

Youth Video-Making:
Selves and Identities in Dialogue

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Well you have to understand, you're looking at a guy who grew up watching thousands of YouTube videos. So when I got a camera—this was my first camera—I just thought well I guess I'll do what I saw.

Danny, age 17

This chapter draws on an on-going longitudinal, collaborative visual ethnography *Children Framing Childhoods* and its follow-up study, *Looking Back*, in which Danny, quoted above, took part.ⁱ The project has dual goals; first, to engage youth in photography and video-making as a means to feature their identities and perspectives on immigrationⁱⁱ, social and cultural differences, and family-school relationships over time; and second, to nourish an iterative and dialogic interpretive process between youth participants and adult researchers that troubles the relationship between what we see and what we know. A key objective of the project is to build an audio-visual archive that challenges dominant (mis)representations of children and youth growing up in urban, culturally diverse, poor and working-class communities so that teachers are better prepared to recognize young people's funds of knowledge and agency. Through their use of photography and video, children and youth can bring to light preferred identities, aspirations, and passions, as well as hidden social realities that may be outside the view of adults in positions of authority. By positioning youth as media producers and interpreters of each other's self representations in dialogue with researchers as curious and interested viewers and analysts, we advocate a need-to-know-more stance toward young people's self and identity making through video. We understand this dialogic relationship between adult

researchers and youth participants as fundamental to the practice of *collaborative seeing* - an approach to participatory video -- that we describe in this chapter.

As a model of inquiry and tool of analysis, *participatory video* encompasses different methods, and a spectrum of youth participation. At one end of the continuum, youth and adults can be positioned as “co-researchers”/co-producers, as in participatory action research (PAR) projects, while at the other end, youth participate in adult-led research and are guided or instructed in their visual media production toward a specific end, with adult researchers doing the editing, coding and interpreting.ⁱⁱⁱ *Children Framing Childhoods* and *Looking Back* fall somewhere in the middle of this continuum of participation and participatory analysis and considers the young people’s changing representations and perspectives over time.^{iv}

In this paper we describe our approach to understanding young people’s video-making as self and identity work, and consider how their self representations are shaped by an ever-widening set of contexts, social practices and audiences. Our analysis is premised on two assumptions: a) that there are complex layers of meanings and knowledge embedded in the young people’s video-making (their choices and intentions), in the images and narratives they produce, and in how they hope to be seen by others through their videos; and b) that none of this can be taken at “face value.” This chapter pivots around these issues with both a sense of appreciation for and skepticism about what we can claim to know about the young people’s selves and identities through their video-making. In order to explore these issues, we first describe our research process. We then discuss the case of Danny and our interpretation of some elements of the self and identity work contained in his video, which we offer as one piece of a much larger

puzzle about young people as engaged “publics” (Ito, 2008, p. 2) who “react, (re)make, and (re)distribute” culture and knowledge. We offer additional evidence drawn from the videos of two other youth participants before concluding with some reflections on the practice of collaborative seeing as a means to better understand young people’s identities and agency.

Brief Description of the Research

The school in which *Children Framing Childhoods* (2003-2007) took place is like many urban, elementary schools struggling to meet the federally imposed standards of *No Child Left Behind*. It is located in the US city of Worcester, Massachusetts, a region that is rich in racial, ethnic, national, linguistic diversity, and has some economic diversity but is mostly working class. Since the turn of the century, Worcester has been home to diverse and shifting groups of migrants, and the school reflects this historic pattern. It serves immigrant families from a range of nations including (to name a few) Albania, Iran, Kenya, Puerto Rico, Colombia, and Vietnam. Of the 370 students enrolled when the research began, 92% were eligible for free and reduced school lunch, 37% were White; 10% were Black; 18% were Asian and 35% were Hispanic.^v

Thirty-four children, ages 10 and 11 – selected by the principal, 5th grade teachers and technology teacher in 2003 -- were initially given disposable cameras with twenty seven exposures and four days to photograph their family, school, and community lives.^{vi}

Within a week the children’s photographs were developed and they were interviewed individually by a member of the research team about their images, what they had meant to convey and if there were any pictures they wished they could have taken but didn’t.

