness of spirit in schools interested in pursuing moving image production as a standard meaning-making practice as will be seen in the next Chapter.

Somewhat paradoxically, despite being a place of fun and refuge, Leonardo has absorbed from public discourse the benefits of gaining media skills in school that could be employed in the work place. Throughout my research and in other professional evaluation work, young people consistently profess the usefulness of film and media production experience to their future careers, seeing it as an adult work-oriented activity. This binary between practical media as *work* and/or *play*, and why in the former case the benefits should be deferred until adulthood, is a recurring theme in media education to be taken up in Chapter VI.

In addition, the re-production of film industry protocols evident in Clip Club, and their constraining influence on youth practices is potentially problematic. It seems there is a lack of imagination on the part of educators, practitioners and software impresarios to re-construe professional standards and practices for younger users. We fall into them with enthusiasm and without question, we mimic linear pre/post-production models, the festivals and the awards, which effectively preserves ‘cinematic life’ (Furstenau and MacKenzie 2009) as mythic and remote, and does

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<sup>55</sup> Listen @ <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/leonardo-july-2014/s-ZeYgl#t=05:43>  
[Accessed 21 September 2015]

little to move the medium on as an expressive art form in the everyday lives of teachers and pupils.

### ***Hybrid transactional pedagogic model***

At the beginning of the thesis I made a distinction between formal, informal and non-formal education, and Clip Club fell in the latter category in that it was run under the aegis of the school but was not accountable to it. There is no doubt that the non-formal nature of the Club had an impact on Dual 2 who struggled in the formal school structures. As indicated above, the opportunity to engage in sustained after school media production may be an appropriate outlet for some less privileged pupils to express themselves and to prepare them for a sense of belonging that is neither school nor home. The Clip Club provided a transitional staging post between these two domains through engagements with popular culture and its link with moving image production.

Moreover, formal pedagogic approaches might embrace the latitude for local community building offered by non-formal, hybrid education models, whose ethos is often less individualistic and more collaborative, where 'failure' is given time to be reinterpreted as a process of iterative review and regroup. The moments of friction in the Clip Club alluded to earlier, were resolved sensitively and democratically with attention to the wider context. The children were offered time and space for critical reflection on proceedings in which they were emotionally invested. It is also possible that this experience and the Club's positive encounter with professional adults seeking their advice, spurred the children on to higher levels of achievement, the implications of which will be examined later.

An appropriately facilitated creative media session accommodates different talents and interests through iterative production practices and the negotiation of different roles. In an atmosphere free from assessment levels and prescriptive standards, Nimbus for one, in a prolonged series of Clip Club literacy 'events', was able to experiment with his less confident 'creative' side, explore social collaboration, as well as indulge his interest in computer science and social networks. These practices are the hallmarks of the kind of dynamic media literacy elicited by this research.

I speculate that what was being generated through the mobilisation of media composition practices was a gestalt of greater significance than the films themselves.

This is an idea corroborated by Dual 2's 'address to camera', who sensed that the success of the Club was built on participation in a co-dependent flattened hierarchy of social and material relations, leveraging new technologies for a collective purpose. Pedagogies related to creative digital media underscore efforts to create a supportive and inclusive teaching habitus which is both conducive to learning and dismissive of ranking and categorising systems. Just as Clip Club learners engaged in editing a series of 'temporal gestalt(s) of sound (and) image' (Furstenau and MacKenzie 2009, p.14, drawing on Merleau-Ponty 1964b, p.54) in iMovie, so a temporary historical gestalt was created amongst its participants.

From a research perspective, through this partial anatomy of experience in a particular local community, it has been possible to lay out the dimensions of creative digital media composition, which may prove fruitful in other contexts. It is to this task that the thesis now turns as my focus shifts to the development of international film and moving image education and the ways in which this is applied in the UK. In so doing I further invoke the dimensions of Figure 12, on page 136, however I do not wish to give the impression that the model is being validated in a deductive sense. The studies in the following chapter have played a vital part in its formulation and the progress of my thinking, and it is the necessarily linear design of the thesis structure that imposes a sequential narrative.

## Chapter V – Interpretation of Material Part II

### A. Introduction

Given my less personal and more observational research relationship with the remaining three settings as compared with that of Clip Club, I split the data into two separate Chapters. I convey my more conventional qualitative research in a different register to my personal auto-ethnographic experience as an embedded Participant Observer. I let go of the character portrayal format, considered less appropriate with children with whose backgrounds I am less familiar. Notwithstanding, as before, I retain thematic headings and present audiovisual materials, interpreting the implications for literacy and learning of media composition processes from a pedagogic and practitioner's point of view. Interspersed will be citations from interviews with educators and other associated commentators. Each setting's account will conclude with a reflection on the socio-cultural context in which the data are situated and the constraints and potentialities related to the conditions of production.

Setting 2 is a Year 6 after school film-making club, set in the non-formal space of a north London primary school, following the French educational programme: *Le Cinéma: Cent Ans de Jeunesse* (*Cinema: A Hundred Years of Youth*, henceforth CCADJ). There are parallels here with Clip Club in terms of the demographic of the school and the Club format, however CCADJ's formal structures provide an interesting counterpoint to the more free-range nature of Clip Club proceedings in terms of agency and critical engagement. Setting 3, referred to here as *Film in a Morning*, records Year 7 media composition practices in the formal English curriculum of Riverside School, a secondary school in south London, in partnership with Institute of Education (IoE) tutors and their student teachers. This setting is pivotal as it offers an unusual bridge for non-formal practices to cross over to the formal institutionalised environment. Finally, Setting 4, *Riverside School English and Drama Department*, follows specific pedagogic practices in a series of Year 7 English lessons, working on the development of critical awareness through still and moving image work.

For convenience, the heuristic used in Chapter IV is included below as a way of framing the interpretation of my material. Again, the central five core dimensions ground my examination of questions related to: the constitution of a wider literacy



that includes media composition, to new pedagogies associated with digital media production in the classroom, and the associated socio-cultural determinants.

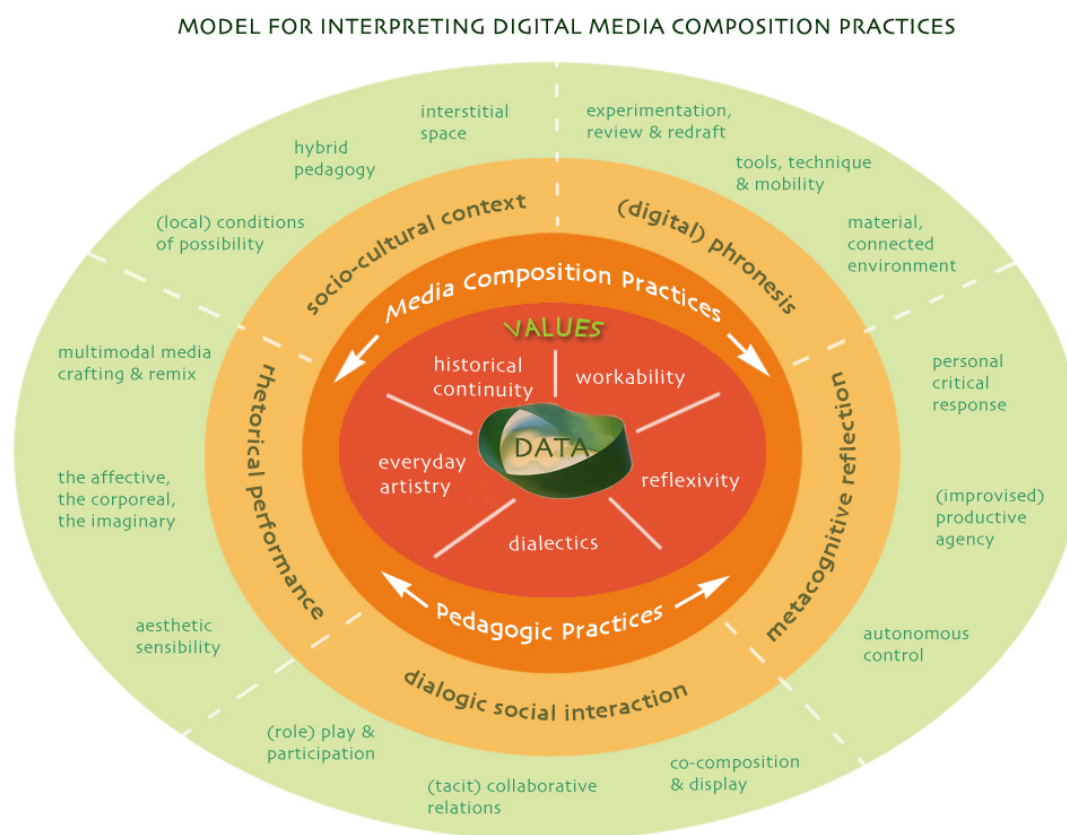


Figure 12: Model for interpreting media composition practices, derived from Heikkinen et al. (2007)

## B. Setting 2 – Le Cinéma: Cent Ans de Jeunesse (CCADJ)

CCADJ was one of my Masters case studies and proved fruitful for examining the impact of moving image production on young people's social and cultural participation as well as on creative and critical engagement with film. My focus at the time was limited to an appreciation of the benefits of film production in school contexts, with only a passing mention of the implications for pedagogy. My dissertation also failed to engage with innovative theories on the constitution of a film sensibility, nor on the notion of ongoing critical pedagogies that seek to develop that sensibility. These latter dimensions inspired me to extend my understanding of CCADJ to PhD level as it was found to be a site of rich international experimentation with teaching and learning approaches, all the while embedded in the long established traditions of European film culture.

There is a heady mix of discourses at large in this programme that appear to contradict much of the preceding prose championing progressive inclusive educational strategies. Indeed, a sceptical view of CCADJ's ways of operating may construe a programme stamped with a certain cultural elitism: employing classic 'sage-on-stage' pedagogies; cultivating canonical art house production values; and eschewing popular cultural references and film genres. These tensions will be explored later in this account of CCADJ, but first I wish to examine its ethos, one that informed the thinking behind the model in Figure 12, and one supported by Reid (Head of Education at The British Film Institute, with seventeen years experience). Reid first enrolled a UK secondary school in the French programme in 2009, seeing the model as an innovative approach to teaching and learning about film. Its aesthetic is rooted in film as an art form, hence it attends to aspects of theory, language, form and production culminating in public display, rather than to narrative content and/or social issues.

### ***Relations between theory and practice through artistry***

Building on a culture of decades of abstract thought on 'le cinéma', CCADJ actively works at maintaining the balance between theory and practice, between reflection and material experimentation. This key principle resonates with my research questions in that explicit attention is given to film literacy or the 'reading and writing' of film. That is, time and parity is given to group processes of watching, practicing and critical reflection in iterative cycles over the weeks of the programme. Aspects of historical continuity are maintained by watching specific clips from a wide range of nations and times past, with viewer-learners' sensibilities attuned to one particular film aesthetic. This annually determined aesthetic could be abstract in nature, or it could relate to practical camera work, both however relate to authorship and artistry. Chez CCADJ these dimensions are in constant dialogue with each other and with the affordances of the local environment – orientations which, it is argued here, illustrate the kinds of situated cultural practices that constitute relevant and dynamic literacies.

My study of material from a London based primary school following the CCADJ programme offers a glimpse of such a model, but first I briefly relay its key

principles in the words of Nathalie Bourgeois, Director of Learning at the Cinémathèque française over the past twenty years.

This extract (my translation below), is available in French from 0:35' to 3:11' @ <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/ccadj-nathalie/s-PH5ty#t=0:35> [Accessed 21 September 2015]:

The most distinguishing feature of this programme is the connection between reflection and experimentation. That is, we gather a group of adults - teachers, practitioners and cultural partners or coordinators - around a specific subject every year. We *could* just get together and discuss the theme and how we would develop it in the workshops. However, how this project differs is that we develop an actual experiment with real pupils in the classroom, and at the same time share an object of study. And at the end of the year, we reflect on how the shared experiment went, and also discover something of ourselves in the process. I think we could call it experience at the human level: because there are over forty workshops, and we can actually meet and see each other's work. I think that's unique.

<https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/ccadj-nathalie/s-PH5ty#t=2:10> [Accessed 21 September 2015]:

Another thing which is important and quite rare is the partnership between the teachers and film-makers. It's not that we have a session for teachers and a session for the professionals. At the beginning of the year we all meet and we unite over some aspect of cinema. We don't just talk about pedagogy, we talk about film. It's an educational experience for teachers and the cultural partners, who don't often have the opportunity to follow film education programmes; and for the film-makers too, who are faced with a theoretical question *before* any consideration is given to pedagogy. I think that's really important, that film is a central aspect of the programme - an 'object' that we question.

(Interview with Nathalie Bourgeois, 2015, transcript in Appendix G2)

Bourgeois' account highlights the importance of maintaining a dynamic relationship between theory, its robust implementation, and follow-up processes of open and critical evaluation. The adults' practices and interactions – what she terms 'le va et le vient' (or coming and going) between theory and practice - mirror in many respects those amongst the young participants. They too engage in multi-operational practices related to: the *phronetic* (the negotiation of tools and techniques in workshop style environments); the critical (the particular 'film grammar' theme); and the dialogic (recursive display and discussion at every stage) - which in turn emulate the activities

of linked international communities of practice. The model is self-perpetuating, most years propagating additional national or international practitioner-pedagogue alliances. Its successful global reach may well be attributable to accessible meta-linguistic foci, and the iterative movement between robust structures of delivery and the creative agency this begets, from Lambeth to Guadeloupe<sup>56</sup>.

Bourgeois alludes to a central theme, which for 2013-2014 was the ‘long take’ (*‘le plan séquence’*). Groups worked around a theoretical typology devised by Bergala (2002) to execute short film ‘exercises’, or indeed ‘film sentences’, that anatomise visual structures of meaning pertaining to the long take. The full array of rules and protocols for the year can be found in Appendix D, suffice it here to explain what participants were asked to do in Exercise 1, why and with what result. An exegesis of this series of events addresses how literacy incorporating the moving image can be re-conceived as an array of cultural practices that move us beyond the narrow definitions to which formal centrally mandated UK curricula subscribe, and towards vibrant, global and social interactions.

(The exercises were translated by Alastair Satchel, coordinator of the Scottish wing of CCADJ, *Understanding Cinema*<sup>57</sup>)

#### Exercise 1

**Watching:** *Lumière Minutes - recording the world around you*

*Each participant will film a minute of material in the manner of the Lumière Brothers. The shot will be from a fixed position, lasting one minute and include the sounds recorded on location at the time of filming. The minutes can be filmed either inside or outside.*

*Choose a place, a subject, a moment and record it, without influencing anything in the shot. Once each student has recorded their minute, show all of the clips they have made together in one go.*

*You can ask your groups to choose locations for their minutes together in small numbers. Within those groups each participant must film a different*

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<sup>56</sup> The French CCADJ blog, renewed annually, presents clips from workshops in their respective locales around the world:  
<http://blog.cinematheque.fr/100ans20132014/category/presentation-des-ateliers/> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

<sup>57</sup> Alastair made a short explanatory movie of *Understanding Cinema's* CCADJ activities in 2013-2014: <https://vimeo.com/102957237> [Accessed 21 September 2015] including comments from teachers and pupils. Some of their young participants' films were shown at the Edinburgh Film Festival 2014.

*moment, in the location chosen, or about the chosen subject, making sure to set up their own framing and choose the right moment for themselves.*

The exercise could not be ‘simpler’ in practical terms: from their knowledge of the clips and ‘long take’ typology, they were to frame and film a sixty second unscripted local moment.

One late November afternoon I set out with Ms. J, Ben (tutor-film-maker) and the Year 6 children, to capture some Lumière Minutes along a busy north London thoroughfare. The shop fronts, businesses and buildings that the children would habitually pass had thus become potential film sets. Some were clear about their desired setting and others more whimsical, and each ‘scout’ was obliged to think about the strengths and weaknesses of their location, to interact with the people in it and to ask for permission. They also had to deal with knock-backs from the fast food shops - sites that may routinely have welcomed their custom.

Johnny, seen to the right below, chose the ordinarily ‘forbidden zone’ of the tattoo parlour, to which the unusual combination of chaperoned child with a professional camera was granted entry. Pushing further, Johnny asked if he could shoot his Minute during a client’s procedure, and is photographed below with film-maker Ben, setting up the camera. Other children had variously chosen a nail salon, a grocer’s, a garage, a bus stop, but this seemed the most audacious location, screened off from public view and laden for some with cultural taboo. Johnny may have been curious about its workings and he was now authorised to venture in, engage with the adults, capture part of its culture, shape a representation and share it.<sup>58</sup>

On the surface the photo seems like some amateur photo shoot or film set with added elements of cultural dissonance. Johnny appears to be calling the shots in a realm not readily associated with childhood and in which normative power relations seem to have been overturned. The cling film covered table, the kitchen roll and the household spray bottle connote comfort and domesticity, but juxtaposed with random vinyl wall hangings, an indeterminate bystander, the all-seeing eye of Jack

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<sup>58</sup> All the ‘Minutes’, (including the tattoo parlour from 02:05’), are recorded here: <http://makingislearning.com/2014/01/25/north-london-obs-january-2014/> [Accessed 21 September 2014]



Nicholson's Joker, and set within a cramped space of questionable hygiene, the emergent scene is reminiscent of some faux surgical Gothic tableau.



Figure 21: Filming in a tattoo parlour on Holloway Road, North London

Included in Bergala's typology for the long take (see Appendix E) was the idea of using such a shot to represent a mutation, some kind of modification or variation of intensity over time. This, he proposes, could be wrought through bodily transformations, the development of a mood, a dawning realisation, or simply a change in the weather. Johnny's choice of filming a tattoo artist at work fits the brief well: he is effecting – and performing – a permanent change in a conveniently lit audiovisually evocative process, with little in the way of dialogue. Moreover, it fulfils what Bergala would describe as the aesthetic function of the long take rather than a narrative function. Part of this former function is to be sensitive to the audience's experience through the artistry of framing.

Filming their individual Minutes, the children were intently following the action through the viewfinder, looking for an unexpected, serendipitous moment that may have related to process, narrative or framing: everyday details were transformed in

some way or became cinematic in scope. As previously related in Clip Club's film language analysis sessions and in accounts of Clara's filmed improvisations, it is argued here that acts of literacy in response to the visual begin with the simple act of *noticing* the peculiarity and profundity of one's material surroundings.

### ***Aesthetic / film sensibility***

I wrote a blog post at the time reflecting on the quality of attentiveness that the children bestowed on what they were watching.

Striking how they've taken to this exercise without any kind of complaint – just filming an apparent 'nothing', no fiction, no fighting, no acting, no dialogue, no action, no genre-imitating, no plot, no story... except of course we captured most of those things in a filmed slice of real life. Or is it a 'slab' of real life? in the way of Geertz's 'thick description'? There was a real feeling of thinking on your feet and scouting for locations, keeping quiet and *behind* the camera. One time the camera operator couldn't help commenting on the drama of his Minute: "Perfect!" ... as he catches the bus driver not allowing a woman on the bus and her reaction.  
(Available from: <http://makingislearning.com/2014/01/25/north-london-obs-january-2014/> ) [Accessed 21 September 2015]

Imbuing quotidian experience with meaning is for Bourgeois one of film's unique attributes. She speaks of 'film sensibility' and the ways in which working with film sensitises the maker to visual nuance and the sensorial. She claims it activates a kind of knowing that is *metacognitive*, a consciousness that has to do with perception, which invokes in the film-maker a 'sincere attention' to the environment and the visual. The sincerity of which Bourgeois speaks is less to do with 'genuineness' and more to do with a response that is personal and 'untainted'. A link might be made here with G-man's ethnographic sensitivity and his close photographic attentiveness to filming and its procedures. The proposition is that drawing attention to innovative theoretical typologies (in this instance, the long take) helps to deliver the viewer-maker of his/her preconceptions; in other words, they can short-circuit conditioned feedback loops that may arise otherwise.

Available in French at [https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/ccadj-nathalie/s-PH5ty - t=13:08](https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/ccadj-nathalie/s-PH5ty-t=13:08) [Accessed 16 June 2015]

... having this perceptive acuity already creates the conditions through which this sensibility can be felt. And when I spoke of sincerity I think this word is

appropriate because it's the opposite of 'a priori' givens – hence the reasons for showing the film clips, which are often a kind of immediate confrontation. Having to think about sound or about the context, breaks the contact with the film, either because of the milieu or the question posed. Attention is kept in a sincere way without being muddled with a priori knowledge and prejudices. (Interview with Nathalie Bourgeois 2015, transcript in Appendix G2)

Johnny, whose autonomous choices had been bold and original, was exhilarated on exiting the parlour; he had captured his moment born out of an intense and 'sincere' engagement with a 'real' setting of his own choosing. In so doing, a cluster of normally distinct worlds came together for a brief improvised collaboration – ecotonal<sup>59</sup> in nature - in ways that possibly rehearse a nascent moment of social participative empowerment. If literacy is conceived less as a stable threshold and more as a moveable, contingent *condition* (Belshaw 2012, p. 205, drawing on Martin 2006) sensitive to social engagement and 'siting' (Burnett et al. 2012), then this may have been one such moment.

### ***Moments of translation and 'Practise, practise, practise!'***

The final 8 – 10 minute CCADJ film, produced by each participating workshop, is known as a 'film essai' and Bourgeois distinguishes this from a 'short film' which, despite its brevity, is nevertheless considered a finished entity. The 'essai', which comes from the French *essayer* - to try - describes the aim of the exercise, which is less the pursuit of a 'festival-ready' oeuvre that would reflect well on all parties, and more about creating a structured reverie exploring a film aesthetic through a simple narrative.

The brief was this:

***A troubling encounter:*** at a certain moment a character or characters have an encounter which troubles them.

*Create a film around the provocation above which includes several long takes. The film can be edited together, including elements of montage if you so wish. The film will last a maximum of 8 -10 minutes. **In one of the long takes the camera must forget the character or characters and become autonomous, follow another path and then find the character or characters***

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<sup>59</sup> It will be remembered that *ecotonal* refers to the biodiverse territory that constitutes edge conditions between two distinct eco-systems, such as estuaries or mangrove swamps. The two worlds collide productively, creating rich sites of resistance, adaptation and new forms of life.



*again. This section should create an emotional or sensational response in the viewer watching the clip.*

The material I present relates to the above brief and comprises four clips of audiovisual material edited into one file:

Clip 1: *participant generated* footage from a film shoot in the street outside school

Clip 2: *participant generated* footage taken in the editing suite and edited (by me) into a sequence of 7 short sub-clips (2a – 2g)

Clip 3: a scene from the final film to provide context for ...

Clip 4: the BFI screening of the film and public Q & A

Clip 1 is taken by a Year 6 child participant, Callum. He liked to be the centre of attention, he was a good actor, a good dancer and a good beat-boxer; he seemed to need more managing than most. In my mind, he was a cross between Clip Club members Wizard and Dual 2 - a confident showman amongst his peers, with occasional issues of concentration. I asked him if he would take some DV and photos of the shoot with my iPad. The reasons for this request were three-fold a) to yield participant generated material b) to make a ‘Making of’ movie if there was time and c) to give him something to do that would make him less of a distraction to the others.

The premise of their film was the bullying of a new girl in the school who was set up for stealing the school’s gold cup award. Clip 1 features a girl catching up with the new girl outside school in order to strike up a ‘false friendship’.

***Watch Clip 1 on DVD footage CCADJ-North-London-Primary.mp4. Also at <https://vimeo.com/132088709> from 00:00’ - 00:56’*** [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]

Callum sets up the shot behind the camera<sup>60</sup> and begins recording the third take of this particular scene – hence, he is familiar with the design of the shot. The sound operator, Becky, gestures to Johnny, positioned over the road, to signal to the first actress to begin walking. The two actresses are not within earshot of the crew but wear radio microphones so the sound can be picked up in the editing phase. Callum first frames the action on the signal to Johnny and then moves over to the main action, composing it so that both the girls and the DV camera's viewfinder are within shot. Finding he can move in with the camera, he steadily gets a closer look. He then leaves the action and pans round to his left, filming myself and Ms. J, and finally the camera alights on the two actresses who have just finished their scene. I am gesturing for him to get out of the way of the actresses and Ms. J gives the thumbs up to them for a successful take.

In the same way it suited G-man's sense of self to dart in and out of Clip Club film shoot with his stills camera, Callum was able to break away from the main area of concentration in a gesture of independence that provided him with an alternative route to express himself. In other words, by acting on impulse in a structured way rather than in a way that might be perceived as disruptive, he found another path on which to practise his craft that was separate but pertinent, and still within the integrity of the group.

Possibly as a response to the overall CCADJ film essay brief which dictated the bifurcation of the camera at a certain point (that is, a cinematic technique in which the camera independently diverges away from the main subject/s, only to rejoin it/them moments later), Callum made the decision to leave the approaching girls and pan a near 360 degrees, to rejoin the girls behind him. In ways reminiscent of Wizard's first autonomous point of view 'sentence' with the camera (where he was crawling on the table with a DV Flip camera in the last Chapter) we see Callum's first experiments in framing, close-up, pan and bifurcation with an iPad. This thesis calls for the examination of such seemingly random acts of moving image cognition and theoretical assimilation, casting them as 'moments of translation'; that is,

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<sup>60</sup> The in-picture camera view in Clip 1, (as used in Wizard's table-top filming) simultaneously screens the junior producers' work. This is a potent dual perspective – now common editing functionality - that researchers would do well to explore in terms of presenting material in non-linear and multi-layered ways.

learning moments in which prior knowledge or experience is re-presented, transformed and embodied in alternative modalities, in ways that anchor our subjectivities.

Reid likens our first moving image efforts, regardless of age, to our first attempts at creative production in other established art forms and media, commenting as follows:

Available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/mark-reid#t=23:10> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

it's time-consuming and difficult, and every time somebody shows me a film they've made, invariably I ask myself, or imagine asking them, "Do you remember writing your first paragraph, or writing your first poem?" because it's probably a bit like that, you make and you've never made one before, and you're 30, and you're like a 6 year old who's written a poem about a flower for the first time. It takes a long time to learn how to manipulate a language, to express yourself in a language ... You just do it, you just practise, practise, practise.

(Interview with Reid, 2015)

The fact of having repeated opportunities to make and refine DV communicative efforts based on structured short form exercises, rather than a one-off linear film-making approach, is enshrined in CCADJ methodology. This resonates with the ways in which a more fluid and fragmented approach to literacy is envisaged that lifts meaning off the page, and creates a disposition for '*le va et le vient*' – or iterative interactions - between forms of praxis, aesthetic improvisation and communicative modalities.

There are echoes here of Lanham's (1994) 'AT (*INTERACT*) / THROUGH bi-stable oscillation', explained in Chapter II, as the means by which a sense of stable meaning emerges through texts. Lanham's insight concerning the ways in which we recursively fool ourselves by looking AT symbols and THROUGH to illusory constructed meanings<sup>61</sup> will be picked up again in Chapter VI. Suffice to say here that trends in transmedia take-up, suggest that '*multi-stable oscillation*' (McKee

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<sup>61</sup> I am indebted to Reid from whom I first heard of Lanham and his work on bi-stable oscillation: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/mark-reid/s-wVzWW#t=11:20> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

2005, p.124) as well as *INTERACTION* with tools and symbols, may more accurately describe sense-making practices with digital media.

***Practitioner's insight: tacit communication, tools and anatomy***

In keeping with my anthropological approach to interpretation, I notice how Callum's clip demonstrates the richness of non-verbal communication in film-making processes. The silent signalling evident in Clip 1 brings to mind Wizard's dramatic gesturing and the spontaneous clapping in the Clip Club corridor shoot. In evidence is a range of facial expressions, gestured instructions and signs of approval indicative of a complicity within the group. This is the stuff of organised teamwork, communicative strategies with which many children will be familiar, not least from competitive sports. It is perhaps time for educators to think about how intuitive and interpretive skills developed in other milieux, might be applied in more formal sites of learning.



Figure 22: Maria plays air guitar with the boom on street shoot with North London Primary

These moments of social and cohesive artistry, where much is achieved in *tacit* agreement, accumulate to create the conditions for a group of young media authors to become attentive to processes of refinement, as opposed to gaining kudos for being first to finish some individual task. Along with the complicity of a joint vision, it is possible for a shoot to accommodate tangential action on the sidelines, as part of the *phronesis* of pedagogic practice. Schools often tend to eradicate *play* with the objects of technology, conferring on them either a technophilic or technophobic essentialist aura. Figure 22 suggests that technology can be repurposed, with the same tactile value as props, in playful integration with the network of human and non-human relations on a shoot.

In this view the equipment in use folds into the social arrangements; from iPad to boom, material technologies become haptic ports of security for children involved in media-making. Again in a manner reminiscent of G-man with his camera, Callum took a series of photos of the sound operator, Maria, wielding the boom like an air guitar (Figure 22), so many in fact that they could have been turned into an animated sequence. Callum silently colluded with her air guitar fantasy perhaps even imagining himself an MTV videographer / photographer. In formal structures this episode may have been a cause for reprimand, for unfocussed attention, but in the informal world of the creative media practitioner – who rarely ‘trashes’ footage – the air guitar moment is fertile territory for a ‘Making of’ movie.

When committed to from the start by keen observers, the supplementary ‘Making of’ reveals a *version* of the heart, soul, nuts and bolts of the physical production process. As such these texts have a value, in as much as the ‘behind the scenes’ unveiling of films’ anatomy piques audience’s curiosity, a process in which the taken for granted can start to be unpicked (ESRO 2015, p. 28). For the makers themselves, this process starts in the editing suite.

***Watch Clip 2 on DVD footage CCADJ-North-London-Primary.mp4. Also at: <https://vimeo.com/132088709> from 00:57’ - 04:19’ [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]***

***‘Film essai’ editing: a socially contingent and embodied cultural practice***

I believe the editing phase of media composition brings together many elements of my interpretive framework and the interoperability of its dimensions. The subtitle of



this section refers to literacy as socially contingent and embodied, and elsewhere as a set of entwined cultural practices that develop a certain disposition for media composition. For example the data shows the children's collaborative reviewing and redrafting of digital material based on reasoned critical responses, balanced with aesthetic sensibilities. Their verbal and body language evinces modes of trial, error and modification; doubt, ambiguity, consultation, and finally some decisive action. This section contends that a *mélange* of learning moments are revealed in the participants' level of autonomous engagement, their use of implicit knowledge about moving image construction, and in their interactions with the screen, the editing software, the teacher and their peers.

Clip 2 is filmed in the editing suite of a local secondary school<sup>62</sup>. Unable to attend this session I asked Ms. J if one of the children could film it for me with an iPad as I



Figure 23: Year 6 children in DV editing suite:  
still photo from participant generated movie

was keen to capture editing in progress. This practical solution proved advantageous in terms of acquiring footage of editing through the eyes of a child participant – right down to the preferred portrait orientation associated with movies taken on mobile phones. The camera operator on this occasion, Tara, appeared to film with all the selfless composure of a fly-on-the-wall documentary film-maker, making no intervention and dividing her time equally between the editing couples. This impressed me a great deal on seeing the footage, probably because 'invisible' camera work of this nature mobilises skills of unbiased restraint, with which I personally seem to struggle.

There were three editing stations with a couple at each, responsible for cutting an allocated number of scenes, with Ms. J and Ben in the background as tutor-mentors.

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<sup>62</sup> As editing is the realm of the practitioner, there is no separate *Practitioner's insights* in Clips 2a - g, they are subsumed within the initial interpretation.

From Tara's thirty minutes of continuous footage, I put together a montage of the children editing in which I tried to capture the spirit of the process in terms of language, action and intent.<sup>63</sup>

Clip 2a @ 00:57' - 01:19' features Sally and Eva, editing the final moments of their film including the requisite bifurcating long take. Eva, to the right in Figure 23, is seen fully engaged in authorial choice. Headphones on, she gestures at the screen and speculates on the effect of cropping the long shot in question, articulating herself verbally and physically as she goes. Her hand gestures replicate the movement of the camera as it turns a 90-degree corner and then frame a hypothetical zoom. Just as Clara in the Clip Club had found hand gestures useful in the description of her close-ups, we can start to see how the verbal articulation of moving image editing and analysis is an inclusive and expressive practice, no less sophisticated in terms of conceptual grasp than the written act.

In Clip 2b, 01:19' – 02:32', Johnny is asking for permission to delete a 'giant part' of the clip. This comment is easily overlooked - he has assimilated that a mere few seconds of film on a timeline is valuable storytelling space, which could be put to better use: too long a clip means lagging action and potentially losing viewers' attention, too short a clip makes for a disjointed or incoherent viewing experience. Ben, the mentor, turns the decision back to the editors who have in fact already risked making the cut and found the 'decisive moment' for themselves. These particular editors have learned that through patiently watching clips, you hit upon the 'rightness of fit' required of continuity editing. This means, the right clip, cut to the right length, in the right sequence, at the right pace in order to advance the story smoothly, all of which coalesces to create the tone for a certain mood to develop. Arguably Johnny and his partner achieved a complex editing outcome as a result of the various viewing, making and theoretical strands of learning over the months of the programme, and as a function of visual engagement accumulated over years of consumption. Their accomplishment is recognised by Ms. J., in Clip 2e.

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<sup>63</sup> I had communicated in advance that quick bursts of *contiguous* filming was preferable to *continuous*, but even at this stage in their film-making, the urge to reproduce one long take, as default film-making practice, is difficult to shift. Although given the context, there is an inherent irony in her decision to opt for one long take...

In Clip 2c and 2d, @ 02:35' – 03:14', Ms. J entreats Maria and Stephanie to act on their own decisions made in the spirit of strong visual storytelling; that is, artfully and efficiently composed clips, whose juxtaposition adds value in some way - at least, this is the aspiration, a less strong outcome could become the subject for a critical and constructive discussion. Maria on the left is concerned about the inauthentic look of the classroom with 'too many empty seats'; to cut that part of the scene she needs reassurance from Ms. J:

**Clip 2c @ 02:35'**

**Ms. J:** Do what you think. I mean, is this part really important? Is it necessary in the film? What do you think? So, do what you think. If you think that bit is...

**Maria:** Shall we just cut it off?

**Ms. J:** Yeah. Do what you think.

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**Clip 2d @ 02:52'**

[stopping the film and pointing at the screen]

**Maria:** If you look there, do you think that this bit is actually important? Do we need it?

**Stephanie:** [quietly] No, if she's showing that she's doing *well*, then we don't really need it.

**Maria:** Erm, [pointing] there's too much space there, like too many empty seats. So let's take this one.

This brief exchange between Ms. J and the editors reveals the dynamic between the teacher and the pupils and between the pupils themselves. They are at first hesitant to delete material in order to improve the scene, perhaps because it is not inherently 'wrong'.

One of the important skills in editing is that they must make decisions based on their own judgement. As Nimbus found, in the absence of definitive notions of right and



wrong, they must build on their ‘negative capability’<sup>64</sup>. DV editing entails the negotiation of ambiguity, of almost endless possibility, within the conventions of moving image storytelling, during which judicious adding and subtracting become creative acts, like sculpting, to achieve specific effects. The challenge is to trust in and feel the ‘rightness’ of aesthetic choice from the raw variables, and manipulate them under the constraints of the technology. Digital making conditions of this nature inculcate feelings of autonomy and control that may arguably lead to a sense of self as a confident agent of change, especially in the screening and Q & A phase. This was indeed the case for Clip Club’s Leonardo who ‘made change’ having shown his film to over a hundred of his peers. These conditions are at once socially contingent and choreographed by the mentors.

In Clip 2e @ 03:16’, Ms. J is congratulating Johnny and his partner on a job well done. Using her hands to reinforce her comment: “I really like the way you edited that together, you’re doing a good job there”. She could equally have been applauding a group of adults on their first experience of DV editing, who, from my own personal experience, would have felt a similar sense of achievement. Regular feedback is an important part of the process as media texts are most often meant for audiences’ consumption. Johnny and his partner take the praise, put headphones back on and immediately get back to work with an increased sense of purpose: “Right!”

In Clips 2f and 2g @ 03:27’ – 04:15’, Sally and Eva at the central editing station have to negotiate their strong individual sense of what was ‘right’ or ‘nice’ in terms of successful edits. In an interview, Ms. J advised me that these girls’ acute visual sense was apparent throughout the project and they were able to project the look and sequencing of shots at the filming stage. Making quick work of their choices, taking turns and collaborating well, the girls’ demeanour indicates the fun to be had whilst editing, demonstrating its ludic (playful) and haptic (touch-oriented) functions in conjunction with the cognitive. The other couples’ working relationships were slightly different in that there seemed to be a more dominant personality taking the

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<sup>64</sup> ‘Negative capability’ was a term fleetingly used in a letter by Keats, critiquing Coleridge, whom he thought wrong to be privileging knowledge over beauty. The phrase describes: “when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries (sic), doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason” (Mee and Gittings 2002, p.40). Keats’ cherished ‘half-knowledge’ which connects with Eisnerian ‘knowledge in the absence of rule’, seems to have gained a particular resonance in modern times.

lead, Johnny and Maria respectively, yet it is clear that the ideas of the quieter children were heard and acted on. This is a significant finding as pair work can often lead to disparately matched couples, but media composition practices have the propensity to generate contemplative dialogue at the interface in an accessible and unthreatening manner. At the end of Clip 2g, the girls are so engrossed that they fail to hear Ms. J's question, they need to be physically nudged to jolt them out of their editing bubble, or their 'flow'.

