

27th Annual Ethnography in Education Research Forum
Center for Urban Ethnography
University of Pennsylvania, February 24th – 25th, 2006

**Transcending The Prototypes Of High School Video Production:
Illicit Activity, Forgotten Directions, And Invisible Processes
As A Guide For Teachers**

Lara Margaret Beaty
City University of New York
lbeaty@sdf.lonestar.org
available at <http://lbeaty.freeshell.org>

Abstract

Based on a study of three diverse high-school video-production courses, the meaning of students' failed, illicit, and off-task activities and the less than successful attempts by teachers to promote particular agendas are mined for hidden successes and the new directions these suggest. Setting aside the diverse goals of programs, the overall development of students toward a capacity for critical literacy is the focus of an analysis that seeks to reveal small successes and activities ripe with potential. These observations are the source for reflection on how courses about video production and—more generally—courses designed for adolescents should be planned. This study looks specifically at what students do and what directions their interests take as a guide to teachers and course designers. Specific recommendations for a shift in the position of teachers and expert knowledge are offered that are consistent with a project-based curriculum. Generally speaking, teachers, text books, and expert advise were found to fluctuate between dominance and complete absence rather than being integrated throughout class activities. Courses are encouraged to establish experts as supportive resources rather than as restrictive obstacles and to remain responsive to student diversity.

In an era of high stakes testing, finding—let alone appreciating—unconventional academic successes can be difficult, but by their very nature, the unconventional successes may reveal processes that are central to student activity and can suggest refinements of educational goals that address the vast ideological differences among educators and students. This paper seeks the invisible achievements of diverse students in the non-traditional subject of video production because this context reveals accomplishments of the young videographers that are as much about being a high school student as they are about learning video production and, by focusing on situated actions in these contexts, student actions are uniquely revealed. The intentions of diverse programs and struggling instructors were sometimes *inverted* by students who transformed activities—at their best—into meaningful, personalized efforts. It is this occasional inversion of a program’s ideologies that demands closer examination of activities so that teachers can better transform “off-task” activities into productive practices.

This project was partly inspired and guided by the methods that de Certeau (1984) laid out for studying “everyday life.” The “uses” to which students put their school assignments and classroom activities are thus the focus. A central part of these methods is to recognize power differences among participants and the consequences these differences have on individual actions. Note, however, that individuals—whether

students or teachers—are understood to have limited power *and* ample opportunities for redirection, diversion, and exploitation because “the system in which they move about is too vast to be able to fix them in one place, but too constraining for them ever to be able to escape from it” (p. 40). Therefore, teachers as well as students lack significant power and must frequently seek the spaces within their institutions for creating personal meanings. These spaces, both metaphorical and physical, have the potential to become “third spaces” where actual development is possible and promoted (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejada, 1999).

De Certeau’s method of study, however, lacks two essential pieces: First, the focus on power leads to an insufficient attention to what Hodge and Kress (1988) term “solidarity.” By adding this dimension, moments of intimacy can be systematically contrasted with moments of control and submission or of conflict or of chaos. A focus on solidarity enables an analysis that moves beyond conflict and submission. The second missing piece is that part which is most fundamental to education: It connects what students “do” with what they are learning and how they are developing. Vygotsky’s (1978) assertion that learning can stimulate and further a child’s development is viewed as both a fundamental part of education and a perspective that necessitates an examination of power and solidarity: Learning and development are social, and an analysis of student activity—of how students *use* their time in school—requires bringing the social and the cognitive realms together.

The *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky, 1978) serves as a model for how a