They were also asked to select the five photographs that best represented them to share with peers. A month later, the children met in small groups to discuss their five favorite photographs and to respond to each other's images. Embedded in the design of the project was a commitment to give the young people editorial authority over what images would be shared with different audiences – including their peers, teachers, educators-in-training, and then a larger audience who would attend an exhibition of their work. The project offered these multiple “audiencing” opportunities as a way to explore the multiplicity of meanings and context-dependent perspectives that the children held on their everyday lives and chosen self representations.^{vii} Tracing the children's “multivoicedness” about their photographs has offered insight into their intentions, emotions, and agency as well as their perspectives about the relationship between home, school and community life (Luttrell, 2010; Luttrell et al forthcoming).

In the follow-up project, *Looking Back* (2010-present), Luttrell was able to contact twenty-six (26) of the thirty-four (34) original participants, who were now attending six different high schools. All agreed to be interviewed about their childhood photographs and to reflect upon the ways in which they and their lives have and have not changed. Twenty-two (22) participants then agreed to continue by taking photographs and later videos to document their contemporary life-worlds.^{viii} Mirroring the early methodology, participants were again given a disposable camera and were asked to select five favorite photographs to assemble into a digital narrative using an online program called VoiceThread; after sharing their own stories, they viewed and responded to each other's “threads” by leaving audio or text comments.^{ix} Participants were then given Flip video cameras and invited to “Make a short video about you, your world, or your life.” We

provided no instructions or guidance with regard to composition, sound, narrative, or camera work, continuing to believe, ^x as with photography in the early phase of the study, that “there is merit in projects that seek to preserve and understand whatever meanings children [and youth] might give to their images [and videos]” (Luttrell, 2010). In late April 2011, participants came together for an in-progress workshop where youth reflected on the experience of filming, reviewed their footage, and learned the simple Flip video-editing program. They pulled out favorite clips, linked sequences, (some) added music, and created title pages. Nineteen (19) of the twenty-two (22) completed a short video of five minutes or less within two weeks of the workshop.

As a first step in the collaborative seeing process, the research team viewed the completed youth videos to prepare for an audiencing session during which youth would screen and talk about their own and others’ projects. We observed patterns among the pieces—including references to Facebook and YouTube, the use of music—and we discussed the diversity of the films with regard to style and content. We identified three related types: *a day in the life*, films that presented the youth’s activities over the course of a day; *my self and my people*, videos that depicted the filmmaker with and through friends or family members; and *collage*, films that pieced together disparate elements.

Wendy Luttrell and David Chapin then met to select clips from each youth film to compile into a montage that would be viewed and discussed with the youth participants. Our selections were guided by a commitment to include the full range of people, places, activities, and settings that were contained across the videos. Using Lyn Yates’ (2010) distinction between analyzing video as a “window to the world” or as a “window to identity” (p. 283) our aim was to identify segments of both. We selected clips from each

of the films that spoke to the *contexts* youth portrayed as well as their *perspectives*, combining a focus on “what happens” as much as “what matters.” These clips became the raw material for a ten-minute montage, the outcome of our researcher vision (Chapin produced the video). We were interested to learn how, if at all, our selections would resonate with the young people’s own views about what was important in their videos.

We organized a whole group session to screen the montage. Members of the research team solicited youth observations about each other’s clips and responses to the montage as a whole.^{xi} After this large group discussion we separated the youth into focus groups, each of which was facilitated by members of the research team following a semi-structured protocol. The groups watched each participant’s full-length video, listened to the filmmaker discuss the work, and asked questions about choices and intentions. The young people also discussed their views about the segments chosen for the montage and which clips they wished had been included. The sessions were audio- and video-recorded so that researchers could systematically trace patterns and themes within the conversations. These audiencing sessions -- first with all the youth participants and then in small focus groups -- paralleled our collaborative seeing process in *Children Framing Childhoods*.

As Luttrell has written elsewhere, our analysis features the children’s *use* of their images -- in different contexts, with different audiences, and for different purposes -- at three interrelated, yet distinct sites of meaning-making: picture taking, picture viewing and picture content (Luttrell 2010). In the first phase, we traced this “complex life” of the children’s images by considering the affordances, constraints, and rhythms of their everyday lives at home and in school that were made evident by their photographs, as

well as the larger social forces, ideologies and discourses that the children invoked to interpret their own and each other's images, including immigration, cultural belonging, and consumer culture.

In this second phase of the project, we have become aware of other layers of complexity. As teenagers who "hang out" on social network sites and "mess around" with social media (Ito, et al. 2010), the cultural resources and multimedia production tools they have available to them have expanded. They can be producers, not just consumers of digital media, able to repurpose, remix and redistribute cultural resources. In the next section we explore these dynamics through the case of Danny.

Danny who?

