

Literature Review

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At the heart of this project is my concern and interest regarding the issues, politics and possibilities of representation. Representations, including those created by independent and much more powerful mainstream sources, influence how we make meaning of ourselves and of the world around us. In this section, I will first discuss connections between representation and identity-formation, popular conceptions of marginalized populations (including young and non-white people), and systems of power both past and present. Second, I will briefly describe the history of specifically photographic representations in the United States. Next, I will present examples of existing youth media projects that incorporate photography and electronic correspondence. I will give additional consideration to several youth video programs that, while using a different medium, greatly influenced the development of the photo-based *Re-Presenting* project. I will then discuss various forms of multicultural education as advocated by scholars in the field. Finally, I will offer definitions of globalization and describe how an education towards critical citizenship may be practiced in both community and classroom settings.

Clarification of Terms

Within the *Re-Presenting* project, I define representation as an image or set of images, sounds, words, etc. that represent the experiences and lives of individuals and/or communities to an audience. This audience may be members or outsiders of the groups being represented. I define mainstream representation as those that are financially supported and/or distributed by powerful entities such as the government and major corporations. In contrast, independent

representations, such as those created by artists and youth of marginalized communities, are not created or circulated for commercial gain.

I borrow Goodman's (2002) definition of mass-media as the mainstream commercial industries of advertising, music, fashion and entertainment and the visual and aural culture they promote. The term marginalized refers to individuals and groups who have systematically been denied access to the same resources and visibility that are taken for granted by dominant groups – primarily white, upper to middle-class men of Northern European descent – in local and global communities.

The Power of Representation

Freedman (2003) writes how education is largely a process of identity-formation. Because mass-media has become such a powerful educator of youth - arguably more powerful than texts or formal schooling (Buckingham, 2004; Goodman, 2003) - images hold enormous power in shaping how young people develop their sense(s) of identity. Indeed, images and visual representation have long helped to shape understanding of ourselves, of others and of how we might challenge the world (Desai, 2000). Bailey and Hall (1990) argue that identities, which are always contradictory and responsive to our surroundings, can be thought of as a group of representations.

For centuries, visual representation has been used to support notions of white superiority (hooks, 1992). Prior to the invention of photography, non-white and colonized people were depicted as animals or as less than human, thus helping to justify brutal acts of colonization (Ebron, 2002; Fusco, 2004). hooks (1992) writes how controlling visual representations has been instrumental in maintaining racial domination as images are enormously powerful in

shaping perceptions held by both white and black people. Moreover, Paula Ebron (2002) describes how, historically, representation was instrumental in the colonization of Africa by depicting Africans as primitive and distinctly different from their European colonizers. She argues that representation perpetuated by the Western mainstream media continues to define Africa through repetitive images and stories of famine, ethnic war and political instability. Wainaina (2006) supports this argument in his satirical advice for Westerners interested in writing about Africa. He encourages such writers not to focus on details, to treat the African continent as one country filled with rolling landscapes, exotic animals and people too preoccupied with starvation, disease and killing one other to bother reading anything written about them.

The idea of African people being inferior and/or less civilized than Europeans or North-Americans exists in the art world as well. For example, the first collection of African objects (excluding Egyptian artifacts) acquired by the Art Institute of Chicago Museum were housed exclusively in the Children's Museum (Berzock, 2006). The objects were moved to the "Department of Primitive Art," along with objects classified as Precolumbian, Oceanic, and Native American, where they remained until 1980.

Goodman (2002) writes how representation is currently used in the United States to promote this cycle of dominance by the powerful over the marginalized. He describes how mainstream media institutions have assumed an authority in the lives of young people that is as powerful but contradictory to the more traditional authoritative institutions such as police, courts and schools. For example, the music and advertising industries glamorize and perpetuate an image of urban youth of color as defiant criminals and, therefore, profit from depictions of activities for which the same groups are punished in real life. This dual system helps silence youth of color by marketing their lifestyle and rage while denying them opportunities to

represent themselves and, in many instances, removing their voices altogether by locking them in prison.

Life in the U.S. is saturated with images and stories that are created by mass-media corporations and disseminated electronically, through television, film, print and video games (Goodman, 1996). As educators of young people, it is not enough to simply analyze these images. hooks (1992) argues that we must also offer alternative representations depicting those marginalized by the dominant media. Such alternative representations can help change individual perceptions and, in turn, lived realities.

Photographic Representation

I have chosen photography as one of the primary mediums in the *Re-Presenting* project as this is the area in which I have the most experience teaching and because photographic images are among the most pervasive in visual culture. Like other forms of representation, photography has been used historically by Westerners to further a colonial agenda. For example, Lippard (1996) describes how in the United States photography became instrumental during western expansion in the 19th century by creating images that “documented” Native Americans as a “vanishing” group rather than people being slaughtered and/or forcibly relocated.