teacher directly impacts development, but the role of teachers as well as of environments and tools is elaborated upon in the *zone of free movement* (ZFM) and *zone promoted action* (ZPA) (Valisner, 1997). “The ZFM structures (a) the child’s access to different areas in the environment, (b) the availability of different objects within an accessible area, and (c) the child’s ways of acting with the available objects in the accessible area” (p. 188). Within this zone, activity is free, but movement outside it—whether it is a physical area or a bounded activity—is not permitted. Constraints and the power that imposes them define ZFMs. The ZPA, on the other hand, focuses on how particular activity is *promoted* along certain lines and is indicated by people’s expectations. Activity is promoted through discussion, in the tools made available to students, and by example. The ZPA uses solidarity and the gentler pressures for conformity, connection, and identity to shape activity. An assignment to read a particular passage from the textbook is understood as creating a ZFM, but a ZPA is contained in the text’s content and is strengthened when solidarity exists among participants. Together the ZFM and ZPA define how expressions of power and solidarity shape development. These are the parts of student activity that teachers have clear influences upon. What students do within the zones, though less visible than how the institutions create them, has everything to do with their successes and failures. This examination of student activities seeks in part to assess typical ZFMs and ZPAs.

This study is based on an ethnography of three diverse programs in video production existing in three diverse high schools in southern California. It uses field

notes from observations, discussions, and interviews as well as documentation from the programs and student-made videos, some of which were narrated by students to further explain their production. A more complete description of the methods is available (Beaty, 2005). The programs included (1) a *vocational program* headed by a single instructor, (2) a *new media program* initiated by a not-for-profit educational-reform organization with three participating teachers, and (3) a *digital arts program* with courses that were run by college interns over a series of five sessions.

The analysis for this paper relies primarily on student-made videotapes and field notes to examine events that fall into one of three categories:

1. classroom activities that were deemed a failure by the instructor
2. projects or parts of projects with obvious and significant flaws
3. illicit or off-task acts by the camera operator

These events and projects are defined first in a de-contextualized manner according to the criteria established by the programs and then redefined by placing them in the context of the social relations in the moment and the accomplishments individual actions represented within these contexts.

Failed Classroom Activities

The classroom activity that stands out as the least successful one across programs did not involve video production but was “merely” the class discussions of projects that so frequently bear most of the responsibility for promoting critical thinking (Goodman,

2003; Reilly, 1998). As such, a discussion is typically constrained in terms of its subject matter, who can speak, and the duration of individual speech and overall discussion, while the desired discourse is frequently promoted through examples, explicit directions, questions, and elaboration. The class discussions for video production can focus on “pitches,” the proposals students have for projects, or they can focus on reviewing completed or partially completed projects. Of the three programs I observed, only the new media program truly attempted pitches, but all three of the program’s instructors tried them. All the programs attempted some review of projects. But at no school were the discussions truly a success: The vocational program had the smoothest screenings, but the teacher had students *write* their comments on a form while he gave his critique, thus there was no discussion and there was no opportunity to build critical analysis through dialog. The new media program, on the other hand, had sufficient attempts and variation to analyze the process.

The new media program had been instructed by the leaders of the reform organization to have students pitch their projects and to review finished projects as an integral part of course, but like a lot of the activities the teachers were taught to do, they found that running them was different from when they had been the students. Teacher A had relatively successful pitch sessions: He got through the pitches and pushed them to think further about their ideas. The failures came in his domination of the discussion, the lack of class participation, the production of only one project all semester, and the suspension of even this when a problem occurred. Teacher B did not dominate but had

chaos. Where Teacher A had too many constraints, Teacher B had too few, and both instructors lacked a connection with their students. This disconnection dominated the activities I observed at this school.

Teacher C was observed the following semester, during which I observed two pitch sessions. In the first one, he began the discussion by saying, “I want you to ask questions. Not, it sucks, but why do you think is funny. Remember, we're looking for . . . What are we looking for?”¹ In this way, he sought to instruct them how to proceed, transforming the last into a question to draw students into participation. The students, however, did not want to answer this question or elaborate on their ideas. One student answered, “Don't worry about it. It's our movie.” As the class turned to a second proposal, students from the first group began questioning as the teacher had, but the teacher concluded that they were merely mocking him. One student complained that the teacher was making something that was so simple into something so complicated.