Danny's video opens with a close-up shot of his face, smiling. "Let's see all the nice things people have to say about me..." The video cuts to several quick clips in interview format each with a different young person. A white teenage boy with close-cropped hair says, "Danny? Danny who?" Another boy with darker skin and a goatee looks quizzically into the camera and deadpans, "Danny? You mean that little Spanish kid?" (Danny is Vietnamese). In this beginning sequence of Danny's video, three teenagers hurl insults at the camera in rapid succession: "Danny is a jerk!" "Danny's ugly." "Danny's not funny." Actually, Danny is very funny and this witty self-deprecating introduction to his video is characteristic of the humor he has brought to interviews, group meetings, and to the media he has created since he was a ten year old.

This introduction can be seen as a mocking testimonial from his friends, reworking the Facebook practice of commenting on someone's "wall." As danah boyd

(2007) points out, the convention of commenting on other's walls and of curating comments on one's own wall is a form of social grooming on social network sites, and, we would add, in Danny's video production. Rather than crafting a flattering persona, in line with the "wall" convention, Danny uses parodied postings from "enemies" as opposed to "friends." In this segment of the video he is addressing and being addressed by an audience of his peers, specifically a racially-mixed group (including whites, Asians and Latinos) of five male friends from school, who he describes in a VoiceThread as "My Misfit, Ragtag Group of Just Awesome Friends Formerly Known As The FHS" (Danny, February 2011, VoiceThread).

After screening his video for the focus group, Danny addressed yet another audience. Reflecting on the choices he made in shaping his video he said, "I wanted you [the researchers] to have a good impression of me. And I didn't just want to show my normal life because it's pretty boring." The focus group facilitator followed up, probing Danny, "Are there parts of the video that are out of the ordinary?" Danny went on to describe that going to the arcade was very unusual for him. He said that most people would be surprised to see him out there because usually, he is just at home with family, doing homework. Danny filmed the arcade, not as a place of familiarity, but to make his video (and his life) look "interesting."^{xiii} Danny's reference to the performative aspects of his video suggests that he is well aware of his part in what Erving Goffman refers to as the "information game" in which we manage our self presentation in light of others and what we believe they expect (1959, p. 8). For Goffman, the "information game" and its "infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation and rediscovery" is the stuff of everyday face-to-face social communication and often requires us to be strategic about

managing the impression that others have of us. But in the age of digital networked culture and global media, one's actual audience is unknown and unknowable; thus, applying the principles of impression management to the digital self, one must curate an online persona that it is suitable for many possible audiences, whose tastes/interests we cannot fully anticipate (boyd, 2007, p. 9).

A different "Danny" comes through in the tender, sometimes silly portrayal of the relationship he shares with his younger sister. She appears in the video several times: At the arcade we see him pose with her (and his girlfriend) for a digital photo-booth picture leaning his head into hers and squeezing her cheeks; later she and Danny play video games together at home and when she wins, she gleefully dances around in her Beauty and the Beast pajamas and makes faces at the camera. During the focus group session, a research team member asks him (as per the semi-structured protocol), "Danny, what does this video say about who you are?" He replies, "Family is the most important thing to me. And I love my whole family, but I would say my sister most of all. We're really close. Because she is so much younger than me, I took care of her since she was a baby and sometimes more than our parents because they weren't around during the day."

The way that Danny looks at the camera after his little sister beats him at a video game shouting, "No one can beat me, huh? Huh? Huh?" in a silly little victory dance is not the look of a competitive older brother embarrassed to lose or annoyed by his little sister's carrying on, but the look of a parent who can't help but shine with pride. Despite her antics, Danny seems to delight in his sister's skill (at the video game) and her humor. During the audiencing session he talked about his sister with total earnestness, setting aside the comic Danny for this topic of conversation. The relationship he described with

his sister focused on carework and responsibility – a theme that permeated the participants’ self-representations of the working-class rhythms of daily life, including the demands this placed on their shoulders, whether watching younger siblings, preparing meals, doing the dishes or laundry (Luttrell 2010; Luttrell et al forthcoming). Danny speaks of this “work” as pure privilege, a cherished bond, not a burden. In the context of networked culture, it is interesting to note how he exposes the private space of his special familial connection alongside the conscious choice to portray an “interesting” public self, suggesting a complex relationship and fuzzy distinction between notions of public and private.