Editing decisions made 'on the fly' constitute the *phronetic* dimension of media composition practices that necessarily link with the corporeal, the imaginative, the cognitive and the affective elements of digital storytelling. Ms. J and Ben repeatedly give the children authorisation, encouragement and perhaps most importantly the *trust* and *responsibility*, to make the cut, and draw on *shared* intuitive and critical understandings of moving image tropes. The editing excerpts presented bring into relief the ways in which pedagogies related to media production that assume a more authorising 'hands off' approach, bring about a succession of critical and autonomous learning moments.

***Watch Clips 3 and 4 on DVD footage CCADJ-North-London-Primary.mp4. Also at: <https://vimeo.com/132088709> from 04:18' - 09:45'. [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]***

### ***BFI Screening: public display & process exegesis***

Earlier it was acknowledged that media texts are most often made with an audience in mind and that CCADJ learning protocols build in both a public screening, and a question and answer session. Clip 4 shows the group answering questions about their production from an authentic audience of peers and adults in one of the smaller BFI cinemas. The primary film-makers in the audience have all answered the same CCADJ brief and are thus primed to be asking questions of each other's productions. I include Clip 3 – a scene from the end of the film – so as to provide context for the disquisition between young film-makers.

Before examining Clip 4, I invoke Bourgeois' comment on the meaning of this stage of the programme. She refers to the moment of screening as a kind of 'alchemy':

Available in French at: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/ccadj-nathalie#t=23:00> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

It's a significant moment because that's when their film becomes detached. People from your workshop are all there, and you show it to everyone else and suddenly, a 'little alchemy' occurs on that day because the film becomes a separate 'object', and that's powerful. It's the thing that counts over and above the *comparing* of films [in a film festival context], it's the *event* that took place that's important.

(Interview with Nathalie Bourgeois, 2015, transcript in Appendix G2)

The metaphor is aptly chosen as it recalls the moment in my digital making cycle (Figure 12) when texts are 'detached' from their makers and released into the public sphere. Alchemy involves the transmutation of one material to another, and if we embrace this metaphor, then it is the screening event that enables a change in the relationship between the children and their film - an '(im)material *translation*' perhaps - from a set of localised meanings conceived in a private space, to diffuse meanings in a communal space. In addition film screenings, conceived as chosen literacy event *sites*, de-center the individual maker and effect a change in the wider society<sup>65</sup>. The Clip Club's Leonardo expresses it thus in Chapter IV regarding making the audience laugh:

Available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/leonardo-july-2014/s-ZeYgI#t=3:23> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

the people who make it will appreciate it, because they've done something or changed... made *change*.

(Interview with Leonardo, 2014)

What further facilitates the children's sense of agency and ownership is the non-hierarchical, non-competitive nature of the event. Formal literacy is entrenched in scales of individual aptitude and specific cultural value that seem to build in failure for some, from an early age. Open non-judgemental fora such as the post-screening discussion hints at a more dynamic, inclusive version of literacy, as celebration. The idea is that the Q & A is of benefit to all, through the stimulation of a critical sense via the communication of participants' production challenges and decision-making processes.

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<sup>65</sup> See Burnett et al. 2012 for more on '(im)materiality', 'siting' and 'de-centering' in relation to literacy and digital media.

The public dissemination phase is a moment that requires sensitive pedagogic orchestration for the ‘alchemy’ to be fully realised. Rather than asking about the meaning of the text, so often a trait of formal literacy understanding, Reid asks them to explain how they achieved the final winding long shot, and commends them on their resourcefulness - an approach which ascribes value to the often unarticulated but accessible nuances of the film-making process.

***Practitioner’s insight: improvisation, historical continuity and critique***

We heard in the Clip Club corridor footage that the film crew re-shot the scene nine times. Choosing to do that repeatedly, unsupervised, is testament to their commitment to crafting their product until it was ‘right’, until it ‘worked’. From Eva’s first comments on the BFI stage we see a similar disposition in operation. The group is accepting of ‘lots of trials and errors’ because by that stage in the programme they anticipate the various logistical (‘people coming in the way’) and technical (‘too much bumping’) challenges. The ‘long take’ brief immediately presented practical problems related to moving camera work, problems that had to be solved through iterative experimental strategies. The more sophisticated the operation the more *phronetic* ‘wisdom’, or ingenuity on the fly, is called upon to achieve the required effect. Maria reveals the use of a trolley – with the camera placed on top - as a substitute for a professional tracking system, dolly or Steadicam. Indeed the film-making process affords frequent opportunities for improvised problem-solving and independent productive agency.

My digital making cycle (Figure 4) speculates that ideas for creative output often arise from reflection on observations and feelings remembered from past experiences (drawing on Dewey 1997/1938, p.64), suggesting that widening the cultural repertoires of young learners will enrich their pool of imaginative and filmic resources. Mirroring this, Reid’s line of questioning accentuates the often overlooked importance of historical continuity in the act of media composition. In recognition that ideas for creative moving image narratives are often rooted in personal or viewing experiences, he is interested in knowing how the group had been influenced. At 06:50’ Johnny refers to the Lumière Minutes of a few months prior, stating that a stealing incident had inspired their choice of plot. Evaluation practices such as tracing the threads of thought and cultural derivation related to film and moving image work, (and other creative arts disciplines) are the kinds of metacognitive skills

that can be developed orally and publicly, especially with respect to work that evolves over a sustained period.

The screening is a celebration as well as an evaluation. In my interview with Potter, a parallel was drawn between creative media evaluation techniques and established assessment methods in Higher Education's Creative & Visual Arts programmes, where the emphasis is on discussion:

Available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/john-potter#t=09:27> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

there is a strong correlation between artistic practice, the studio practice, and the practice of discussion and critique which still persists in degree ... our fine art degree system now. I think there's something to be said about the ways in which people will look at a screen together, and work out whether something is working or not, and what more they have to do, which is similar to the way somebody would talk about a collage that has been created.  
(Interview with John Potter, 2015, transcript in Appendix G3)

Potter's choice of 'collage' as an analogy is apposite in terms of the ways in which editing is a sculpted process of assembly. In addition, the public BFI screening aligns with older students' art and design shows – inviting provocation and inquisitiveness as much as admiration. In a move that strategically does away with the trappings of industry and festivals, the annual CCADJ screening is an event, where primary children come together and exchange their knowledge and experience of film-making with peers and adults - almost in the mode of a research presentation: there is a brief, a method, an outcome and a public 'defence' of both.

Something I have noticed as a practitioner over my years of involvement with CCADJ, is the apparent dissonance between the relatively mature observations that novice film-makers can offer – such as the benefits of a simple plot as expressed by Eva – and then the more basic questions from the floor. Their way of participating is often to ask highly practical methodological questions, such as here to do with the negotiation of 'extras'. For some however, such as Callum to the right in yellow (and Gman before him), the occasion is overwhelming and he withdraws when beckoned to contribute by Reid. On the other hand, he has been fully immersed in practical film production for a sustained period, the 'material' and 'immaterial' experience of which will be stored in what might be called his 'visual archive'. As discussed in

Chapter II, and as Reid himself contends (2014, following Gee 2011), to be literate is to fully participate in the culture, the language, the values and the meaning-making practices of a community - the screenings are one way of reaching towards this.

### ***Contextual interpretation: CCADJ programme***

#### *Socio-cultural conditions of possibility*

One of my questions relates to the constraints and discursive conditions of possibility that encircle film and media production projects. To throw more light on this, I asked key commentators linked with CCADJ to reflect on what distinguishes the programme from other film and moving image education initiatives they encounter in the UK. Reid picked out several features relating to its culture and infrastructure that led him to initiate the first UK workshop:

Audio available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/mark-reid/s-wVzWW#t=12:50> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

It's been going for 20 years, every year it's new, it has a common set of constraints that aren't new every year but there's a new instantiation every year. It's a programme that has a 'va et vient' between teachers and film-makers, which is important ... It's about film language, it's not about social issues, it's a gateway into cinema from all over the world, you don't get a gateway like that in UK film culture, the UK always looks towards America, and the French look everywhere else.  
(Interview with Reid, 2015)

From this snippet and in other parts of the interview references to iterative practices come to the fore which are prerequisites for the types of cultural diversity and historical continuity alluded to in my theoretical and interpretive frameworks respectively. Both in Bourgeois' and Reid's accounts recursivity is seen in the ricochet between CCADJ's longevity and yet its fresh annual appeal; its recurring methodological structure and its renewed content; its practices of exchange and interaction between teachers and practitioners (the 'va et vient' or coming and going to which they both refer); its continual revisiting of visual form over content or social foci (although social issues *do* feature as a means of exploring visual thematics) and finally its holistic and eclectic embrace of old and new classics from world cinema.

For Reid these are the cultural principles and structuring characteristics, that differentiate CCADJ from other European models of film education. The inference

being that, while there *are* recurring projects of quality in existence, for example here in the UK<sup>66</sup>, many others are expert-led, short-term, industry/career-facing, one-off funded projects, driven by age-specific content, inspired in the main by US/English language cinematic outputs. It does seem that the UK approach to film education, and hence to the development of moving image sensibilities, is frequently functional in comparison with French cultural and educational practices. It may be that the film education field could benefit from programmes conceived with a wider view, including film as a historically situated complex art form (see Appendix F for a suggested Film Education Framework - see FLAG 2015 - with this principle in mind).

My research supports the re-imagining of schools' engagement with film and the moving image as both a cross-disciplinary medium of expression *and* as a particular dimension of the Visual Arts. As such, it is worth reflecting on the contextual challenges with which progressive pedagogies would have to contend if such a vision were to be contemplated.

#### *Negotiating constraints and permeable non-linear pedagogies*

From what has been said about the prescriptive nature of the programme and its exclusive siting, some with a more pragmatic outlook might be sceptical about the French approach and its celebration of the European film canon. Indeed there is a palpable dissonance between the transactional model of pedagogy that has been hitherto championed in this thesis, and the implementation of what appears to be the classic expert transmission model by CCADJ. Potter, who conducted research on the project in 2012, had similar initial misgivings with the model and its perceived overly structured design. At first he thought it would:

Available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/john-potter/s-3P9LY#t=13:05>

[Accessed 21 September 2015]

inhibit rather than allow [pupils] to develop their own mastery. The idea that there *is* a mastery is going to inhibit their creativity in some way, and actually that isn't what happened, but I think it could have worked liked that without the pedagogy ... the role of the pedagogue was so important in ensuring that

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<sup>66</sup> One such programme is the annual UK networked BFI Film Academy: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/education-research/5-19-film-education-scheme-2013-2017/bfi-film-academy-scheme/bfi-film-academy-uk-network-programme>, although this too is industry-facing and specifically aimed at older students.

that did not happen. It pushed the students out of their comfort zone, but allowed them to remain inside the zone of their own agency,

[*I interject with 'their habitus?'*]

... habitus, yes, because it enabled them to think that they could reflect that back through the lens of some of the techniques that they were learning, and make a better film than if they'd run around with the camera pointing it in any direction, without any consideration for some of the structures of film-making.

(Interview with John Potter, 2015, transcript in Appendix G3)

Potter reasons that CCADJ's prescriptive constraints and the practice of specific techniques help to extend all participants' horizons of possibility, at the same time as shaping practice and output. He stresses that this is only possible with the application of a pedagogy permeable to the needs, interests and insights of the students; in short, one that respects their habitus (Bourdieu 1984). Interview material gathered from participating tutor-mentors concurs with this hypothesis, and lends weight to the notion that tutoring in film-making requires artistry sensitive to the synchronous negotiation of structure, agency and production.

We see this tension played out in observations made by Ms. J after her fourth year of participation in the programme:

Audio available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-interview-8-ms-j-june-2014/s-TF3fj#t=17:02> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

Mark [Reid] said to me last year, he was like, "Your film really stood out, it was like a cut above," and he said, blah, blah, blah, and the shots and this and that. And I, sort of, cracked a joke and I went, "Yeah, but you know me, Mark, I just blag it every year." And he went to me, "Never say that, [Ms. J], you should never say that, you should always retain composure and say, 'Well, of course', you know." [*Laughing*] but yeah, and I did think it was partly because I had the group, but it's also because I know what I'm doing more now, you know what I mean? And I know what I need to do to get them... and when I first started the project I was like, "I don't want to drive this, I don't want to influence you," so I took too much of a step back where I didn't want to tarnish it in any way, I didn't want to touch it, I wanted it all to come from them. But now I understand more that actually they need some of the techniques, they need some of the knowledge and they need – I don't know what the word is – I guess they need the training, and that's my job to train them. And that's not me taking over and controlling it and making it my



film. Because from every idea they have I can see it. The minute they tell me the film I can see the whole thing and I know exactly how I'd shoot it. I know everything about it. So I always have to go, "No, no, so how would *you* do that, kids?" Because I know how *I'd* do it.  
(Interview with Ms. J, 2014)

Her opening comments seem to downplay or even to deny her skills and talents, at the same time as displaying a nuanced and reflexive practice. It is arguable that her lack of self-esteem comes as a result of feeling cut off from formal school structures: the conundrum being that the freedom associated with having little accountability in the running of the project, equates to little senior leadership support. In contrast, both Reid and Potter are strong advocates of the need to invest in robust career professional development for teachers in the field of creative media production, hence Reid's recognition of an enhanced expertise. Despite the local vacuum in which she had been working, the recurring nature of CCADJ meant that Ms. J had a rare opportunity to hone her film production pedagogy, enabling a more sophisticated practice to develop, porous to the interests and responses of her pupils.

From what she discloses in the interview and from my own experience, it seems that many budding moving image educators fall between two camps. There are those who take an 'auteur' approach - overly controlling events and occasionally offering creative agency to pupils, and then those who operate in a more detached way. This detached mode, as was Ms. J's initial strategy, may emerge from discourses that over-determine the so-called 'untarnished' freedom that film production is questionably seen to afford; alternatively it may be a question of apprehensiveness on the part of the teacher down to lack of training. Ms. J learnt from experience that the way forward with film-making with young people is to adopt a measured and facilitative approach akin to workshop/studio practice, with relations based on trust empathy and respect.

Considering the entrenched structures and rigid divisions of the school day, it is debatable the extent to which traditional pedagogies can take on informal mores, more accommodating of pupils' life worlds and more reflective of their digital interactions outside school. Pupils could be conceived as apprentices in a more flexible, transactional environment with access to experienced mentors. The media production zone, both for CCADJ and Clip Club participants, was a haven in which

it was safe to experiment, pose questions, build relationships and learn from each other, all the while developing everyday artistry in slow and often messy iterative stages.

### *Informal contexts and the case for twilight pedagogies*

In the nomenclature of the UK Inspectorate there is an expectation for schools to provide evidence of pupils' 'rapid and sustained progress' (OFSTED 2012), which is something of an oxymoron. It is questionable how this progress might be reliably manifested in a 'drive-by' approach to lesson observation, and debatable how useful such a strategy can be for the students themselves to get a sense of their own advancement. This study suggests that progress is rather a commitment to a process whose outcomes are long term, thus presenting a challenge to existing pedagogies and inspection routines. I interviewed primary teachers from Lincolnshire who follow the CCADJ programme, as well as a Media Studies secondary teacher, on the ways their 'twilight' media-related pedagogy may be alerting them to anomalies in their daytime practices. A male primary teacher responded thus:

Audio available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-thesis-interview-10-primary-teachers-ccadj-mid-project/s-RuoWT#t=02:50> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

Well, normal lessons - you do your starter and say "we're doing this for this hour .. now apply it yourself for 20, 25 minutes and then let's come back and have a look at it". Whereas this is so much more "let's experiment and have a play around", and over the course of one hour-long film club you might have nothing at the end of it, like an actual product, but all that experimentation you've done over the course of that hour is really, really useful. I think that gradual build-up is very different to in lessons, for me anyway .... you're not prescribing to them: "You are doing this today!" They're experimenting and trying it out for themselves and working as a group to find it themselves which I think is much more different and very exciting as well.  
(Interview with primary CCADJ teachers, 2014)

In wistful tones, this teacher draws a distinction between the sanctioned pedagogies of prescriptive input based on efficiency, and what appear to be experimental, undetermined practices. The implication being that, according to some, the former *does* produce meaningful 'product' in the form of tangible progress and testable knowledge. The CCADJ context for learning, then, espouses informal practices that nurture certain dispositions for social and reciprocal relations, and for praxis, that is,

the often improvised productive action based on theoretical discussion and aesthetic film sensibility.

The secondary teacher, Mr. H, following the programme for the second year, used to be a professional film editor and therefore brought another level of sophistication to the project which Reid was keen to exploit. His group of multi-ethnic Year 9 and 10s from South London represented the UK contingent at the Paris screening. He spoke of the opportunities for deep learning that the programme offered:

Audio available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-interview-9-mr-h-march-2015/s-ae6Id#t=03:00> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

... so they're considering each time they move the camera what they're communicating to the audience. And I just think it's... there are so many complex things going on in that process that it is, it is real learning and real skills being developed right in front of you, and the evidence of that working is that students that went through the programme last year and came back this year have remembered almost everything that they were taught and are able to apply it again, and were looking to move on and develop more skills. Whereas there is a sense sometimes that we're in schools and the nature of what is being learnt can be, because of the nature of the way it's being taught, students go away for the summer and they come back and their minds have been sort of wiped clean and they're ready to move onto the next thing, so there isn't really any progress there.  
(Interview with Mr. H, 2015)

While Mr. H is clearly supportive of the positive outcomes of CCADJ, his rather tongue-in-cheek suggestion that students start the autumn term with a mind like a 'tabula rasa' as far as other subjects are concerned is problematic. It is symptomatic of polarising debates between the relative merits of academic knowledge that either accretes or is forgotten over time, versus the dynamic and interwoven accumulation of practical skills. While I am sympathetic to the looping value of film-making in terms of 'sticky' experiential learning, we must be wary of making universal assumptions about the outcomes of pedagogic approaches in other disciplines.

Having said that Mr. H is working concurrently within formal and non-formal paradigms, and so it is unsurprising that he draws the distinction so starkly. Perhaps mentor-like pedagogies are more easily facilitated in the primary context, where there is one teacher per class, and a degree of curricular flexibility. As the stakes rise in secondary, the appetite for transactional creative pedagogy is less identifiable and

limited by a more oppressive regime of individual test preparation in distinct subject areas. As Mr. H implies, these are conditions un-conducive to group media composition practices, though not impossible, as the ensuing studies attest.

I conclude by summarising the ways in which the non-formally located CCADJ programme shows us ways forward for the design and evaluation not only of film-related but digital media projects in general. The emphasis is on a critical egalitarian process driven by agentive social learning, within a framework of structured production and evaluation, sensitive to present and past influences. I will proceed with presenting media composition practices in the *formal* secondary school environment, where such activities are even less frequent and constraints more institutionally prescribed. If contemporary ideation on literacy is aiming for action-oriented participation, ways of conceptualising *modern illiteracy* are thrown into question. The studies to follow engage with issues of digital equality head on, with pedagogic ideology rooted in democratic ideals, and leveraged with digital tools.

### **C. Setting 3 – Riverside School - Film in a Morning**

As noted in my methodology Chapter, the *Film in a Morning* setting was the space in which I was more of a detached Observer Participant, able to take a step back, as neither the participants nor the proceedings were dependent on me in any way. Not being viscerally entangled in social actors' meaning-making practices, meant that I was able to process my interpretations more objectively. As a reminder, the study took place in an inner London secondary boys school (Riverside) that had an established relationship with staff and PGCE students at UCL, The Institute of Education (IoE). *Film in a Morning* had been a regular optional 'extra module' for students for a number of years, led by IoE lecturers / teacher educators – Morlette Lindsay (English) and Theo Bryer (English and Drama). They are actively engaged in educational research that incorporates media production into classroom practice, as an alternative expressive mode for both teachers and learners. It was felt that this setting was to offer an unusually multi-perspectival view of new literacy practices,





Figure 25: PGCE students practicing media composition with iPads with inlayed review process.

It was a cold sunny January morning and most students avoided the brighter external conditions, opting to make do with the potentialities and possible constraints of the inside space. The room was notable for the one pane of glass where natural light could enter, which possibly explains the BFI's choice of hanging a panoramic photo of an outside view (to the right of the photo) as a 'fake' window onto the Thames - although this too is artificially lit. In contemplation of the enclosed area underneath the arches of Waterloo Bridge, there is a sense of being hemmed in, as if the student teachers had been let loose with a brief, in a bounded playground. They had been given the challenge to exceed the confines of the ordinary and capture that excess as an act of literacy, in short, the permission to play with audiovisual material and produce cultural products.

The activity recalls the CCADJ exercises in terms of the time-limited, stripped down brief, the imposed rules and the 'authorisation' to feel a sense of imaginative agency under the prevailing conditions. I observed a mood of playful spontaneity and 'possibility thinking' as iPads were handed out and props opportunistically grabbed; the task was 'on' to choose a mise-en-scène ripe with visual potential amongst

‘found’ semiotic resources. As Bryer notes (Cannon et al. 2014) co-opting and ‘freighting’ the everyday with meaning in opportunistic ways, is an exercise in envisaging alternative realities. In addition, the anticipation of a peer screening fed a sense of deadline and impending performance.

One group experimented with stop-motion animation, using the wall as a backdrop and bringing plastic bricks to life<sup>67</sup>. The foregrounded couple in Figure 25, resolved to transform a black leather glove into a sinister presence with a tap. The male teacher’s awkward positioning testifies to a commitment to get an appropriately angled and framed shot; the pair then review their work as seen in the inlayed photo. The iPad’s large screen enabled them to experience their roles as actors in, producers of and audience for their own work in rapid succession. As such, by using the language of creative collaboration as was seen in the CCADJ editing suite, they were in a position to make judgement calls, do retakes and negotiate provisional adjustments as necessary. They were manipulating in social and empirical ways the building blocks of film and media composition, which once experienced even in microcosm, seemed for most to instil a peculiar curiosity and/or confidence with the medium and the desire to do and learn more.

***Practitioner’s insight: digital artistry and media composition language***

Without any previous experience the film-makers in question had chosen a ‘kitchen sink setting’ that offered a series of cinematic affordances: it was well lit with the overhead lights of the bar area; the shiny metallic chrome would render a pleasing clean contrast with the dark textured gloved hand; there was potential in the textures and reflective surfaces for a rewarding close-up; and there was a natural source of noise and contained movement with the running water. With the addition of menacing music from the iMovie app database, this was traditional film trailer fare and eventually made for an amusing clip as a result of the students’ attention to suspense and the sensorial.

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<sup>67</sup> More information on the richness of learning with animation in the primary years, particularly in poetry, can be found in Bazalgette 2012.



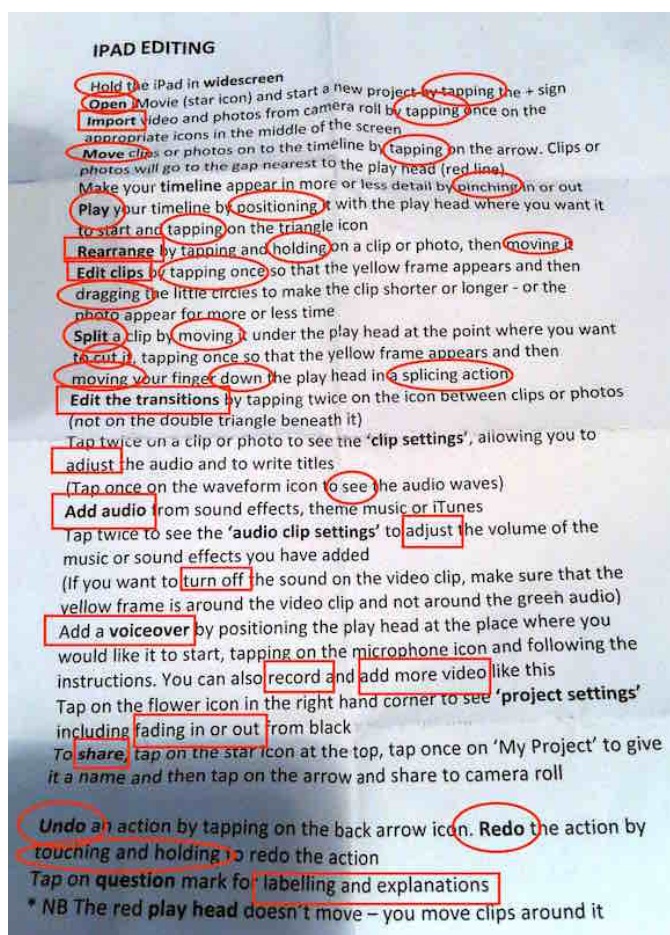


Figure 26: IoE tutor's instructions for editing, with red annotations indicating language of touch-screen editing.

Theirs was a short audiovisual piece that has remained in my memory for the reasons of artistry outlined above, thereafter the clip was deleted. With the teachers it was the *process* that mattered over any precious attachment to the text, serving as a reminder that short-form digital texts are dispensable, and can in the main be replicated and reworked. Indeed there being no 'once chance to get it right', as with other visual art forms, proves liberating for those less confident with oral or inscribed storytelling.

Although the iMovie app interface is compact and

intuitive, it is often frustrating in its reliance on fine motor skills. Whilst it must be acknowledged that the app is a commercial digital product (with limited functionality compared with the desktop version), the resultant work is closer to the hand wrought and designed, in the mode of craft, than the hand written and described. Pinching, reverse pinching, hovering, dragging, splitting, splicing, pressing, moving and (double) tapping in sequences of iterative actions, as highlighted in Figure 26, signal a new dynamic literacy lexicon in relation to touch screens, where linear typographic codes cede ground to the 'hand-crafted audiovisual'. The properties of the hand and eye are more directly connected to the symbolic material than they might be through the mediation of a mouse. Not only this but the accessibility and wireless mobility of the tablet could start to displace assumed power relations in the classroom, as widely accepted pedagogic physical norms are disrupted.



### ***Critical and hybrid pedagogy***

These student teachers are practicing what appears to be open-ended ‘rigourless’ play with no clear assessable success criteria; but if one overlays Reid’s analogy with the young learner writing their first poem, the seemingly frivolous scene in Figure 25 becomes politically potent. Without their tutors’ direction the two couples in the photo are assuming responsibility for cultural production (no matter for the moment how trivial the content appears), and then evaluating its success based on their own cultural affiliations. This thesis argues that the earlier these processes are modelled in ITT programmes, the more practised learners become at the critical creative and personally-involving (co-)construction of texts, and the less reliant they feel on gaining mastery over ‘always-already’ scripted content.

I interviewed a group of student teachers at the end of the morning after working with Year 7 students, and they found the experience beneficial in a variety of ways. For example one student overcame feelings of inadequacy related to digital editing - not being ‘a huge technology person’. Another was surprised that the boys had not used the app before but they ‘cottoned on quick’. Both these views are arguably derivative of the binary digital immigrant / native discourse (Prensky 2001), where the myth goes that young people are perceived as adept producers and knowing masters of the mystical digital, while adults are bemused bystanders. Happily these ‘misplaced technological and biological’ determinist views (Selwyn 2009) were unsettled through the *Film in a Morning* process.

A more confident student teacher found the morning useful at the level of her practice. She questioned whether it was acceptable for teachers to encourage reflexivity in her pupils with regard to improving their media outputs. I found myself puzzled, re-phrasing her question thinking she must be asking *How?* rather than *If* it was possible:

Available at: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-thesis-interview-ioe-student-teachers-film-in-a-morning1/s-6R82a#t=06:25> [Accessed 27 September 2015]

**Sarah:** Would you push the kids to improve upon what they’d done? What do you think?

**Michelle:** [Do you mean:] *How* do you do that?

**Sarah:** Well I mean, have you seen it done? Should it..? Is..? Cos more the point of this session was very exploratory..... But should it be, maybe at a later point more critical? You know kind of like critical and reflective. Was that strong? Why wasn't it that strong?

Available at: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-thesis-interview-ioe-student-teachers-film-in-a-morning1/s-6R82a#t=07:03> [Accessed 27 September 2015]

**Sarah:** It can be hard for kids though to know why something works and something doesn't and like, you kind of have to ask the right questions. Erm.. but I don't... It's not something I've done a lot. It's something that I need to work on in Drama.

**Liz:** It's like leading without leading  
(Interview with student teachers after the *Film in a Morning* activity, 2014)

The issue of if and how to encourage the revision of media texts echoes Eisner's invocation (2005/2002) to practice the art of 'aesthetic judgement made in the absence of rule', meaning the exercise of wisdom that goes beyond the ratiocinative. Youth media texts can occupy ambiguous territory in terms of evaluation in a school context, as a function of the popular cultural stock on which they often draw, and the generous rule-resistant nature of audiovisual assembly. There is a sense in which meanings inhere in the moments *before* learning, hence the value of post-production reflection. At the end of the exercise it seems Sarah was searching for the 'criteria for success' herself, on behalf of her pupils, and perhaps needed more support on how to invite and convey media-making critique in mentor-like ways. It is worth noting that Sarah may not have raised the question had improvements to a *written* text been under discussion, with their clear objectives and 'obvious' successful elements.

It is laudable that Sarah be raising meta-thinking as an important part of media composition but lamentable that she should have to question its validity, suggesting that *Film in a Morning* apart, compliance with the teaching of 'content' and 'how to deliver it' is still the dominant pedagogic model in ITT. This said, it did seem that even after this short DV editing exercise, the teachers were edging towards a more nuanced pedagogy that would incite learners to collaborate and take ownership of their own improvement – an engagement more likely to happen in a climate of trust

and open-ended experimentation. It could be that in addition to the inherent benefits of film and media-making for which I have been arguing, these activities have a utility as tools to ignite independent critical thinking, across the subject ranks of ITT, even at this early stage of their career (McIntyre and Jones 2014). If self-reflexive questioning is recognised as an important attribute of the modern pedagogue, then modelling this skill so that students are encouraged to critique their own and others' work emerges as a salient facet of literacy, beyond mere tokenistic peer review, not least in light of the caustic public commentary often found on social media.

Over the course of my research with children I have found that asking them tangentially *about* their learning rather than the more pointed *what* they think they are learning, is a more fruitful tactic. To round off this setting, I present an interview extract demonstrating this approach, which also adds weight to the value of children's oral and reflective commentary in acts of literacy and pedagogy.

***Contextual interpretation: formal frustration***

As a wide ranging question that can invite eclectic and intimate responses, I often ask my research participants about aspects of their practical media work that may have surprised them in some way, either in relation to themselves or in relation to external phenomena. In conversation with two Year 7 boys some two weeks after completion of their magic realist text, Isaac replied with: 'I was surprised that we thought about it so quickly'<sup>68</sup>, suggesting that he may not have been used to acting impulsively in a creative setting. Turning fantastical ideas into embodied action and inscribing them digitally, all in the space of an hour, was an empowering and refreshing change that interrupted their more procedural daily routines.

On further questioning about the editing process, Isaac revealed metacognitive insights about his media composition work:

Available at: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-thesis-interview-year7s-film-in-a-morning/s-AszEh#t=02:45> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

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<sup>68</sup> This interview extract and some of the observations appear in a joint article written about the project by myself, Bryer and Lindsay (2014), for the journal MERJ (Media Education Research Journal).

**Michelle:** Yeah. It does take ages, doesn't it? editing... And you've got... (pause) What do you think you've got to be, if you're ... if you're editing?

**Isaac:** You have to be focussed and ..um ... permitted to do it

**Michelle:** Permitted to do it

**Daniel:** And relaxed

**Michelle:** And relaxed. And what was that first thing you said?

**Isaac:** Focussed

**Michelle:** Focussed, right yeah. I like this word ... I like the idea of you thinking you need permission, that's interesting. Can you talk a bit more about that?

**Isaac:** That you can't just do anything, without ...well... you can't just do anything that you ... (pause)

**Michelle:** ... that you feel like

**Isaac:** Yeah, that you feel like. It has to be appropriate and (that...)

**Michelle:** Yeah. OK. Alright. So you're talking about following certain rules? Maybe? Are you? I'm not quite sure ... when you say permitted do you mean, you're given the permission to do it by a teacher or do you mean something else?

**Isaac:** Like, not permission but..

**Michelle:** Erm, I think I know what you mean. Erm, (pause)

**Isaac:** Like, we *want* to do it.

**Michelle:** Yeah. Yeah. You're allowed to just use your imagination, maybe? Is that what you mean? Just given a bit of freedom? Could you talk a bit more about that? Just kind of ... doing

**Isaac:** Like imagination ... you can think about anything you like, and dream about anything you like and no-one can stop you from doing that, so... it's a bit like that... the freedom to think about whatever er.. you like.. and then (pause) and then it's just, it's the same like that because we use our imagination to think about the story, so... we like freedom to, erm to think about what we like.

(Interview with Year 7 students, 2014)

Isaac chooses two adjectives to describe the states conducive to good DV editing, being – ‘focussed’ and ‘permitted’; the former relates to his cognitive engagement

(commonly associated with editing), the latter to an impersonal warrant from some external authority. A ‘permitted’ state springs to his consciousness rather than any ‘unfettered’ state. Arguably, needing permission is indicative of the disruptive unconventionality of the project, and the extent to which institutionalised young learners have internalised school rules. Daniel’s contribution with respect to being ‘relaxed’, may indicate how the social nature of media composition practices worked for him, especially as they involved collaborating with ‘stranger-adults’ who willingly reciprocated ideas and shared a certain parity of skills, knowledge and enthusiasm.

The extract hinges on Isaac’s quietly emphatic ‘We *want* to do it’, the implication being that they are routinely denied opportunities for free reign creative production; even more so in today’s climate of academic credentialising and the de-privileging of the arts. There is a certain melancholy in Isaac’s claim, in so far as he and his peers *do* in fact buy into this kind of work. Although grateful for the experience, they lament the mere glimpse of a social practice of direct relevance to their world beyond the confines of the school. I phrased it thus in a related article:

If indeed Isaac did use the word ‘permission’ in relation to being authorised to ‘dream’ (as, in the interests of transparency, I am aware that he may have been influenced by my enthusiasm to interpret it as such), then schools might question the wisdom of current instrumental curricular regimes. Isaac experienced a liberating, if wistful, shift in orientation, an ontological adjustment in a supported environment where the boys’ own cultural capital was shaped, shared and collectively valued.  
(Cannon et al. 2014, p. 29)

It has to be recognised that replicating this activity and its impact in mainstream classrooms in the format just recounted – that is, densely populated with facilitators, hardware and enthusiastic adults asking secondary questions – is unrealistic. Be that as it may, the rich outcomes are indicative of a pupil-teacher relationship that blurs traditional roles, and exposes dispositions open to both creative collusion and strong improvisatory practices that ask the question ‘What if...’ (Liu and Noppe-Brandon 2009)

The final study is set in the same school and engages with the tensions inherent in one department’s valorising and implementing of formal moving image literacy,

whilst complying with the largely analogue statutory demands and centralised accountability procedures.

#### **D. Setting 4 – Riverside School - English and Drama department**

This fourth setting marked the end of my PhD fieldwork, and I had been moving along a spectrum towards the *Observer-Participant* status (see Chapter III) taken up here. I was keen to observe the formal practices of an English and Drama department that annually supported *Film in a Morning* as part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. After some initial rudimentary classroom observations in prior months, I observed three Year 7 classes over one week, taking note of interactions between the teacher, Mr. C – the Head of Department - and his pupils. I had recognised by that stage in my research that in terms of examining the literacy implications of practices involving media composition, new *pedagogies* were integral to the success of these practices. Without a critical investigation of a potential model of confident modern pedagogy, there would have been something missing from my research efforts with respect to the necessary climate in which these alternative practices are given a chance to flourish.

Mr. C brings to the department an alternative pedagogic vision imported from his native New Zealand (NZ). In 2007 and after a lengthy and inclusive governmental review over several years, a new NZ curriculum<sup>69</sup> was formulated, on which Mr. C had collaborated. The new future-facing curriculum embraces the digital, and is cognisant of the well-being of the individual and their *productive* and *participative* stake in society. From my observations, this seems to be the ethos that drives Riverside School's English and Drama department. Their practices presage the ways in which formal arrangements can both harness the informally acquired digital skills and interests of many young people, and identify those in need of more support.

I examine the following data: a pupil's drawing, photos taken during a moving image exercise with iPads, extracts from an interview with Mr. C, and a video interview with Year 7s. This is with a view to examining the ways in which digital media production is integrated into a locally devised programme of English study, that focusses on the development of critical textual response. I do not intend to outline the

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<sup>69</sup> Available at: <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/The-New-Zealand-Curriculum> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

programme nor the resultant texts, I focus on processes related to literacy conceived as producing meanings in a variety of modes, which are in active, material and digital dialogue with the environment. As in the previous settings, the Riverside study concludes with an interpretation of the context from which this data is drawn.

Before presenting material I wish to point out that at the heart of the department is an open online digital platform which functions as a teaching, learning and communication hub. The platform - created in Wordpress and maintained by Mr. C – is accessed by all department staff, students of English and their families.