Like hooks, Fusco (2004) describes how representations, specifically photographs, have helped create the notion that race exists as a fact rather than as a social construct. For example, photographs were used to document people of so-called inferior races as scientific objects, serving as “evidence” in the quest to “prove” the existence of racial hierarchies in the 19th and early 20th century. Photography is also a medium that has been reappropriated. In an essay discussing their analysis of over 600 images printed in *National Geographic* magazine, Lutz and

Collins (1994) describe how giving a camera to non-Western people (often the subject of *Geographic* images) could potentially shift the roles of who creates knowledge. The camera has long been recognized as a tool of power and, therefore, to transfer control of that tool could also be understood as a transfer of power. hooks (1995) writes how photography became an invaluable personal and political instrument for many pre-integration African-American families. More than any other medium, it allowed these families to create alternative representations of their experiences and, therefore, counter the negative imagery of African-Americans created and circulated by the dominant white culture.

Existing Youth Media Projects and Programs

For more than three decades, photographer Wendy Ewald has taught photography workshops to children living in many parts of the world including the United States, India, Mexico, Morocco and Native American reservations in Canada (Ewald, 1999). Many images created by Ewald's students have been widely published and exhibited in art galleries and museums, challenging popular assumptions of who may contribute to the world of "fine art" photography. Some of these photographs have been deemed controversial for their perceived violent or disturbing content but defended by Ewald as portraying accurate representations of what some children imagine and experience (see Figure 1).

In 1989, Ewald founded the Literacy Through Photography (LTP) program at Duke University's Center for Documentary Studies (Ewald, 2001). LTP conducts weeklong teacher workshops in methods developed by Ewald for incorporating



(Fig. 1) *Sebastian was punished for eight hours,*
 Photograph of a dream by
 Dominga González Castellanos (1991)



(Fig. 2) *I was alone in the wilderness*
 Self-Portrait by Phillip Liverpool (1989)

photography into the classroom. These methods, which combine writing and photography, allow students to bring their lives outside of school into the classroom and develop literacy skills through visual and written documentation of their experiences (see Figure 2). This process validates the knowledge students already possess and enables them to engage with the experiences of their classmates (Ewald, 2001).

Like Ewald, Jim Hubbard was a practicing photographer when he began teaching photography workshops to homeless children in Washington DC, a population he had been covering in his own work as a photo-journalist (Paley, 1995). Hubbard began the project, later named *Shooting Back* by the youth-participants, in response to both community interest and his own desire to bring greater awareness to homelessness and poverty in the United States (see Figure 3). The images that were



(Fig. 3) *Boys* by George Maxie (1989)
Shooting Back



(Fig. 4) *Laundrette late at night* by Tatiana (2005)
PhotoVoice

produced by the participants and shown in a major, traveling exhibition, showed the harsh environment of shelter-life but also the joy and pride of those who lived there, thus countering mainstream depictions of homeless and poor people as living hopeless lives. Shooting Back greatly expanded following the exhibition, creating after-school and weekend programs for homeless and non-homeless youth in DC and later with Native American youth in Minneapolis, Minnesota and the Southwestern United States.

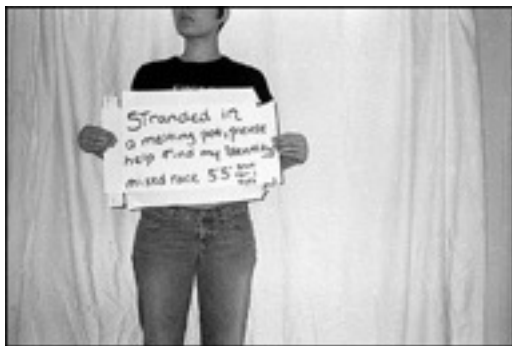
Currently, there are several photo-based programs for young people operating in various parts of the world. Many of these such as the London based PhotoVoice (2006), Through the Eyes of Children in Rwanda (2006), Kids with Cameras in India (2006) and Youth In Focus in Seattle (2006), also seek to “empower” youth of marginalized and underrepresented communities by offering technical training and a



(Fig. 5) *Gudi* by Jacqueline
Through the Eyes of Children



(Fig. 6) *Girl on a roof* by Suchitra
Kids with Cameras



(Fig. 7) *Antigone*
in response to *Only Skin Deep* exhibition
Youth in Focus



(Fig. 8) *title unknown*
Eye to Eye

means of recognizing and expressing their voice through photography (see Figures 4-7). All of these organizations promote the participants' photographs through exhibitions, web and/or book publication. In some cases, as with *Through the Eyes of Children* and *Kids with Cameras*, photographs are sold and all proceeds directly support the participants or the organization.