Meanwhile, Danny does not necessarily strive to represent himself consistently from one moment to the next, as he experiments with creative re-appropriations of cultural codes around gender and ethnicity. Rather than subscribing wholesale to dominant gender and ethnicity paradigms, or outright subverting them, Danny’s video seems to relish the troubling of these identities. His video draws on mainstream gender codes but rearranges them in new ways. Similarly, he makes use of a variety of cultural cues to locate himself as broadly “Asian(-American),” pulling from Asian cultures (namely Korean and Chinese) to communicate a sense of his identification as Asian-American without disclosing his Vietnamese heritage.

Danny plays with masculine gender codes throughout the video, both taking up and spoofing the “manly-man” convention. In the lingerie department of TJ Maxx, he poses before the mirror wearing a pair of slick dark sunglasses. With a quick pan of the camera, he zooms in for a close-up “It’s cold,” he says in a movie-star whisper, whipping off the shades, “as ice.” Here he imitates the pivotal moment of a fictitious action movie

or a kind of action-hero catchphrase—in the fluorescent-lit bra department of a discount store—as if to highlight and laugh with the blurring of contexts -- consumer culture, intimate feminine wear, and masculine hero. Danny plays with the juxtaposition of contexts and their associated gender codes, bringing the viewer to wonder, aside from the comic effect, how does Danny wish to be seen? While others have argued (Watkins, 2009) that youth profiles on social network sites tend to portray an “aspirational self” (p. 43) using images that are sexualized and gender specific, Danny’s video seems to be taking up gender codes in a less conventional way. For example, while driving in the slow-moving traffic of downtown Worcester, he turns to the camera and narrates with a sly smile, “A very slow car chase.” Again, Danny plays with cultural forms of masculinity, to both engage and spoof the “action hero,” car-chasing version.

Danny also experiments with cultural codes of ethnicity to convey a complex hyphenated identity. He sets the tone for his video with music from a Korean film, an instrumental song, typical of Korean popular music’s sentimental, synthesizer-heavy style. His music choice conveys a familiarity with an Asian/ Asian-American subculture, a web of engagement that extends beyond mainstream American pop-culture. Layered over the scene in the arcade, with images of flashing lights, gaming with his girlfriend and younger sister and amid sounds of laughter and beeping games, the video footage shares an affinity with the soft, happy style of the romantic musical montage in Korean TV drama—the couple out on a date, being silly, having fun. Like the impression management associated with participation in social networking sites that bleed into the representation of his “interesting” everyday life, the romantic sentiments and sensibilities of global media bleed into Danny’s self authoring.

Later, Danny makes two references to Chinese culture. The first is a two-second clip of a bakery counter filled with egg custard tarts (a typical Chinese sweet) and other pastries. The image fades almost as it registers, and Danny offers no commentary about the scene—does he frequent this bakery, does he enjoy these desserts, is it just a colorful image he liked? Regardless of the meaning these sweets hold for him, the shot suggests a familiarity (at least visually) with egg custard tarts and Chinese bakeries more broadly. His final reference to Chinese culture takes place in the Chinatown community of Boston, the largest city and the capital of Massachusetts. Danny stands several hundred yards from the neighborhood's border, training his video camera lens on the elaborate entrance way. He says, "This is how you know you're in Chinatown. There is a big gate...A big Chinese gate...A big Asian gate." He is poking fun here at the trope of Chinatowns, the performative announcement of Chinese geography in American cities. He seems to view this sort of neighborhood branding as both an outsider and insider. He gently teases the gate's existence, mocking the grandiosity, and yet he also seems to want to stake some claim to the gate and to the community it represents, shifting his description of the structure from 'Chinese' to the more inclusive 'Asian.'

Danny's Asian references and the last point particularly, suggest an interpretation of or desire to communicate his identity in a way that is understandable to peers and researchers. Perhaps the broad stroke identity buckets widely recognized in the US—Latino, Asian, etc.—have shaped Danny's view of himself as part of a Pan-Asian-American community. Perhaps in the way that many U.S. Latinos complain of being misperceived as 'Mexicans' and many Asians are mistakenly deemed 'Chinese,' Danny has grown frustrated with explaining his own distinct Vietnamese background and has

chosen instead to acquiesce to these assumptions. Or perhaps, because there is little in the way of Vietnamese/ Vietnamese-American popular culture and visual symbols in and around Worcester and Boston, he has selected the next best thing.^{xiii}

Danny makes a point of expressing his Asian identity by the cultural references he employs, and through his use of transnational trends, styles, imagery, and sound. He locates his identity as part of a broad social group and demonstrates active participation in Asian/ Asian-American subculture(s). The links between his self, identity and video-making suggest a complex negotiation with American and Asian identities that move beyond the either/or of acculturation and assimilation, which in the United States remain the dominant frameworks for understanding immigrant students and their experiences. Similarly, Danny's engagement in global media, YouTube, and the practices of social networking sites may also open up a broader, more fluid notion of cultural belonging than is currently appreciated.