In the second observed pitch session, the teacher began by saying, “A suggestion is better than a negative comment.” He did not need to instruct the students in what to do. This time there were six rather than two pitches, but less time was spent on each. At the end of the first one, the teacher asked, “Is that it? Is it approved? Okay,” and they moved on. He let the students decide. After the second one, he allowed another quick pitch but instructed them to identify their strategies in the written proposal. After the third, he said, “We're not going to just approve everything,” and proceeded to push them to develop their ideas further. The class, however, descended into silliness, and for the

¹ Note that all quotes are based on notes and do not necessarily reflect the exact words used.

fourth pitch, the student spoke unintelligibly. Finally, the teacher threatened to deduct points. The last two pitches reverted to short pitches without discussion, and the teacher's only contribution to the last pitch was that he would not be in any of the videos.

The teacher expressed frustration about these discussions to me and he decided to stop having them. The students had been resistant to the process throughout, and, he reported, could not be serious about anything. He seemed to decide that the discussions had failed to promote critical thinking among the students. (Reilly (1998) had also discussed a lack of critical thinking in video production courses but did not present an analysis in this regard.) In these pitch sessions, however, I saw some merit of which the teacher was unaware. In the first session, the students pretended to evaluate the second pitch, acting like the teacher and mimicking his questions and ideas. But in the process, they were doing exactly what the teacher wanted them to do. In the second session, the students again began with resistance and then presented their questions and ideas as if it was a joke, but more students participated and they were asking good questions. The final student (in my notes) to offer an idea was one who had been so resistant to participating in the class that he was routinely sneaking in and out of the room and arguing with the teacher's criticisms, but he had truly become engaged with the process and offered ideas for improving on another student's ideas. Perhaps, the most successful part of the activity, given the context, was that the teacher connected with students by allowing the jokes and teasing to be part of the activity (like third spaces). The teacher had achieved sufficient constraints to maintain the topic and was able to encourage some

analysis. Most importantly, there were extended exchanges as a class that I had not observed at any other time in any of the three new media courses.

Failed Projects

Though a number of projects could be described as failures with hidden successes, one project will be the focus because of the availability of video work, interviews, and focused observations. It was produced at the vocational program and was a “failure” due in part to the particular context in which it was made. In the class viewing, the teacher made the following list of comments, “There are some white balance issues. . . . You should have used the music more. You should have had narration. . . . You should have used a boom [microphone]. It was always either under- or over-exposed. There was too much movement. . . .” Not everything the teacher said was negative, but technical issues were a major focus of the course and of the teacher’s critique; the students did not demonstrate that they had mastered the material that was the focus of the course. Beyond these issues, however, the project also lacked meaning: It showed a string of short events that had no apparent connection and frequently action that was impossible to follow. There was no message to the piece, and the camera work, like in many high school projects, lacked purpose, having few closeups or other techniques that might indicate what was important or what events meant within the framework of the video. To give some credit to the students, they had not completed the editing to their satisfaction. Moreover, they intended to spend more time editing but were told they could not have the computer more than two hours during the after-school sessions. The

teacher clearly believed that class time plus two hours was sufficient, and therefore even their inability to finish it in the allotted time can be viewed as a failure. Revealing the successes in this project requires details of the context and of the production process that are unnecessary in finding its flaws.

The project was entitled, “The Good, The Bad, And The Techies,” reflecting one student’s interest in satire. This student, referred to as Luke, took the lead in production because he had access to the subject: the school news program that was produced four days a week by the advanced students and of which the students decided to do a documentary. Luke was responsible for all the recording and claimed responsibility in an interview for the idea and the editing. One way in which this project was a major success for Luke was in his ability to take the leadership position. In his previous project, he had a peripheral role, commenting that he was the “creative consultant” and that his acting part had been cut out. His shift in participation was an important indication of development for him.²

The other strand of development becomes apparent in how Luke made the project personally meaningful. The assignment was to pick one from a long list of video genres, thus there was freedom to choose a project that would have personal meaning. In general, students tend to use their video projects to pursue alternative agendas: Luke, like many students, used his video project to elevate his position in the social structure and to engage with students who otherwise gave him little attention. All of the students

² The lack of participation by the other two students in group was problematic for both and has been discussed in Beaty (2005).