Programmes of work, lesson plans, resources, homework, reflections, feedback, blog posts and other digital outputs are moderated and published on a daily basis. The pupils no longer exclusively write in books and can choose to make their work private or open to the public.

Despite being publicly accessible, divulging the website address would identify the school, and issues of ethics outlined in Chapter III prevent me from doing this. It does seem at odds with the department's generous ethos of transparency; Mr. C was happy to be identified and reveal the workings of the platform, however I opt to retain the school's, the pupils' and the teachers' anonymity, especially as the previous study is implicated and the consent applied for did not extend to naming the school.<sup>70</sup>

### ***Preparation for praxis and critical thinking***

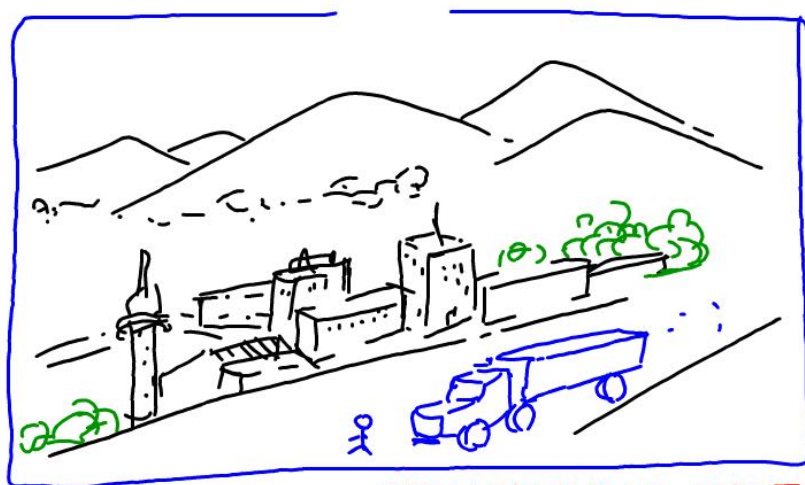
The week prior to my visit the boys were introduced to various shot types that constitute basic film 'grammar'. For example, they were challenged to draw storyboard frames that represented the scenario illustrated in Figure 27 from different angles, positions and perspectives. These included: the establishing shot, the (extreme) close-up, the mid shot, the wide shot, the bird's eye view, the over-the-shoulder shot, shots taken at high, low or skewed angles, or from different people's point of view.

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<sup>70</sup> Issues of privacy and consent in openly networked school environments point to a possible future schism in orthodox educational research, possibly provoking a shift towards more flexible practices.

# FILM STUDY

## FRAME ONE



SHOT: ESTABLISHING SHOT  
ANGLE: HIGH ANGLE

Figure 27: Board capture of stimulus for studying camera shots and angles.

According to Mr. C, simple drawing exercises, based on film language, usefully set up hands-on audiovisual production activities related to theories on the construction of film narrative. In a few lessons time, having watched and analysed a specific short film<sup>71</sup> and had practice at enacting their own directorial choices, the boys were to create a more considered filmed response, using a range of techniques aimed at developing their overall critical and creative textual understanding. Mr. C proposes that the stage of ‘making’ translates abstract concepts in concrete ways which relate to thought processes that can be re-applied in other media such as writing. Their drawings arguably illustrate a latent knowledge of filmic techniques used for specific dramatic and narrative effects, as the example in Figure 28 demonstrates. The child has chosen to illustrate the extreme close-up, and in doing so demonstrates a

<sup>71</sup> The NZ film in question was *Two Cars One Night* (2004) which was nominated for an Oscar in 2005 for Best Short. It follows an encounter between a young Maori girl and boy waiting in a car park. Available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6Pc6cBP-8U> [Accessed 21 September 2015].



dramatic cinematic technique, that draws audiences into the minutiae and drama of a given moment.

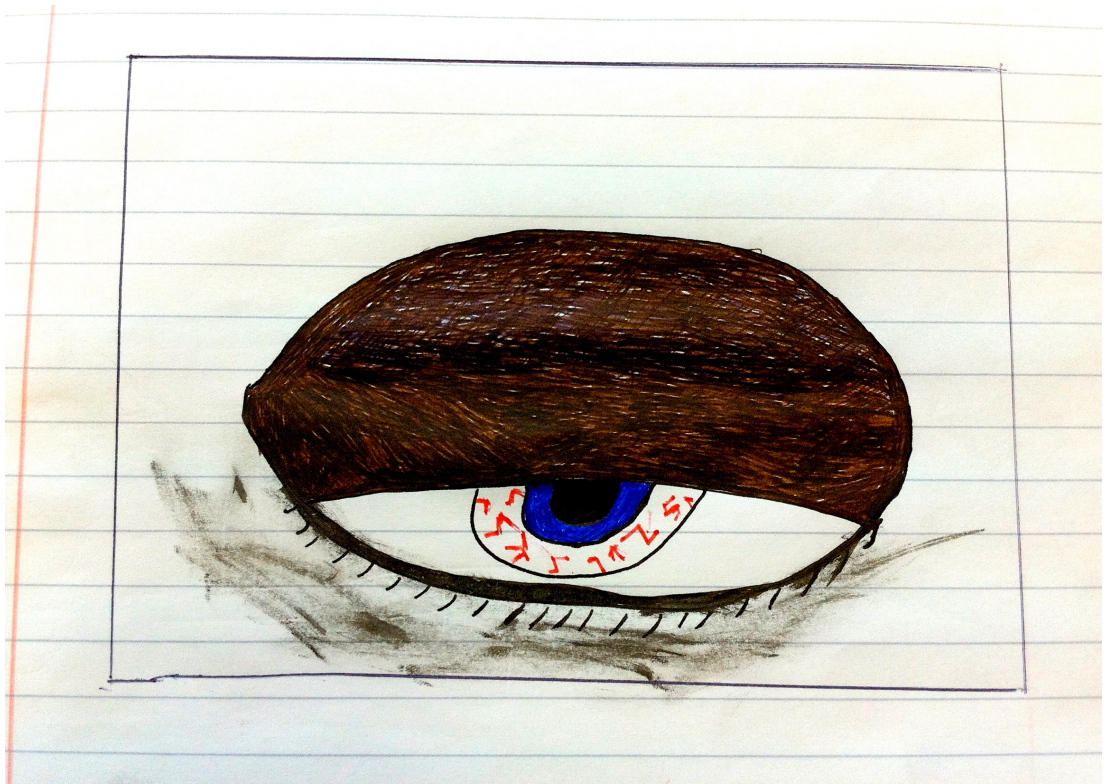


Figure 28: Extreme close-up shot of an eye, drawn by a Year 7 pupil

According to Cousins (2012, p.31), the invention of the close-up is one of film's unique visual affordances (as distinct from the constant distance that theatrical audiences maintain), whose intimacy and emphasis seize our imagination, as was the case for *Clip Club's* Clara. The eye in Figure 28, bounded by the frame, radiates narrative, rendered by the artist's aesthetic attention to: colour, shape, line, positioning, cropping, mood, perspective, proportion, texture and geometry. Particularly evocative is the clarity and contrast of the black outline and pupil, the dark brown skin, the blue iris encircled with the jagged blood-shot white of the eye, the short lower lashes and the smudged dark circles that compliment the eye's weary half-closed state. Notably, unlike the contours of the lid, defined with care, the shading under the eye smudges over the edges of the frame, connoting tired limp movement - an excess or perhaps an absence of emotion.

The image interpellates the viewer with a direct gaze and its detail poses questions about possible fictional narratives. It could be that filmic approaches to literacy offer direct pathways to understanding inference, perspective, mood, context and critical interpretation in ways that are more personally relevant, than those spoon-fed by the teacher. A point made by Mr. C in my interview with him:

Available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-interview-mr-c-riverside-school/s-OSuBH#t=39:38> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

So instead of me showing them a film and then telling them how to respond to it critically, and what valid critical responses would be, and then asking them to reproduce what I've said in their own writing, as a film criticism, or a film review, they are being asked instead to look at aspects of the film that they find interesting or that they have thought to be successful, and to reproduce those in their own process of film-making. So that they can explore what the director's role is in making a film, so that then when they are ultimately asked to respond to the film, and the director's decisions within the film, they'll do it from a place of *knowing* as opposed to a place of being *told*. So they will be able to, I hope, come up with both more sophisticated and also more authentic responses to the original text, and they'll be able to talk with a sort of sophistication that I need them to, but about the things that they see rather than the things that I tell them are there ... this is the exploration, learning phase.

(Interview with Mr. C, 2014, transcript in Appendix G1)

In Mr. C's class a drawing is as valued as other forms of response in terms of what it reveals about the pupil's visual literacy and can be built on with collective feedback, more watching and more practical outputs:

Available at: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-interview-mr-c-riverside-school/s-OSuBH#t=0:31> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

... viewing and making is actually a very parallel process to reading and writing, so you teach them in a literature class - you can teach them in the same ways and you can use the benefits of one in the domain of the other ...

Available at: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-interview-mr-c-riverside-school/s-OSuBH#t=2:52> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

... they're going to ultimately create a film that demonstrates an appreciation for those skills and techniques, and they'll also write about the original film, where they reflect on how the film-maker did this. So it's not radical at all, it's completely within the domain - it's entirely within the domain of English

learning in secondary school, the work they're doing. You know, it's not a deviation or a holiday from it.

(Interview with Mr. C, 2014, transcript in Appendix G1)

Mr. C is conscious of the status of film and moving image in this country, hence his reference to it as a perceived 'holiday', but he maintains a non-celebratory and pragmatic stance on its use. He will employ whatever means necessary to help cultivate the capacity to be critical. This said, Mr. C has a double advantage, he has professional media experience as a former radio broadcaster and he comes from a progressive school culture that invests in and values the digital.

In the New Zealand curriculum acts of reading and writing, and viewing and making, have parity of importance and are regarded as separate but interacting communicative means. As such he is a confident negotiator within these domains, relatively free from the dogma of hierarchical cultural value that often stifles claims on the benefits of practical media work in the UK. As revealed in the *Film in a Morning* study, critical understanding of film and moving image has yet to establish itself in UK ITT programmes, marking out creative and bold forms of critical pedagogic practice as the realm of the outlier.

***Practitioner insight: pedagogy porous to the popular and the public***

The boys were given an opportunity to respond to the drawing task in a visual and personal way. The young artist who drew the eye (Figure 28) may have imagined himself as the figure standing in front of the truck (Figure 27) - his zombie self - which may explain the macabre detailing. For many boys at the rudimentary stages of film production, action or horror movies are rarely far from their sphere of influence, and scenes of bullying and violence loom invariably large in early autonomous production work<sup>72</sup>. Nevertheless, valuing and building on this knowledge of popular cultural references, and then framing them in critical ways,

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<sup>72</sup> See Bazalgette and Staples (1995), for further discussion on the Hollywood 'cultural imperialism' that dominates children's and 'family' films on offer, and that my study suggests influences young people's initial efforts at production; although even these scenes are good opportunities for learning about building tension with different camera shots.

rather than dismissing them, is a useful and accessible starting point for further development in the English curriculum.

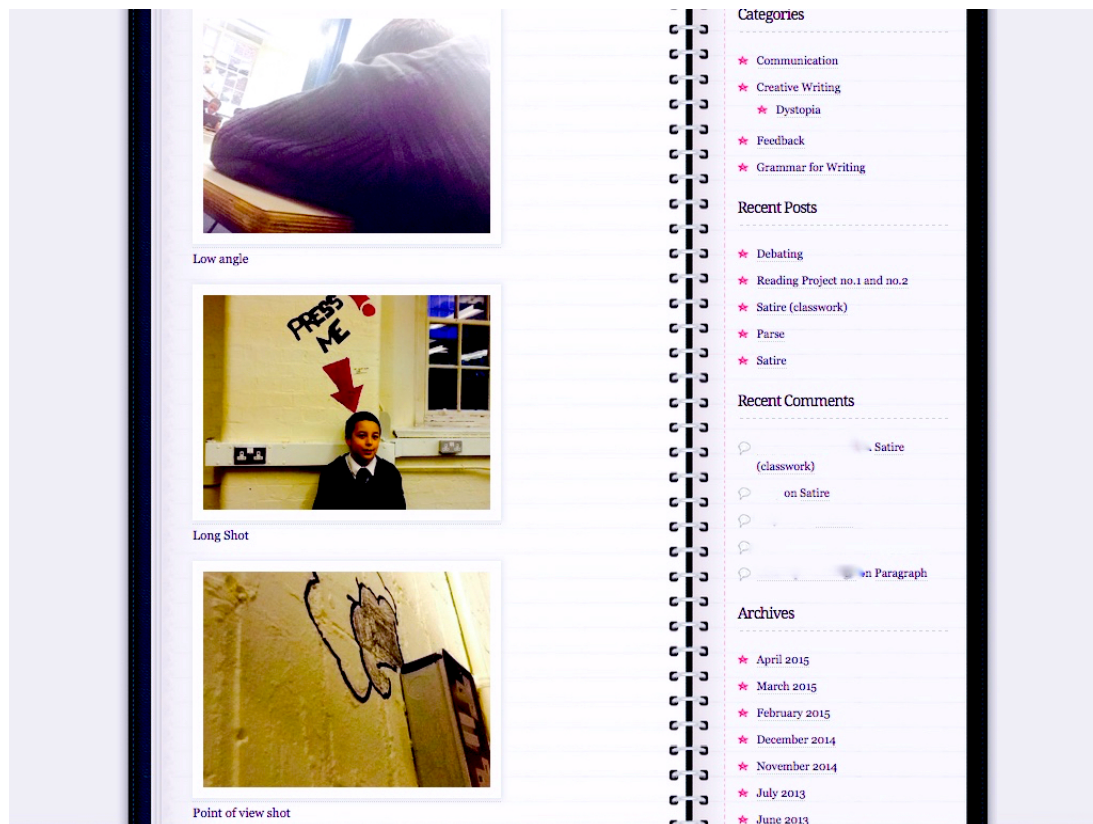


Figure 29: Shot types on student's online journal, in the style of a personal digital notebook

One of the ways that such development can take place is through online peer assessment. Once equipped with the basic typologies and formulae of film and visual critique, the boys were able to display their newfound knowledge on their personal online journals as shown in Figure 29 above.

Their work is thereby available for collective feedback, that is, not exclusively for the class teacher, but it can be reviewed by external interested parties. This helps the boys keep track of their learning and make responsible choices about what they wish to publish and how to present it. Although the virtual dissemination of material on a blog does not guarantee an audience, it bears witness to a personally relevant body of work tied to its author. In other words, it is not separate and distant like last year's discarded exercise books or past exam papers, but it forms part of an ongoing digital identity, where progress pertinent to the learner is preserved and the 'conversation' pursued.



### *Making meaning between a rock and a hard place*

After the drawing stage, Mr. C had students do photographic and/or short moving image exercises with iPads, practising shot types that might, for example, metaphorically express a concept, such as regret. Figure 30 below features a Year 7



Figure 30: Year 7 boy takes a high angle shot, with an on-looking staff member

boy, Simeon, practising a high angle shot in the playground. I had noticed Simeon in class – he found it difficult to sit still and concentrate. Even as the short film played and most of the class were wrapped in attention, he was fiddling with his bag and making a paper plane, mainly wrapped in distraction. I believe this photo has a similar resonance to that of *Clone Clara* taken by Clip Club’s G-man (Figure 15) in the sense that it seems to be freighted with symbolic as well as literal meaning.

Figure 30 appears to acknowledge the pull of creative media practice and the tensions that circulate around its formal implementation. I catch Simeon as he teeters on the stone base of an iron pillar to get his high angle shot. I notice his dishevelled appearance, shirt hanging out, collar awry, shoes laces undone, and then a directorial poise in the way he has chosen to snugly wedge himself between the wall and the supporting pillar, using his feet and elbows to balance and keep the camera steady.

There is a marked difference between the unsettled boy I noticed shifting on his seat in class, and the boy fixedly framing a shot from a consciously selected vantage point. Could it be that he has found what Robinson (2013) might describe as his ‘element’?

The precariousness of Simeon’s position seems to be noticed by the on-looking suited staff member Mr. B, in a neighbouring class – he is the basketball coach, on Teaching Assistant duty. He was wondering what was going on with the apparently unsupervised, un-boisterous Year 7s – a scene that some might have perceived as chaotic during class time - playfully engaging with the environment, the cameras and each other. His leaning body, eyeing some out-of-shot activity, suggests a reprimanding mode, but Mr. B’s non-teacher supporting role works well for him, and he is in fact curious to learn more. He pokes his head through a window and enters a different realm of educational activity that seemed to involve: agility and accuracy, intention and co-operation, in other words, teamwork.

The muted colours and the vertical and parallel lines that crisscross the photo introduce connotations of institutional rigidity, within which Simeon is constrained but self-directed and agentive. His cocked leg and angle-poised body speak back to these constraints in a resistant and subversive act of creation. The off-centre, flat, grey pillar seems to dominate and splice the image in two, until we realise that it is the people who matter in this photo – they occupy the lines that compose the ‘rule of thirds’<sup>73</sup>. There is even space out of frame for Simeon’s unseen subject: a mysterious excess. The ‘punctum’ (Barthes 1979) for me in this photo is Simeon’s hanging shoe-lace, a limp reflection of the iron pillar, and perhaps a more ‘truthful’ representation of his social power beyond this media exercise.

As can be seen in Figure 31 and the video clip to follow<sup>74</sup>, Simeon enthusiastically practices a variety of moving and still shots for later more purposeful narrative sequencing. Reminiscent of Wizard on the table in Figure 17, he is amassing a rich visual vocabulary with which to build meaning. Indeed, somewhat controversially in

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<sup>73</sup> The principle of the ‘rule of thirds’ is thought to improve the balance and composition of a shot. By placing an imaginary 9-square grid on a photo, its key elements should align along the intersecting lines.

<sup>74</sup> Available at <https://vimeo.com/111458298> @ 00:08’ [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]

terms of the *aesthetic* relevance of film-making discussed earlier, Mr. C likens this process to the collection of raw materials for construction:

Available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-interview-mr-c-riverside-school/s-OSuBH#t=5:28> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

They create an overall plan and they make, they film and record the parts, sometimes out of narrative sequence, and then they form a narrative sequence from those parts, and it's very much a building process. It's almost like engineering, structural engineering as opposed to writing which is as I said, a lot more linear.

(Interview with Mr. C, 2014, transcript in Appendix G1)

This thesis argues that the process of *making* is one of the key attractions of digital media manipulation for many young people. Sophisticated human concepts and emotions, and social and environmental sensibilities can be translated into palpable chunks and slices of movable material. At their most rudimentary, it could be argued these processes are reminiscent of the control and satisfaction that intricate Lego and Meccano building can offer. Clearly the utilitarian functionality of an engineering analogy has its limitations, but it serves to highlight the possible frustrations for some, that 'going in cold' with abstract monomodal writing as a means of expressing understanding, might engender. The structural as well as aesthetic dimensions of traditional literacy activities could be grounded in the practical co-creation of audiovisual meanings.

### ***Local conditions of possibility***

In this section I focus on specific elements within Mr. C's pedagogic environment that facilitate practices with digital making, picking out relevant details in videoed interview material<sup>75</sup> taken during the camera shot exercise above. I asked a group of boys to talk to me about Mr. C's English lessons. Echoing some of Leonardo's observations, the boys make reference to the use of iPads for learning, the acquired skills that might be useful 'in future life' and, notably, in this particular session, the fact of 'not having to write', as if, in other contexts writing were some chore to be endured. This account claims that reluctance to write is partly down to its consistent and stringent monitoring, and the prescriptive nature of what pupils are told counts as

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<sup>75</sup> Available at <https://vimeo.com/111458298> @ 03:17' - 07:42' [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]

‘good writing’ (Barrs and Horrocks 2014). As Nimbus acknowledged earlier, content they are asked to produce routinely fails to connect with their own interests and sensibilities.

Below I list some of the boys’ comments in the video that are suggestive of a strong bond between teacher and student, and of a more relaxed and egalitarian pedagogic approach. Mr. C’s method of building dialogic relations involves listening, trust, responsibility and agency:

- it’s fun
- he likes our ideas
- he gives us many chances
- he’s patient
- he tells us off for good reasons
- you respect him and he respects you back
- he gives us encouragement
- [media production tasks] give us ideas

It might be said that this is a generic list of characteristics applicable to many teachers who are popular with students. The difference in this instance is that the boys had been trusted to get on with this particular production task on their own – Mr. C knew he would be absent that day for reasons beyond his control and having completed the groundwork, he trusted the Year 7 boys to ‘deliver’ on their own creative learning; which they did (albeit within the confines of a boat yard, weighed down with bags and naval uniforms). Mr. C’s decision to ‘leave them to it’, although the exception rather than the rule in terms of practice, took trust, agency and responsibility to a higher level, a realisation which I myself discovered in the latter stages of Clip Club.





Figure 31: Simeon and partner practise a high angle shot in the playground

### ***Contextual interpretation: secret engagement and the wider context***

Over the past three years, the school's GCSE English results have significantly improved, and my study tentatively suggests that this could correlate with an overall increase in student engagement<sup>76</sup>. My research data proposes that engagement is a social process, and claims on success in the educational domain are as much down to the quality of the relationship between teacher and pupil as they are to content, tools and teaching methodology. Collective 'doing' and the pooling and respecting of ideas build the kind of shared history on which such relationships can thrive.

Two of the (bulleted) points raised by the boys above stand out - those of generating and listening to ideas. Potter, an experienced primary teacher as well as academic, claims that listening to pupils' *responses* is a crucial element in building the necessary dialogic relationship on which effective teaching depends (Back 2013),

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<sup>76</sup> For those interested in academic progress measured in statistics, in 2013, the year that Mr. C became Head of Department, 61% of pupils achieved A\* - C in English Language GCSE; in 2014 that percentage rose to 76%, with a further increase in 2015 to 85%. Some might draw conclusions from this data, but my study is more concerned with qualitative interpretation.

especially concerning media projects, as most young people are experienced readers of visual texts with implicit knowledge to share, when given the opportunity. He notes:

Available @ <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/john-potter/s-3P9LY#t=21:24>  
[Accessed 21 September 2015]

[teachers'] questioning has to be quite skilful and you need to be quite skilled in your listening to what comes back. There used to be, in the curriculum for teacher education in the late 90s and early 2000s, there used to be a standard that teachers had to meet which was something to do with listening to what children say and building on it. That went in 2002, quite tellingly, as a standard. But to me that's the heart of teaching. Listen to what people are telling you about what they know, then you know where to take them.  
(Interview with John Potter, 2015, transcript in Appendix G3)

Time that was once allocated to speaking and listening, and hence to the potential for building relationships with pupils and for which teachers used to be accountable, is increasingly encroached upon in the name of bureaucratic demands to 'cover' content and produce spurious data on school 'performance'. Throughout my experience in schools and as a researcher, I have come across teachers who have buckled under the pressures of complicity with managerialism, seen as at odds with a vocational motivation. Educational environments in which the reaping of data is the primary objective are doomed to jar with engagement in creative media projects, as they remain stubbornly resistant to measurement in these terms.

I quote from my interview with Mr. C at some length to illustrate his handling of such issues. When I first entered the classroom the pupils were briefed on the fact that I was not an 'official observer', but an observing researcher, a friend, who could be trusted with 'real' information and no-one, including Mr. C, would get into trouble for saying the wrong thing. My interview unearthed some trenchant comments on schools' efforts to erect an acceptable front for the Inspectorate and the potential deleterious effects on students:

Available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-interview-mr-c-riverside-school/s-OSuBH#t=20:12> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

I think the whole system of school assessment leads to the entire school population erecting a façade in order to be meeting the approval of the observer. And I think that's an absolute industry in the UK, and that schools

are judged on their capacity to effectively erect that façade as opposed to anything else. And I think that's going to create enormous ripple effects through society over time, because it's duplicity and it's *institutional duplicity*, and it's enforced and encouraged by the system as it is ... So you know, the kind of requirements that they have of the performance of schools leads to the schools – by absolute necessity – operating a dual system, a system for the inspector and then the real system. And the kids are part of that, so I was just telling them to know that that stranger in the room wasn't an inspector, so that they didn't start doing – because that would invalidate your research, because they would give you the answers they felt you wanted to hear.

(Interview with Mr. C, 2014, transcript in Appendix G1)

Mr. C raises an interesting point: my reading suggests that there is little in the way of research on the impact of official inspections and the potential systemic dishonesty with which many young people are ipso facto complicit. In the schools where 'institutional duplicity' might be detected, this may seed at best, a critical perspective in pupils, or more likely a cynical disaffection with the 'system' – either way it is at some considerable cost to pupils' overall sense of integrity.

Although recently acquired information suggests that OFSTED is warming to Riverside's approach to English, my research in 2014 saw the department resorting to 'secret' measures:

Available at <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-interview-mr-c-riverside-school/s-OSuBH#t=18:14> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

The things that I am doing relating to making, I do in secret. Because there's no language or process to acknowledge or value that work. But because I do believe in it being broadly valuable to the students - not just because of the experience being good in and of itself, but because it actually assists them to develop the kind of faculties that will lead to their quite conventional success ... So I don't think I'm working at odds with the system, I just don't think the system gets what it is that I think I'm doing.

(Interview with Mr. C, 2014, transcript in Appendix G1)

The candidness with which Mr. C speaks is in stark contrast with the stealth with which the department occasionally finds itself operating, as indeed was the case during a school-based *Film in a Morning* activity. It clashed with an OFSTED inspection and the project was diverted to the basement, preferably out of sight (Cannon et al. 2014).

Overall what is revealed here is a department confident in its methods and committed to developing an inclusive, critically-oriented and digitally enabled community of practice, regardless of discursive accountability constraints. Even as it complies with the formal system, students can choose their programme of work and hence their teacher. They are given the kind of democratic responsibilities for their learning that supports engaged participating citizens, enjoying un-simulated control and equality. Mr. C is, however, the first to recognise that such a vision is under constant review and compromises between formal procedures and these more fluid practices are ever present. In the end, with pupils' incipient critical understanding as a focus, an alternative methodology is presented here that could serve as a functioning proto-pedagogy for the integration of digital media production as a trans-disciplinary school practice.

#### **E. Young literate media practitioners**

To conclude Chapter V, I briefly re-visit material from the Clip Club, as I believe this particular movie clip gives us a glimpse of the skills and dispositions that comprise young literate, media practitioners working in collaboration. Watching this clip now, in the light of the preceding three studies, offers opportunities for a multi-layered understanding:

*See Clip 7: Editing the green screen video effect*

*Michelle-Cannon-phd-movie-data.mp4 at 09:16' on the DVD, or the same here <https://vimeo.com/142087018> [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]*

Clip 7 picks up editing activity once the green screen clips at the end of the film had been transferred to iMovie. One of the casualties of the multitasking Participant Observer is the fact of missing key events that might have been filmed. One such occasion was the moment the green screen was replaced on the timeline with Wizard's blue backdrop (Figure 18). This is invariably a moment of juxtaposing 'magic' – most often met with cries and gestures of delight – where elements of the human and the hardware merge, and meaning translates into a different realm of visual understanding.





Figure 32: Clip Club members editing final scene in iMovie using green screen technology

The editors set to work, fixing imperfections and making decisions on how and where to cut. They notice that the creased green fabric had been imprecisely positioned and the background was uneven in terms of shading and coverage. As is often the way in an editing or design process, when faced with a technical hitch, an

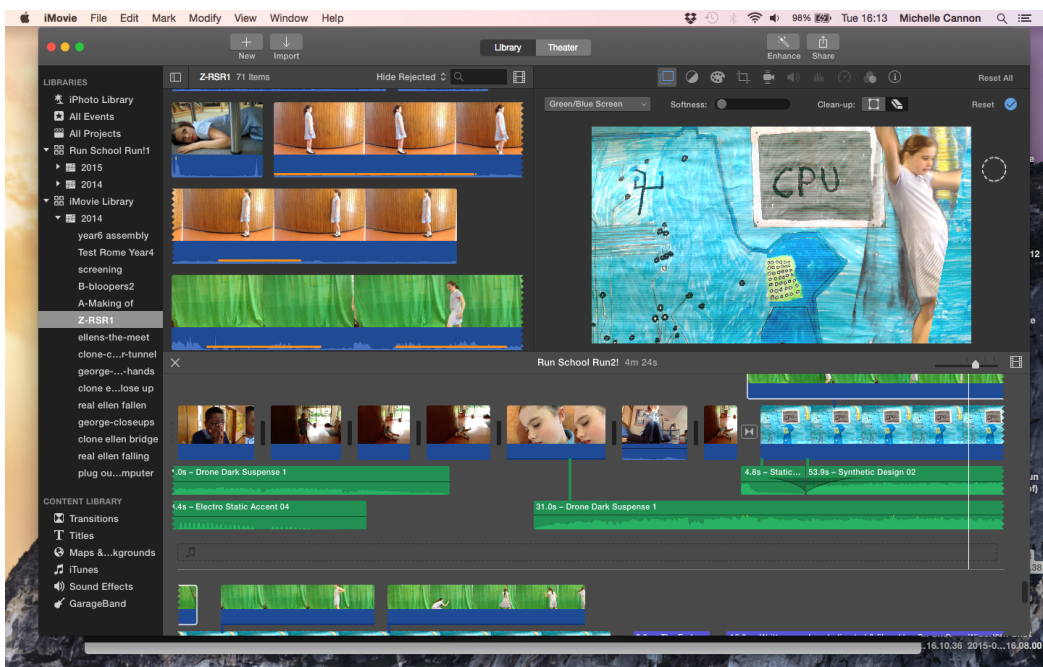


Figure 33: iMovie editing interface - green screen effect and layered timeline with 'diagonal portal door' in the viewer pane

improvisatory mode kicks in. This meant using the Cut Away effect - where the green screen clip is cut diagonally to obscure the 'error', to reveal more of the background.

Fixing the problem produced yet another effect, the meaning of which is interpreted literally by Nimbus: 'Oh my God, you're just going into no-where!' then, more imaginatively by Clara: 'It looks like I'm coming from a different room'. At that point the effect is ratified and given narrative integrity by G-man who makes an interpretive claim on the 'mistake' with a sense of knowing disclosure: 'No! make it look like diagonal because then it looks like she's going through some portal door' (see Figure 33). Nimbus, pleasantly surprised, endorses G-man's suggestion: 'Oh yeah, that is actually kind of a good idea!' which, with tacit agreement, becomes integral to the ending of the film.

For many, making and agreeing meanings on the fly and taking appropriate remedial action makes digital video editing an engrossing experience. Clara appears to be enjoying a sense of creative collusion and as was her way throughout the project she vocalises what others might only be thinking. As if cooking up some alchemy herself, she chants: 'We're *experimenting* here people!'. This simple exclamation, along with G-man's audibly satisfied: 'We made a *decision*!' alert us to the pleasures of practical media projects: trying things out, making autonomous decisions on meaning and being open to serendipity. Feeling such authorial empowerment has to do with praxis: the translation of abstractions into a palpable modality that in turn transmutes into material action. The joint vision of a story to be told that had existed 'darkly' in their imaginations in the weeks prior, has finally materialised in the viewer.

Presenting Chapters IV and V has felt like a sinewy odyssey, the data churning as it changed volume and shape within my imagined elastic Möbius strip (Figure 11). Temporal interpretations of participants' words, actions and artefacts, have been harbouring in the different dimensions of my interpretive model (Figure 12). The ways in which media composition offers a sense of control over one's learning, if enabled in a supportive and authorising environment, is a key finding of my study. These and many of the other insights that have been garnered over the course of

interpreting my research material will be interrogated further in Chapter VI, once more making use of Figure 12 as a framework for discussion.

## Chapter VI – Discussion

### A. Introduction

Over the Chapters I have adhered to five core principles that have functioned as a series of interconnecting vertebrae in the backbone of my thesis. I adapted a framework related to the evaluation of narrative as a method in action research (Heikkinen et al. 2007), whose components chimed with my practice as a researcher and as a creative media practitioner. I developed these conceptual tools – *workability, reflexivity, dialectics, evocativeness (everyday artistry), and historical continuity* – into a model of values that guided both my methodology and my interpretation of materials. I now use these tools to ground a discussion on the suggested relationships between moving image literacy, pedagogies related to creative media composition, and their local and wider contexts. As a reminder, the ensuing sections engage with the following questions:

*How does creative media work constitute a wider literacy in formal and non-formal school spaces?*

*What can traditional pedagogy learn from moving image production processes?*

*How do social discursive factors determine practical media work in schools?*

To help organise the discussion of these questions, arguments will be presented under five headings that relate emergent themes from my findings to each core principle. Following on from this introductory Section A, are Sections entitled:

B. Iterative Practical Experiences (workability)

C. Disposition for Praxis (reflexivity)

D. Disposition for Reciprocal Communication (dialectics)

E. Rightness of Fit (everyday artistry)

F. Spaces of Translation (historical continuity)

Choosing to structure sections in this way does not preclude the potential for material to overlap and cross-pollinate - as was mentioned in Chapter III when the model was first introduced – indeed hybridity is woven into the fabric of the discussion.



Firstly I look at the ways in which media-making practices re-orient the teacher's identity as less the one who knows and more the one who navigates, guides and coaxes participation. I explain how these flattened, agentic relations are made possible through the tangible meaning-making processes offered by the 'digital visual', and how recursive practice at producing and consuming moving image texts is as vital to non-verbal forms of literacy, as reading and writing are to the verbal.

## **B. Iterative Practical Experiences**

### ***Literacy, pedagogy and non-linearity***

From *workability*, I developed the notion of (digital) *phronesis* - a pragmatic sense linked with intuitive 'wisdom' – which is called upon in moments of experimental engagement with digital tools and with the learning environment. My research explores the benefits of repeated opportunities to engage with digital and material resources in 'more than linear' and iterative ways in order to experience the drafting and re-drafting of texts, and the display and open discussion of meanings. The *phronetic* element in media production, understood here as a dynamic strand of literacy missing from current restricted conceptualisations, embeds mobile and transmedia technical competences (as well as linguistic) into a portfolio of skills, for participation in the 'human conversation'. Equally, the agile and versatile responses of the teacher facilitate the development of these types of skills and dispositions<sup>77</sup>. As recognised by Potter (2012, p.21), the pairing of new literacies with new pedagogies was mooted two decades ago::

If it were possible to define generally the mission of education, one could say that its fundamental purpose is to ensure that all students benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate fully in public, community, and economic life. Literacy pedagogy is expected to play a particularly importance role in fulfilling this mission.  
(New London Group 1996, p.60)

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<sup>77</sup> Designer and architect Pendleton-Jullian (2009) elaborated the metaphor of the 'sailboat' versus the 'kayak' to explain modern approaches to pedagogy and the need for nimble responses to innovatory practices, the one terrain necessitating: control and foresight - "setting sail and tacking with the wind and currents to keep on course" (2009 p.7); the other, the navigation of complex 'white water' topologies and "highly developed disciplinary expertise (musculature) and creative dexterity. The imagination is the undercurrent for this creative dexterity, and it fuels movement forward at a steady pace and as bursts of adrenalin." (2009 p.8)

The democratising influence of digital classroom practices has made these civic aspirations more feasible, however it appears that it is down to knowledge and commitment at local school level to make this form of literacy a reality (Waugh 2016, in press).

Figure 34 below, as well as being a timely reminder of the theoretical context of this discussion, traces the winding paths of the production process, stewarded by teachers versed in the nature and function of media ecologies. Quadrant 3, is the site where

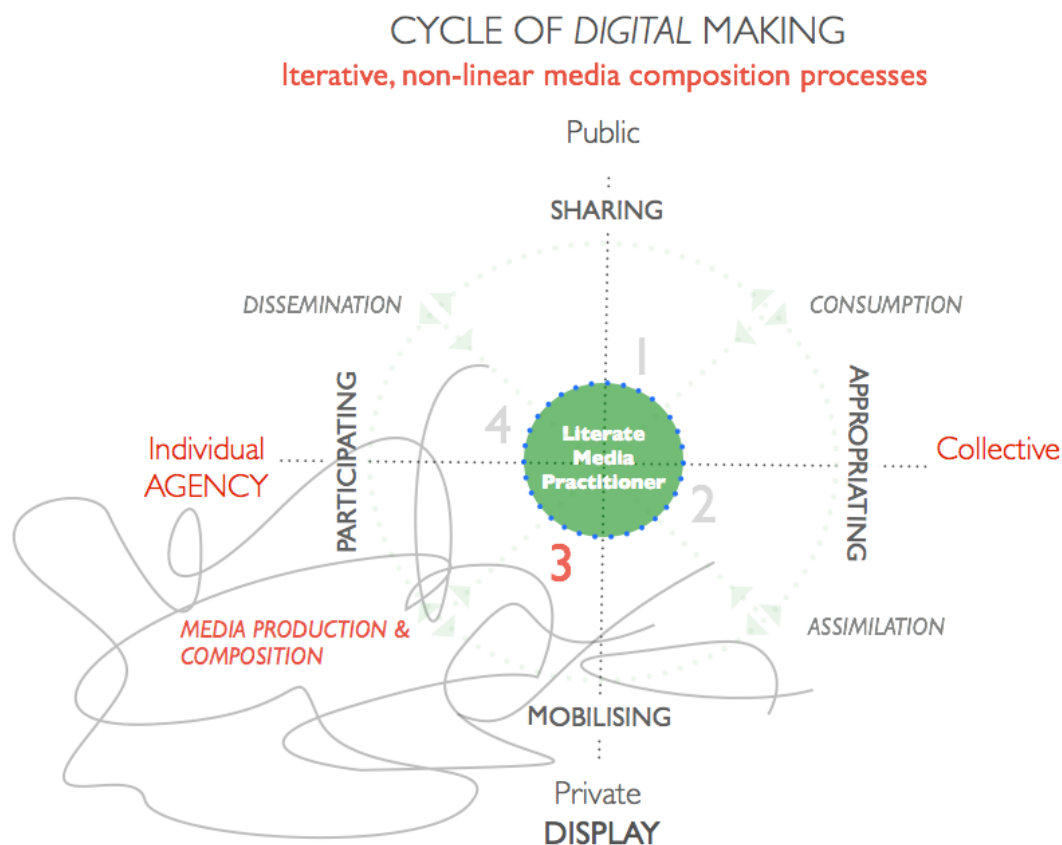


Figure 34: Cycle of Digital Making - iterative, non-linear media composition processes

assimilated cultural material is re-composed, and then re-distributed as new workable forms of knowledge, via what might be termed 'literacy events' (Potter 2012; Kendall and McDougall 2013). These events might be virtual, such as blogging (Barrs and Horrocks 2014) and posting to YouTube, or physical exhibitions such as the CCADJ / Clip Club public screenings.