Identities, Agency and Networked Culture

Our interpretation of Danny's effort to present himself in an "interesting" light assumes on-going dialogue between himself and those he feels he is being addressed by. The ever-pressing question, "Who are you?" (which in this case is made explicit in our directions to "make a short film about you, your world, or your life") is asked in a specific context (a research project linked with schooling); in a particular place (post-9/11, post-industrial, northeastern city of Worcester, MA, USA); during a life stage (teenagehood) where the youth are socializing and representing themselves on-line with new audiences in mind. From a Bahktinian perspective, in order to answer this question,

“Who am I?” we rely upon a host of competing “voices” -- from actual people we know, to institutional rules, laws and practices, to media images (Bahktin, 1981). Our answers are riddled with an array of cultural-, class-, race-, gender- and sexuality - based expectations, values, and ideologies about who we think we should be in the eyes of multiple addressees. Thus, we understand that in the videos produced by the young people, they were responding to many distinct addressees and exercising multiple voices, all while dealing with the increased demands for impression management associated with participation in networked culture. This is not a simple process nor is it new; children and youth have always been inventors as well as conservers of cultural practices (Opie and Opie, 1959). But YouTube, reality television and social media organize information in new ways, blurring public and private boundaries and changing the parameters of the kind of knowledge we share with others. As Internet users, we are all increasingly brought into contact with networked publics. The term publics, Ito argues, “foregrounds a more engaged stance” (2008, p. 3), while networked refers to the way that our active engagement is shaped by certain aspects of the organizational architecture of information on the Internet. Among these features are “persistence, searchability, replicability, and invisible audiences” which, according to danah boyd (2007, p. 9) intensify the demands on self presentation.

Two other examples highlight the young people’s awareness of these dynamics with and through the genres of social network sites and reality TV. For example, in Fatimah’s video, “People don’t like being recorded :)” the camera tags along with her friends on a typical school day, punctuated by people protesting, hiding from, and covering up the camera lens. The video begins with Fatimah behind the camera talking

with two friends in an empty classroom. One young woman says, “Ugh, put the camera away.” Fatimah counters, “Just pretend I’m not here.” “I can’t,” she says. “I don’t know how all those people on reality TV just do stuff and act like the camera’s not there.” The other teen jumps in, “You think they act like the camera’s not there?! You think they would do all that crazy stuff if there weren’t any cameras? No way!” When Fatimah’s friends debate the nature of the influence of the camera on behavior -- whether people behave poorly because or in spite of the presence of the camera – while being filmed, they acknowledge the paradox of both being on display and of creating this display.

Kim-Ly’s video draws on the conventions of social networking sites and posting status updates to play with the question of authenticity and the changing parameters of intimacy and revelation. Two minutes into her video, Kim-Ly is alone in her bedroom. “Hiii” she greets us, the camera close-up on her face, two red stripes of a tank top leading off the bottom of the screen. “It’s 11:02. And...I should be doing my homework, but...” she pauses, rolls her eyes and scrunches her lips as if to say “Oopsy...” then remarks rhetorically, “Guess what I’m on?” The camera spins around to a computer screen with a video still of her looking like a pop-star in her bedroom wearing the same red striped tank-top. “Facebook. Of course I’m on Facebook, I’m always on Facebook.”

In this meta-moment of her video, we see Kim-Ly moving and breathing on the (video) screen, and then frozen in still-image on the smaller computer screen. She is self-consciously documenting herself in this moment and showing us that this mode of self-recording and revelation is part of her everyday practice. Her video is a blend of practiced authenticity and an intentional nonchalance, as if the line between her public and private selves has been dissolved, all the while demonstrating a nuanced

understanding of her video's audience(s). It is a striking example of strategic impression management. During the audiencing session Kim-Ly described how she draws private boundaries around her digital persona, "Well, my parents aren't on Facebook because they don't know about it which is good, because they are very strict. So my sisters are the ones who watch over me on Facebook. They look at what I put on my wall and my profile, so I block them from seeing it, not that I put anything so bad on there." Kim-Ly spoke about her Facebook wall like private personal property--like the wall of her bedroom plastered with images of her friends, most of whom she will "probably not keep in touch with in college" (Kim-Ly, February 2011, Voicethread). How are we to understand the relationship between these multiple self representations – the photos on her bedroom wall? the updates on her Facebook? the video for this project? These are questions to take back to Kim-Ly in the next step in our collaborative seeing process.