who were involved in the school news program, particularly those who appeared on camera, achieved a semi-celebrity status on campus when the program began being aired across a school intranet. Luke joined the advanced class, which produced the show, half-way through the school year while continuing in the beginning class. His decision to do a documentary about the school news program influenced his position in both classes. He spoke about wanting to do a project with which his classmates in the advanced course would have fun, and despite evidence about his position in class, he talked about the group being close and seemed to include himself. At the same time, Luke was able to advertise his connection to the advanced class within the beginning class, thus his status in both courses could be elevated. Such a shift in social status would always be relevant, but it is particularly so with Luke because he was noticeably disconnected from his peers. Students frequently spoke about him being unusual, and the teacher was heard to remark more than once that his problem was that he had been home schooled. His finding a way to insert himself into class activities and to demonstrate a connection was an important part of his development.

The significance of using his video project to connect with his classmates is also related to his development as a videographer. His connection to the video camera was strengthened and personalized: He found a purpose to his usual observer status in the class as well as finding ways to gain the attention of fellow students. Even the teacher responded differently to him while he was recording. Though Luke—who referred to himself as a “screenwriter”—had previously shown little interest in camera work, he found a role for himself as a camera operator. In the process, he showed indications of

engaging with activity through the camera that was a first step in discovering the meaning that can be brought to an event with a camera. The use of cameras to shift a student's position in the social structure—to engage with students and teachers that they normally would not—was observed at all three schools and was observed to build a student's connection to school activities.

Luke's lack of agency in most of his video work, however, was remarkable and was clearly mediated by his desire to be “a fly on the wall.” To some extent, his desire to not affect events as he created his documentary was a misunderstanding of video production. It led to a blurring of events as one action was indistinguishable from the next, the result being a lot of videotape that would bore anyone not interested in analysis. Activity was viewed from a distance and showed people talking or working with equipment but frequently without the content of the discussion or work. Students consistently spoke to and performed for the camera, but Luke routinely chose to *not* assert his presence. Out of the 60 shots that were obtained for analysis from the unedited work (an additional tape existed but was lost by the student), 44 shots (73%) contained neither speech nor camera action—beyond turning it on—that overtly affected the events that were being recorded. Furthermore, the camera consistently followed the action or searched for action rather than creating clearly defined events. This passivity is most pronounced in one interview in which the students comment on it and discuss among themselves how to proceed: Two students sat facing the camera. One asked, “Are you going to ask us or . . .” Luke answered, “Just start talking.” The second student asked,

“Are you going to interview us?” Then the male said, “Say who you are and what you do.” In this way, they composed the “interview” themselves, and despite speaking to them, Luke’s role was subverted to that of the camera; he was more a tool of the camera than vice versa. In general, the video shots that included Luke’s speech included very little.

The evidence for Luke developing more agency within his camera work is limited. A total of fifteen shots contained speech toward another person, thus displaying a presence that was absent in most shots. Two-thirds of these were in that second half of his work, suggesting some progression. The camera never was used to create events—it was never used symbolically—other than by being turned on, but this in and of itself made an impact: Students and the teacher talked to him as the camera operator when he would normally have been invisible to them. There were only two shots in which Luke ventured outside his role as camera operator—acting as a peer—and only in the second of these, which was near the end of his work, did he initiate an event. He said only, “This is [the anchor], trying to look smart.” It was a brief, teasing comment such as he had made at other times, but this time his position within the group (rather than outside it) initiated a series of small events as students essentially performed for the camera in response to his words. He had found *power* in his use of the camera to insert himself into events and alter them in small ways, achieving both an increase in power and solidarity in the social structure. Thus in this moment and overall, the project changed Luke’s participation in the classroom and in video production.

Illicit And Off-Task Acts

Luke's greatest success, in some ways, was his ability to circumvent the heavy emphasis on planning that was required by the teacher and finding his own way to create a video. In so doing, he became one of the few students to pursue an alternative production process. Chalfen (1992) observed that manuals promote a way to produce videos that is rarely followed by home videographers. This apparent failure to take the experts' advice, I have found two distinct production processes in the work of high school students (Beaty, 2005). Textbooks, manuals, and teachers typically call for a process that involves planning in the form of scripts, picture boards, and rehearsal. The need for planning is stressed and was required in both the vocational program and the new media program. This, however, is not what Luke and his group chose to do.³ The group planned a documentary of the school news program, but they did not plan which events they would record nor the whens, whos, and wheres of interviews. The teacher required planning, but the students found an acceptable way to build improvisation into the process, shifting the composing to the editing stage. This is characteristic of projects that utilize exploratory camera work. This second process, however, is frequently discouraged by teachers, who tend to view it as "playing." The value of this second approach to video production—one with *exploratory* camera work—is rarely supported by institutions but becomes evident in this research.