Such participatory knowledge-making practices (Rorabaugh 2012) are itinerant but purposeful in nature, and participants are conceived as meandering through virtual and physical production spaces (as illustrated by the wavy line in Figure 34), alternately experimenting and re-grouping (Dezuanni 2014). In previous Chapters, we witnessed certain young participants' inconsistent focus, where attention was sometimes diverted, re-calibrated and drawn back on course (not unlike a deliberately bifurcating camera movement). Negotiating blind alleys and re-tracing steps are commonplace occurrences in media composition, and modern pedagogues might more frequently be called upon to marshal nomadic learners, and to become attuned to their personal creative processes and popular cultural preferences.

### ***Theorising meaning-making in media composition***

Beyond the teacher, a more abstract binding agent that keeps learners motivated and on track could issue from the 'oscillatory processes' (Lanham 1994; McKee 2005) and the anthropologically derived notion of 'symbolic behaviour' mentioned in Chapter II (A. Reid 2007, p.25). In this view, early forms of human representation and the superior wielding of symbolic language, are linked to the development of consciousness and social hierarchies. A. Reid speculates that the externalisation of early man's abstract thought conferred communicative and competitive advantage. As conceded earlier, this thesis is not strictly a socio-anthropological tract, I merely wish to make an association between this evolutionary theory and Lanham's (1993) ideas on the anatomy of meaning-making.

I am reminded of a moment at the end of Chapter V, in the video clip featuring four Clip Clubbers at the editing screen, where Nimbus is trying to fix a visual anomaly and G-man suggests leaving it as it is because that way Clone Clara 'looks like she is coming through a diagonal portal'<sup>78</sup>. This was an entirely appropriate and credible shift in thinking, drawing on a popular sci-fi motif. It is also the kind of imaginative or intuitive leap (Sennett 2008, p. 211) that can be brought about by looking AT (or *INTERACTING* with) the stylistic surface of a multimodal text and THROUGH to possible meanings. G-man's metaphorical interpretation of the visual was accepted, and the production 'mistake' was supplanted by a collectively re-imagined version of

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<sup>78</sup> Clip 7: See *Michelle-Cannon-phd-movie-data.mp4* at 09:42' on the DVD or the same here: <https://vimeo.com/142087018> [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]

the narrative. In other words, his ‘decorous trickery’<sup>79</sup> was tacitly approved (Lanham 1993, p.81) .

Chapter II spoke of the ‘decorous trickery’ involved in aesthetic textual assembly for specific rhetorical effects. Lanham’s theory unveils the advantage for text-makers of imagining themselves as ‘insiders’: iteratively looking AT the stylistic formulation of the text (the ‘decor’) from the inside, and then THROUGH to abstract meanings (the ‘trickery’), to then retreat back inside, to finesse the rhetorical ‘meaning effect’. The proposal is that as we *write linear* texts, the intended meaning – coded in abstract monomodal *print* - aims to be clear cut and controllable, whereas the process of composing *moving image* texts muddies these waters. Contrary to cultures of print literacy, the mechanical processes of audiovisual inscription are more concrete and tangible, and the meanings at the point of production and reception, are elusive, emergent and subject to change. As well as cerebral, the iterative AT (*INTERACT*) / THROUGH meaning-making dynamic in film and DV composition can be thought of as a sensory, immersive and emotional process of embodied *translation*.

For many these are rewarding processes that prompt more accessible and equitable literacy practices, or as Lanham phrases it, “the radical enfranchisement of the perceiver” (1993, p.17), even at the earliest stages of primary education. If literacy can be re-conceptualised in socially ‘enfranchised’, practical and experiential terms, then arguably it could be aligned with cognitive *engagement* and transformative *action* - notions often associated with *praxis*.

### **C. Disposition for Praxis**

#### ***Literacy, pedagogy and metacognition***

Praxis, understood here in an emancipatory frame, is autonomous action informed by clarity of purpose and a reflexive critical sense (Freire 1970/1993; Lather 1991; Anyon 2009; McDougall 2011). In this section I make suggestions as to how film

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<sup>79</sup> It should be noted that ‘trickery’ does not connote mischief; but it is an everyday communicative social practice at which some are more rehearsed and critically dexterous than others. Differences in aptitude are perhaps unavoidable, but this study advances that all learners should be given opportunities to become critical wielders of *rhetorical performance*, in all its ‘decorous’ digital modality, adding another dimension to the phrase ‘sleight of hand’.

and moving image education can incite metacognitive<sup>80</sup> reflection through pedagogies that nourish learning conditions for praxis and pupils' dispositions towards the same.

Chapter IV saw the presentation of a photo (Figure 13) of the two Clip Club girls taken from a low angle: Clara demonstrating the purpose of the close-up, and Cara waiting to answer, (which she did in a succinct and undemonstrative way, a more contemplative approach to learning that she maintained for the duration of the Club). I suggested that this could signal the different access points that media composition practices can rally. Pupils, with their range of interests and personalities, seem to find a metacognitive trigger in film and media production activity, as a function of the multifarious practical, aesthetic and executive decisions to be made. Towards the end of Chapter V, I connected praxis with the converging pleasures of manipulating, viewing and interacting with media representations, in the process of DV editing. This nexus of pleasure, immediacy, control, purpose and reflexivity are ingredients in the development of a holistic metacognitive engagement, which helps to define a new literate state of being, related to flow in creative arts practice (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).

Two instantiations of this practical and reflective orientation, were Wizard's improvised 'table-top' sequence, and Callum's autonomous bifurcating shot, where the camera left the main action, turned about him and rejoined the subjects. I suggested that these were examples of deliberative action to produce 'filmic sentences' or 'phrases'. The way in which meaning is made from the printed word through the manipulation of grammatical code and stylistic convention, bears comparison, albeit limited, with meaning made from digital assets through audiovisual protocols. Running this process requires reflexive and critical engagement.

### ***Theorising media composition pedagogy***

The 'film sentence' metaphor was first used in a speech by the late Anthony Minghella in 2005 at a BFI convention entitled *The Charter for Media Literacy*.

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<sup>80</sup> In this context, I interpret 'metacognitive' as taking active and productive control over one's learning and its contextual significance, rather than brain functionality.

Apart from a mention by the Head of Film Education at Creative Scotland (Donaldson 2014), and a citation in the *Film: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy* advocacy report (BFI 2012), my research has unearthed no further elaboration of the analogy<sup>81</sup>. In his speech, Minghella expressed dismay at the ways in which the rich complexity of moving image is consistently ignored in mainstream education:

...given the way in which moving image can manipulate us, allow us to inhabit many differing points of view, take us on journeys to other times, places and cultures, indict us, shock us, and delight us, surely it's time for our education system to hold the teaching of the sentence we watch as no less important and crucial than the teaching of the sentence we read.  
(BFI 2012, p.6)

Expressed in these terms, film's marginalisation is indeed perplexing. The advantage of working with moving image production in short manageable exercises that produce clips, is that learners become habituated to particular techniques in the film lexicon, which are internalised in a repertoire of visual expression and conceptual thought. Just as one's understanding and production of language in speech and writing improves through regular practice and exposure, a corollary might be drawn with the production of film language.

On the understanding that film language and the written word do have clear and distinct affordances as productive media, Minghella's 'film sentence' metaphor may be a useful place to start with respect to both forms' use of 'narration' (Donaldson 2014), as a structuring technique to convey and organise concepts and imaginative thought. In terms of my research, Mr. C's embrace of moving image as one of the building blocks to developing critical thinking at Riverside School (including the *Film in a Morning* project), attests to the academic resonance of audiovisual representation to express critical understanding of literature<sup>82</sup>. Furthermore, without waiting for the 'blessing' of the Inspectorate, a system is in place whereby Riverside English pupils can choose the communicative means through which to explore and

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<sup>81</sup> Merleau-Ponty hints at the correlation in an essay on film and perception, alluding to the "flair or tact of the director, who handles cinematographic language as a man manipulates syntax" (1964b, p.55)

<sup>82</sup> See also Jones with Hearing (2015) and Hearing (2015) on the use of 'fictive' film and documentary video (respectively) as a creative academic *research* tool for critical understanding of social phenomena.

express their textual understandings - a strategy which, it is argued here, is a form of pedagogic and egalitarian praxis in practice.

Freire, one of the first proponents of an action-oriented ‘humanising’ education, was acutely critical of content heavy and paralysing ‘banking’ models<sup>83</sup> of education served up by ‘teacher-bank clerks’. Although he somewhat romantically entertained the thought of *learners* as “searchers [whose] ontological vocation [was] humanization” (1993/1970, p.56) and self-liberation from imposed ‘domestication’, more usefully, Freire invested *teachers* with professional proactive agency:

the humanist, revolutionary educator cannot wait for this possibility to materialize. From the outset, her [sic] efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization. His [sic] efforts must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power. To achieve this, they must be partners of the students in their relations with them.  
(Freire 1993/1970, p.56)

With this he lays out many of the precepts of both Riverside English department and the French CCADJ teaching models, where hierarchies are perceived to be less entrenched and relationships to be based on trust, partnership and cooperation. Both are enquiry-led environments, where question-posing is as valued and as safe as problem-solving. Riverside’s open digital learning platform and transparent practices (for example, Mr. C’s pragmatic explanation of my presence to pupils – that I had not come to inspect, and they need not adjust their behaviour) are manifestations of honest critical relations that appear to rehearse Lather’s definition of praxis-orientated terrain:

Emancipatory knowledge increases awareness of the contradictions distorted or hidden by everyday understandings, and in doing so it directs attention to the possibilities for social transformation inherent in the present configuration of social processes.  
(Lather 1991, p.52)

Although one must guard against over-claiming, my research indicates that flatter and more transparent social arrangements in media-production-enabled classrooms

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<sup>83</sup> ‘Banking education’ is a Freirian formulation describing styles of pedagogic practice where “instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorise and repeat ... the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits.” (Freire 1993/1970, p.53)

can encourage marginalised voices to be heard, personal agency to be felt, self-reflexive awareness to propagate, and in the case of the CCADJ environment, aesthetic sensibilities to be heightened.

It is unsurprising that Freirian philosophy, when combined with the rise of digital media and ‘oppressive’ cultures of prescription and accountability, appears to be enjoying a resurgence (Rogers and Winters 2010; Joaquin 2010). On the other hand, as with Robinson’s ‘creative education salvation’ narrative (2011, 2013) a degree of caution should accompany Freirian thinking. Despite some inspiring and relevant ideas on pedagogic relationships, one detects a universalising tone with a polarising effect (with respect to the ‘know-ers’ and the ‘know-ees’), an element of patriarchal demystifying campaign-speak (reminiscent of Masterman’s seminal 1985 text), and a de-emphasis on social and participative knowledge building (Street 1984; Smith 2002/1997). This orientation runs counter to the social constructionist ontologies that pertain in contemporary scholarship on media education and indeed in this thesis. Progressing educational change and spaces for praxis is as much about keeping a dialogue open with establishment government figures and policy makers, as it is about resistance<sup>84</sup>.

Moving on from media composition’s relationship with individual cognitive, critical thinking and action, I now begin to examine the ways in which practical work with film and moving image nurtures conditions conducive to complex and often congenial social interaction.

## **D. Disposition for Reciprocal Communication**

### ***Social literacies***

In order for conceptions of literacy to diversify, we need to take account of relations between and amongst pupils, teachers, the learning community and their respective responsibilities, which when operating unencumbered by bureaucracy, are commonly

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<sup>84</sup> There exists a strong grassroots Head Teachers initiative, using a ‘civil society’ approach based on consensus, to promote a broad-based *National Baccalaureate* (Playfair 2014; Sherrington 2015). They aspire to a transparent development process, cognisant of lessons from the classical past (Robinson, M., 2013) and porous to the views and interests of politicians, awarding bodies, teaching professional bodies and social media stalwarts. The movement is gathering momentum and may overshadow the narrow and centrally prescribed EBacc mandate, initiated by Gove (DfE 2015b).



stamped with a certain reciprocity. I choose the word ‘reciprocal’ to accompany ‘communication’ because it carries a human inflection – that of sustained giving and taking in kind. These gestures and movements chime with the oscillatory practices examined earlier in relation to meaning-making. Section D takes its cue from Potter’s recommendation (who in turn draws on Marsh 2010; Street 2003; Sefton-Green 2000; and Buckingham 2003):

we need a way of understanding children’s engagement with digital video as a rapidly changing social literacy practice... we further need to align this with a socialized view of creativity that is much more closely connected with group work, situated peer review, and an awareness of group roles in cultural production than connected with individual auteurs and the realization of a personal expressive goal.  
(Potter 2012, p. 148)

We can assume that for Potter and other commentators mentioned, that social and dialogic interaction is a key dimension of literacies associated with film and the moving image. As such, it presents problems for established assessment practices which revolve around individual achievement. This is one of the hurdles over which primary education, above all, could in theory be negotiating its way, with just the one teacher at the helm.

The different areas of film-making in particular enable the formation of a pool of mutual and interdependent understanding from which others can learn. The scope of this understanding is not limited to the spaces of production, the social benefits of which have been widely documented (see Lord et al. 2007; BFI Education and Film Education 2012; Lardoux 2014): it is in the crucial stage of display and dissemination that participative literacy competencies further accrue. Quadrant 4 of the Cycle of Digital Making (Figure 4) – that of participation, dissemination and sharing - is integral to the production of ‘literacy events’, as previously mentioned. Clip Club’s Leonardo is a case in point; from the beginning of the project he expressed a desire to peer teach, to spread his newfound knowledge and show his classmates how to film and edit. It will be remembered that he was also moved by the laughter that his work generated in the school screenings. These are the unmeasurable depths and sensitivities of audiovisual literacy work framed as social and participative.

It seems almost fatuous, in academic discourse, to mention the fun element of making media, so obvious and ubiquitous are children and young people's references to it. But should it be so taken for granted, when in the same breath they readily and almost as frequently associate film and media production with the world of work? In several of my research interviews (as heard and seen with Leonardo and the Riverside boys, respectively) and in my professional experience, young people reveal the extent to which they have absorbed adult preoccupations related to the link between media skills and industry. The narrative often goes that they believe filming with iPads is a good thing because it will help them 'get a job'. Digital creative production for its own sake, as a fun activity, does not feature in most young people's life worlds, even though they routinely comment on how much fun they have in the process in other contexts. My account questions why the 'fun' should be deferred until adulthood and even then framed around careers, when there is potentially much to be gained from filmic expression - socially, culturally, and in terms of personal and academic fulfilment - in the present.

To disregard structured filming with iPads and the screening of this content, as frivolous play, fatuous screen-time or precocious 'work experience', is to miss the pedagogic and social potency of the activity. Recalling for a moment the importance that A. Reid (2007) places on the externalisation of thought and its embodiment in symbols, we can start to see a correlation with Potter's ideas on the stage at which play becomes a creative and potentially political act. In this extract, if one substitutes his references to 'internalised speech'<sup>85</sup> and 'thought', with *film*, the importance of practising public display becomes more salient:

... the internalized speech [film] cannot take its place in the culture, become widely understood, until it becomes externalized; at this point the inner, context dependent thought [film] gradually unfolds its meaning as "symbol-for-others"; it is creative, rather than playful at the point at which it is assimilated within a culture as a "literacy event".  
(Potter 2012, p.37)

Inspired by Vygotsky (1978, 2002/1933), for Potter, play with others (and in particular the range of 'serious' roleplaying that film production offers) is seen as an

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<sup>85</sup> 'Internalised speech' relates to Vygotskian theories on the role of play in the development of conceptual thought, a discourse which has played an important role in media education theorising since the nineties (Sefton-Green 1998)

integral part of the development of communicative skills. Moreover, the digital display of resultant moving image texts gives them meaning and potential socio-cultural heft, as they get swept into what I have been referring to as the discursive ‘human conversation’.

### ***Theoretical observations on the ‘Making of’***

I wish to elaborate on the words ‘context dependent’ above as I believe mimicking industry’s production of ‘Making of’ movies, enriches youth media production experiences and enlightens some audience members with deeper intellectual engagement than that offered by the film viewing alone. Such texts are commonly constructed to provide insight, amusement (the blooper reel) or a tantalising glimpse of film artifice. An organised ‘Making of’ production team has the potential to lay out the tone and constitution of the film’s creative processes as well as preserve the ‘golden moments’ for its participants.

On reflection I realise that the events pieced together in ‘Making of’ texts, document the discord, the fun, the challenges, the re-takes, the camaraderie, the finessing in action, in other words, they record a string of selected learning moments. I include links to the ‘Making of’ movies for *Run School Run 1* and *2* in a footnote<sup>86</sup>, as they were a hastily edited afterthought. These particular texts do not constitute research material in and of themselves because they were made by me in teacherly (non-researcherly) cherry-picking mode, but my sense is that it is an area of documentary film-making with young people that is under-utilised. My contention is that this potential deficit is down to the default mode of youth film consumption, which is largely one of entertainment as opposed to cultural and critical stimulation.

On a social level, rendering visible the work that goes on behind the camera and the mess of filming, parallels the disclosure of certain pupils’ hitherto unrecognised ‘ways of being’ in the school setting, perhaps unsettling adults’ and peers’ ingrained assumptions about them. For example, in an interview with their class teacher<sup>87</sup>,

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<sup>86</sup> Making of *Run School Run 1*: <http://theclipclub.co.uk/2013/07/13/run-school-run-bloopers/-comments> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

Making of *Run School Run 2*: <http://theclipclub.co.uk/2014/07/11/run-school-run-1-2-making-of-on-youtube/> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

<sup>87</sup> Year 6 teacher’s interview: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/clip-club-yr6-teacher/s-89qE0#t=7:30> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

Clara was described as an occasional ‘drama queen’ in the classroom but she transformed into a driven and impassioned actress on screen. Seeing the Clip Club children operate in an entirely different habitus, their teacher saw the rich affordances of time and space *between* shots. In amongst the disarray of backstage film clips, she observed her pupils negotiating altered social relations and self-directed (dis)positions. In dialogic ways, the ‘Making of’ gradually unfolds the *complicity* that film-making fosters and requires, three aspects of which feature in the social interaction dimension of my interpretive model - (role)play, co-composition and collaborative relations.

### ***Dialogic co-construction of knowledge***

I conclude section D with a rumination on collaboration as an important social component in wider, reciprocal and participative notions of literacy, and to which practices with media composition are seen to contribute. As mentioned in Chapter IV dedicated to Clip Club findings, I refer to the visit made by educational film-makers (*Xube*) and a media education researcher on a scoping exercise. These were professionals researching the possible benefits and shortcomings of using iPads in school film production as opposed to more conventional camera equipment.

Rather than discuss the particulars of the conversation (which is nonetheless fascinating and revelatory<sup>88</sup>), this account looks to the value of its very occurrence. The encounter bears witness to the ways in which reflection on film-making is a valuable and levelling exercise: knowledge was shared and opinions aired on a variety of sophisticated topics from production tactics to programme design. As previously recognised, this experience may have had a beneficial effect on the group’s ‘performance’ the following week, in that after a ‘fallow’ filming period, they significantly ‘upped their game’. I propose that they had absorbed an un-simulated appeal to their expertise and that this ‘authentic’<sup>89</sup> dialogic exchange kindled a mutual trust and respect that had in turn boosted their confidence and

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<sup>88</sup> Audio available at: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-interview-clip-club-john-potter-xube-april-2014/s-pscBO#t=4:10> [Accessed 21 September 2015] and video extract available at: <https://vimeo.com/136745476> [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]. Transcript also available in Appendix G4.

<sup>89</sup> I use the word ‘authentic’ advisedly. It is questionable the extent to which anything can be described as such. Here it simply means a rare and sincere engagement with the so-called ‘real world’ of the adult exterior - an equally problematic construction that devalues the very ‘real world’ that school life represents for young people.

identities as film-makers, and as participants in a wider social narrative. Processes of media production provide opportunities for pupils' meaningful contact with 'the outside world', and for the practice of 'porous pedagogies' (Haas Dyson 1997; McDougall 2014; McDougall and Potter 2015).

Potter has a history of consulting young people in the research context (Selwyn et al. 2010), and I asked him to comment on seeking Year 6 advice for a project in which children could be seen as 'ethnographic partners' (McDougall 2016, in press):

Available at: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/john-potter/s-3P9LY#t=17:38>

[Accessed 21 September 2015]

that was something that I learned as a teacher which is that you work with giving and receiving respect for knowledge, however that knowledge is gained ... The fact that they were children showing other children was really important because it meant that they felt that they were being treated as, if not experts, at least as advisors, because they've gone out there and made some of the mistakes and done things, or done things well, and would be able to give advice to them, so everybody gains from that situation.  
(Interview with John Potter, 2015)

After confirming his iterative approach to teaching – the explicit to-ing and fro-ing of knowledge building - he went on to lament the uni-directional, common-sense mandating of certain kinds of cultural capital that 'all pupils should know', and without which knowledge, many are deemed socially lacking or deficient in some way.

The Clip Club *Xube* interview was an opportunity for the (adult) researchers to gain access to knowledge that pupils themselves had acquired through their own experience of mobile (in the sense of 'ambulant') film-making. Recalling Mr. C's observation, they spoke from a position of '*knowing*' rather than having been told' because of 'the stage of making'. There is no doubt that Potter's primary ICT teaching background informs his research practice in rewarding ways, the one role learning from the epistemological and ontological insights of the other. As expounded in Chapter III, my hybrid teacher/practitioner/researcher status attests to the symbiosis between these roles, (albeit in a non-formal capacity) which supports the argument that teachers might be re-cast as critical researcher-practitioners (Orr and McDougall 2014) in the development of media education pedagogy.

The less textual and more social connotation of *doing* film, rather than making it, perhaps captures the broader and inclusive ramifications of pedagogies related to audiovisual production in schools. In terms of strengthening its traction, simply this more prosaic, less rarefied term could seed new spaces in which cultural encounters of ‘dialogic parity’, such as the *Xube* meeting, might blossom. This is ambitious thinking, which may need some reigning in; indeed, if movie clips can have a punctum, the frame that remains with me from the meeting features G-man, and the momentary self-conscious glance he shot at me - and my filming of him - in the final seconds of the clip<sup>90</sup>. He remained silent and guarded throughout the discussion, with slippery eyes and a bearing that was demonstrably ill at ease, recalling Callum at the BFI screening.

If, in film-making programmes, time and space *is* specifically allocated for reflection and dialogue, there is still some way to go for the likes of G-man to feel completely included. Fluid and confident behind the camera among his peers, he recoils from the double exposure of my prying lens and an alienating world of adult ‘authority’. Although it was very much in evidence in other parts of our circular forum, the pressure of having to speak was disempowering for G-man, and there was little in the way of mutual reciprocity to the right of the room. This conscious opting out complicates simplistic notions of overt social participation and language as the natural order of things, and points to the importance of a less threatening non-verbal dialectic in such circumstances. Indeed understandings achieved through *tacit* communicative exchanges was a key finding in terms of the range of learning preferences that film-making affords.

By concentrating on the Clip Club research encounter (and indeed as revealed in my interview with Isaac and Daniel in *Film in a Morning*), I have shown that collective reflection on media-making, although not without complication, can for some be a valuable exercise in the development of a wider literacy of participation. Fielding, however, identifies a clashing incompatibility between these more collaborative ways and prevailing authoritarian doctrines, practices that he claims can induce a ‘carping’ cross-fire in some formal spaces:

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<sup>90</sup> See 04:43’: <https://vimeo.com/136745476> [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]

The strength of dialogue is in its mutuality. Its transformative potential lies in its reciprocity because it is in these kinds of person-centred ... arrangements that trust and creativity are most likely to grow. If we see and relate to each other within the context of a reciprocal responsibility we will indeed transform what it is to be a teacher, what it is to be a student, and the spectre of schools as nineteenth-century institutions will begin to fade. However, the context of performativity and a narrowly conceived, incessant accountability leads too readily down the path of a *carping, antagonistic relationship between students and teachers*, one in which students become the new agents of external control ... or regressive pedagogy.  
(Fielding 2004, p.308. my emphasis)

Fielding's reference to schools' 'performativity' obtains ten years on, and shows no sign of abating. Issues of educational utilitarianism in formal schooling will be explored further in Section F, before this, I consider the ways in which media-making relates to the arts and the difficulties of defining and 'nailing' the ineffable in a culture of metrics and expediency.

## **E. Rightness of Fit**

### ***Aesthetic experience and the 'rightness' of combining***

Referring to the affective quality of narrative action research, one of the Finnish principles of validation (Heikkinen et al. 2007) is translated into English as 'evocativeness'. In a move to re-align this principle with media composition, and retain an 'earthed' aesthetic dimension, I adapted it to 'everyday artistry' for a more *process* orientated core concept. 'Artistry' captures the abstract and physical processes of aesthetic crafting with analogue and digital tools, as well as the disposition and sensibility of the artist. 'Everyday' brings artistry to the level of the quotidian, and the ways in which ordinariness can inspire imaginative leaps. Under this umbrella term, I developed the concept of 'rhetorical performance' (A. Reid 2007; Burn 2009a, 2013) to suggest the ways in which we assemble and curate media content, and *perform* our artistry and our identity, both to ourselves and to a potential public (Burn and Durran 2006, 2007; Potter 2012). This performance (not to be confused with 'performativity' against targets in a political economy), relates to our capacity to combine experience, memories and observations with our imagination, to produce a coherent and affective multi-sensory text. This capacity is described by Lanham as an ability to mobilise 'our integrative powers' (1994). The realm of

‘combinatory play’ (a term attributable to Einstein<sup>91</sup>) is the space that creative media mentors are well placed to occupy, to assist pupils in solving what Clip Club’s Leonardo called the ‘slowly fitting puzzle’<sup>92</sup> of media composition in time and space (Bazalgette 2008).

Goodman’s phrase, ‘rightness of fit’ (1978, p.132), describes artists’ ways of negotiating the relationships between qualities in the act of composition (Eisner 2005/2002, p.208) – in other words, getting the form or action ‘right enough’ for coherence and the emergence of specific moods and effects. I chose ‘rightness of fit’ for three reasons that align with the contours of my questions and that go some way to capturing:

- those intricate, contingent and *phronetic* workings of media composition (such as the choice of camera shot, distance, angle, duration and the infinite nuances of DV editing), that constitute a modern relevant meaning-making practice
- the elusive, ‘in solution’ nature of an inspiring responsive teaching environment
- the awkward complexity of assessing and positioning digital media-making in a data-driven school environment, fragmented by subject

Is media composition, as I have been claiming, an important and pertinent strand of literacy, to be aligned with subject English? or is it a discrete set of technical skills and competences in preparation for the workplace? or further still, does it fit more seamlessly and appropriately into the visual and expressive Arts discipline? The next

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<sup>91</sup> The phrase is quoted in various online texts, as part of a conversation between Einstein and Hadamard, in the context of discussing relationships between the productive thought of mathematicians and mental images. One such instance is available at: <http://www.brainpickings.org/2013/08/14/how-einstein-thought-combinatorial-creativity/> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

<sup>92</sup> This is how Leonardo referred to the selection, ordering and pacing of metaphorical images in a beautiful animated montage sequence referred to in this post: <http://theclipclub.co.uk/2013/10/16/the-big-match-analysis/> [Accessed 21 September 2015]. Audio available at: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-thesis-interview-2-mrp-leonardo-nimbus-march-2013/s-uhdHC#t=8:00> [Accessed 21 September 2015]



sub-section engages with this latter claim, while issues related to the teaching environment and socio-cultural context will be addressed in Section F.

***The ‘work’ of art in the age of dynamic and embodied literacies***<sup>93</sup>

I noted in Chapter II Eisner’s affiliation of the word ‘ineffable’ with aesthetic experience. Rather than engaging further with the ‘unutterable’, this section seeks to account for the ways in which aesthetic experience<sup>94</sup> relates to the concrete artistry of multimodal expression. Eisner elucidates thus:

The phrase “work of art” can have two meanings. It can refer to work of *art*, or it can refer to the *work* of art. The former refers to the product created, the latter to the process of creating it. Aesthetic experience can be secured at each location.

(Eisner 2002, p.81, original emphasis)

According to Eisner, the word ‘artistry’ captures the duality of the word *work*:

Artistry consists in having an idea worth expressing, the imaginative ability needed to conceive of how, the technical skills needed to work effectively with some material, and the sensibilities needed to make the delicate adjustments that will give the forms the moving qualities that the best of them possess.

(Eisner 2002, p.81)

There are, however, two missing perspectives in Eisner’s philosophy that are crucial to modern views of creative, screen-based media artistry – the critical frame and popular cultural understanding<sup>95</sup>. This expanded view of the *work* of (media) art is supported by Burn’s (2013) proposed re-location of school media production into a newly conceived Media Arts discipline, and by his beckoning for the academic development of a *Poetics* of media education (2009). In his view, an injection of discursive Media Arts production and performance would feed into and enrich the

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<sup>93</sup> The title is a play on Benjamin’s celebrated essay (1936) in which he critiques the loss of a work of art’s ‘aura’ in the age of ‘mechanical reproduction’. I reference it as Benjamin’s study on technology’s disruption of tradition and its potential impact on the politicisation of artists’ work resonates with aspects of this thesis.

<sup>94</sup> Eisner makes the distinction between *aesthetic* and *anaesthetic* experience, the former lays claim to works of art that heighten our senses and the latter to processes that deaden or suppress them (Eisner 2002, p.81).

<sup>95</sup> Eisner’s use of the word ‘best’ here hints questionably at Arnoldian 19th century thinking and elitist views of culture as ‘the *best* that has been thought and said’.

established critical and cultural frames of Media Studies and Film Studies, respectively.

The study most cognisant of this aesthetic is *Le Cinéma: Cent Ans de Jeunesse* (CCADJ). As will be recalled, its co-ordinators value the liminal and iterative states of becoming, offered by the programme's '*va et vient*' rhythms, shuttling between theory and practice. Teachers, film-makers and pupils engage collaboratively in the joint weaving<sup>96</sup> of theoretically underpinned and affective moving image texts. My study suggests that participants' decisions made in the interstices between conscious and intuitive reckoning correlate with deep learning moments. These moments might for example constitute: re-taking shots, going off script, actors' and directors' improvisation on set, indulging private jokes, anticipating audience response whilst editing, and embracing surprise and serendipity.

Shared social moments that involve imaginative leaps are redolent of Vygotsky's widely acknowledged 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky 1978; Sefton-Green 1998; Burn and Durran 2006, 2007; Potter 2012, p.146) describing the fertilising effect on learning of social play when combined with teachers' scaffolding: a blend that purports to carry young people beyond current levels of understanding. Indeed Maria's use of the sound *boom* as an air guitar updates Vygotsky's analogy of 'the *broom* that becomes a hobby horse' in children's imaginative play - a motif quoted by Burn (2009, p.14) in the context of defining intuitive leaps of the imagination.

Moving beyond Vygotsky, my account puts forward a more granular formulation for understanding the everyday *work* of digital artistry, and editing in particular, drawing on Sennett (2008) and his study on the nature of craftsmanship. I believe that the articulation of literacy as a perceptual craft, involving the adding, re-fashioning and eliminating of sensory material, serves to refresh tired formal categorisations of traditional school literacy, whose emphasis is on accuracy and progress towards predefined goals, following predefined standards, measured with predefined indicators (Thomson et al. 2013, p.5; Yandell 2014).

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<sup>96</sup> The derivation of the word *text* is from the Latin *texere*, to weave, evoking compact strands of intertextual meaning (Burn and Durran 2006, p. 291) - both the warp and the weft of symbolic resources.

My Masters dissertation touched on imaginative patterns of thought in design and craft processes and how, in some respects, they can be seen to parallel meaning-making in DV editing. Like many others, (Buckingham 2003; Claxton 2003; Banaji et al. 2006; Readman 2010) Sennett dispels a tendency towards romantic ideals of creativity and defines the four elements necessary for ‘leaping intuitively’, which when applied to my conceptual model (Figure 12), seem to ricochet around it like a ball in a pinball machine. The following bullet points, paraphrasing Sennett’s abstractions, are drawn from my dissertation (Cannon 2011<sup>97</sup>), and are interspersed with additional insights developed in my PhD research:

a) **reformatting** – an aspect of reality is materially reworked.

This calls to mind the aesthetic, *phronetic* and intertextual re-mixing of image and sound inherent in the re-presenting of assimilated cultural material, as that rehearsed in *Film in a Morning*. In this project, themes from a novel or poetic verse were unpicked and analysed, and the format of understanding was re-woven and re-imagined as an-other digital audiovisual entity.

b) **adjacency** – the juxtaposition of “two unlike domains ... the closer they are the more stimulating seems their twined presence” (Sennett 2008, p.210).

My video clips of young people editing, signal the ways in which varied shots, clips and appropriate sounds are (provisionally) stitched together onto a timeline in processes of multi-layered matching and sequencing. The idea of contrasting or complementary ‘adjacency’ is fundamental to the creative process. Depending on the audience and the protocols of the medium, the more innovatively or ‘artfully’ juxtaposed the genres, audiovisual assets, materials and/or ideas, the more compelling the effect (Monaco 2009; Bordwell and Thompson 2010; Reisz and Millar 2010; Cousins 2012).

c) **surprise** – “you begin dredging up tacit knowledge into consciousness to do the comparing” and experience wonder. “Surprise is a way of telling yourself that something you know can be other than you assumed” (Sennett 2008, p.211).

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<sup>97</sup> Available in blog format at:

<https://fashioningandflow.wordpress.com/2011/11/10/vygotsky-intuition-flow-theory/>  
[Accessed 21 September 2015]

Linked with the recognition that original composition can produce arresting work, Sennett introduces a welcome affective dimension that helps us understand the fun element in media production. A frequently observed phenomenon in my research was the element of wonder and surprise that film and moving image manipulation often generates, especially when the work, the people and the productive moment seem to coalesce. There is a sense in which an unconscious process of comparison with one's former experiences meshes with present creative conditions, to precipitate an inquisitive urge to imitate or *re-present*: an impulse embodied in Claxton's understanding of acting on one's 'intuition' (1998, 2003)<sup>98</sup>. From clinching the take, to trusting feelings of 'rightness' in editing, recurrent experiences such as these beget confidence, pleasure and arguably, a reflexively literate state of being<sup>99</sup>.

d) **gravity** – recognition that leaps do not defy gravity and constraints are something of a constant: "The technical import, like any immigrant, will bring with it its own problems" (Sennett 2008, p.212)

So much for the highs; Sennett then concedes the inevitable downward arc of the imaginative leap - here articulated as the human or technical hitches and glitches in craft processes. As evinced in the group agency of participants in CCADJ and The Clip Club, their focus and ingenuity defied perceptibly adverse circumstance by working imaginatively with the available resources. This account argues that embracing questioning 'habits of mind' and a disposition for resourcefulness, rehearse the kinds of democratic and responsible decision-making that can unseat the seemingly insurmountable.

Having looked at media composition artistry from aesthetic (Eisner 2005/1985) and craft (Sennett 2008) points of view, there appears to be a lack of emphasis in both cases on the specifics of socio-critical context. Media craft work might be rendered a more socially-conscious embodied literacy practice by introducing a fifth element to Sennett's framework, which I have termed *rhetorical performance*. This integrates

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<sup>98</sup> Bruner offered a pleasing definition of intuition that captures the idea of 'temporary rightness' whilst editing: "the intellectual technique of arriving at plausible but tentative formulations without going through the analytical steps by which such formulations would be found to be valid or invalid conclusions" (2009/1960, p.13).

<sup>99</sup> Lanham captured the 'surprise' element of literacy work in the phrase "a toggle to boggle the mind" (1993, p.82) referring to repetitious movements between concrete inscription and abstract conceptualisation that produce anomalies or incongruities.

the ideas of reaching out in explicit and informed ways to situated audiences, using critical arts practices whose ripples provoke debate as well as aesthetic impact.