Seeing and Knowing

The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. (Berger, 1972, p. 7)

We believe, like Berger, that there is an unsettled relationship between what we can see in the young people's videos and thus, what we can know about them. In conducting participatory video research and analysis, we need to be aware that young people's skills, strategies, insights, investments and stakes in their self representations cannot be collapsed into any single interpretive framework. Nor are the affordances and constraints on youth video-making universal, as we expect digital media access and

experiences to vary widely. But, as we consider youth participation with global media and networked culture we should make space for the possibilities that are opened up and closed down through online engagement; and also bear in mind that these dynamics may not always be apparent (to youth participants or adult researchers) at the time of production, circulation, or interpretation. For instance, opportunities for strategic impression management on social network sites may be constrained by intricate privacy settings, which sometimes expand the invisible audience beyond our intentions to share information we did not want to be public, like data about one's shopping or media consumption habits. As participatory video practitioners and analysts, we need to be aware of the unseeable architecture of on-line communication and the way that multi-layered voices -- internal and external, personal, public, and institutional -- sit side by side in ways that alter the meaning of openness, transparency, privacy and public scrutiny. For all these reasons, we advocate a collaborative seeing process, that does not take young people's videos at "face value", but as opportunities to explore and discuss an ever-widening set of contexts, social practices, and personal desires that are not given but made, undone, and remade.

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ⁱⁱ In the United States, in educational research, social policy and common parlance, the term “immigrant” is typically used rather than “migrant.”

ⁱⁱⁱ For example, see Caitlin Cahill’s (2010) PAR project on undocumented students and Rich and Chalfen’s project on children living with asthma. (Rich and Chalfen, 1999; Rich et al., 2000); Also see Lyn Yates (2010) for her discussion of the spectrum of participation afforded youth in visual research.

^{iv} We do not believe that the participatory nature of research alone determines its emancipatory possibilities or uses. Luttrell has written elsewhere about her worries about the lack of transparency across this spectrum of youth participation, arguing that it is often unclear in these projects whose “voice” is whose in the representation of findings and research products, and has called for the importance of bringing more transparency to participatory video practices (Luttrell, 2010; Luttrell and Chalfen, 2010).

^v These are the labels and percentages provided by the school; they do not publish records of immigrant status of the children. Students are eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch in schools if their family income is at or below 185 percent of the Federal poverty line. In the United States the percentage of students in a school receiving Free and Reduced Lunch is an indicator of the socio-economic status of a school.

UTH VIDEO-MAKING

^{vi} The prompt: You have a cousin who is moving to the Worcester area. Take pictures of your school, family and community that will help them understand what to expect.

^{vii} At the end of 5th grade, the children were asked whether they wished to participate again in 6th grade when they were again given disposable cameras and invited to take pictures of whatever “matters most to you.” The same multiple audiencing sessions were followed, including a public exhibition.

^{viii} The four young people who decided not to participate in the photography/video-making gave varied reasons -- including work and family care-giving responsibilities.

^{ix} Through the use of the software, VoiceThread, we hoped to enhance the young people’s control over the meaning of their images and to increase dialogue among the participants in different school settings. VoiceThread allows users to upload photographs and create audio and text-based commentary. These photographs can then be shared with a community of “friends” who are also free to contribute questions or comments.

^x Ethical considerations were discussed at length, building upon the project’s earlier role-playing about issues related to intrusion, embarrassment, and consent.

^{xi} Analysis of the young people’s reaction to the montage – as a whole audience and as individuals reflecting on what was and wasn’t included – has not yet been completed. But several participants agreed with Danny when he remarked that the montage “made our lives look more interesting.”

^{xii} See Pini and Walkerdine (2011) who found that the young women who produced video diaries sought to present their lives as having more status. The idea of presenting a more interesting life would seem to be a new wrinkle in a similar theme.

YOUTH VIDEO-MAKING

^{xiii} In the United States, Vietnamese restaurants in major metropolitan centers mark the presence of Vietnamese culture, but there is very little cultural imagery in the way of music or other media, except for that related to the Vietnam War.