Luke found a way to engage his fellow students and discover some of the power

³ The group had initially planned a fictional comedy with a script as promoted by the course, but they decided that the project was "too big" to complete (according to Luke).

of the camera. Evidence of this “discovery” was more evident in other projects and perhaps most dramatically in one project from the digital arts program. In this program, students had—relatively—an enormous amount of freedom. Nearly all the students began recording without plans for their finished projects, and they were permitted to wander the school, which allowed them to seek out friends, explore the campus, and play with the objects and people they happened to find on the way. This study found ample evidence that these freedoms were valuable. One project in particular demonstrates that even “illicit” and “off-task” behavior can accomplish some of the media literacy for which many programs strive (Goodman, 2003).

Wicket and Jerome (the pseudonyms selected by the two youth) spent less than an hour on each of two days, one week apart, and though their finished project lacked a sound track and had a meaning that was clear only because I had their unedited work and interviews, they demonstrated more awareness of symbolic uses of video cameras than any other student. The fact that the digital arts program was done as part of an art class is likely to have contributed to this accomplishment, but even compared to other students in the program, a greater variety of camera techniques were present and were used across more situations than any other group. Actions with the camera were an integral part of most events, and the quality that distinguishes their work most is that nearly every moment of the unedited tape involves “play.”

Two types of play are evident in Wicket and Jerome’s work and have been noted in other projects both from within the digital arts program and from other programs. The first type is more difficult to satisfactorily analyze and is the more illicit of the two

because teasing defines it. At an analytical level, the problem in defining acts of teasing is about how to rate the level of solidarity in any particular moment. Defining the teaser as asserting power over the one being teased is relatively unproblematic, but concretely defining how teasing sometimes increases solidarity even while it involves an emphasis on differences remains a problem. More relevant to this analysis, however, is that teasing is frequently accompanied by the most meaningful uses of the camera. In several shots, for example, Wicket pairs his verbal teasing with zooming in and out and turning the camera from one place to another such that the camera “explains” what the teasing is about. In one such case, Wicket notices a girl’s shoes on the floor: He tilts the camera down and zooms out, effectively pointing at the shoes beneath her chair while he says, “She’s got her shoe . . . No wonder it smells up in here.” Because Wicket was using the camera as his eyes while interacting with students, he used the zoom and camera movements to meaningfully manipulate the images on the video. This use of the camera was frequently found in student work.

The second type of play involves manipulation of the way a subject is viewed.⁴ Both in this project and others, it can be done with the intent of exploring or with sheer silliness. Either way, the symbolic potential of the camera is tapped to change the look and feel of the what is shown with or without an accompanying narration. A dramatic example of this involves Wicket playing with the meaning of a poster such that he showed only the part of the poster he was speaking about while zooming in and out

⁴ This type of video at its extreme is distinguished as “video graffiti” (Beatty, 2005) and involves making a mark on place that is left on the video and on its audiences.

dramatically. Wicket read the bubble above the bear on the poster, which said, “Who me?” He then turned to leave but changed his mind—an intention visible in the pan of the camera away and quick pan back to the poster. Instead of reading the bubble above the penguin, which says, “Whose then?” Wicket said, “And the penguin says, ‘Yes, you. Yes, you!’” emphasizing it with zooms in and out. He then laughed as he turned to see what Jerome had been trying to call his attention to. Again, the movements of the camera were a meaningful part of the video, creating an event where there was none. Another, less silly, instance of this form of meaning-making occurred while Jerome briefly recorded students playing basketball. In the process, he selected which actions were the important ones, including a student walking past and gesturing toward the camera. This project contains many such examples. The value of both forms of play is that they engage students with meaning-making via a video camera (as opposed to documentation of events).