Burn goes further to suggest that the popular acronym describing a comprehensive curriculum inclusive of the arts - STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Maths) as mentioned in Chapter II – fails to go far enough. He claims that the arts, even in this frame, are still positioned as separate and secondary - “a supplement to the formidable ranks of the ‘serious’ disciplines” (Burn 2013, p.60). Instead Burn (2013) introduces the acronym STAMMP (Science, Technology, Arts, Maths, *Media* and *Performance* - with Engineering perhaps subsumed in S and T), along with a rationale that *unites* science, computer programming, the analogue and digital arts and humanities, as a more relevant curriculum descriptor<sup>100</sup>. This view is more accommodating of a broad and inclusive interest-base, and checks the advance of instrumentalist STEM lobbies - carefully documented by some (Cultural Learning Alliance 2011, 2014; Craft Council 2014) and implemented by others (Gibb 2015b, 2015c) - that arguably fuel the acceleration of computer programming as a stand-alone skill, both in schools and in informal ‘maker-spaces’ more widely.

The next section takes up Burn’s call for unity and continuity between the disciplines and for a more conciliatory view within the media education camp itself. Its trajectories tend to veer in different discursive directions, following cultural, critical and/or creative avenues, or indeed the way of ed-tech evangelism and technological determinism (Buckingham 2007; Watters 2015). Burn nominates that we “resist and question these rhetorics of rupture” (2005, p.273) and seek a more even-handed approach, the better to put the arts ‘stammp’ on cross-disciplinary spaces of learning and their wider contexts.

## **F. Spaces of Translation**

As will have been apparent over the course of this thesis, etymology has inspired certain lines of enquiry and Section F is no exception. At various points the process of *translation* has looped in and out of my prose - *translat* meaning ‘carried across’ in Latin. ‘Spaces of translation’ is therefore a way of envisaging the social

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<sup>100</sup> See also Potter 2015, for further informed play with acronyms. STEAM(M) works along the same lines, where (M) is the sadly ‘ignored’ but all-pervading curriculum dimension: Media.

environments in which meanings are carried in one form to another, from one person to another, from one space to another, across certain terrains in iterative movements. I will examine what hinders and what facilitates the fluid translation and unrestricted movement of meanings in and beyond the classroom. In other words, I revisit Quadrant 3 of Figure 5 (the pedagogies that correspond with Composition / Production) to explore hybrid approaches that shape the digital teaching environment in positive ways, while also engaging with the social conditions of possibility. In these ways, I hope to cast light on the discursive factors that delimit media composition practices in schools, and at the same time suggest how teachers might respond to these tensions for new grass root pedagogies to emerge.

As disclosed in Chapter II in relation to Crawford's work, attentiveness to interactions between elements and the capacity to make immediate material adjustments on the fly, are key characteristics of craftsmanship, and no less is true of the daily interactions of a teacher. This account works on the premise that teaching involves all the nuance and qualitative adjustment required of an artist refining their craft and experimenting with their medium. The medium, rather than any tool or curriculum content, is envisaged as the 'ether' and 'presence' of communicative relations with pupils. One of my questions relates to the ways in which traditional 'default pedagogy' can learn from creative media practitioners and it is the constitution of this ether that is put under scrutiny.

### ***Teaching as 'practical consciousness of a present kind'***

The *Signature Pedagogies* report (Thomson et al. 2012) explains the modus operandi of creative practitioners and the ways in which school environments are shaped in their hands. The authors extrapolate specific 'pedagogic platforms, purposes and practices' - too large in scope to detail in full here, but some key ideas percolate through to help to explore my questions. The platforms comprise the foundational approaches common to all the creative pedagogies revealed in their research:

- inclusion
- choice and agency
- scale and ambition

- the carnivalesque (in the playful Bakhtinian sense, of norms being overturned)
- the lived experience of the present

All of these components resonate with my research, but the latter promises to illuminate the ‘spaces of translation’ of interest in this section.

Thomson et al. make use of Williams’ ‘structure of feeling’ (referenced in Chapter II), to represent the essentially ‘present’ duality of thought and feeling that creative practitioners are able to conjure in their manipulation of art forms:

For Williams [the structure of feeling] was a way of describing the moment before meanings and possibilities are closed down. In the present, ideas are being formed, not finished, events are experienced, not remembered ... We can find no better term to describe the combination of affect and cognitive attention, the sheer exhilaration, delight and joy that students often displayed during their encounters with creative pedagogies.  
(Thomson et al. 2012, p.15)

Clearly some teachers, more versed in analogue practice, may already be sensitive to such moments, and might already be actively negotiating a “practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity” (Thomson et al. 2012, p.32; see also Van Manen’s (2008) pedagogic ‘Knowing-in-Action’). My contention is that filming, editing and working with digital media can help to ground pupils’ conceptual, perceptual and representational meaning-making even further, in *present* and material ways. Interstitial spaces are opened up for constructive dialogue and exchange between actions which, I propose, concretise the conceptual work of literacy. Pursued further, the potential for a world of sophisticated metaphor, nuance and critique is brought to light, thus widening and democratising the palette of expressive representation. These ‘horizons of possibility’ were revealed to me in my Masters research, and teachers such as Ms. J and Mr. C grasp this potential too, working in their own ways to realise it.

At the same time, my research has exposed the erosion of the ‘enabling ether’ which is rendered anaemic by the deadening imperative to ‘cover’ mandated compartmentalised material in bureaucratic ways. For many children, the meaning and value of *the moment* is sacrificed on the slab of some other obscure, deferred future moment. Indeed my data suggests that for some children the future moment

that is considered to be of any worth, is one that narrowly relates media-making to the world of work. For some researchers it might be tempting to take the enthusiastic associations young people make between school media production and employment at face value, as an indication of sophisticated forward thinking, whereas what is more likely to be the case is their having imbibed the empty ‘alienated and alienating *blah*’ (Freire 1993/1970, p.68, original emphasis) of hegemonic discourse.

There seems to be a conflict here between the enjoyable hands-on experiences that creative media pedagogies fabricate, and the idea that the former have no intrinsic worth except when reified and rationalised with state-endorsed use and value. Even for the vetted ‘researcher-friend’, the videoed Riverside Year 7 boys seemed to want to dress up their free reign media-making with adult-work-speak in order to legitimise it. My observations do however indicate that this outlook gradually dissipates in Mr. C’s students, as they move through the years, with a fluid and pragmatic orientation to digital media production. Other young people, recipients of the one-off media project ‘treat’, would benefit from a diversified view of the moving image, seeing it as a regularly accessed and legitimate expressive form, helpful in the here-and-now, and not merely as an industry-related extracurricular frill.

### ***Schools and industry trappings***

To broker a dialogue that goes beyond audience building or corporate responsibility, it is in the gift of creative media practitioners and professional film educators, to disturb the ready and ‘natural’ conflation of school film production with vocational work and industry. The stranglehold of instrumental thinking might then be loosened and Media Arts with cross disciplinary frames of reference might be given a chance to establish itself.

My auto-ethnographic account in Chapter IV brings home the extent to which I was enculturating industry practices, to some extent replicating the trappings of ‘cinematic life’ (Furstenau and MacKenzie 2009). For all the benefits of role-taking and the ‘Making of’, one wonders how else it might be possible for young people to experience informal film production, on their own terms, in ways that are not so in thrall to dominant professional practices, standards and vocabulary. This is a possible area of development for young people, practitioners and educators, who, through the



use of mobile and wireless technologies, may come to reinvent and fashion moving image production and consumption norms for their own purposes<sup>101</sup>.

Having elaborated in celebratory ways on film-making in schools as a democratic strand of literacy, it must be acknowledged that the process itself is steeped in commercial and cultural constraints. From the designed affordances of the hardware and software, to the very conventions of filming and editing, the empowerment that film-making purports to offer is always-already compromised. Nimbus delights in the choice of sounds available in an iMovie database but my experience suggests that the development of a more critical eye and ear means the novelty of standardised authoring packages wears off as quickly as a mobile ring tone. A longer view of learning with digital assets would encourage young people to record, compose and curate their own library of music and Foley sounds, from the outset.

Notwithstanding Clip Club's successful use of the green screen, this remains the only item in use out of a trunk of low-grade film-making equipment, bought on a whim by a former staff member. This purchase is symptomatic of the ways in which schools are commonly positioned by commercial and industrial interests, buoyed by all-in-one, ed-tech 'solutionism' (Buckingham 2007; Selwyn 2012b; Watters 2015). Writers researching the use of technologies in schools (Selwyn et al. 2010; Potter 2012) report the privilege that *acquiring* tools often occupies over and above the consideration that might be given to their *purpose* and *use* in a learning context (Luckin et al. 2012). My concern is that if visual literacy becomes more popular in schools and industry's rhetorical influence goes unexamined, commercial interests combined with the magnetising power of the "participatory promise ... and access to the movie-dream" (Furstenau and MacKenzie 2009, p. 8) will stultify and delimit agency and variety. Promising spaces of dispersed and diverse translations of meaning may, without informed cultural and critical investment in teacher education, correspond more with the homogenised re-production of familiar texts and genres.

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<sup>101</sup> See <http://movingcinema.eu/> [Accessed 21 September 2015] for an account of a Spanish-Lithuanian-Portuguese collaboration in which innovative models of film education for young people are being explored and enacted.

### *Seeding the ecotonal environment*

On a more pragmatic note, I now look at the ways in which schools can develop different relationships and more porous borders with cultural organisations. My professional experience with BFI-led film and media projects allowed me to see the advantages of partnerships between schools and external creative, cultural and research agencies. The research interview with Clip Club seemed to consolidate the children's hitherto simulated film-making roles. They *were* the experienced actors, editors, camera operators, directors and producers whose advice was being formally sought, rehearsing the value of interactions which vivify learning and enable the practice of more hybrid, porous pedagogies.

The weeks prior to the interview there had been fractious internal relations in the Club, but after adult validation of their identities as film-makers, although cautious of narratives of causation, more conscientious commitment ensued. This switch in dynamic could demonstrate the changeable, undulating terrain that DV work inhabits. With this in mind, I propose that the transactional nature of the Clip Club environment is redolent of the *ecotone*: a space in which juxtaposed biodiverse zones are in constant tension, commingling and effecting a productive and 'unstable equilibria'<sup>102</sup> (Barker 2011, p.68, drawing on Gramsci).

In the DV production context the *ecotonal* tension equates to pupils' ongoing diverse talents, dispositions and home-spun interests, operating within non-formal parameters, but within a formal institutional space. Introducing professional adults and alternative educators into the mix, as indeed witnessed in *Film in a Morning*, adds to the complexity in productive ways. Through the skilful management of a sense of social interdependence, the potential for chaos can lead to positive 'disruptive innovation', new juxtapositions and alliances. Pendleton-Jullian depicts these transitional learning spaces as permeable 'corridors' between institutions and innovation hubs:

The ecotone's success, both in terms of sustaining itself and evolving, depends upon the ability to self-generate spontaneous events of work, play and communication which can, themselves, evolve improvisationally. And it values the serendipitous connections between events and their content. These

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<sup>102</sup> 'Unstable equilibria' is Gramsci's way of describing constantly evolving hegemonic practices, bound up with social and consensual power relations that are continually being superceded.

events and mechanisms, as the ecotone corridors, seed the ecotone. They bring work from the edges into the system, transfer work into new questions, these questions back into new work, etc, all of which plays back into the system.

Non time and space dependent, the corridors form an ether of connectivity as opposed to point to point conversations or lines of thought. As an indivisible entity, one in which the spontaneous, improvised and serendipitous are valued, the ecotone requires a communication infrastructure that is diverse in its forms, highly responsive in its operations, so easy as to become tacit in nature, and of high capacity. In fact, the ecotone concept can only be realized in our digital age with the new media tools and methods we now have at hand.

(Pendleton-Jullian 2009, p.52)

With this, and enriched by an incongruous analogy with the natural world, this commentator calls for the structured exploitation of digital tools in learning environments mediated by distinctly human interventions. If the concept of literacy is in need of a digital overhaul, then new moving image production alliances could occupy these ‘corridors’<sup>103</sup> carrying innovatory pedagogic practices in from the edges - where inertia and entrenched interests are weaker - across contested state-organised terrain<sup>104</sup>.

## **G. Concluding thoughts**

Emerging mainly inductively from experience in the field, this Chapter has considered digital moving image literacy from a range of perspectives found to co-exist interdependently. For example, my research supports the re-imagining of schools’ engagement with film and the moving image as both a cross-disciplinary critical means of expression *and* as a Media Arts discipline, a particular dimension of the visual arts. This would require an adjusted view of literacy and pedagogy - as hybrid social practices in a densely networked environment, that mobilise multiple

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<sup>103</sup> In serendipitous ways, the ‘ecotonal corridor’ metaphor is embodied in microcosm, in the Clip Club’s ‘corridor shoot’ already examined (Clip 2 here: <https://vimeo.com/142087018> @ 00:18’ [Accessed 21 September 2015, password = wizard]. We used the Evernote app for wireless shot list management in fluid connected relations with other remote members of the group. In these ways school media production can experience the flow of creative practice in a networked environment, thus agitating linear, mono-spatial and individually conceived meaning-making practices.

<sup>104</sup> A further analogy inspired by natural forms is made by Sherrington (2013), who compares teachers’ working conditions within the current one-size-fits-all ‘*plantation* thinking’ frame with those of an imagined lush, complex ‘(managed) *rainforest* thinking’ model.

expressive resources, with and on a range of digital tools and platforms. As such, it is worth reflecting further on the contextual challenges with which progressive pedagogies would have to contend if such a vision were to be realised. The final Chapter is devoted to this challenge.

In conclusion, a pre-Web 2.0 citation from Eisner traces many of the themes and discursive tensions relevant to the introduction of media composition in schools and the complications therein. Originally given in 2002 as the John Dewey Lecture at Stanford University, he entreats:

At the risk of propagating dualisms, but in the service of emphasis, I am talking about a culture of schooling in which more importance is placed on *exploration* than on discovery, more value is assigned to *surprise* than to control, more attention is devoted to what is *distinctive* than to what is standard, more interest is related to what is *metaphorical* than to what is literal. It is an educational culture that has a greater focus on *becoming* than on being, places more value on the *imaginative* than on the factual, assigns greater priority to *valuing* than to measuring, and regards the *quality of the journey* as more educationally significant than the speed at which the destination is reached. I am talking about a new vision of what education might become and what schools are for.  
(Eisner 2005/2002, p.213, my emphasis)

Eisner's commitment to the qualitative and the experiential in schooling is clear, what is less clear is how these priorities tally with cultures of performativity and accountability metrics, which are seen as hampering the agency of the teacher and the progress of a critical Media Arts discipline.

What frames the problematic is twofold: the infantilisation of the teaching profession through the enactment of neoliberal discourse, as recognised below:

Teachers are no longer encouraged to have a rationale for practice, account of themselves in terms of a relationship to the meaningfulness of what they do, but are required to produce measurable and 'improving' outputs and performances, what is important is *what works*.  
(Ball and Olmedo 2013, p.91, my emphases)

This is coupled with the overweening sheen of 'big data' and idealised technological determinism (Sivek 2011) as that expressed by Anderson (physicist, former editor of *Wired* magazine and proponent of the 'new Maker industrial revolution'):

This is a world where massive amounts of data and applied mathematics replace every other tool that might be brought to bear. Out with every theory of human behaviour, from linguistics to sociology. Forget taxonomy, ontology, and psychology. Who knows why people do what they do? The point is they do it, and we can track and measure it with unprecedented fidelity. With enough data, the numbers speak for themselves.  
(Anderson 2008)

## Chapter VII – Conclusion

### A. Research questions re-visited

My research draws together five human and social dimensions that when combined, form the who, what, when and where of my study. More importantly, however, as a qualitative investigation it examines the *how* and the *why* of media composition practices in schools. It remains to summarise the discussion points in relation to the underpinning research questions and then propose ways forward. The first question forms around creative media work's relation to an inclusive and interactive vision of literacy - one that encompasses film and the moving image as a core entitlement and relevant meaning-making practice. I suggest that this vision is constituted by:

- iterative social and cognitive interactions
- concrete inscription and crafting of media assets with digital tools of production
- development of imaginative and conceptual leaps; and
- sensibility and criticality towards the social and environmental network of relations in which everyday living is embedded

Further, this view is imbued with an arts perspective, combining students' interests and popular cultural motifs, in collaborative cultural production.

The second question goes on to consider how existing teaching practices might adapt to the proliferation of digital media beyond school, with the kinds of pedagogic repertoires used by creative media practitioners, and their choreography of DV and film production moments and processes. This amounts to creating generative, *ecotonal*, spaces of translation that steward and support social and creative agency with expressive resources. It is argued that hybrid, less hierarchical interactions and a mutually respectful style of teaching that encourages praxis, autonomy, recursive trial and error, and *phronetic* making opportunities, feed a disposition for present and engaged learning.

Finally, a scan of the socio-cultural landscape accounts for the discursive factors that determine practical media work in schools, on an institutional and practical level. It was found that the external forces that constrain the agency of teachers, in turn

constrain the opportunities for young people to engage formally with digital media in many schools, except when it is in some way advantageous to the establishment. The strategy to win a notional ‘international STEM education race’ starts in the primary years with basic computer programming. Further, the marginalisation of the arts in school curricula (and thereby creative media practice), is symptomatic of our extrinsically motivated, results-driven era. For many of the schools in economically challenged areas, this results in the pruning of creative teaching and learning, and the preserving of primary ‘paper and *Pritt*’ technologies in the service of individual, easily assessed outputs.

The professional development of teachers is undermined by exigent reform measures, that demand ‘the enactment of performance data’ (Ball et al. 2012) at the expense of self-determined practice with possible intrinsic benefits. A critical eye was also cast on the nature of authoring software. In schools that do engage with digital media production, it was found that commercial packages, even as they stoke the imaginative capacity of learners, can also shape and delimit the parameters of creative agency. On the other hand, non-proprietary open source software was found to be a useful tool for building educational communities of practice, so important for the transfer of learning beyond school boundaries.

The final observations in Chapter VI and the above interpretations of social constraints summon up a vision of the doomed ‘datafication’ of school cultures (Roberts-Holmes 2014). To counter this, I advance some pragmatic recommendations in support of practical media work in schools, and make further use of my interpretive model (Figure 35). The media-related dimensions at its core reflect aspects of the social world that seem to frame:

- what people do, where, how and with what digital tools (workability)
- their critical engagement and ‘conviviality’ in the process (reflexivity and dialectics)
- what they create and how they are seen to ‘perform’ in their daily lives (everyday artistry)





- and the nature of the social conditions in which all this happens (historical continuity)

Figure 35 is now annotated at the outer edges with five emergent themes and a re-purposed title: *Teaching, Learning and Digital Media Composition in a Networked Community of Practice*. These extensions are justified as I believe the model could have a broader application as a framework for developing and evaluating programmes of learning and pedagogies that incorporate digital media production. It is hoped that my ethnographic work on the intricacies of media production and pedagogy offers a plausible but tentative starting point for the development of an overarching digital making framework, as Sefton-Green (2013a) suggested was necessary.

### **B. Recommendations: signature pedagogies & critical media-making**

Bearing in mind the limitations that regulated educational frameworks place on such endeavours, I itemise hybrid pedagogies that shape the best possible conditions in which collaborative creative media engagements can prosper. In so doing, I nominate the art of critical media-making as a productive practice for raising the consciousness, in the broadest sense, of both maker and audience. In line with a commitment to recognising historical continuity, I then invoke pre-digital literacy ideals that uphold the case for schools' media composition to develop alongside the expressive arts and modern literacy inscription practices.

For many of the following insights I am indebted to the work of Thomson et al. (2012, p.46) many of whose findings in the *Signature Pedagogies* report chime with my own. Some of the practices they uncovered in their research with artists and creative practitioners working in schools, will be integrated into five headings which, as stated, relate to the domains of my model. In order then for time-based texts and media production to become established components of literacy teaching and learning – like some arts-based 'digital glue' (Brook 2010) that binds subject areas together – I envisage the following:

#### ***Managed time and space (workability)***

Pupils are allowed the time and space to develop a *phronetic* sense; that is, the **iterative** nature of practical media work is fully realised within the parameters of the possible. Effectively, this amounts to encouraging the oscillation between: watching

and making; abstract thought and material representation; the metaphorical and the literal; action and reflection on action; and the repeated drafting and redrafting of outputs. In addition, this means creating the necessary room and mood for learner-practitioners to experience feelings of ‘failure’ in relatively quick succession (‘fast failures’ perhaps), as well as technical triumphs and aesthetic successes. Specific attention is paid to the speed and flow of activities underpinned by social connectivity and freedom of movement. The pace is brisk but unhurried: rather than a feeling of time running out towards some remote fixed outcome, the sense is of collective progress towards an ill-defined end.

Film-making in particular is a levelling and trans-disciplinary creative practice that mobilises qualitative tensions. Plans and plot lines change in the midst of production as different ideas are tried, tested and refined. It is this interplay of liquid working relations combined with disciplined, task-oriented roles that appeals to young people, giving them a productive oscillation between structure and agency. In terms of rationale, the infinitely alterable nature of media representation complements cultures of change, possible futures and the practice of Eisnerian ‘judgement in the absence of rule’. This opens up the creative process to direction by its participants, and offers an empowered counterpoint to pervasive cultures of external control and performativity.

***Recommendation 1:*** The implications for pedagogy relate to more flexible timetabling and social arrangements. Over a specific period, school leaders would experiment with the structure of the formal day, as well as with more sophisticated after school planning, so that group media projects become a regular embedded social practice both in formal spaces, and in the valuable ‘third space’ of learning between home and school. Schools would think about their own film and moving image cultures whose forms could more accurately reflect local ‘truths’, needs and concerns rather than emulating those of industry. Such a strategy would represent a more sincere and therefore more pertinent engagement with the spaces and tools of a wider literacy.

***Pedagogic provocation and present sensibility (reflexivity)***

My research indicates that schoolwork ‘that matters’ is often geared towards national testing, during which process the ‘present-ness’ of the moment is somewhat negated.

To re-balance this deference to an impersonally framed future, creative media production and the development of a film sensibility, proffer a re-engagement with the present, and an alertness to the immediate environment. Creative pedagogic approaches often open with a themed provocation embodied in an unusual or everyday artefact, prop or text, and some form of design brief, the dual function of which acts as a stimulus to cognitive and imaginative thought and action. There is an expectation of an autonomous response grounded in the present, with little explicit emphasis on future-oriented ‘learning objectives’ or ‘success criteria’. Success is measured by the group’s **disposition for praxis**, that is, the level of theoretical, productive and purposeful engagement with the process. Further, if teachers are to inspire such dispositions for uncompetitive action and critical risk-taking in their pupils, the same ought to be encouraged in their practice.

Teaching and learning decisions are in constant negotiation like Pendleton-Jullian’s kayaker in the rapids (2009). In an earlier section I intimated that pedagogies with media composition processes in particular involve a managed tension between the planned and the improvised, question-posing and problem-solving, autonomous and collaborative learning, and between letting go and adjusting levels of control when necessary. Modelling this kind of agility and versatility, demonstrates to the learner the kind of flexibility and vulnerability they too may have to negotiate as literate practitioners in the digital realm.

**Recommendation 2:** This study calls for a transformed view of teachers as ‘public intellectuals’ (Giroux 2011, p.5), rather than as ‘instruments of the state’. With less politicised intervention in education design and infrastructure, teachers are empowered to take the long view, and to devise rich curriculum content and relevant assessment routines, in dialogue with the changing needs of young people, and the local and wider community. With fewer utilitarian objectives, time and space for film and moving image production from the early years onwards, become more feasible, and are more likely to gain traction as literacy practices that strengthen abstract critical thinking and perception.

### ***Make a sociable meeting place (dialectics)***

As cited in Chapter II, one of the framing devices of *Signature Pedagogies* (Thomson et al. 2013) was taken from the UNESCO commissioned Delors report

(1996) relating to the shape of a ‘21<sup>st</sup> century education’. It proposed four foundational pillars of learning - how to know, to do, to live together and to be. Learning to live together is perhaps one of the most overlooked elements of modern schooling, and one which becomes ever more significant in our lived historical moment with respect to mass migration and cultural intolerance. Without wishing to invest it with all the remedial qualities of a silver bullet, (nor indeed a ‘silicon bullet’ - Lynch 2015, p.1), the socially cohesive nature of DV production work could help address this most pressing of contemporary issues. Creative media practitioners tend towards collaboration as an approach to work, they weave their mediating tools and talents in and out of social interstices and build platforms for debate, dialogue and **reciprocal relations**.

Group film and media production projects are venues for social gatherings, where, with a specific collective purpose, identities are oxygenated and a particular sense of self is allowed to develop. Strong social bonds are forged within its boundaries, made all the more complicit with the exercise of tacit understandings and non-verbal communications as that fostered in games and playground interactions. Such practices can encourage playful, dialogic relationships and parity of esteem between its constituents. Mirroring life’s vicissitudes, there are peaks and troughs to be negotiated in this burgeoning sense of belonging, and one such peak resides in the moment of display and public address. With appropriate framing and questioning, a media event can just as well be an interactive, show-tell-and-*respond*, literacy event.

**Recommendation 3:** In Initial Teacher Training, time should be allocated to the dialogic ways in which film and media projects function and in which unique social spaces for learning and ‘operational excess’ are generated. With this input, the ground is seeded for genuine cultural *partnerships* to develop between outside creative agencies and schools, as opposed to the more usual one-off ‘expert-led’ creative interventions. Teachers should *lead* the programme with less privilege given to the quality of the textual outcome, and more to pupils’ ownership and celebration of the learning process - its intellectual, social and ‘ethereal’ impact.

### ***Be an artist! (everyday artistry)***

In an earlier section I suggested the ways in which imaginative play is lush terrain for the development of conceptual thought, and how the capacity “to re-imagine the

world creates the potential to change it” (Koh 2014). Koh’s elaboration of the work of subversive artistry and the disruption of ‘*idées reçues*’, resonates with my thesis findings. In a comment that recalls the literary stimulus for the *Film in a Morning* project, she invokes Rushdie’s interpretation of the overarching metaphor in the film *Brazil* (Gilliam 1989). For Rushdie, the film illustrates one of art’s great traditions - in which “techniques of comedy, metaphor, heightened imagery, fantasy and so on are used to break down our conventional, *habit-dulled certainties* about what the world is and has to be” (Rushdie 1991, p.122, my emphasis). I propose that subversive and imaginative metacognition of this nature is an all-important driver for aesthetic and critical meaning-making in the audiovisual medium. Instances of wonder and surprise that arise in DV editing and media-crafting, make this faculty manifest and can help to nurture a reflexive sense.

Creative pedagogies that combine rich narrative environments with everyday experience and permission to play, render opportunities to rehearse the skill of **rhetorical performance**. This is a skill which is understood as part of a lifelong process of learning that depends on a strong sense of self, and sensitivity to changing conditions and fluctuating audience or peer expectations. The greater the *intrinsic* desire to refine one’s digital creation - to make it ‘better’ or improve the ‘rightness’ – the deeper the learning experience. For teachers, this is where acute attention to pupils’ aesthetic sensibilities comes to the fore.

**Recommendation 4:** The development of a critically-inflected Media Arts programme would support moving image and DV editing as a relevant cross-disciplinary mode of expression, thus amplifying modes of perception and the proliferation of digital meaning-making tools. As an extension of this discrete discipline, the professional development of teachers should include support for production skills and for strengthening awareness of young people’s dynamic media preferences. Strategies for broadening literacy approaches are thus in a process of continual interest-driven and discursive renewal.

#### ***Creating a distributed network of understanding (historical continuity)***

In Chapter II, I invoked A. Reid’s deliberations on the “material-historical-cultural-space” (2007, p.25) in which compositional processes are located. I made use of his and others’ conceptual armoury, to explain the constrained conditions of possibility

that surround schools' digital media tools and production. Furthermore, A. Reid loosens cognition from the individual mind, and fashions it materially as a socially distributed network of human and non-human connections. Both these are useful constructs in terms of configuring new spaces in which multiple literacies can thrive and **translations of meaning** be given a chance to percolate between agents in a community.

This account then, sees schools as porous social hubs with a renewed remit to reach beyond their material confines. Pupils can be seen as productive 'field agents' exploring the more 'alien' aspects of their community, and assisting in the forging of local partnerships. Inventive textual capture within the local vicinity creates the potential for memorable cultural understanding and exchange in a 'third space' of learning. The pedagogies that facilitate this type of engagement are necessarily hybrid, often digitally so, and are backed up with principled and equitable practice. As Stommel states:

Pedagogy is the place where philosophy and practice meet. It's vibrant and embodied, meditative and productive. Good pedagogy takes both teaching *and* learning as its subjects.  
(Stommel 2012, original emphasis)

In light of forward-looking pedagogies, one of the areas that will be in need of root and branch reform is that of teaching and learning assessment regimes involving media: digital (ecotonal) hybridity aligns maladroitly with linear progress towards sealed numerical standards. It has been suggested in this account that curricula reform increasingly revolves around the needs of its auditors, rather than those of the learning community they purport to serve. I argue that exclusively academic and economically-determined trajectories be short-circuited, and that the needs and interests of pupils and local communities be met as a priority, in dialogue with the wider needs of society<sup>105</sup>.

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<sup>105</sup> With punitive and performative logic one think-tank proposes that if bureaucratic needs are foiled by exam failure, then a 'resit levy', should be exacted from the 'offending' school and awarded to 'over-burdened' Further Education institutions dealing with the 'fall-out'. See <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/media-centre/in-the-news/category/item/schools-should-be-fined-for-their-students-gcse-fails-argues-think-tank> (Porter 2015) [Accessed 21 September 2015]

**Recommendation 5:** Inclusivity requires a social and variegated approach to literacy, and permeable borders between classes, year groups, schools, localities, creative agencies and the Inspectorate. School-wide film and interactive media events - some with meaningful local community involvement - would be common practices to be enacted physically and/or shared on open networks. This may be the point at which it is recognised that embedded teacher-practitioners (possibly with pointers on assessment derived from the visual and fine arts), are the ones best placed to assess pupils' group achievements using *locally* designed criteria.

The above observations on critical media-making practices are entwined in teachers' and pupils' lived experience, in a sense of freedom of thought, expression and movement. Beyond the fear and control narrative, they support a fundamental trust in young people's integrity as regards their learning, and their capacity to make more critical choices than might first be assumed - when given the tools, the skills, the time to create, the social space, and the autonomous control<sup>106</sup>. Equally, if teachers were afforded the same 'freedoms' and professional conditions as those just cited for learners, then an environment more auspicious to developing pertinent, interest-driven, media production initiatives may result.

### **C. Contribution to knowledge**

My contribution to knowledge, as part of a future-facing, community-oriented approach to education and educational research, is threefold. This exegesis offers a amalgam of theories that re-frame social practices in three domains: literacy, pedagogy and ethnographic research. My findings suggest that:

1. **literacy** is a disposition towards socio-cultural participation and rhetorical performance reinforced with iterative digital media production, in which young learners are conceived as proto-cultural thinkers and critical producers, within an (im)material network of distributed cognition.
2. **teachers** are professional intellectual media practitioners engaged in developing the knowledge, skills and sensitive pedagogies that facilitate

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<sup>106</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed by Riverside's Mr. C. Available at: <https://soundcloud.com/shelleuk/phd-interview-mr-c-riverside-school/s-OSuBH#t=44:49> [Accessed 21 September 2015]

creative engagement and productive learning environments in *present* and relevant ways.

3. *ethnographers* are ‘intimate public journalists’, equipped with practical media skills and audiovisual sensitivities, whose task is to observe human, social and material interactions, and produce insightful multi-sensorial narratives.

***Literacy: a disposition towards cultural experience and production, made public***

The digital making cycle in Chapter II (Figure 4) offered an interpretation of how cultural products circulate in western societies. Part of that cycle relates to private processes of selection and consumption, and the accumulation of a personal cultural repertoire, which in large part is made up of media representations. Increasingly the assimilation of digitally mediated ‘realities’ accounts for a considerable proportion of young people’s everyday social encounters - their *lived experience*. This study proposes that young people’s enthusiasm for media production springs from an impulse to “confer a publicly social dimension to cognition” (Eisner 2005/1993, p.151), and from the desire to ‘become somebody’ (Wexler et al. 1992). My study then, conceives of literacy in the digital age, not simply as a reading and writing threshold, but as the critical capacity and creative sensibility to make and interpret meanings from a range of resources and texts, in/on a range of spaces and platforms. Literacy conceived as multiply sited promises the fullest social and cultural participation.

With thought that pre-figures the preoccupations of the digital age, Eisner’s understanding of experience and creative action in the public realm throws light on current institutional responsibilities, and young people’s disposition to engage with multimodal representation:

Experience is ... private. For experience to become public we must find some means to represent it. Culture makes available to the developing human an array of forms of representation through which the transformation of consciousness into its public equivalent is created. *Schools are culture’s agencies for selectively developing competences in the use of these forms.* Once public, the content of consciousness is stabilized, and once stabilized it can be edited, revised and shared. But representation is not a one-way street ... the act of representation is also an act of invention ... it provides its own



unpredictable options, options that can only emerge in the course of action.  
(Eisner 2005/1993, p.153, my emphasis)

A more public and socially framed literacy then, is grounded in the freedom to make conceptual leaps with expressive forms, and in the liberty to perform rhetorically as social actors.

***‘Do what you think!’ – a pedagogic call to action***

Ms. J persistently urged her Year 6s to act on and trust their own judgement in the unfamiliar world of the editing suite. As an educator, my own guiding impulse is to inspire young people to embrace divergent thinking and take control of their learning through praxis. Recapping Eisner’s words above: in order to creatively ‘invent’ and critically ‘represent’, with the myriad ‘unpredictable options’ available to the media author, it is incumbent on schools, as public ‘cultural agencies’, to widen the ‘selection’ and opportunities for production of representative forms, in order to make manifest their explanatory power, and their “utility in terms of conceptual understanding and applicability” (Belshaw 2012, p.160, drawing on Martin 2006). Indeed, as if bolstering such a proposal, film director John Huston made the provocative assertion, that “Film is like thought ... it’s the closest to thought process of any art” (Huston 2001/1973, p.44).

The fresh perspective on audiovisual meaning-making offered in this narrative - related to the AT (*INTERACT*) / THROUGH to-ing and fro-ing between digital assets and projected abstractions - offers educators new avenues in the quest to secure pupils’ creative, critical and cultural engagement. Furthermore, Ms. J’s pedagogic call to action is as much a rallying cry to teachers as it is to students, to desist from playing the ‘expert’, and to consciously defer to the messy imprecision of ‘in-expertise’ (Kendall and McDougall 2012) in matters of media manipulation. In this way, collaborative practices with media and pupil agency surface with more authenticity for the discerning young mind.

***Creative ethnographic research practice***

For literacy practices to remain relevant and equitable, then teaching professionals and the research community, should engage with the *present* media interests and representations of children and young people, if only to pull back on teleological

‘what works’ solutions. Made visible in this account are the observations of a participant-practitioner embedded in a range of school settings, gaining insights into the often over-looked interstices of creative media practice and pedagogy. What lends my interpretations theoretical heft is the fact that they are based on rich and textured evidence, mainly generated by *the participants themselves* - in some instances in impassioned ways - that demand attention and action. Giving ‘voice’ to participants has become something of a cliché in qualitative research, but to deny this is to potentially fuel asymmetries in power. The value of this (auto)ethnography lies in its capacity to capture excess in unregulated territories and go ‘beyond rigour’ to the sweet spots of learning at the edges of perceived capability.

Where possible, some of these moments have been presented using the affordances of authoring software for dual representation, such as the inlaid imagery, for a polyvocal perspective. This is surely just the beginning of a technical re-configuration in media education scholarship, in terms of the potential for creative DV and image data capture, representation and dissemination. Just as teachers and learners are enfranchised by the plural and public embodiment of abstractions that media composition makes possible, so researchers might well feel a similar sense of responsibility to experiment playfully with alternative productive modalities. As Kvale (1996) intimates, as far as research instruments go, in the performance of a narrative account, researchers themselves could be the principals in the orchestra, pushing the boundaries of a wider literacy.

### ***Now where?***

I have already mentioned how school life is often narrowly viewed as *preparation* for adult working life, but I argue, in a shift to a universalising tone, that school life is a very ‘real’ existence for all pupils in the here and now, each with largely neglected individual interests and specific circumstances. To counter what seems to be an ever-postponed present, my thesis supports a future agenda that complements creative fictional outputs with innovative forms of critical documentary. This aligns with McDougall’s call for an augmented youth civic praxis to permeate already established literacy networks, and for more dispersed social participation pertinent to

youth interests. Pragmatic partnerships with these and other creative arts agencies will secure:

a more strategic dialogue between literacy research and media education practice, with a particular emphasis on the aspiration for media educators to foster ‘critical’ thought and ‘civic’ action in a new (digital) public sphere ... the material (including virtual) conditions for such ‘voice’ can only be adequately configured with lessons learned from the rich history of ‘analogue’ literacy enquiry.  
(McDougall 2016, in press)

One of the elegantly argued aims of Alexander’s comprehensive *Cambridge Primary Review* (2010)<sup>107</sup> is indeed the need for citizenship to occupy more space in the scramble for curriculum ‘real estate’. In a similar vein, I argued in Chapter II that education systems should be devised to maximise the potential for leading a life that can be personally fulfilling, socially rewarding, culturally enriching and economically beneficial, whilst being of benefit to the wider community. In this, my conclusion, I maintain that DV, film and media composition practices and associated pedagogies, have a vital role to play in pursuit of these broad aims, and of a transformed school mediascape.