The Meaning of Invisible Successes

A number of successes were found in observation and analysis of which teachers were unaware. In the new media program, Teacher C saw only resistance and mocking imitation in his students responses to discussions, but imitation of the appropriate kinds of questions is a major path to understanding why the questions are being asked and toward critical thinking. The mockery reflected the established pattern of resistance among the program’s students, but it may eventually have given way to more earnest efforts, and if not, their ability to ask the right questions as a joke indicates that they

have come to understand the structure of such discussions. Moreover, the earnest attempts to participate in discussions were frequently hidden by the overt and sometimes loud resistance of other students, who tended to receive the bulk of the teacher's attentions.

Both within discussions in the new media program and in the shifting of roles in the vocational program, teachers did not see the success represented in students' increased participation. In the new media program, furthermore, teachers seemed to take steps to ensure that students would not increase their participation by requiring considerable planning in writing, and this was of students who were already the "worst" in the school according to one teacher. Similarly in the vocational program, students spent most of the year learning about how to make videos rather than doing it, which not only resulted in students having to read, write, and listen to lectures most of the time, but they were not able to try all the techniques about which they learned within meaningful contexts; they had only two projects during the year.

Engagement with classroom activities, whether it involves students being silly or finding a way to personalize and take over a project, will allow both learning and development, and the more engagement happens, the more likely it is to become meaningful. Video production is ripe with potential to motivate students but not if too many obstacles are placed between students and the parts they really want to do.

Perhaps the most important finding is that off-task or "illicit" activities—*playing* with the video camera—can bring about the discovery of the symbolic uses of cameras.

Social scientists have been found to underestimate the effect of the camera in interpreting events (Bellman & Jules-Rosette, 1977; Chalfen, 1992), thus it should be no surprise that students have difficulty. Nevertheless, it was something teachers were not heard to discuss beyond encouraging students to get a variety of shots, including close-ups, because their videos would be boring otherwise (heard several times in the new media program). The vocational program taught the “correct” way to do video rather than questioning why some shots were preferred over others. Teaching about the power of video cameras to manipulate what is seen and heard was clearly not a priority. The result was most visible with one pair of students in the new media program: Assigned to do a public service announcement, they chose to sit at a table and read from notes to a stationary camera. They not only did not understand that the camera could be used in meaningful ways, but they did not understand how the genre of a public service announcement differed from a classroom presentation.

In general, instructors underestimated the successes inherent in classroom jokes, increased participation, off-task activity, and the redirection of institutional goals into personally meaningful aims. These small successes tend to remain invisible and uncommented upon, while various attempts to personalize or play with work acquire an “illicit” status. My recommendations for teachers follow from what I observed in student work: First, make room for exploration and play. These activities allow for discoveries that can be built upon. Similarly, get involved in the process of production so that expert advice is available when students really need it. See the process, appreciate the small improvements, and let these guide evaluations more than the final product. And refer to

contexts and personal histories when making evaluations, because this will help illuminate the successes. Let students make mistakes, and then help them find better ways to do it, not because it is the “right” way, but because it more clearly communicates their point or because it is more attractive, etc. And build on students’ strengths: Do not make them plan what their projects will look like when they do not have the experience to think visually, and do not make them write it all out if writing is a significant weakness. Introduce writing as a tool, not a constraint.

The greatest missing activity—across programs—was teacher involvement in student-centered activities such as recording and editing. The tragedy in this is that these activities are ripe for teachers to insert a casual remark, ask a question, or point to a resource and, in so doing, build upon student discoveries and help promote real development. At no time was there a discussion of the symbolic use of cameras, nor did a teacher discuss the meaning of a particular camera technique. These conversations are not easy and may require more critical thinking from teachers than most are prepared for, but as video production becomes an increasingly common course in high schools, the need to ready teachers has arisen.