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<sup>107</sup> The twelve aims of the esteemed Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander 2010, p.197-199) many of which speckle this account, are succinctly itemised here: [http://cprtrust.org.uk/about\\_cprt/aims/](http://cprtrust.org.uk/about_cprt/aims/) [Accessed 29 October 2015].

## APPENDICES

### A. Audit of research materials

**PhD Data Audit 2012-2015  
Riverside Secondary School**

Form of Data	Date	Participant(s)	Location	Duration / Quantity	Description
<b>AUDIO &amp; VIDEO FILE NAMES: T=Transcribed S=Soundcloud</b>					
Mr.W-river.wav	02/04/14	Mr. W, MC	Southbank	53:57:00	Interview
Mr.W-Google-hangout.mp4	10/11/14	Mr. W, MC	online	01:37:51	Watching footage of Year 7's filming after Two Card screening
2cars-audio-lesson1.m4a	31/03/14	Year 7 class	South London Secondary	48:15:00	Lesson 1: Watching Two Cars One Night short film
2cars-lesson1.MOV	31/03/14	Year 7 class	South London Secondary	32:35:00	Lesson 1: Video of same as above
2cars-lesson2-1.wav	02/04/14	Year 7 class	South London Secondary	11:50	Lesson 2: They practice some shots
2cars-lesson2-2-kids-filming.wav	02/04/14	Year 7 class	South London Secondary	01:56	Lesson 2
2cars-lesson2-3-kids-filming.wav	02/04/14	Year 7 class	South London Secondary	26:20:00	Lesson 2
2cars-lesson2-post-exercise-show-tell.MOV	02/04/14	Year 7 class	South London Secondary	20:32	Lesson 2

This is an example of the way in which I audited my data. As there are multiple pages I have posted the remaining excel sheets as one pdf on *Slideshare* for reference. I list the audio files, photos, movies and documents by study:

<http://www.slideshare.net/shelleuk/research-dataaudittrail-52985089> [Accessed 20 September 2015]

## **B. Example of Interview Schedule**

Location: Xube office – Bethnal Green - 13 October 2014 - iPad film-making project – commissioned by *Into Film* – Out of the Box

Interviewees: Former Teacher / Researcher & Tutor to Trainee Teachers / Researcher & Former Teacher Film-makers

*Wider Cultural context...* Why do you think *Into Film* commissioned it?

What motivated you to apply for the funding? (Longing to return to your roots?)

*Time and space...*

Can you talk about the after school slot as a learning space?

Were there any constraints or enabling factors in relation to timing and timetabling in general?

Process ... for the children and also roles as teachers/film makers/lecturers/researchers

Did you struggle with adopting different roles? The fact of having been a teacher – in what ways did this help or hinder? Departure from commercial film making...

Can you comment on how your young participants responded to the process? cognitively? socially? behaviour? Did you notice any particular transformations? surprising incidents? amusing anecdotes?

*Outcomes ...*

Can anyone make any comments about where and how film-making might fit into such a spectrum in terms of its curriculum value? (Film-making as useful training or film-making as a medium for story telling in the humanities or simply as an intrinsically worthy art form?)

To what extent should working with digital media shift pedagogical approaches and educational priorities? what aspects will become more salient as a result?

Assuming that we achieve our ideals... so that all children are participating socially, adept with media production tools, and culturally productive ...

How is this contributing to the overall purpose of education? Can anyone predict any ongoing tensions?

What is there perennially and irreplaceably human in the job of the teacher?

*I did not actually use the material in this interview as data in my thesis, but include it to give a flavour of the types of conversations I had with professionals in the field.*

## C. Example Consent Form

### CONSENT FORM FOR PHD RESEARCH May 2014

**Organisation:** Bournemouth University

**Researcher:** Michelle Cannon, PhD student

**Title of Study:** **Making is Learning – the role and the function of practical media work in schools**

**Aim of Study:** I am researching teaching and learning in relation to practical media work in schools. I am interested in looking at more social and collaborative ways of being literate that include traditional forms of reading and writing along with new media technologies. I will do this through the study of young people's production and editing of digital media.

**Contact:** Please contact me if there's anything you are not sure about: email: XXX tel: XXXX

#### **Consent:**

- I give consent to audio and/or video footage being taken of my child while being interviewed by the researcher and during after-school sessions.
- I understand that clips of the audio or video footage may be used in future conference and journal publications. The data will not be shared by anybody other than the researcher.
- All audio or video footage given in the final thesis will remain anonymous and my child will not be identified.
- I understand that part of the research involves my child interacting with a blog (uploading comments, posts, video clips and photos of the sessions), that a pseudonym will be used in place of my child's name to maintain anonymity and the school will remain anonymous.
- My child is not required to answer any specific questions if he/she chooses not to and he/she has the option to withdraw at any time from the interview or study without giving a reason.
- The researcher will retain the audio or video footage for a maximum of 36 months. Some footage and/or audio recordings may be used in academic and/or educational presentations, publications, etc. and stored in research data archives. The raw footage will be destroyed in accordance with Data Protection and the Bournemouth University Research Ethics Code of Practice (2013).

Please PRINT your name and sign as appropriate below:

- I, ..... agree that my child can take part in the study  
(name of the parent/guardian of a participating child)

**Signature of Parent / Carer** .....

**Date**.....

**Signature of Child** .....

**Date**.....

## **D. Le Cinéma: Cent Ans de Jeunesse 2014 Rules and Protocols**

### ***Understanding Cinema 2013-14: The Long Take - Rules of the Game***

(translated from the French by Alastair Satchel – Understanding Cinema, Scotland)

#### *Tips for Analysing the Film Clips*

You can chose to accompany your viewing of the Long Take clips by using screen captures, still photos grabbed by computer from the clips, of the key moments of the excerpts you chose to look at.

You can retrace the journey of the camera in relation to the characters by either drawing up a floor plan and marking it on it, or acting it out physically with your students.

You can also note where the Long Take could have been broken up to make it in to a series of shots, rather than as one Long Take.

Use the still images included on the DVD of film clips to sketch out ideas for short scenes. Discuss which kind of Long Takes would best serve the groups to tell the story of their scene in the way they want.

#### ***Exercises***

##### *1. Watching: Lumière Minutes - Recording the World Around You*

Each participant will film a minute of material in the manner of the Lumière Brothers. The shot will be from a fixed position, lasting one minute and include the sounds recorded on location at the time of filming. The minutes can be filmed either inside or outside.

Choose a place, a subject, a moment and record it, with out influencing anything in the shot. Once each student has recorded *their* minute, show all of the clips they have made together in one go. You can ask your groups to chose locations for their minutes together in small numbers. Within those groups each participant must film a different moment, in the location chosen, or about the chosen subject, making sure to set up their own framing and chose the right moment for themselves. It is requested that all the participants in the project, including teachers, group leaders, film makers and cultural partners put themselves in the firing line and also film their own Lumière Minute.

##### *2. Create A Short Scene*

Create a brief scene which will then be filmed using a Long Take.

- Film the scene from a fixed point
- Then film the same scene with a moving camera

Each version must be between 2 - 3 minutes long. Indicate which type of Long Take

you are using in the title card for the clip. Types as indicated in the DVD of film clips include: double scene; telling a story; a contemplative shot; a physical performance; changing during the shot; split focus etc.

*Particular attention will be paid to the use of sound in this exercise.*

### 3. Group Film

***A troubling encounter: At a certain moment a character or characters have an encounter which troubles them.***

Create a film around the provocation above which includes several Long Takes. The film can be edited together, including elements of montage if you so wish. The film will last a maximum of 8 -10 minutes. In one of the Long Takes the camera must forget the character or characters and become autonomous, follow another path and then find the character or characters again. This section should create an emotional or sensational response in the viewer watching the clip.

### *Blog*

Before the end of November each participant group should present themselves to the others on the blog using photos. These will include:

- A photo of the group
- A photo of your work space
- A photo of your school / centre and the area around it.
- A photo of a space near to your workspace that your group finds inspiring, stating what interest them about the space.

Throughout the course of the year you can contribute to the blog when you like. Things you may like to put up on the blog include:

- Films that you've seen
- Excerpts of any thoughts you have on any of the films and clips you've seen
- Any of your own discoveries about the subject and film making
- Photos of the group at work in rehearsal and filming
- Anything else that you think useful to share with the rest of the group

All of the Lumière Minutes from across the project will be brought together and shared on line. Make the most of the blog, it's a chance to exchange your perspectives on the project and your findings with other groups, before meeting them in person later in the year. Posts can be sent by participants, tutors, teachers, film makers and cultural partners.



## E. Alain Bergalas's typology for The Long Take

Extracts from Margaux Guillemard's translation of Bergala's lecture in French. Full version of notes available here: <https://markreid1895.wordpress.com/cent-ans-de-jeunesse-themes/plan-sequence-the-long-take/notes-from-paris/> [Accessed 20 September 2015]

According to Bergala, the long-take is used to record a modification, a mutation (of the state of a body, or of the set, landscape, etc.), it is a variation of intensity:

**BODY:** In industrial cinema we always find shot/reverse effects, however the long-take allows us to see a **visible bodily change** (example of the video clip with Michel Piccoli)

**MOOD:** (*Vive l'Amour*, Tsai Ming Liang: Sequence of the woman crying) A change of mood on a face, **progression of emotion** over time. There is also a recording of meteorological change (the light, the wind)

**PLACE and CHARACTERS:** in *Una giornata particolare/ A Special Day* by Ettore Scola - there is a movement from **exterior/interior** and the introduction of **characters** (which allows us to meet them and discover their habitat). Very good way to open a film.

### TWO IMPORTANT CATEGORIES OF THE LONG-TAKE:

#### Passage of sensation:

1. when the camera goes from a point A to B by following first a character,
2. bifurcating then, disconnecting from the characters journey and taking her own path
3. in order to find the character again in the end

Like in *Nouvelle Vague* by Jean Luc Godard (the camera follows Alain Delon and then takes her own path, caressing the water, the wooden boat, music, etc. - **journey of sensations**), *Sunrise* by Fritz Lang, and *Vive l'amour* by Tsai Ming-liang.

Why should the camera only follow the characters ?

**Passage of relay:** the camera follows one of the characters, and then meets another one on the way and starts following him/her, and so on. Like in *La soif du mal/ Touch of Evil* by Orson Welles: the camera quits the object (couple 1) that she is following, bifurcation on the couple 2 as if the camera was making a mistake, and goes back to couple 1 again.

## F. Film Literacy Advisory Group: Film Education Framework

Co-ordinated by The British Film Institute, The Film Literacy Advisory Group is a consortia of cross-sector film education agencies across Europe which was established as part of the EU's Creative Europe Programme. I have been a researcher with the group since the first scoping exercise in 2011-2012 - *Screening Literacy* – a project set up to assess film education provision across 32 countries. Since then a



nucleus of agencies has met several times to produce a comprehensive framework for film education for use in schools, cinemas, institutes, arts venues and other spaces committed to the moving image. We launched the framework at the Cinémathèque française in Paris in June 2015. The next phase is to research the appropriate creative pedagogies with which to implement aspects of the framework in different settings and audiences across Europe.

## G. Interview Transcripts

### *1. Mr. C Interview, London, April 2014*

[0:00:00]

Mr. C: By giving them a chance to make with cameras, they'll then be able to generate much more sophisticated and authentic critical responses to film-makers' choices, which is not at all different to the idea that if you asked a student to write, they'll start to understand the process of reading and vice versa. But for example, if reading and writing interact with each other that way then so should viewing and making. And viewing and making is actually a very parallel process to reading and writing, so you teach them in a literature class - you can teach them in the same ways and you can use the benefits of one in the domain of the other. So for example, if I wanted to help my students to develop their own critical responses to written texts, I can first get them to develop critical responses to visual texts using the process of making, and then just generate a parallel looking at the same thing. So looking at what the director is trying to achieve through the choices they're making and then we're looking at what the writer's trying to achieve through the choices they're making, and then we're looking at how we respond to it as an audience. Most concepts are quite difficult to communicate in the text domain – the written text domain - to Year 7 students, but they're not so hard to communicate in the visual text domain, because of the stage of making which is a lot less abstract than the stage of writing. And also where they have kind of – they've got a lot of experience in reading visual texts at this age that we can use to our advantage. So what I actually ultimately wanted to do though, is to produce a critical response to the film that is credible as a literary study, in the same way as anybody who shows a group of students a film and then asks them to discuss the effects created has. But I'm just using this making – in this case, I'm using making films as a means of strengthening their capacity to be critical by them acting as film-makers, and therefore their own decisions about camera techniques, the cinematography aspects and the sequencing aspects. So today we looked at cinematography as much as anything, in other periods there are things like sequencing and we'll look at the humour of the texts and how that humour was supported by the visual. And then at the end of it, they are actually going to write as well as show. So they're going to ultimately create a film that demonstrates an appreciation for those skills and techniques, and they'll also write about the original film, where they reflect on how the film-maker did this. So it's not radical at all, it's completely within the domain - it's entirely within the domain of English learning in secondary school, the work they're doing. You know, it's not a deviation or a holiday from it.

- Michelle: And can you articulate – I know you’ve talked a bit about how the production process in film runs parallel with the kind of writing. Can you talk about the specifics – I don’t know, are there affordances of film that aren’t present in the writing process?
- Mr. C: Mhm, there are. I don’t think writing and filming are the same thing, so yeah... I mean for example, the process of editing film is quite different to the process of writing for young people in particular but I think for most people, in that editing is very much an inherent part of the creative process in film-making, whereas editing in writing tends to be more about – especially at the level the students are at – it’s more at a correcting level than it is about reframing or reorganising. And that’s due to the fact that when you make film, you make it, you’re assembling parts whereas when you’re writing you tend to be in a much more linear process. And although it is encouraged that the students go back and rework their writing, the form of writing is not that it’s in chunks of meaning that can be rearranged – certainly not in the way they conceptualise their writing. So there’s always a conversation between those two things, but they’re not the same. So if you want to ask the students to consider their writing more structurally, a good way of going about it would be to get them to make a film where they consider the narrative structure, and then say to them, ‘This is how you could prepare for writing’. You know, ‘Think about the narrative structure in as concrete a way as you do when you make a film’, which is that you assemble it from parts that are almost prefabricated, and that the writing is the assembling of the parts rather than the creating of them. Because that’s what film is really, isn’t it? They create an overall plan and they film and record the parts – sometimes they are to a narrative sequence and then they form a narrative sequence from those parts, and it’s very much a building process. It’s almost like engineering, structural engineering as opposed to writing which is as I said, a lot more linear.
- Michelle: What do you think about that idea of – you know how film is often related – film production and film-making is often related to Literacy?
- Mr. C: Is it?
- Michelle: Well, put it this way – it’s often used in the classroom instrumentally to enhance traditional Literacy, if it’s used at all. Not in your classroom.
- Mr. C: No, but can you explain to me how that’s done?
- Michelle: Well they’ll take issues of for example, inference or narrative structure and character arts from traditional Literacy, and then they will see how film can help build those concepts. But what I’d like to look at is that idea of – I think it was

Andrew Byrne kind of came up with the idea that media texts could be framed with – conceptually, within the idea of Oracy or Orality. Have you thought about that ever? In terms of it being more to do with speech and audience than individual consumption and writing?

Mr. C: I think it's hard for me to frame things like that because I come from a curriculum that has visual, oral and written as separate but interacting things, and it's hard for me to say that film is Literacy, and it's hard for me to say that film is Oracy, because I see those things as separate domains. I don't know how to think of it as Oracy because it's film (laughs). Does that make sense? Like, film is its own thing. Visual language is its own thing.

Michelle: Okay, so it doesn't need to be labelled -

Mr. C: Like something else.

Michelle: Like something else, right. Okay.

Mr. C: It has its own integrity and its own rules and its own processes. I'm interested in the relationships between the different processes, I'm interested in how making a film or performing in a film might be like presenting an oral presentation or communicating orally, but I don't think that means that I want one to be a superset and another to be a subset. I don't see why they have to be – in New Zealand, for example, when we look at visual language, we also look at static visual images in that domain. They're connected, the idea of communicating ideas visually. And so there's a lot of comfort with the idea that what you're seeing is the message -

Michelle: Comfort, what do you mean by comfort?

Mr. C: Well no, the challenge of that notion – and that's seen as meaningful thinking. And so it's trying to think – you know, how can I connect a poster to Oracy? Because that's how I think of visual language, and I don't know how you do. I suppose you can, the expression on someone's face as opposed to something that you see in a poster, but I don't get it. I don't know why you'd want to do that. It seems like an uncomfortable -

Michelle: It's limiting.

Mr. C: It's kind of like saying, 'A jersey is a bit like a brick'. It is, but because you know, you put jerseys on things and you put bricks on things (laughs). So they must be similar. I know I'm being a bit facetious but it's just... yeah.

Michelle: Can you talk a bit about the New Zealand curriculum?

[0:09:55]

Mr. C: I guess it's just that in the British curriculum they have Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and in New Zealand they have Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, Viewing, Presenting. So it has three major strands and Viewing and Presenting has the same privilege as Reading and Writing, and therefore as a domain it has its own integrity. They don't expect the rules of speaking to apply to the rules of viewing, or presenting.

Michelle: But they all integrate in some way.

Mr. C: They interact. You know, there are often words in posters – you know, like they're not usually only one of those things but we always look at them as having their own – the visual component of something has its own set of ideas and methods, and that they're not necessarily the same as the ideas and methods that you would use when you're speaking or when you're writing. I mean, you can have a visual metaphor, so you can find things that are actually present in all of the domains or two of the three, but one of them doesn't have to be justified in the terms of the other. Does that make sense? So I don't have to justify a visual text on the basis that it's like a written text, or that it tells me something about speaking.

Michelle: Yeah, which is sometimes the way when one is trying to justify the pedagogy that one uses using media. It's a kind of knee jerk reaction -

Mr. C: I think the way that I'm thinking is I'm trying to get the kids to think critically. That's the overriding thing. I don't really care how I do it, so if making film is a way of helping them to develop their capacity to think critically, which means deal with abstraction and identify individual features and note their effect on the larger whole, and that kind of abstract rigorous rational reasoning process, then I'm doing my job as a teacher in the classroom.

Michelle: Do you think creativity and criticality go together necessarily?

Mr. C: Mhm. Well, I think that they're – yeah, I think they necessarily do. I don't know if it's possible to be able to be critical without being some form of creative. And I think creating is a method of developing a critical response.

Michelle: How does that happen?

Mr. C: Because creating involves the unique assembly of fragments into something that contains some form of meaning, or some kind of – communicates something.

Michelle: Why is that important though?

Mr. C: Why is it important? Well, I guess that's why I think their education – I think it's important because I think that's what I'm trying to do as a teacher, is to develop human beings' capacity to communicate something meaningful to each other or to the world around them, or to make meaning of the world around them. And again, a lot of this does come from my New Zealand curriculum background. I mean, English is also divided – the bigger subdivide is making meaning and creating meaning – those are the two things that the English curriculum in New Zealand is designed to do, to assist people to either understand or see the meaning in something, make meaning of something or create meaning through something. And then how you break that down is kind of up to us. But I see that as important I guess because I buy that notion of the point of the investment and the education – that the generation of meaning is what we're assisting.

Michelle: What about the dissemination of that meaning?

Mr. C: Well that's creating, isn't it?

Michelle: So, you've got your thing, how important is audience?

[0:14:21]

Mr. C: I mean that's the social component of it. I think there's a lot of reasons as to why an audience is important, but that's a different branch of pedagogy, isn't it? I think it's quite important to try and look at those things a little bit discretely. It's like what you're trying to do and then how you're going to do it. Because what I'm trying to do is not find an audience for my students' work, that's just a part of how I do it. Because I think it's important to make the practice authentic in order for them to find it meaningful.

Michelle: So it needs an audience to be authentic?

Mr. C: Not always, there are times when having an audience makes something authentic. Sometimes other things make things authentic, but audience is a component to making the experiences authentic. But it's not essential, it's not the thing I'd put at the top of the hierarchy, that everything must have an audience. But as you know, I've experimented with engaging with audiences as a mechanism behind the objective of making the experiences that the students are engaged in authentic and meaningful to them. And that is I think sometimes a very useful means of achieving that, but not because audience is the ultimate goal, but because authenticity is. And some things naturally – some things make more sense when there's an audience. Some things don't. Like, personal reading doesn't need an audience. And in fact I think the audience can also be a



problem, I mean I think you can quite – by forcibly imposing an audience on things that are possibly better achieved in privacy, it's probably counterproductive. Like for example, making people make posters about why they love a book – it's not necessarily supporting reading, do you know what I mean? It's possibly supporting the generation of promotional material as a skill, but I don't think that it's the right means of achieving authenticity when it comes to personal reading. So for example, that class that you were working with today, they on a Friday will read silently with their headphones on. And I don't ask them to talk about what they've read, it's not what – you don't read to talk about it, do you know what I mean? So I think that idea of audience is about where something naturally – where it makes sense for something to be produced for an audience, I try and make it that there is an audience, and where it doesn't I try and make it so that there isn't (laughs). Yeah, does that make sense? So I'm not thinking that.

Michelle: And just getting on to the kind of nitty gritty of doing what you do in the environment in which you do it - I mean, I've seen enough to know that it's quite a stressful, full-on, intense kind of environment in any case for a head of English in a secondary school, but you are operating – you've said to me, kind of under the radar in certain circumstances, when you have to. And I just wondered whether you could talk a bit about those tensions?

Mr. C: Well I guess I'm saying that at the moment, the education system, or at least the sector of the education system in which I exist, the things that I am doing relating to making, I do in secret. Because there's no language or process to acknowledge or value that work. But because I do believe in it being broadly valuable to the students - not just because of the experience being good in and of itself, but because it actually assists them to develop the kind of faculties that will lead to their quite conventional success. I'm really happy to invest time in doing it. So I think a lot of the things that they learn and gain through doing the creating work with me, I think they strengthen the students' capacity to succeed in the conventional model. So I don't think I'm working at odds with the system, I just don't think the system gets what it is that I think I'm doing, so I run a parallel process of the stuff that I know will be seen by the outside observers as being valid, so that they can see that I'm – so that they're reassured by that, and then – much of which I also agree should be done in the classroom anyway, so I'm not against it. And then I have a whole component of my practice that is just really about me and my students and what I think is best for them. I don't expect or anticipate that the observers will be able to even process that part of the job or the work that I do.

Michelle: I also noticed you have obviously a very open, transparent relationship with your classes. And I thought it was interesting the other day when you said, 'You're not going to get in trouble if you say something negative to Michelle if she asks you a question'. Could you talk a bit about that, has that been the case? That they feel they need to say the right answer to certain adults?

[0:20:13]

Mr. C: Yeah, I think the whole system of school assessment leads to the entire school population erecting a façade in order to be meeting the approval of the observer. And I think that's an absolute industry in the UK, and that schools are judged on their capacity to effectively erect that façade as opposed to anything else. And the students are absolutely complicit in that, they realise that they have to say and do the right things when there's an inspector present, and that that doesn't relate to what happens in ordinary classes. And I think that's going to create enormous ripple effects through society over time, because it's duplicity and it's institutional duplicity, and it's enforced and encouraged by the system as it is. In fact, I think it's actually made compulsory by OFSTED, because they actually literally require that you do things that could only be done that way, and they punish you if they don't see you doing those things that everybody else does. So you know, the kind of requirements that they have of the performance of schools leads to the schools – by absolute necessity – operating a dual system, a system for the inspector and then the real system. And the kids are part of that, so I was just telling them to know that that stranger in the room wasn't an inspector, so that they didn't start doing – because that would invalidate your research, because they would give you the answers they felt you wanted to hear.

Michelle: So how could the system actually change, do you think, to be able to accommodate the kind of pedagogy that you're promoting and that you enact?

Mr. C: All it needs to do is to put the teachers, the students and their families at the top of the decision making chain and say that, 'You are the people that know the most about the needs of these people and you are the ones whose views and needs and requirements should be served by the government agencies that exist'. They just have to trust the professionals, the teachers and communicate meaningfully with families and students and listen to what they have to say and act on what they hear.

Michelle: And what if they say, 'Where's the data?'

Mr. C: Well, data for what?

Michelle: I don't know, they seem to require it.

Mr. C: Well that's them though, I'm saying if the teachers say there needs to be – if the teachers, the parents and the families and the students say, 'We need to be able to measure the performance of schools on these things' then they will say that, and then the agencies should do it. The other thing about that whole idea of data is that my understanding of auditors is it's their job to find the information they're looking for. I find it obscene that they go into a school and expect the school to provide them with the information that is their job to seek. The school should be operating with a focus on the students' needs and not the needs of the inspector, and the inspector should have the intelligence and the professionalism to be able to locate the information they're looking for within a school. So where's the data? Well, the data gatherer should get the data.

Michelle: What kinds of things do you think should be measured?

Mr. C: Well, that would be me personally. I think you should measure things like levels of – I mean I have no difficulty with the idea that schools – that one of the functions of schools is to provide young people with academic training, so I think there are measurable academic goals that schools can be charged with the responsibility of achieving, but I don't think that's all. I think there are social, emotional goals that schools – all schools do meet, but often aren't measured or valued for having done so. There are community building goals that schools should be rewarded for engaging in, there are – the level of independence and engagement of the students in the process of teaching and learning should be something that's encouraged and measured. I mean, given time I could give a long list of various things that schools should be measured on, but I would say in most cases that the auditor would be checking to see whether the school is consulting with the people it serves, and whether it is meeting the needs of those people, and whether it is demonstrating that in the ways that that community wants to see it. Do you know what I mean? It's not actually up to some outside organisation to make those decisions for a school. A school should be capable, filled with professionals, of evaluating its own performance and acting on any concerns or limitations in its performance. And that's something an auditor should look at. The same way an auditor of business makes sure that it does what – it fits within the boundaries of the law, and is doing what the shareholders want (laughs). Do you know what I mean? And the shareholders decide, and I think if you want to look at this kind of modern, western kind of capitalist model then the shareholders in a school are the kids and the parents and the teachers and the people that work there. They're the stakeholders in the organisation and they're the ones whose needs should be being met. They're the people who the school is for. Not as an instrument of the state, which is essentially how the school system in the UK seems to be seen.

[0:26:18]

Michelle: And what do you think of the PISA tables?

Mr. C: I think that they're just another extension of a very narrow measure, and I think that the pursuit of achievement in the PISA tables and the way that the UK does it is a classic example of them only recognising success in the terms of a measurable narrow objective as opposed to a larger objective. And not understanding that you can get to achieving high results and something by a holistic process as opposed to getting them by focusing only on that target. Narrowing the entire system in order to achieve a narrow measurable target better is not actually the objective of education. So, I mean I think there's no problem with comparing OECD countries on Literacy, and I think it's interesting information but it should be just given to the professionals. OECD spends a lot of time investigating more detail in relation to those things and we should learn from it, and it should stimulate us to go and have a look at what's being done in other countries where they apparently appear to be achieving success in Literacy, Numeracy etc but as a measure of the effectiveness and success of a school system, with all the things that schools are for and all of the different contexts that schools exist in, it's a joke. And it comes back to that kind of idea of the sort of international race to be the top of something, it doesn't even seem to matter what it is. Any more than you can judge a country on how fast they run, their fastest runners run, I just don't think it's a valid measure of educational performance. But it's a useful measure of that form of Literacy across those different countries.

Michelle: Well, if you've got time, just one more question?

Mr. C: Yeah, I think I have time.

Michelle: Could you talk to me specifically about the 'Cinémathèque français' project that you have been involved in in the past fairly deeply, and the ways in which that – or if indeed, that particular project has affected or influenced your teaching in any way? Or whether you were doing it anyway that way?

Mr. C: I think there were two things. One is that it was much more familiar to me, so I took to it really comfortably and it allowed me to work in the way that I'm familiar working. And I love the sense of – I could do it in an unrestrained way, so I felt really encouraged and really familiar with that. But I also think that there was pedagogy to learn from that - I really, really liked the formality of the restrictive programme of exercises and essays. And I have adopted that strategy of really sophisticated models, really, really exciting abstract ideas and then specific tasks that have quite well defined boundaries as a path towards creating

something unique and interesting. I liked the fact that the students can't – I like the rules aspect of the process of learning, I like the narrow canvas aspect of it because I think that it led to great challenging problems to solve that I felt my way of working in groups was really suited to. And it reminded me a lot of you know, the sort of outdoor education ethic of working with a group of people towards a shared goal and having to collaborate and share out responsibilities and use the strengths of the various people, the various strengths and sharing around tough tasks and cooperating and making decisions about time and place - individual responsibility and group responsibility and all the kind of dynamics of that. I just liked that it was a project that allowed all of those things to be engaged in explicitly. And I think it allowed it because it was an after school club that nobody was monitoring. And the outcome was viewed with high levels of critique, but it wasn't marked, so it was never going to be wrong. It was never going to be the worst one or the best one, it was just going to be 'our one', and that's what I think learning is for people. It actually doesn't make any difference whether the person's at the top or the bottom to the individual learning pathway, it's just – this is their learning. So it also had that lack of assessed outcome and that lack of -

Michelle: Judgement.

[0:31:22]

Mr. C: Lack of judgements, and a lack of kind of ultimate imposing – we've often talked about the criticisms that come from Paris and the possible biases that might exist there, but their cultural references - they actually quite studiously do not tell us that our work is not good. And they studiously do not elevate one piece of work above everybody else's and say, 'This is the good one'. So I think that they're – and I like that they don't do that.

Michelle: But they kind of did though, didn't they? Not in the process with the children, but we found out via another person in the clothes shop kind of assessment of – you know, with all the teachers from around Europe, that in fact your film was singled out as – I don't know, Alain Bergala said the best one – maybe he didn't say the best one -

Mr. C: No, he didn't say the best one.

Michelle: But he said, 'Les petits anglais have achieved something', or something like that.

Mr. C: Yeah, I think he gave a critical response. I don't think he chose it as being better than the others. I mean, I do think that you have a critical response, and I think that an individual – what do you call people that make criticisms?

Michelle: Critics?

Mr. C: An individual critic can take a position as well in that process, because Alain Bergala is not 'Cinémathèque français' and he doesn't say what the best film is. He gives his opinion and people care about his opinion, but it doesn't actually mean that – you know, it's never proposed that we're all just trying to get him to say that ours is the best film, that's not the object. It's not the object of the exercise and it's not what is transmitted back to the students about the work they do. Like it is here, where everybody's trying to get the top mark because that's the thing that the institution and the society tells them makes them the most valid member of the society – that is not happening. Instead, you can stand in there – you know, in a Cinémathèque français group you can say, 'That is an amazing piece of work' without saying, 'And you're amazing too', or without saying, 'More amazing than everyone else'. Do you know what I mean? Like, you can just say what you see, what you believe, based on what you think is important, and then there's room for a whole range of responses. So I think a critical environment is great, but I don't think it has to be numbered.

Michelle: Right, okay. And could you talk a bit about that – you talked a bit about the constraints of the Cinémathèque français project. It's quite fashionable now I think to think of creativity as needing constraints – or not needing, but benefiting from constraints.

Mr. C: Well I think when you're talking about creativity, we might be having to narrow our definition a little bit to creativity within the confines of an organised education system. Do you know what I mean? Like, let's be fair, we're talking about education here. Students walking in and out of classes at 50 minute intervals in uniforms with levels attached to every act that they perform. I mean that's the environment where perhaps a few limitations might provide freedom, you know? (Laughs) And it might provide a mechanism or a pedagogy within which there is room for creativity, and that's good. But I don't think you can then expand from that and say, 'Creativity requires restriction' (laughs). Do you know what I mean? Because we're talking about a particular environment. But I think asking the students today to -

Michelle: Yeah, let's talk about today.

Mr. C: To respond to the film rather than just make a film allowed them a lot of room to do different things, but in the end they still had to think carefully about how they

were informed by a piece of film-making, how they read a film. Because as a reading exercise, that did it. But I think it also helped them decide what to do when it came to filming something, and I think if I'd sent them out and said, 'Make a film, see how you go', even if I'd said, 'Make it like 'Two Cars, One Night'', I think that they would have all come back with those kind of action films that they all first – that initial thing they always want to make.

Michelle: Which is?

Mr. C: An action film with violence and death, and zombies.

Michelle: Fighting.

Mr. C: The stuff they see in mainstream cinema, and that they think of as being the ultimate when it comes to film. So you know, what we'll be doing through the next thing is I will be saying, 'Use a camera angle and a camera movement to create the effect of this', and they'll go away and just do that one thing. I mean I find that really successful as a way of allowing them to work creatively but giving them a frame within which to do it, and I think that's really great in a learning environment. Because we are actually – we're learning to think critically about film here, we're not just talking about how to make films. This isn't necessarily – and I don't think I'm in any way able to comment on what makes people into good film-makers, I'm commenting on a learning programme that has a specific set of objectives, and then within those objectives, that kind of practice I think is very successful. Because it is a kind of scientific isolating of features type of process, and I think that's why the Cinémathèque works for me in terms of its theory, because it is theory based. It's an exercise in exploring film theory as opposed to an exercise in stimulating the creativity of young people, isn't it? And that's what I do as a teacher, that's what I perceive my role as in the classroom as well. So I feel aligned with its object, which is why I can do stuff in my classroom that reflects it, because I feel like we're trying to achieve similar things.

Michelle: And on Friday, it's going to be interesting because you're not going to be there, and I will be and whoever else – the TA, was that a TA there today?

Mr. C: Yeah, and I don't know if he'll be there or not.

Michelle: Just a brief mention of him, does he know what's going on? Does he get your -

Mr. C: It's the first time he's been there.

Michelle: Oh, okay. Do you know him, or -

Mr. C: Yeah, I've met him. He's been in a couple of my classes, but I haven't had time to talk to him.

Michelle: But you don't know who will be covering your -

Mr. C: No.

Michelle: No, okay. But what will you expect to happen in that class?

Mr. C: Well, I'll set it up tomorrow because I see them tomorrow. So I see them before I see them, before that. But I'll set up an exercise tomorrow that I'll ask them to do on Friday without me there, of the kind that I just described I think. Yeah, 'Do this and then this and create this from' -

Michelle: And I know this is about the process and the learning – do you expect them to come up with some kind of unit of response? Some kind of media text of their own, as a culmination of what they're learning has been?

Mr. C: Yeah, in the end. In the end it will be a response to 'Two Cars, One Night'.

Michelle: Okay, and is that something that is going to carry on or is it just going to all end on Friday? Has this been a week-long project, or is it -

Mr. C: No, it's carrying on. This is the learning phase of the project, where they're using film-making as a means of learning.

[0:39:27]

Michelle: Oh yeah, we were going to put it into context, weren't we?

Mr. C: Yeah, so they're doing a film study and they're reading a film and they're making films as a way of engaging in the process of critically thinking about film. So instead of me showing them a film and then telling them how to respond to it critically and what valid critical responses would be and then asking them to reproduce what I've said in their own writing as a film criticism or a film review, they are being asked instead to look at aspects of the film that they find interesting or that they have thought to be successful, and to reproduce those in their own process of film-making. So that they can explore what the director's role is in making a film, so that then when they are ultimately asked to respond to the film and the director's decisions within the film, they'll do it from a place of knowing as opposed to a place of being told. So they will be able to, I hope, come up with both more sophisticated and also more authentic responses to the original text, and they'll be able to talk with a sort of sophistication that I need them to, but about the things that they see rather than the things that I tell them are there. So that's what I hope to be the advantage of using this way of teaching



them about responding to film. I could just as easily show the film, break it down, identify different things that they should notice, show individual frames, analyse those frames, tell them to write these notes into their books, get to the point where they understand that and then get them to write it up. And I have done a process that's quite similar to that reading 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and they did very, very little poetic writing as part of reading 'The Ancient Mariner' although they did do some. And when they did the poetic writing it was the same process, it was, 'Use the same techniques that Samuel Taylor Coleridge uses in order to generate effects of your own', and that's what we're doing here with the film. So it's a process – that's where this sort of work that you're seeing, it's the programme that fits within it. So this is the exploration learning phase.

Michelle: And tell me, is this – I know you had what you call a town meeting with parents right at the beginning of September -

Mr. C: It was actually at the end of the previous year, but yeah, prepping for the new year.

Michelle: Is this part of that where they have chosen this – did the Year 7s get to choose?

Mr. C: Yeah, they chose this class and I told them these would be the things they would do.

Michelle: Right. Could you just give a bit of a rationale for that?

Mr. C: I think what we're thinking about in terms of developing a broader learning programme and allowing the students to make a choice about what class they're in, is about having the students start to learn about themselves as learners, and also to give them greater agency in the learning process so that they start to think that learning is not something that's -

Michelle: Done to them.