Conclusions

One of the most remarkable observations was that solidarity did not exist between teachers and students at the points it had the greatest capacity to promote development. Solidarity existed at times in the form of identity shaping, joking with students, and general concern and interest. The problem was less that teachers were not friendly or

“on students’ sides” during production but that they were not there at all. In the new media program, a huge disconnect, which seemed to have a long history and institutional origins, dominated and made many of the teachers’ efforts seem futile to them. In the vocational program, the teacher was close with many students and did not over-emphasize his power, but he did not reach out to students or become involved in their work. By contrast, the third course in the digital arts program had interns far more involved in production, which led—at the least—to more professional-looking projects and a much higher completion rate. Nevertheless, the interns in the digital arts program struggled in making connections with the students even though they did not have the histories or power differences that can interfere between teachers and students. The problem of building moments when high solidarity can be expressed with few power differences—leading to connections—has been insufficiently addressed and will not easily be solved.

The analysis of school activities in terms of solidarity and power, which on the part of the school refers largely to how and to what extent activity is constrained or promoted, is far more detailed than can be elaborated on here, even though it remains incomplete. In part, the analysis serves to re-frame the “spaces” of the programs. Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, and Tejada (1999) discussed *third spaces*, metaphorical places where hybrid languages can be created that combine the students’ “languages” with those of the school. These spaces can be re-framed as *zones* in which power/constraint is rarely expressed and solidarity/promotion is more common. Most

importantly, these *zones* contain freedom for students to choose their own directions, whether it is in discussions, project ideas, or camera work.

The utility of focusing on power and solidarity is that an array of activities can be systematically compared. The value of Gutierrez et al.'s (1999) construction, on the other hand, is particularly in seeing how the mix of official school discourses and student's more personal and familiar discourses have significant potential to promote development. The idea of a place where what is new can safely be mixed with what is old and familiar is an important one. Student success in these "spaces" comes in part from students having increased power and solidarity: Learning and development occur when students have the power to bring themselves in some way, shape, or form into the activity and finding the connections there with teachers and fellow students to support their efforts and to promote a way of thinking that is just beyond what they are doing. Play and unfocused exploration seem to be valuable tools for promoting development even without the participation of teachers, but they would be strongest, it is projected, if teachers help students see what discoveries they have made.

Video production has the potential to increase media literacy, to engage students meaningfully with school activities, and to shift student roles within the social structure, but the evidence for these developments frequently cannot be found without knowing about the context of production. A key aspect of video, which was too often lost in the programs studied, is that it gives students the power to get out of their seats and become active in a way that engages them with the people around them. In this way, students

achieve freedom and increased power within their schools. Video production forces students to participate at some level in school even if they do no more than pick up a camera and point it somewhere. More importantly for other courses, it also allows a way of seeing student development: Rather than assessing what students have learned through questions that merely access what they can answer, this method makes visible what students can *use* in a meaningful way. Making visible students' accomplishments in video production may contribute to the task of finding how students *use* their educations in other subject areas.

References

Beaty, L. M. (2005). *"Give Me Space!" Situated Video Production And High School Social Relations*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Graduate School And University Center, City University of New York. Available: <http://lbeaty.freeshell.org>

Bellman, B. L., & Jules-Rosette, B. (1977). *A paradigm for looking: Cross-cultural research with visual media*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Chalfen, R. (1992). Picturing culture through indigenous imagery: A telling story. In P. I. Crawford & D. Turton (Ed.), *Film as ethnography* (pp. 222-241). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

De Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life* (S. Rendall, Trans.). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Goodman, S. (2003). *Teaching youth media: A critical guide to literacy, video production, and social change*. New York: Teacher's College Press.

Gutierrez, K. D., Baquedano-Lopez, P. & Tejada, C. (1999). Rethinking diversity: Hybridity and hybrid language practices in the third space. *Mind, Culture, and Activity: An International Journal*, 6(4), 286-303.

Hodge, R., & Kress, G. (1988). *Social semiotics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Reilly, B. (1998). *New media and new literacies: Understanding the culture of a high school video production classroom*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley. Available: <http://www.education.ucr.edu/breilly/writing.html>

Valsiner, J. (1997). *Culture and the development of children's action: A theory of human development*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). Interaction between learning and development. In M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, and E. Souberman (Eds.), *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (pp. 79-91).