Mr. C: Separate from them, but something that they're actually able to participate in. And by encouraging them to contribute to the decisions that are made about what they learn and how they learn, both by asking them what they would like to see in the programmes and then by giving them the choice between a range of different programmes where those things are different, they get to be able to start to think about the sort of things that they want to learn. But they also realise that there are a lot of choices made by educational institutions and that they are able to contribute to those choices, or critique those choices. So it's also about making them better members of the democracy, and better able to make choices for themselves, and to think carefully about the choices they make, think

critically about the choices they make. So it comes back down to the whole thing about how I want them to think critically about everything they do all the time. Not that they have to constantly be running a critical process, but that they're capable of it. And we should put ourselves – we should subject ourselves to that process as much as we subject the texts that we teach, so that we're – and that the students get to learn about making meaningful decisions about their own lives in a context of school where ultimately it's a very safe decision to make. So there's a whole lot of objectives around doing it that way. But there's also the pedagogical objectives and the freedoms that then gives teachers to teach the way that they believe they should teach, to explore their own teaching, to experiment in their own teaching, to justify the choices they're making and to think more about what they're doing in the classroom as well. So that they can answer the questions that students and parents might ask about why they're doing something in a classroom, so that they're both empowered and accountable for what they're doing in a way that is authentic, because they're being empowered to make decisions based on their professionalism and they're accountable to their students, not to the inspectors. And it has had an enormously empowering effect, and they are feeling more accountable for the decisions they make because it isn't any longer the inspectors who make these decisions about their effectiveness as a teacher. It's actually going to be the students who choose their teachers next year, after having experienced learning with them. And despite people's insultingly patronising views towards young people, they actually make very serious minded decisions about their learning and they won't go with the teacher that's popular if they don't feel that that teacher is effective, because they're not prepared to sacrifice their education for a good time. So what you do find is the students choose very soberly, and they will make quite conservative decisions. And so we have to, in some ways, use this process to encourage them to be brave and more optimistic about their future and learning. And the teachers therefore are given a chance not just to experiment in their own terms, but also to experiment with what might work with young people and get feedback that's meaningful. Because instead of just asking them to evaluate something that the kids aren't actually in a position to evaluate, they're actually being asked to make choices that are meaningful, and that is how you get your information about whether you've been successful at both communicating your message and also meeting the needs of the people who you serve. And then when an inspector comes in, obviously the problem is that they don't get it all. They don't have any concept of any of that going on in the background, and they just evaluate the lesson in the 20 minutes that they're in there.

Michelle: And the progress that has been made.

Mr. C: In that time. So in that sense, we don't have any respect for the inspectorate, because it's not inspecting our work. They don't actually have – they're not good enough at their jobs to even know what the work is that we're doing. So how can we respect or how can their feedback to us be of any value to us?

Michelle: And if you were to think critically about your own practice, if you were to actually try and think about ways it could be improved or things you're not happy about – I assume you are casting a critical eye on your practice all the time, but have you come up with any issues or problems or challenges or ways you think it doesn't work?

Mr. C: I think the problems are more macro – I don't really feel like I can give all the things that I can give them to keep them safe in the education system as well as experimenting, so in some senses I'm using them as experimentation subjects. I mean I'm never well enough prepared, I never give the kids enough feedback, I don't really do any of the things that I would like to do well enough for my own satisfaction. So I don't think there's any area where I do feel I'm doing a good enough job, and because I don't have any input – in all the areas where I think I'm operating actively, I don't really have much of a frame of reference that I can work from. So I end up having to judge myself against the students' achievement and the formal assessments -

Michelle: Ironically enough (laughs).

Mr. C: Yeah, because it's the only form of external input I really get as a teacher, except for that from the students and parents. So I don't think I can isolate an area of particular deficit, I don't know if I can isolate an area of particular success either. I would say that one thing I know I do well is build positive learning relationships in my classroom and I think I also do well at some of the things that I – I guess I can say I think I do well at getting the kids to think critically, which is ultimately what I can walk out the doors saying I've been able to do. And I also think that working with me is good for most students' self-esteem, and I think that's also really important to their success in life.

[0:48:56]

Michelle: Do you get that kind of feedback from them?

Mr. C: No, I've decided that for myself (laughs).

Michelle: But do you ever get any kind of feedback from them?

- Mr. C: I guard against asking students for feedback of that kind, because I think it's somehow a perversion of the relationship to ask them to start talking about the relationship in critical terms. A teacher-student relationship shouldn't be one where they're asked to help me be a better teacher, that's not – I don't want them to have to have responsibility for that, so I kind of avoid it.
- Michelle: And we've talked in a similar vein before about asking the students to reflect on their own learning.
- Mr. C: Again, I think that's my job, I don't think that's their job (laughs). I want them to be critical thinkers but if I can't answer questions about how good I am at something, what the hell am I doing asking the kids to do that sort of thing? You know, I do see so much of that self-reflection on learning about more – once again about accountabilities to external people who say the students should – what are they saying they should do? They should know what they need to do to get better. And actually, I should know what they need to do to get better and they should just do it and get better. Do you know what I mean? Otherwise, what's the point in a teacher?
- Michelle: So when they are asked those kinds of things, where does what they say come from?
- Mr. C: I think that comes from the things that we rehearse them in saying, the things we tell them to say. And I think if you ask those questions, you'll get answers that when you think about it in those terms, you can see are quite obviously just them saying what they think we want them to say.
- Michelle: Alright, have you got any closing comments?
- Mr. C: I think the closing comment is that if I just let everything that I've just said stand alone without a closing comment, the impression could be that I feel annoyed and frustrated and disappointed and disaffected and thwarted. And I actually don't. I feel really quite excited by my work and - I feel disappointed about the fact that I am in a position where I have no faith in the broader bureaucracy around the work that I do. But I also think that in the local situation of my classroom, I am empowered to do a lot of what I think is the right thing with a lot of my students, and if that's the case then it can't all be wrong. Maybe I don't credit the bureaucracy enough with the fact that it somehow manages to create that circumstance.
- Michelle: Do you kind of like the subversion?
- Mr. C: Sorry?

Michelle: Do you like the idea of subverting?

Mr. C: No, I don't. I would be happy if the whole education system was subverting something, like subverting crime or subverting hatred as a whole institution, but I don't like being subversive within an institution that's meant to be about positive things. I find that really troubling. I don't mind challenging societal norms where those norms are kind of morally indefensible, but not challenging norms within a bureaucracy that's actually about doing what is apparently the right thing for young people. That just seems like a counterproductive waste of all of our energy. So yeah, I don't like that at all. I would be quite happy to be one of a thousand or a hundred thousand people doing what I do, I really would.

Michelle: Wouldn't you be that in New Zealand?

Mr. C: Well, often I did feel like that in New Zealand and I also – yeah, I do know it's possible to feel that way. And I also seek the people around me in the work that I do now who do feel and think the way I do, and there are people on lots of levels – like you, and the people that you and I have in common, who are all operating like we are. But at the dinner you and I had with Theo and John – you know, like academics in a tertiary institution just seem so completely unable to think of it ever changing. They seem completely defeated by all of it, don't they? They don't think anything will ever change ever, the way they talk. And that's troubling.

Michelle: Shall we stop?

Mr. C: I think that finishes it, does that finish it?

Michelle: Yeah.

[End of transcript]

## ***2. Nathalie Bourgeois (translated from French), Prague, January 2015***

Extracts from Nathalie Bourgeois interview

00:35

Nathalie: The most distinguishing feature of this programme is the connection between reflection and experimentation. That is, we gather together a group of adults, (who are teachers, practitioners and cultural partners or coordinators) around a specific subject every year. And we *could* just get together and discuss the theme and how we would develop it in the workshops. However, how this project differs is that we develop an actual experiment with real pupils in the classroom, and at the same time share an object of study. And at the end of the year, we reflect on how the shared

experiment went, and also discover something of ourselves in the process. I think we could call it experience at the human level: because there are over forty workshops, and we can actually meet and see each other's work. I think that's unique.

02:10'

Another thing which is important and quite rare is the partnership between the teachers and film makers. It's not that we have a session for teachers and a session for the professionals. At the beginning of the year we all meet and we unite over some aspect of cinema. We don't just talk about pedagogy, we talk about film - it's an educational experience for teachers and the cultural partners, who don't often have the opportunity to learn about film, and even for the film makers, who are faced with a theoretical question *before* any consideration is given to the pedagogy. I think that's really important, that film as a medium is a central aspect of the programme, as a subject (object) that we question.

03:11'

It's not that we say, "Right, how do we go about teaching film?" It's the opposite. A question about film form is posed and the assembled are asked whether they have thought about this angle or not. 'Ok, right, well we're all going to think about this now, and think about how we can work with this pedagogically'. And everyone has a go. We mention it all the time but it's true, it's not that teachers are 'afraid' with respect to their pupils, but they are anxious *alongside* their pupils. Has the group really understood the question? What's everyone going to think? It's a special group of people. Everyone, teachers and pupils included, puts themselves to the test.

04:40'

*le va et le vient* – it's one of the credos of the programme, it's the idea that some projects concentrate on analysis and others on the practical side of things. And there are great projects that focus either on the analytical or the practical. But often what that leads to is an impoverished version of one or the other, that is, you get projects that justify analysis from the point of view of apprenticeships and the mastery or recognition of codes etc. I'm exaggerating ... and then you get projects which are more about practical action and general experimentation in all senses of the word.

05:40'

The fact of linking them, and I mean really linking them around a question.. Its not the same thing to say 'Today we're doing practical and tomorrow we're doing theory', that's not at all what's it's about. It's about looking, understanding and experimenting

Everyone, teachers and pupils included, puts themselves to the test

04:40'

*I ask about le va et le vient:*

‘Le va et le vient’ – it’s one of the credos of the programme, it’s the idea that some projects concentrate on analysis and others on the practical side of things. And there are great projects that focus on one or the other. But often what that leads to is an impoverished version of one or the other, that is, you get projects that justify analysis from the point of view of apprenticeships and the mastery or recognition of codes etc. I’m exaggerating ... and then you get projects which are more about practical action and all sorts of (unfocussed) experimentation.

05:40’

For CCADJ, it’s the fact of linking them, and I mean really linking them around a question.. It’s not the same thing to say ‘Today we’re doing practical and tomorrow we’re doing theory’, that’s not at all what’s it’s about. It means having to look about you in order to understand and to explore and experiment. When you’ve actually tried something out, you look at things differently, that’s what ‘le va et vient’ is.

06:03’

That’s what the participants all say, at the beginning of the year when you show the example film extracts to the children, they often have nothing to say about them, but by the end of the year, they have a lot more to say because they themselves have thought about the same questions. They’re inside ... it’s more than simply at first they’re unfamiliar with the film.. What happens is that after watching the extracts, it turns out that they have ideas about shooting, about mise-en-scène and about how things can be done in alternative ways different from what they’re used to seeing. And then this enables them to go and find their own stories. It liberates them from a certain model and gives them a sense of freedom.

06:42’

A kind of authorisation to talk about themselves and their environment, but to talk about it in a *new* way, and not by simply reproducing the things that they have already seen via dominant models of presentation and transmission. The thing that really moves me when I see their films is the sincerity with which they express themselves. Their films are about exclusion, friendships, a birthday that leads onto something else, things to do with childhood. Simple things which are really fundamental.. I don’t know.. my impression is that you’re lucky if you can reach the level of freedom that film offers.

07:42’

At first, they’re a bit disorientated, they start by saying that’s not film making - doing exercises. At least this is what the partners report, they start off quite happy, then they’re a bit thrown, ‘This isn’t film making’ ... They’re also interested in the fact that adults are interested in being with them, working things out together. And in time, something happens, but it’s not immediate.

08:29’

Often in the teacher/practitioner debriefing sessions – I like hearing how the participants report back the moment that something was understood. And that could be January or March, but it's not at the beginning. Sometimes they say June, which is another thing altogether, but the screening *could* be the strongest ... the moment where something begins to be understood. Whatever the case, it's an important learning moment.

09:10'

*Me explaining moments of translation .... and asking about the 'film essai'*

09:40'

That's an interesting question, the issue of vocabulary... the word 'essai' exists, it's a defined cinematographic genre. But vocabulary is invented in relation to the form. I don't know its origins but there were a few of us at the beginning who wanted to call it a 'film essai' naturally, because we didn't want to use the term 'short' which suggests something which is finished. We wanted 'essai' (or trial, an experiment) and 'film' in order to distinguish it from the exercises.

10:31'

I think that 'film essai' fits with the nature of the... and the vocabulary we use is important. Especially when we all talk in English. We're all a bit worried because we know that not all of us understand the underlying meanings of certain words like natives do. It's important to reach a consensus on the meanings of certain words.

*I ask about film sensibility*

11:35'

Sensibility is, what we were saying earlier, it's a question of the consciousness of certain things, but not in the sense of knowing about things, not that I don't want to know about things ... When I say consciousness I mean a type of sincere and close attention to what's in view

*(Me... Perception?).*

Yes. A quality of perception. But not really a *knowing* perception that immediately generates a discourse. Ideally, we normally say a liberated type of perception - to see and compare immediately what one sees with .. what you might have seen elsewhere, with what could exist or with what might be possible if you had the wherewithal or more film knowledge... you can 'see' a film ?... to see something in this way, but even more (futile?).. [indecipherable]

13:00'

But having this perceptive acuity already creates the conditions through which this sensibility can be felt. And when I spoke of sincerity I think this word is appropriate because it's the opposite of 'a priori' givens. Hence the reasons behind showing the film clips, which are often like a kind of



immediate confrontation: having to think about sound or about the context, breaks the contact with the film, either because of the milieu or the question posed. Attention is kept in a sincere way without being muddled with a priori knowledge and prejudices.

14:00'

*I question 'a priori'...*

That means: "No, I don't want to watch a black and white film". It's true that *young* people's sensibility is much easier to reach because there's a kind of wonder about the world. To be able to invoke that feeling of being amazed by the world is not easy. And film is there to... well.. when it's well done... you can be amazed by the world once more. And your capacity to do this during adolescence is difficult because of lots of different barriers. It's much easier to show a range of films to young children than it is to do this later on.

15:06'

You have to find ways of doing this that are engaging and things evolve from there. I don't know if that has answered your question.

15:22'

*I ask about the 7 – 18 age differential...*

Yes. That's been one of the principles since the beginning. Another interesting thing is that it's not one person's project, but it's a project that is *supported* by the thinking of one person, and that's Alain Bergala and his experience with film. I think when you have a profound thinker on board it helps everyone else to further their thinking. That's the case here. When people say it's Bergala's project, I say no, that's not right. If this project has instigated any kind of deep thinking it's because it's been there from the beginning. You can build on deep (*forte*) thought but you can't build on weak or banal (*molle*) thought.

16:19'

There are some principles that have been there since the beginning down to people who we came across who had already had similar experiences. Personally speaking, it reminds me of certain schools of art: groups of thinkers giving rise to further groups of thinkers – and I'm talking about the adults not the students. Unfortunately, it doesn't happen very much in film because new thought on film structure is quite rare. But in terms of pedagogy it's really important.

17:19'

Many of the principles that drive the project have come from people perhaps of a different generation who have experimented widely and had an interest in collecting (?) [*indecipherable*] evidence ... they

didn't have the same workshops, they didn't follow the same rules, different ages had different activities, but it's interesting to follow them.

*I ask about how traditional education can learn from CCADJ practices?*

18:46'

So what can CCADJ bring to others in educational settings? I don't think that on the one hand there's traditional education and on the other there's CCADJ. There are many way of learning about film, each to their own method... In fact it's one of the questions we were tackling when we were building our website. We're trying to put resources online for those who have no idea what the project is, who wouldn't be able to participate for whatever reason .. What can they take from this project? it's an experimental project, so at some point they would have to bear witness to their experience.

19:33'

I think there's an interesting methodology: the fact that the whole thing revolves around a filmic theme, showing film clips as examples, linking different ages, the to-ing and fro-ing between theory and practice. People use this kind of framework in a variety of ways, but we really have evidence of its success.

Also, there's an *attention* given to the children's films. But we insist that they aren't films for festivals: they bear witness to reflective thought, to experience and at the same time, they've got something to say back to 'cinema' – not just because they're children, but because they have worthwhile (*savante*) things to say about film, that don't necessarily belong in the category of kids films. For example, when we're choosing children's films to put online they're not there as illustrations of children's films with no importance, they are there as exempla with specific commentaries. They do have importance and we must start with that notion.

21:08'

CCADJ is a site of research, it's dynamic, it's not any kind of dogma, it generates ideas. It's doesn't exist to apply a definitive methodology, it's about experience. It ought to inspire people to depart from the norms, look for other things.

*I talk about the fact that it's not a competition with a red carpet...*

22:40'

No, because we wouldn't have the same films. Having said that, there might be no red carpet, but there *is* an impressive auditorium. It's the first thing that the children notice... 'Wow, our film is going to be screened there!' It's a significant moment because that's when their film becomes detached. People from your workshop are all there, and you show it to everyone else and suddenly, a 'little alchemy' occurs on that day because the film becomes a separate 'object', and that's powerful, it's the thing that counts, over the *comparing* of films, it's the event that *took place*.

(*Me: agreeing ... “physically, materially...”*)

Absolutely!

[End of transcript]

### **3. Interview with John Potter (JP), London, April 2015**

[0:00:00]

Michelle: Right. Okay. John, in your book, there’s a notion that I keep coming back to which is there are more things...

JP: Yeah.

Michelle: ... there are more things to be literate about.

JP: Yes.

Michelle: I think you said that somewhere.

JP: (Laughter)

Michelle: And I’m going to have to try and track it down. What do you mean by that? There’s more things to be literate about?

JP: More things to be literate about, I think it’s... well it kind of, it subdivides into this sort of functional notion of the literacy, so you could say there are more ways to be literate if you think about the many modes of communication that there are now. But I think the thing is that there are more, there is a wider recognition, not recognised by the school curriculum, in wider society, that there are more ways in which to be literate because you can make something, you can make a representation of yourself and send it up there, you can chat with people, you can communicate, you can exchange in all sorts of cultural practices which you would, which are actually literacy practices and there are more, therefore, there are more things to be literate about. So it’s no longer probably, well I don’t know about good enough, but it’s no longer adequate to say that you’re a literate person if you only know about poetry, novels and the printed word. To be a literate person now I think is to know about film, but it’s also to know about short film, it’s also to know about how advertising operates, it’s also to know about the whole risk safety continuum, it’s, there are many, many more things to be literate about, many more cultural practices which you encounter day to day

which are bigger and wider than literacy has been traditionally conceived. I think the seminar series that I recently went on in Norway was called Dynamic Literacies, so it's sort of saying that ways in which literacy operates are in a movement, a continual movement and there a couple of different ways to think about it. One is that it's not necessarily, there are more things to be literate about now, we've sort of seen that through media, it makes everything visible, but the fact is there always has been, there always has been more than print for as long as people have been able to make marks or talk to each other there's been more than print, so on the morning of the seminar series I was at the back of the altar in Trondheim Cathedral looking at stuff and there was a wood carving, a 14<sup>th</sup> century painting of the life of St. Olaf, and I took a picture of that to remind people that visual literacy isn't new even though people go on about how everything's more visual now, so you had people queuing for miles back out of the cathedral at the time that the miracle of St Olaf occurred to come and see this newly painted panel in the back of the church. At the one side of that the stones that the cathedral were made from had marks on them made by the stonemasons, so that was also a form of literacy practice. It was actually a counting practice, it was the signature of the person, we romanticise it now as we reinterpret it, but the literacy practice at the time was to mark the stone so that you get paid. And it was interesting to be in a cathedral that paid attention to the makers of, actual makers, the constructors of the cathedral, normally it's the story of the saint or the bishop or whoever founded it or the general or the whatever, but this is the actual material construction of the cathedral itself was really marked by the marks in the stone.

Michelle: Hmm.

JP: So, when I said there's more things to be literate about now, I think that media the way it's constructed and made and interpreted reveals to us many more of the modes of meaning making that are there anyway, but they're in combination now and because you can see how they're being made there are more things to be literate about, a need to know about how the angle of a particular shot tells me something about how that narrative is going to be framed and constructed by that, you know, not powerful or not as powerful, those kinds of things.

[0:04:40]

Michelle: Hmm. Hmm.

JP: And that extends to sound and the way visual literacy works.

Michelle: Hmm.

JP: I think that's what I mean.

Michelle: Hmm. Okay. It's interesting you should mention cathedrals because I seem to remember David Gauntlett mentioning something about that in *Making is Connecting*.

JP: Oh right.

Michelle: He talked about gargoyle makers.

JP: Oh right.

Michelle: Putting their signature...

JP: Oh right.

Michelle: ... on their sculpted pieces and how that was somehow reminiscent of the ways in which people make digital text and put their signature on them and put them up on YouTube.

JP: I think there's, that's... that's true. I think it's a fairly easy parallel in some respects but I think that the other thing to say is that it's not a fixed meaning. I don't know how David Gauntlett takes that any further, but I think meaning is contingent and contextual and I would say that I can take a picture of a stone in a cathedral, or a gargoyle, and I can put it into a PowerPoint or a Prezi and I can show it to an audience but I'm remaking it and I'm using my own knowledge of my own audience and my own ways of making literacy come alive to completely reinterpret it. If the stonemason was there, he would tap me on the shoulder and say, "All I wanted to do was to be paid". The gargoyle maker may also just be saying, "I signed this one so that it distinguishes it from my friend's signed that one over there". You have to remember that until the invention of print and printmaking, original artists' sketches were considered to be completely unimportant artefacts, so there's also a layer of capital and the whole notion of genius comes over it, so the sketches that Raphael, Michelangelo and others made in their studio were used to routinely clean the pots out and then thrown away and with printmaking it became possible for you to pick up these discarded things and make fragments of them available and mass-produced and then the signature of the artist becomes important and so... so, I'd agree that there's a, there are, it... it recalls it, but I don't think it's quite the same practice now as then.

Michelle: Hmm, hmm. Okay. Okay.

JP: To say nothing of the fact that on YouTube there aren't many real, real names associated with anybody.

Michelle: That's true. I've got a question here about pedagogy.

JP: Right.

Michelle: And the ways in which media education perhaps edges teachers towards the facilitative and I just wondered if you think that's unique to a media educator, or do you think traditional practices have got something to learn about those moods that media educators?

[0:07:53]

JP: I think this goes to the eternal kind of debate in pedagogy between content and process, doesn't it? So are there, which also is redolent of notions of power. So, are there things that have to be learned, is there a body of knowledge that has to be passed on, or can most knowledge be accessed and acquired through a series of different kinds of skilful processes of research and communication and communal coming to know things? And does that mean that it's really hard to ascribe value to particular kind of knowledge systems? And I think that's a little bit of the way that pedagogy operates in the field of media education, so is it important to know that particular shots are actually derived from the earliest experiences of film-making or the ways in which conversations are recorded now are changing in the way films and TV operate and that that's why they should change in the way that I'm making my short film with my camera? So does it depend on the continual, there being somebody there, a pedagogue, to point this out to you in order to make it happen, or does everything come through osmosis and practice and bashing things out in communication?

Michelle: Hmm.

JP: And rather than create a whole kind of fence for myself to sit on (*Laughter*) I would say that there is something unique about media education in that respect, but that it recalls other practices and I think particularly creative arts practices, so there is a strong correlation between artistic practice, the studio practice, and the practice of discussion and critique which still persists in degree, our fine art degree system now. I think there's something to be said about the ways in which people will look at a screen together and work out whether something is working or not and what more they have to do which is similar to the way somebody would talk about a collage that has been created, is there more that needs to happen for that to actually communicate anything?

Michelle: Hmm.

JP: I would say as well that perhaps poetry is also not, you know, not fixed but contingent on emotion and what gets evoked. I would say that, you know, that's what worries me about, as indeed worries Michael Rosen, about the new, the idea that a poem can be just a series of codes and cyphers to be correct, you know, in the new Key Stage 1 curriculum for that the tests next year which sound quite dreadful. So I think media education is unique, but redolent of other creative practices in that respect and I really like the way in particular there are roles for people within that, within media education itself and what sort of distinguishes it from writing, because everybody has to be a writer when you write, but when you make things, when you make media, you can be many different things at many different times, there's lots of different fluid roles within that. You can be in front of the camera, behind the camera, planning the thing, shooting the thing, exhibiting it, making the music that goes with it or all of those things, or just one or two of them. So, yeah, I think there is something unique about media education, but I've just been focused as we are on the making side of it, then there's the interpretative side is probably quite similar as well.

Michelle: Hmm, hmm. When you were talking there I was reminded about the *Cent Ans de Jeunesse* programme which I know you're familiar with.

JP: Hmm.

Michelle: And I was just wondering if you could pick out maybe one or two features of that particular which perhaps you think is unique or important?

JP: Yeah, I mean I deeply regret that I only was involved in one year of it and I think you've had a wider and deeper experience of the whole thing because you've seen how the different exercises then impact on what happens during that year and also on the growing expertise of the teachers involved in that, the film-makers and how to work with students and young people through that process, but so mine is a snapshot, I mean it was a long snapshot, so it was six months of going to every, nearly every week, and then going with the boys to France, so it was quite, quite detailed, but it still feels like it was a sliver from a much bigger, but my reflections of it are that I thought I had a series of prejudices going into it which were, I think I had already communicated to you at the time, which were, it's too structured, it's not loose enough, it's not... you know? It's going to inhibit rather than allow them to develop their own mastery. The idea that there is a mastery is going to inhibit their creativity in some way, and actually that isn't what happened, but I think it could have worked liked that without the pedagogy and so it kind of connects to your question a few minutes ago which is that the role of the pedagogue was so important in ensuring that that did not

happen, but it pushed the students out of their comfort zone but it allowed them to remain inside the zone of their own agency, in their *habitus*, yes, because it enabled them to think that they could reflect that back through the lens of some of the techniques that they were learning and make a better film than if they'd run around with the camera pointing it in any direction without any consideration for some of the structures of film-making. So it seemed to me that it offered a really great... I was going to use the word "compromise" but it always sounds awful like in some sort of deadens it in some way, but I think it was a liberating compromise, not an un-liberating one, one in which they felt valued that they could express an opinion and move the film in a particular direction, but also they were equipped with, equipping themselves with the skills all the way along, that's why I think the little activities that they did leading up to it was so important, on the bridge in the freezing cold, you know, looking at what the real and fiction and then thinking when they were in the school, how can this be, how can it, what it... how it can serve the film, so you have the time passing shot of the London Eye and it does, and the people are aware as they're walking past. There's not much in there, in the real and fiction, but what there is, is in service to the overall vision of the film and of their storyline. So, I do, I'm quite optimistic about it, but I'm really sorry I didn't get to see any other years, I think I, yeah, I'd have like to have gone...

[0:15:21]

Michelle: Well, it's still carrying on.

JP: Yeah, I know, I...

Michelle: What do you think about that, the longevity of that, I mean it's over 20 years now.

JP: I think it's brilliant, I mean it must have something, it must offer people something. It allows them to develop a sense of rule systems that they can then go and push a little bit. I mean the boys just pushed at it, didn't they? Even in the year that I was observing, and they were able then to defend their decisions to an audience of, quite a critical audience which I thought was really wonderful. And you can't really fake that kind of thing, I mean they were, it was hands off from the teacher and the film-maker, and they were freewheeling them, but they were talking from a position of some knowledge when they were refuting the arguments being made against their film and I thought that was very powerful, so by saying that they was a sort of higher power of authorial knowingness above them that they could reach, they then kind of reached out for that and then they



used that to go back into their vision of it, to I mean... so I thought that was really powerful so I'm quite optimistic about the model really.

Michelle: Hmm mm.

JP: But if I were to want to prove it I think I'd need to see it more often. I don't know whether it was just that year or whether in subsequent years equally important things have happened.

Michelle: Yeah. Okay. You mentioned there I think, or at least it made me think of the idea of simulation and how often, you know, in school contexts it's not often that young people get that chance for authentic collaboration with the outside world.

JP: Hmm.

Michelle: But I for one was lucky enough to have you and some film-makers come to the Click Club and ask the children who I was working with about the project which was really, really valuable. Not least because it was authentic.

[0:17:34]

JP: Hmm.

Michelle: I just wondered if you had anything to say about that?

JP: Well, that was something that I learned as a teacher which is that you work with giving and receiving respect for knowledge, however that knowledge is gained. So you would gain some... I wouldn't be able to go and talk to the children I was teaching at the time about their lives in Tower Hamlets without asking about their lives in Tower Hamlets, and so I couldn't conceive of a situation where you could go into a relatively new area without going to people that had been working in this area. The fact that they were children showing other children was really important because it meant that they felt that they were being treated as, if not experts, at least as advisors, because they've gone out there and made some of the mistakes and done things, or done things well, and would be able to give advice to them, so everybody gains from that situation. People unfortunately now don't seem to get that in education and they think that there is only power and knowledge and everybody else is just, has none, and needs to get that in order to become a person in society. And without that they're not a person, they don't have access to any of the codes of privilege if they don't have those codes inculcated them.

Michelle: Hmm mm.

JP: So I think that really it's quite, I suppose, it shouldn't be a radical vision of pedagogy, but I suppose it is still or is now to suggest that you can go into a classroom and you can want to write poems with some children, but they already have some ideas of what a poem is from their previous experience, either in school or out of school, so it makes no sense to me to go in with your plan without talking to the children about what that plan is or might be and involving them some way in shaping it.

Michelle: Hmm.

JP: It doesn't mean that you're saying that there isn't a learning intention behind that lesson or there isn't something that you want to teach them. I think this is often misconstrued, so it's either one thing or the other. The radical position for me has always been in the middle. You've decided, I guess, at home quite late one evening before you're teaching, "I need to teach this aspect of poetry to this group of children". We don't go in then, write that on a board and start because you're, what are you doing, you're not building on anything. And you're persuading the audience of children in front of you that you know everything about the world, and in particular about this aspect of poetry and they're not allowed to put their hands up because you're telling them what it is, but the natural way for me has always been to work with people and say, "Tell me what you know, I'll tell you what I know and we might move on". And hopefully we will move on.

Michelle: Hmm. Okay, so it's about that, where you start?

JP: It is. But you know that word "iteration" is to me teaching is all iterative. It really is iterative. And the other thing to remember is that of the 20 or 30 children in front of you some of them will have had huge experience of those sorts of issues around poems, maybe even have written some, and others will have virtually nothing. But I don't think there are many that would have had absolutely no idea of what a poem is and so you're questioning has to be quite skilful and you need to be quite skilled in your listening to what comes back. There used to be, in the curriculum for teacher education in the late 90s and early 2000s, there used to be a standard that teachers had to meet which was something to do with listening to what children say and building on it. That went in 2002 quite tellingly. As a standard. But to me that's the heart of teaching. Listen to what people are telling you about what they know, then you know where to take them. If you just assume they're all at the same level, well, that's...

Michelle: Listening is a dialogic thing.

JP: Yeah.

[0:22:08]

Michelle: That doesn't seem to feature as an important characteristic of, you know, the classroom.

JP: But I think it is of the media education project or the media education classroom has to be, doesn't it?

Michelle: Oh completely, yeah, well, I think so. I was going to talk to you about, you mentioned the idea of iteration. And that's a pretty key component of making the digital material, the idea of constantly reviewing what you're doing and that being something of an irresistible process which perhaps for, in a print environment, the idea of going over what you've done is very much a kind of corrective thing rather than a process of amelioration let's say. I wondered if you could a bit about that?

JP: I think that's absolutely right. I think that, yeah, the idea is that you get to... a finished product more... there's more rigidity, less elasticity about that with print literacy and partly because it's on display usually in a classroom or it's in a book and it has to be accessed at the point at which you look at it, you're accessing it, you're making meaning from it, and if it's not finished in the right way, it reflects badly on the author and on the teacher in that classroom, whereas with video material and audio material it doesn't do anything until you press play. When you press play you can be talking about it. When you're reviewing it with someone you can say, "That isn't what I meant, what I meant to do is this". Even if the thing is notionally finished, so you can have a version that you then go back to again later. It's very hard when, you know, the haikus written by Class 2 are on the wall and you notice that that word doesn't work in the right way because that's notionally finished, that piece is finished and then the next piece we're onto maybe a different, we're doing kennings or sonnets next and then, or we're doing a different piece of writing or we're doing persuasive writing. (*Laughter*) You know? That, so you move on into that process and make something else that's notionally finished. I think that media education, that conversely it can be hard to decide when something is ready for exhibition. Really hard. And that depends on, again on sensitive pedagogy and also on persuading people about, iteration is also about having staging posts where this particular phase has run its course. We only wanted a 90 second film with a beginning and a middle and an end. We didn't want a five minute thing where you try to include dialogue and explanation and back stories of characters,

actually we didn't want that, we wanted the 90 second thing because we're going to build towards a bigger production by developing these skills iteratively.

Michelle: Hmm.

JP: But I think there is a tendency, rightly or wrongly, to see print as a finished thing, but I think video less so. I hope that's right. That would be my hunch.

Michelle: Well I think, yeah, Andrew Burn talks about that, doesn't he, the... it's, ooh, what does he say? Media text is something that's sitting there always waiting to be rewritten or something like that?

JP: Yeah, yeah.

Michelle: He says? It's, or a set of instructions waiting to be rewritten or something like that.

JP: Yeah, yeah.

Michelle: Okay. If I were to ask you those kind of researchly questions like, so what and who cares, I mean what if we didn't do any of this? Two things, what if to problematise the things that we think are important, what if they're not, and who cares anyway? You know?

JP: Hmm.

Michelle: It's very easy to be celebrate, what I'm trying to get at it's very easy to be celebratory about the kind of things that we promote.

JP: Hmm.

[0:26:48]

Michelle: And you know, how can we problematise it, one: critically, we can always have that head on, but two: perhaps it's not alright?

JP: Hmm. Well I would, I mean first I would say it is important because of the way it touches other values and I think values they are important to me, and I think they're important to, or they should be important to our, the way we construct our society and our aim should be bigger than testing and I fear for the future of our children cut off from one another because they're competing with each other, we hear that there might be some plan, one of the latest numbskull dunderheads has is to make children resit SATs, you know, and you just think that really will be the point at which the lunatics have taken over the asylum, I think that would be, you know, what will the world have come to? We already have the most assessed children in Europe I think, possibly the world. To what end? Are

people happier? Is there greater access to equity and social justice? I don't really see any evidence of that. So one has to ask why. And is it, as Michael Rosen would say, so that you label failure early enough rather than celebrate success? I don't know. I'd like to live in a country that had a curriculum for achievement, for example.

Michelle: Hmm mm.

JP: Achievement and excellent which they have in Scotland, that would be quite interesting.

Michelle: Hmm mm.

JP: Whereas here we seem to have one that demarcates, or as officially constructed demarcates failure. I'd also like to say that there are vast numbers of schools that just get on with it anyway and do great stuff, you know, so let's not get into the teacher blame thing.

Michelle: No.

JP: Some teachers are well-led and are committed people and they can see the nonsense for what it is. They do the nonsense stuff but they also do actual teaching as well.

Michelle: Hmm.

JP: So remind me what the question was because I'm digressing.

Michelle: Is was the so what and who cares? So...

JP: Okay. Well, okay, so I think I care because I think that we need to aim higher and we need to think about the life course. We need to think about what media education and what making adds to the mix of a person's education and it adds skills of negotiation, problem solving, listening to each other, working on a shared, you know, towards a shared endeavour, all of those things, whereas the very narrow prescribed version of, prescribed version of education produces people who can rank themselves either norm or criterion referenced, depending, you know, they can say, "I'm better than that person," or "I am a Level 3.2". So, but how does that help anyone? It doesn't, so... it's a very, very negative and destructive form of education and I think whereas making, especially digital making perhaps has some opportunity to create a better sense of value and self-worth and self-advocacy.

Michelle: Why do you think that's getting worse, the instrumentality?

JP: Why do I think it's getting worse? I think it's just desperately easy to do, so it, in a commoditised world it's easy to commodify education if it can be just, you know, 'Pearsonised' into a kind of a curriculum that you purchase off the shelf, plug it into your iPad, a child goes through a particular sequences of actions on that and then hands it back and then you get a score. It's really easy. It requires very low investment of talent for massive profit. So I think commodification lies behind it. But also that notion that you can control and put people down as well, if everybody would just start to think for themselves, goodness only knows what would happen.

[0:31:05]

Michelle: Hmm. Okay. Alright. And if you could, if you just had a research project...

JP: Hmm.

*(Laughter)*

JP: Yeah.

*(Laughter)*

JP: Yeah.

Michelle: If you had a considerable sum of money, where would it go? What needs addressing most urgently?

JP: I think the things that we've been talking about need addressing urgently, so I would like to spend some time and effort looking at what slightly freer models of pedagogy, particularly around making and because I'm interested in it, digital making, but it could equally well be stonemasonry, which of those sorts of processes could go into some kind of feedback loop back into formal education, iteratively. Is there a way to demonstrate that there is real work in those fields and those greater spaces for, you know, where pedagogy is negotiated slightly differently. Could formal education learn from those? So I'd like to do a series of case studies in different kinds of settings. I mean it's interesting and exciting what's happening with computing, but it's not the only way to make digitally. So I'd have, could you draw parallels between computing clubs and film-making clubs and music making clubs and you know, after school making of all kinds?

Michelle: Hmm mm.

JP: And how could that then be used to direct a little bit more what's happening in school?

Michelle: Just to finish off, on that issue of, you know, in school or not school, you've written quite a lot about the third space of learning.

JP: Hmm mm.

Michelle: And something forthcoming, third space literacy, do you just say before?

JP: Well, maybe.

Michelle: Perhaps? Could you talk a bit about that?

JP: Well I mean the third space is like one of those concepts like affordance... and others which is, which are, become buzz words really easily and lose their critical edge because they become really diffuse as ideas, so I think third spaces need a little bit more criticality because it's not saying that everything that happens in the first space of the formal education is wrong or that the home is right, but it's saying that there is a third space which is a real third space but is also a conceptual third space in which you negotiate what you do and don't know in order to move on. Usually with guidance from somebody. If you think about people informally teaching, I don't know, motor mechanics outside school or someone learning to swim, somebody getting a badge for something somewhere, they involve a different relation with the stuff of learning, so the third space as it was originally conceived in, you know, the language isn't the language of culture, bah, bah, text is really about, really about a semiotic process of remaking and reinterpreting within a speech act, within a written act, so I think the third spaces we need to think about with digital making is it's a good analogy but we need to do some work on making it theoretically better and more rigorous. At the moment it sounds like a bit of a romantic notion that you easily make it, I don't think you can easily create a third space. I don't think you could easily create a third space in an after school club either. And I think sometimes that can be school plus. Likewise, I don't think every classroom is necessarily incapable of making this kind of quite interesting third space. I think that it's all quite porous, it needs further, needs further investigation.

[0:35:14]

Michelle: Further research.

JP: Further research.

*(Laughter)*

JP: Which I'd be willing to undertake, you know, if people would give me money to do it.

Michelle: Yes, yes. Right, have you got anything else to throw in?

JP: Erm... no, not really.

Michelle: I think we've covered quite a lot.

JP: Yeah. I think so. No, it's all, it's all interesting. I think I'm quite, very interested in that work I was talking about earlier about Kathy Bennett's stuff about materiality, immateriality.

Michelle: Hmm. Indeed.

JP: I think where those encounters take place is, can be a kind of third space.

Michelle: Or Dezuanni.

JP: Yeah.

Michelle: That...

JP: Yeah. That reaches out a little bit towards actor network theory which is I think useful. Quite interesting. Quite interesting. As indeed is going the other way up, communities of practice idea, but again you need to be careful not to dilute communities of practice down into something that's touchy feely evangelical, quite nice, everybody's, you know? Doing something together therefore it's a community of practice. It's got quite specific definition in its original one.

Michelle: Hmm. Yeah, I hadn't thought about those on an continuum actually. Community of practice, network of material relations.

JP: Yeah. And somewhere that space is somewhere in all of that.

Michelle: Yeah, as ever we're in the middle.

JP: As ever we're in the middle but just, I don't know, we find it a very exciting place to be is to be open-minded and to be facing in those different directions. Because it works if you make something out of it. If you create something out of it it's worked, hasn't it?

Michelle: Hmm. Hmm.

JP: Hmm.

Michelle: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

JP: Well thank you.

[End of Transcript]



#### ***4. Interview with Clip Club members, media education researcher and film-makers, London, May 2014***

Participants:

MC= Michelle, JP = Researcher, RW = Film-maker, JH = Film-maker, LM = Learning Mentor, and the children are: GG=Nimbus, EL=Clara, ESH=Wizard, GV=Gman, ST=Dual2, CH=Cara, DW=Leonardo.

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MC: OK, we're still hoping to get some shots done, alright? so we're gonna have a little chat first if that's alright? OK? so we'll leave that there, that should be alright [puts audio recorder in the middle of the circle].

EL: shall I go and change?

MC: er, no, don't leave us just now.

EL: OK

MC: so, welcome!

JP: thank you

MC: we have film makers, we have... [pauses to try to describe JP's job]

JP: well I do make films sometimes ...

MC: alright! ... [laughs]

JP: I'm a researcher but in my spare time I make really really slow, very slow films. I just put the camera on and wait for something to happen. Or I leave it on the dashboard of my car and drive and you get the lights from the other way up.

LM: ah!

JP: I don't know why I do that... but anyway... that's just me

LM: ... because you can

MC: er, shall we quickly go round saying our names to one another. do you want to start EL?

EL: erm, EL! [laughs]

GG: I'm GG aka Nimbus

MC: aka Nimbus, we've all got pseudonyms for the, for the blog.

EL: shall I say name?

LM: start again then

EL: Carla

MC: Carla, yeah, GG-Nimbus [pointing to GG], Michelle [pointing to myself]

DW: Leonardo

MC: Leonardo or DW

GV: Gman-GV

LM: JP., Mr.P

ESH: er, Wiz...Wizard23-ESH

MC: Wizard23-ESH

RW: I'm afraid I don't have a pseudonym. [Laughter]

EL: You can make one up!

RW: Oh, OK, I'm Richard for now and I'll think about that.

EL: OK

JH: I'm Jeremy

CH: CH-Cara

ST: ST-Duel2. 10 years old. [Laughter]

JP: I'm John Potter. I'm kind of not going to talk too much about how old I am. I'm another JP.

LM: Yes. Every, every room should have 2.

MC: So, John do you want to just give us an introduction about..

JP: Shall I just say what we're doing? OK. We've been hearing a lot about Clip Club because I know Michelle through my work as a researcher, because she is also a researcher as well. And er, we've been hearing a lot about Clip Club and I thought as soon as I walked through the door, I'd seen you before, and of course I have seen this really famous movie which we'll come to talk about in a little while, which I thought was fabulous really fabulous. Erm, so, we're very interested in learning a little bit more about how...

[Interruption from Teaching Assistant at the door - about a child's medicinal cream to take home]

JP continues: so where interested in learning about, something about how you made a film, but also about the kinds of things you do in Clip Club. And one of the reasons were interested in learning about that is because after the Easter holidays we're going to go into another school which is really at the beginnings of film-making, and I'm very lucky to be working with two proper film-makers. And the project that they're going to do in this school with children that are in the primary bit of the school, and with some older children as well, is all about film-making with using, well this is an iPad mini, as you probably know, er but using iPads as your kind of erm, as your film making device. So knowing that you've used all sorts of equipment and done all sorts of exciting things with Clip Club, and you're very lucky in this school because not too many schools are doing this at the moment, we thought we'd come and learn, properly learn, about it not from, just from grown ups who work with you, but from, really from you, so that you can really help other children in this new project next term to do some of the kinds of things you've done. I doubt that they'd be quite as good as you [laughter from Ellen]

immediately, straight out of the blocks.

JH or RW: No.

JP: And Richard and Jeremy as film makers who have been used to using cameras are interested in hearing about some of your tips and tricks for using other sorts of cameras during the course of the conversation. So is that alright? We'll try not to take up too much of your time, cos you want to get some shots don't you? but we'll just ask you some questions. Feel free to jump in with any comments, so is that alright?

All: Yes.

JP: So the first thing we're most interested to learn about is what are the kinds of things you do at Clip Club when you come running in after a day at school, when you pile into this room with Michelle? What kinds of things do you do?

ST: First of all we have discussions, we have, talk about how our day a little bit has been and then we crack on, we start to do some, talking about what we're going to be doing, planning and what not.

JP: OK. so you, you do quite a bit of planning before you do things?

CH: Erm, when we first come in, erm, we normally just think about the shots that we've already done and we look at the board and try to see what shots we need to get done.

JP: OK, so the things you've already collected, and you see whether you've got enough or you need to do more?

CH: Yes.

EL: Well we come in and we put our bags down and we all have to sit down at the table and we have to look at the shots and I have to quickly go and get changed, then I have to come back, and ...

MC: That happened last week [Laughter]

LM: Why don't you explain why you have to go and get changed?

JP: This 'going to get changed thing' is a theme, isn't it? [Laughter]

EL: Yes. It's because the last time I was filming, because it was in summer last year, I was in a summer dress.

JP: Ah OK. Yes.

MC: Can you remember what that's called?

EL: Pardon?

MC: Can you remember what that's called? Why you, why you have to get changed?

EL: Oh. I have to get changed because...

MC: It's one word. Do you remember what it is? I know you know .. [nodding towards GG, LM laughs]. Anyone else? it begins with a C. I'm in teacher mode here, I should stop...[Someone says clone] Clone? no...

GG: Continuity.

MC: Continuity.

EL: Ah yeah, I remember now.

JP: You've got to be in the same stuff for all of the shots.

EL: It is quite hard to remember.

JP: OK, yes. and do you know some people get that wrong in real movies.

JH: All the time.

GG: Erm, in our spare time we run a blog.

JP: Aha. So the blog is as important?

MC: [pause] ... erm... to some.

GG: To some.

EL: In a way.

JP: In a way, so that it keeps a record of the stuff that you did?

ALL: Yeah

GG: And it's a good way for all the Clip Clubbers to communicate

JP: OK, OK, so you do some communication outside of school time as well? OK. Very good.

DW: We also sometimes, at the start of Clip Club, we used to watch like Clips or films, like from other projects.

MC: That's right, we used to do a lot more of that, didn't we, but then we got making them, didn't we? But er..

EL/ALL: Yeah.

MC: Can you remember any of the ones that you saw?

EL: [sharp intake of breath and hand up]

DW: There was one that was like er...

EL: 'Alma'

ST: That was a nice one. I like that.

EL: And then this really scary one, it was really really scary.

DW/ALL: 'He Dies...' ... 'He Dies at the end'

GV: He doesn't die at the end

EL: It was really scary.

DW: it doesn't make sense.

GV: 'He Dies at the end' but he doesn't even die at the end.

MC: It doesn't show him dying at the end.

LM: No, we don't see him dying.

JP: So at the beginning when you first started out making films, you watched a lot of stuff, so that's kind of useful for us to know. So would you recommend that as a way of teaching other people? when we go to the other schools?

[07:16]

ALL: Yeah

MC: We watched some ET clips, didn't we?

EL: Yeah

LM: Wall-E

MC: Wall-E, that was it, not ET.

EL: That was the first day.

CH: And we watched one with the kid and his Dad.

EL: That was the first day we watched Wall-E.

MC: Ah, yeah... the little kid and his Dad,

ST: and the Chopper

MC: ... they got the football tickets...

EL: Yeah! the animation one.

DW: The Irish football match

MC: It was really nice that one.

JP: so when you come to, you know, thinking of your own ideas, do you start by creating a story like a piece of writing? or do you draw pictures? or do you do a bit of both? how do you actually go about the planning bit of it?

ST: Talk and scribe.

JP: Talk and scribe, OK, so somebody

MC: Talk and scribe?

JP: Talk and scribe, I'm gonna..

LM: Well done ST!

JP: ..write that down and remember that. That's excellent, really excellent.

DW: We also sometimes like ... we do.. we plan it first and then we do a storyboard. One event and then another event.

JP: Do you find the storyboards are helpful?

DW: yeah, because when you're actually in the film, you know which one you're doing next and if you were without a storyboard you wouldn't, you would forget.

JP: Do you find, just a matter of interest about storyboards, do you find when you're in the middle of it that you put stuff into the movie that wasn't in the storyboard as well?

ALL: Yeah .. sometimes...

ST: So what we ...

JP: Yeah go on, that's very, very polite.

ST: ... so what we do is on iMovie when we're editing, we take the good bits and the bad bits we just like leave them there.

JP: OK, alright then, but you might actually make up new scenes that are not quite in the storyboard sometimes?

ALL: Yep

JP: Yeah, Hi.

ESH: As ST. says, like how sometimes we take out the bits that are bad, like sometimes when we come to doing more stuff like filming, sometimes we were doing it, sometimes we use the bad stuff and we put like other stuff in it to make it much better. So sometimes it's kinda useful to put bad stuff on the side, so it can probably be used again to edit it.

JP: Mm. Because obviously when you watch a DVD as well sometimes people have collected together the things that go a bit wrong, haven't they? and put them at the end as extras.

ESH : Bloopers.

JP: Bloopers yeah. That's the word. Yes. EL.

EL: erm, well, i remember, me and ESH are like the main characters and no-one knew this but we decided to do something that... we were in a tunnel which is in reception and we put our hands out, so like we were reaching to get out, but no one knew we were doing it, so sometimes it is good to add stuff that people don't know, but you have to make sure it's ok to add it.

JP: Yeah, otherwise they're off doing something else and they're not recording it and you've done all that and they've missed it. yeah.

GG: Um.. we sometimes do this. And we have our storyboard, and we take shots we need to take on that day because like a few weeks ago, I thought I was only going to be in that week because I got a booster, and we were all quite keen to get shots of me in because it would be our only chance to get them. So we got the ones that... we got the priority shots first.

JP: OK, so you changed your plans to do that. Erm so can you tell me a little bit about the sorts of roles that you like, the kind of roles that you have when you're making it? does everyone have a turn at everything? Do some people like to be more in front of the camera? behind the camera?

LM: Sorry - if it's ok - do you mind if I just take some shots?

JP: Maybe we could get some later?

LM: Of course you can!

JP: Yes.

EL: We go in different places and every scene we swap around, so maybe ST is Director for one scene but then he could be behind the camera in another, and GV could be camera man but then on another one he can be Assistant Director. So we just take turns but me and ESH we can't really be behind the camera because we're normally the actors so we have to be in the scene. But sometimes if we're not in the scene we can, we can ...

JP: Is that what you prefer? You prefer to be in front of the camera rather than behind it?

EL: Well, people...

JP: Do you like to be...

EL: People have different styles. But I like to be in front of the camera obviously.

JP: Yeah. Yeah. ... different skills, haven't they? Absolutely.

LM: And you're very good at it.

EL: Thank you!

JP: What about other roles? Like actually being the camera person framing the shots, who likes doing...?

ST: Actually, me and GV [GV laughs] like doing...

JP: Yeah? Do you make people do things again and again and again and again?

ST: Yes. That's what the Director does.

JP: Behind that camera, are you pretty much in charge of what's er...?

GG: ... actually no, if you're the Director..

DW: Especially if you're the Director.

JP: Because there's another role, isn't there?

DW: Especially if you're the Director because you can control everything.

LM: There a couple of very funny shots in the bloopers, I hope GV doesn't mind me saying this, but as the cameraman he quite often gets caught on camera himself when he shouldn't be, but they make good blooper shots, don't they? [Laughter]

GV: yeah like that clip where I was walking away...

LM: Walking off slowly.. [Laughs]

GG: Yeah, it's like there's GV taking his time... [Laughter]

JP: So we've got people who like to act, got people who like to take the shots, who likes to call the shots? who likes to be kind of directing it?

GG: Me.

JP: Do you?

GG: Yes.

JP: Why's that?

GG: Erm, well there's something very satisfying about keeping people from going wild [Laughter]. And um, sorry if that sounds bad!

JP: No! I can quite understand that.

ST: Assistant Director.

{Laughter/Indecipherable..}

JP: Assistant Director. What does the Assistant Director do that's different to the Director?

ST: It seems to be that the Assistant Director does more things than the Director does. [Indecipherable]. [13:42]

JP: So the Assistant ... you're kind of getting things ready...sourcing props...like a Producer.

MC: They've got the clipboard.

ST: Oh yeah!

EL: The special clipboard.

DW: As an Assistant Director, you can also say like all the shots. Who's doing what,

JP: and making sure you stick to what *you* were talking about with the storyboard, making sure you stick to that?

DW: For example, GV - Cameraman! GG -

EL: [whispers] Director!

DW: Director!

MC: And we also just brought in a new role, haven't we?

EL & ST: [Hands up!] Ah yes!

JP: Ah, stills...

CH: Is it the photographer?

MC: Yes.

CH: So what the photographer does, [pronounces wrongly] *photographer* I mean, it's like while we're filming they take shots of what we're doing, like of the cameraman filming and stuff like that.

JP: OK. And why do you take pictures while you're filming? What's the main reason do you think? Or are there lots of different reasons for doing it?

GG: For the blog.

JP: For the blog, the blog could be one. [Pause]. That C word could be... that Continuity thing, to make sure everyone is wearing the same.

GG: Ah yeah, yeah, yeah.

MC: We also used, at one point, just as an extra, we used photographs as a storyboard as well.

JP: Ahh! OK

LM: Mm.[Remembering]

MC: Photographs. We did that early on. I don't know if you remember that? That was really early on.

GG: I just remembered.

MC: Instead of drawing cos they get, you can get bogged down in drawing: "I'm useless at drawing!"

DW: It takes a long time.

MC: And all that. If you just take, with the right angle, photographs and put those up.

GG: That was when we were planning Run School Run1.

MC: Indeed it was! Yes.

EL: Erm, in, I don't know, I think it was, in the first bit of Run School Run1, at the beginning you saw ESH on the floor and there was like the shot, and that's when GV took the picture of him. So we used, sometimes we do that. It's really good to do that because like it gives an effect sometimes,

MC: So they can go into the film as well

EL: yeah

MC: One after the other... because there was this particular... remember that particular shot in Alma that we looked at a lot.

GV: Oh yeah that eye one.

DW: When the eye moves like...[noise]

GV: When she like...

MC: There was a shot with about...

GV: When she like moved, when she like.. was turning into a doll.

MC: That's right.

ST: Oh yeah.

MC: And there were about 40 shots in about 2 or 3 seconds. Tack, tack, tack like that,

JP: Really quick.

MC: So we tried to do a bit of that, didn't we?

[16:07]

LM: There was one other area we used a photograph in, which was .. we didn't realise when we first started Clip Club that this would be so important, but um ESH came up ... he's quite an artist ... um *marketing*

JP: Oh right, OK. Good.

LM: That particular shot that GV and ST are talking about where ESH is on the floor. He's got .. like that [arms up], it was a perfect shot

JP: for the poster.

LM: And he actually in fact designed it was very involved in that.

MC: ESH in the film had dreadlocks, I don't know if you... recognised him?

LM: Yeah. talking of continuity! [Laughter]

JP: One of the things we're a little bit worried about... and I don't know if you find this to be a bit of pain when your filming, is the *sound*, the sound side of things?

EL: Ah yeah.



JP: How do you solve that? Because sometimes your shots are so good and then when you get them back and you're listening back and you think: 'What? What was he saying? What was she saying? Yeah. {Indicates to GG to speak}

GG: Um, most of the time we don't use the sound from the shot. We take the sound separately and just put it in in iMovie,

JP: That is really good advice.

DW: And in iMovie like, you know when we did that microphone thing, when you recorded over the thing. I think it was like that.

JP: You were bursting to say something then weren't you!

MC: Do you mean in *Explain Everything* on the iPad?

DW: Yeah.

MC: When we did the voice-over?

DW: Yeah.

JP: Is that what you were going to say? so you did it by voice-over? so that you could get good shots and then...

CH: Cos normally when we like, film, like, sometimes you can hear loud noises in the background cos there's like one group doing their shots and another group doing their shots, so we don't keep the sound we go on iMovie and we choose a sound to be in it

JP: That's a really good tip, actually. Very very good advice. And when it comes to the actual .. because I know you use ... Michelle's told me you've used different kinds of cameras at Clip Club at different times, sometimes you've used ... Well, what kinds of cameras have you used, without me telling you..?

ST: Actually we used erm... not a camera, a iPad camera.

CH: A Flip camera.

ST: A Flip camera.

JP: A Flip camera, the little ones, yeah. And?

DW: Video.

JP: Video cameras. The ones with the bar that comes out at the sides that you can hold it with your hand?

DW: Yeah.

ESH: When we're filming we have.. we have... I can't remember the name for it but we have something to adjust it, so that when we...

CH: Tripod

ESH: Yeah, a tripod.

JP: OK, so you've used tripods as well. OK so that's good advice. Yep?

GG: When you are filming, I think, I think an iPad is good for shots you want to have still but if you want panning it's probably best to use a Flip camera with a tripod. Because otherwise the iPads all moving.

JP: Cos we were gonna ask what were your top tips really for film making with iPads? What things should you really do and what things should you really not do when you're shooting with an iPad? This is quite new.

DW: When, like, you don't... it's it' all good, like for example, you're taking a photo ...

JP: You can see the frame of it?

DW: And then... someone just walks in suddenly? And that's sometimes annoying.

JP: Is that particular to iPads because people don't realise you're filming with it, or something?

DW: yeah, because they think that you're holding something else.

ALL: Ah! OK

JP: Good point! Because they don't look like cameras. so somebody could easily ... Not ... they're not doing it on purpose, because they just walk .. because they just don't know what you're actually ...

DW: No but sometimes it's actually good. You know at the beginning of Run School Run, Mr.Taylor..

ST: Yes.

LM: The caretaker.

GV: Yeah.

JP: Yes? [looking at ST] Go on, yeah.

ST: Ah never mind. Keep on talking it might come back to me.

LM: [Laughs]

JP: Yeah, OK, ... come back to you in a sec.

CH: I was gonna say one time, me, GV and DW were filming outside in the playground and it was a shot, it was a pan of the playground and I think it was with the iPad and the iPad wasn't very good because it was like shaking, and while I was filming I kind of filmed my shadow without noticing.

JP: Ah, that must be really easy to do.

GV: Well it could be EL's shadow.

MC: We thought we could use it, maybe.

JP: Keep it, keep it cos you might...

MC: Yeah, completely. Don't throw anything away.

JP: Don't throw it away. Cos you might there'll be a moment where you think, yeah, I could use that. [At GG] Yep?

GG: Erm, I don't know, can you get iPods with a flash? iPads with a flash? if you can't then I'm sure apple will probably add it soon. Because they just do stuff like that.

DW: If you get a camera.. get a torch! [Laughter]

GG: if you have the option, if you're using an iPad, then you should use the Flash, because it shows people that you're filming.

JP: Right.

GV: And then you could see it like...[noise]

GG: Otherwise you can see it...

JH: You can see if flashing on the actual pad?

GG: Yeah.

JH: Like on cameras.

GG: Yeah.

LM: Like the old fashioned red light.

JH: Mm, Mm.

JP: That's good.

MC: You can get mounts for tripods. iPad mounts for tripods.

JP: Ah, you can.

MC: I was looking at those on Amazon.

JP: So that would help.

GG: Oh. You can get special cases for them.

DW: I would get it.

JP: Which... so.. What kind of things have you found that have been quite difficult? and how did you overcome them?

ST: I came up with an idea called a split screen. At first like because like, you know Clone EL, it's difficult for us to keep on switching and switching, but we wanted her to be there twice.

CH: Yeah looking at her

ST: So I came up with the idea of a split screen, because like, I had a phone and I kept on doing split screens but the Apple's different because we had to do it on the laptop. So then we said oh, we could have done it on iMovie, so we looked on the internet to see how we'd do it. So I had to do it. And basically it's like ... we saw a little video on YouTube of a man talking to basically ...

[21:46]

CH: to himself

ST: Yeah.

MC: It was a piece of research

LM: Yeah. That's what it was.

GV: And then we had to look through the options, to find how to do it.

JP: Right.

ST: Apparently it wasn't on all of the... it was only on iMovie.. what was it?

MC: There were different versions of iMovie. So you then had to look for the right version of iMovie because we had a different version.

ST: I kept on telling Miss to go and

ST & GV: update it.

ST: .. but she said No.

LM & JP laugh.

MC: I have now!

JP: Sometimes the early versions are good... of the iPad.

ST: It was only on version 10.

JP: Version 10. OK. [to GG]. Yes.

GG: Erm, well we were filming yester... last session sorry, and I was trying to do an evil smile, but the problem is I'm bad at evil smiles, but I overcame it because I got glasses. You don't need the smile any more, because I can just go like this...

LM: You just need a prop.

JP: A prop. yes.

GG: Yeah. A prop.

JP: Forward slightly and that's quite evil.

GG: It looks sinister.

JP: It does. OK. Yes.

DW: And he also, GG, you know when, you know when everyone was saying how would you feel if.. [noise] what the..? Erm, remember last week? When thing said like, you have to get that smile right. How would you feel if ...

GV: Angry face.

DW: Yeah. Angry. But then he couldn't do that. How would you feel if

GG: Minecraft was...

GV: But it is...

JP: Oh! if Minecraft had crashed.

JH: Oh!

MC: To get into character. Right. Right. OK.

EL: He's very, very very...

LM: Feeding off emotions.

EL: Then he went angry.

GV: He went angry.

MC: What other things can go wrong. You know how sometimes I go a bit loopy?

[Pause]

JP: What other things go wrong?

MC: In terms of working together.

JP: What drives Michelle nuts?

CH: Sometimes, when we come in, we just go really crazy and we don't really, we don't really focus.

EL: Like me.

CH: Like when we, when we go in, we're just really crazy and we don't focus. So, like, if someone does something and everyone goes O-er and everyone just doesn't focus and they start laughing and stuff like that.

EL: [Laughs]

JP: OK

GG: The joys of being a Director.

JP: indeed, Indeed. [to EL ] Yeah?

EL: OK. I have to admit myself that I'm not very good at staying focussed because i love having fun. So this is really good because we're not doing school, so we all go yay! Then we have to show respect to Michelle, so it's good to ... you know.

LM: [Laughs] Well done!

JP: I was going to say, that's good, that's good.

EL: Cos last week someone made a [Laughing - indecipherable]

DW: Someone did a.. incident.

JP: I can just imagine.

LM: It went straight into the Bloopers.

[indecipherable]

MC: But also, just to refocus...

[Laughter]

MC: er.. yer know there's always a kind of really tricky bit where you're you're really trying to get the storyline

LM: Mm

MC: and you have to sit down round a table and talk about it and listen to each other's ideas. some people find it boring.

[CH or EL.? Sniggers]

MC: Some people find it difficult to keep still and think and maintain the thread. And that's really quite tricky but I think you've got, better at it. You know? What do you want to say about that?

ST: Not about that. But in our movie. I think we should add slow motion.

GV: Like. [Slow motion sound of speech]

ST: you see the iPhone5S. They said, apparently, they said that they have slow-mo and it would be sick, it would be good,

LM: [Snigger]

ST: like if, I don't know, it won't come, I know it won't come on this, it might come on iOS8 or something like that. But I think we should have slow-motion in our ...

MC: Maybe we could do that, but it wasn't quite what we were discussing, was it?

[ST makes slow motion noise] Er... Does anyone have any ideas about working in a group and how that is?

ESH: Sometimes when we work in a group, like say if we wanna be with someone like, like, say if you wanna be with your friends for example and you work as a group and sometimes you misbehave and you go with a ball. Sometimes, when you're with other people, sometimes, the other .. the other person that you're with, sometimes the both of you actually are a good combination together. Like you get on with it and you like focus and the combination with the both of the people, however you wanna put it, the both of them like they, they get on with ... the work that they produce is actually quite good.

JP: Yeah.

ESH: So, like, I'm trying to say they like, the more... if you're not with your friends, you could make a good combination of work.

[Pause, JP acknowledges]

LM: This is an interesting group from my point of view, as a Learning Mentor in the school. Erm. It is an interesting group because if you were to go to the playground, it's not necessarily that all these would be hanging out together. But they have a bond now. They've created something and they've appreciated the different characters that are in the group and they are all very different, but they work together excellently.

JP: Mm, I can see that.

EL: I know.

LM: Exactly.

JP: [To CH.] Yes.

CH: I really like working in a group because normally, like what ESH said, you normally with your friends but if you like erm, work with different people you can kind of see what you can do together to make a really good shot. And you can also see what they do, like with the camera.

JP: Excellent. Like learn off each other.

CH: yeah.

JP: Erm. Just before I take any more. [To JH & RW] I just wondered if we'd covered the sorts of things that from a film maker's point of view., what you were...

JH: Editing I was interested in. Who does most of the editing? Anyone? or do you all edit?

ALL: We all do it.

ST: But Miss, more me and Miss.

JH: Because editing's difficult to do with more than one person, it's hard.

MC: Yeah, yeah.

JH: for more than one person.

MC: What happened on the first project was that they all did little bits of editing and then finally it was pulled, I pulled the little bits together.

JH: Mm

MC: But it's a constant issue, if you're working on one film. How to give everybody a go. And I'm still trying to work that one out. I don't know how I'm going to do it with the sequel for example. Especially when we've got the iPad which doesn't quite have the functionality that's erm, you know a full iMovie version's got. I don't know if anyone's got any er, anything to say about editing?

GG: How many Macs do we have? I mean that are available to use?

MC: Three.

GG: But we could put the footage onto all of the Macs, which I know is very hard.

MC: No, we can do that

GG: Apple won't like it. Erm, and we could split us into groups, 2, 3, 4 whatever and erm, we could all edit it and at the end we could come together and improve and criticise people's editing and then put it all together one that we all think is perfect.

MC: yeah. yeah.

EL: But are we filming any shots today?

[Laughter]

MC: Yes, maybe in another 5 minutes.

JP: We won't, we don't want to hold you back too much.

MC: Do you want to go and get changed? Is that the key issue?

JP: Is that your...? You could go...

MC: I don't know if you need to do it actually, because we could do a load of close-up faces?

JP: We won't be doing those shots today, the dress shots.

EL: Is there any close-up faces that I'm doing?

MC: Yes. You all have a close-up face.

JP: So, cos I know that JH does lots of editing and that's ...

JH: Yes I was interested, something else, and this is a difficult question, just see what you think: do you watch TV and watch films and when you go to the Pictures house, do you see it differently?

ALL: Yes.

JH: What goes through your mind when you're watching a film? or when you, when you're watching TV? Go on [to DW].

DW: Like when they do like, cartoons,

JH: Yeah

DW: Especially like, how did they do that? how did they do that? That's what I'm sometimes thinking.

JP: It makes you curious about how they do stuff.

ST: Sometimes it puzzles me, how they... a cartoon... how do they actually make them move fully?

GV: Yeah!

ST: Because if you look at it, after that Ponyo one. There were like people, they was like

GV: They have to move it slowly.

ST: It was understandable. I don't know the word, it was like, anyone who watched that would know

ESH: It was stop motion.

ST: Yeah. Anyone who watched that would know that it was made out of paper. If you compare it to cartoons. It's like rigged (?) I don't even know how to do it, like,

GG: Detail?

ST: Yes ... [disbelief]

JP: Yes [to ESH]

ESH: I think it's because when film makers make cartoons they don't actually like just make it up. Before they do it, they actually draw the people and then they draw it first and then they like, they, get, they like, when they've finished drawing the picture. They would like do it on a system and then the system, i think it erm , it, erm, it

GV: photocopies

ESH: Yeah, it photocopies the character and somehow the technology makes the character like to be able to move and walk. But first you need to draw the character before it's...

JP: Mm.

EL: Like Tom and Jerry

ESH: Yeah. Tom and Jerry yeah.

GG: That's how they did, you know, the last Harry Potter, the very last one? In that epic battle scene at the end, what they did, it took them about 5 months or 6 months to build the whole of Hogwarts and everything in the computer. And then what they could do is they could fly the camera in through the window from, to miles away from the school and it would all look perfect.

JH: Hum.

GG: That's how they conquered that problem.

EL: OK.

JP: That's special effects, animation, editing. Does anyone really, really, really like editing?

[Laughter]

ST: Definitely.

[JH puts hand up!]

JP: Ah there you go, look! [Laughter]

JH: What's wrong with me? [Laughter]

EL: It's really fun.

JP: What do you like about it?

EL: Well...

JP: Cos some people might think No! that's the bit where...ooh, it's so hard... What do you like about it?

EL: Well if you know what to do then it's quite easy.

JH: Maybe that's my problem. Yeah.

[32:12]

[Laughter]

EL: Erm, I like erm, to know if you have just a plain character and saying nothing you can do voice-overs and record stuff so it's like a real voice. Because sometimes we make our own little shots and movies and we go onto this special thing and then we record our voice and we pick a certain music to go to our theme and it's just really fun because you can bring everything together and go really crazy and stuff with what you're doing.

CH: When you edit, it's kind of fun because you get to see what we have done, and you can make it better through editing. Like if you've got an idea you can try to make it better with all the special effects.

[33:06]

ST: For me it's just using the iMac because as for me I just like Apple. I told Sir that i just want to work in a Apple store. [Laughter].

[Indecipherable]

EL: Anything which has an Apple...

LM: Fruit n Veg.

RW: I just got a question about how you enjoy working on projects? So this is a hypothetical question. If you had 3 weeks, if Michelle says 'Right, we got 3 weeks to make a film.' if she said she gave you 2 choices. She says 'Right, choice 1 is - 'We're gonna write and plan and script and



storyboard for a week and then we're gonna film for 2 weeks. And if we have to do loads of retakes that's fine.' Or, option 2, 'We're gonna write and plan and storyboard for 2 weeks and then we're gonna film it in Week 3'. Which one would you choose?

DW: I'd say option 2.

GV: Option 1.

DW: Because if you, if you go, you like, the first week you actually do it. But in the first week you're like planning it, and the next week you're like finalising the, what are you doing, and who's doing what, and stuff and then the last week hopefully it would come together.

JP: Who'd have thought Option 1? Somebody... a few people...

EL: I think Option 1 because a week doing planning is OK because we can type all our ideas on paper and then we can go over it. And that'd be good so we can do that for a whole lesson but with our school you need extra time because we do more shots and then we do more... cos the first week we were doing Run School Run 2, I wasn't in the right clothes. But we the shots but we had to do those all over again because it was all wrong.

JP: So having an extra week would give you time if things hadn't quite gone to plan, you could go back over it.

ESH: Even when you're at home it could catch back to your mind and then you come back and do it again.

JP: Yeah. What were going to say?

GG: Option 1 because with filming erm, when you plan, you can plan, you can do it, except I think the most part of the changes you make are actually while you're on the set and you need lots of time to film because one you've got to take each shot for about 10 seconds longer than you need it, even if you're only going to use one second of it, you have to take it for about 6.

JP: Yes.

GG: And erm, as .. I can't remember who it was though, I can't remember who it was but they said something, but you have to retake lots because I don't mean this badly or anything but like even professional film makers, they always make mistakes,

JH: Oh yeah.

GG: .. when they're filming. So you have to take lots of shots over and over again,

JP: Over and over again, yeah.

LM: True.

JP: Anyone else on these options?

CH: I think Option 1 because it will be much better, and once you start planning your story and getting the events, if you start filming, like, as GG said, you can start to change things around while you're filming in the 2 weeks, and you can like, make the film better than just doing plain things, and you can like change it up, add little bits in between the film.

JH: I'll need some toothpaste.

[Laughter]

JP: You like Option 2.

JH: I like Option 2, nice n steady.

JP: Steady, steady as you go.

RW: It's interesting, so many went with Option 1.

JH: It is, it is, I'm scared about that.

JP: What about Option 1.5?

[Laughter]

EL: Yes! That's what I.... I didn't know you could ...

JP: Compromise.

[Laughter]

JP: But I mean that way you could start to gather some shots in Week 2, can't you. And then, and then go back..

RW: You can't just make up another Option.

[Laughter]

JP: I just have made up another Option.

[Laughter]

JP: Right, I think we've erm, have we got? we've got quite a lot of information.

JH: Yeah, very, very good ...

RW: Yeah, really useful.

JP: We just wanted to say erm thank you very much for giving us your time. We've used quite a bit of your Clip Club this week for us, we really do appreciate it.

JH: We do.

JP: Wanted to know would you be interested in seeing some of the stuff that they make? These other children later in the summer?

ALL: Yeah. Of course!

JH: Are you all the same year?

ALL: Yes. We are.

JH: Which year are you in?

ALL: Year 6.

ST: We're all in Year 6 but in different ..

CH: ..classes

ESH: There's 2 classes.

LM: We started it in Year 5 though, didn't we.

ESH: We started in Year 4. We started in Year 4.

JP: Because we're working with Year 5 and Year 8, but for I think you'd be probably quite interested later on to see some of the shots.

EL: Yeah.

JP: And if you are then we'll make sure that they get back to you. I really really appreciate the time that you've given us in the Clip Club, and you've only a little bit of time now to go and get some shots.

DW: Yeees.

GG: 15 minutes.

EL: Are you still staying?

JP: We can hang around and watch , if that's OK?

ALL: Yes.

LM: I think, we, we.. I mean, I don't like to speak for the group but definitely, it's quite nice to sit around and talk about all the success we've had.

GG: Yes.

LM: ..so you coming in to listen to that.

DW: I think it's been really good. It's been really good.

LM: .. gives us the chance to speak, all of them. And as you can see, they speak.

RW: Yeah. Yeah. Lots of opinions. It's been really great.

LM: It's been a nice little moment, I think.

EL: Do you remember last week, we were supposed to do me going down the stairs?

LM: Yes.

EL: Can we do this this week?

LM: I'm not sure what the running order is this week?

EL: Can we?

LM: Yep?

GG: Yep. We'll have to do that at a separate time because we've got to set up the bottom of the stairs.

ST: Miss, Miss, before we all go, can you play that clip of me again, shouting?

[Laughter]

MC: No, we're not doing that now.

JP: I'll come back to that another time.

LM: We'll stick it in the bloopers, so you can see it.

JH: Yeah right. Great. Good, good, good.

LM: Or maybe it'll be part of the movie, Who knows? We don't know yet.

JP: thank you very much, we'll try and keep out of your way while you er...

ST: What is that?

EL: Michelle!

GG: It is my beautiful, beautiful Raspberry Pi.

[Pause]

DW: That's not a Raspberry Pi.

[Noise]

[39:00]

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