Eye to Eye (2006), a written and photographic documentary project made by children living in Palestinian refugee camps, has a different incentive for sharing youth-created work (see Figure 8). The project website is intended to be used by young people around the world and features games, videos, quizzes as well as suggested curriculum for teachers wanting to use the website material in their classrooms. The interactive site is meant to connect with and inform

visitors about life in the refugee camps while encouraging them to add to the document by posting their responses in text and images.

There are other examples of young people in different parts of the world using the Internet as a means of connecting and sharing daily experiences. Recently, professors at the University of Northern Iowa and Miyazaki International College in Japan organized an email exchange between their students in an effort to build cross-cultural understanding that, through first hand communication, could challenge cultural assumptions or stereotypes (Dunn & Occhi, 2003). While this approach allowed for students in both locations to learn of the diversity of experiences and opinions held by members of another culture, the facilitators concluded that it did not challenge students to consider larger issues of class, ethnicity or gender that help shape these individual experiences. In addition, the email-conversations did not encourage students of dominant socio-economic backgrounds to question or identify their own positionality as influential in shaping their personal experiences.

I support and am excited by projects that allow young people to document their lives through photography. While I have been especially influenced by the projects of LTP, PhotoVoice and Youth in Focus, the following educators who use video in their practice have had an even greater impact in the development of *Re-Presenting*. In an interview I conducted with Cesar Sanchez and Tammy Ko Robinson from Video Machete, a Chicago-based, intergenerational collective of cultural workers and media artists, Sanchez critiqued adults who initiate photo projects with youth from underrepresented communities (personal communication, November 3, 2005). He expressed concern that such projects risk exoticizing youth by taking their images out of context by putting them in galleries or books for consumption by outsiders to the communities in which they were created. While the photos are beautiful and there might be an impact in the

moment the works are created and shared, there may be no sustainable connection with the youth artists. Similarly, while the lives of teachers and facilitators may be enriched through the course of these projects, the marginalized status of their students/youth collaborators may not change at all.

Sanchez and robinson continued to explain why they do not consider Video Machete to be a “youth media organization” as it is often labeled. While members of Video Machete often produce videos, Sanchez explained that he feels the organization is better described as one committed to popular media education (in reference to the ideas of Paolo Friere). He further described Video Machete as a self-reflexive and constantly evolving program more concerned with the *process* of addressing community issues and creating collaborative media with multiple community members rather than with the production of polished products.

The Educational Video Center (EVC) in New York City has been working with youth to develop documentary-style videos since 1984. EVC labels itself as a “media arts center” “dedicated to the creative and community-based use of video and multi-media as a means to develop literacy, research, public speaking and work preparation skills of at-risk youth.” Goodman (2002) writes about EVC’s commitment to developing critical literacy skills with young people. Such literacy includes being capable of analyzing and producing print, aural and visual representations. Goodman states that it is through acquiring such literacies of power that economically disadvantaged and marginalized people have been able to gain visibility and demand equal rights and recognition.

British media educator David Buckingham (2003) adds to this notion of literacy, writing how “new communications media has decisively undermined the dominance of the written word. . . Literacy today. . . is inevitably and necessarily multimedia literacy: and to this extent,

traditional forms of literacy teaching are no longer adequate” (p. 35). Buckingham echoes Goodman’s calls for critical literacy, arguing that media literacy must include both *analysis* and *production* of media. Goodman describes how EVC has helped change the lives of its youth participants, measured not just through the development of critical literacy but also through increased self-confidence and the acquisition of skills in latest video production technology. Many EVC participants go on to college and/or find media-related employment.

Appalshop’s Appalachian Media Institute (AMI) is a similar organization that serves youth from the largely impoverished Appalachian south in rural Kentucky. AMI director and lead instructor Rebecca O’Doherty explains how the organization provides support for participants not offered by local institutions (personal communication, November 10, 2005). For example, referring to AMI participants as “interns” and offering training and freedom to operate advanced video equipment and software, conveys a sense of respect and learning/workplace responsibility that schools do not. In addition, AMI interns are paid for this participation. O’Doherty explains that this is a necessity as most high school students in the community require jobs in order to help financially support their families.

While both AMI and EVC continue to make connections with local schools (EVC works extensively within schools and holds workshops for classroom teachers each summer), they are, in addition to Video Machete, primarily after-school and summer programs. While they may advocate for critical media literacy to be taught in school, the methods embraced by the above organizations counter pervasive classroom approaches. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998) write about this traditional notion of education in which “students are taught to surrender themselves to the system and become passive recipients of official truths” (p. 13). Educational approaches which position students as experts and support their personal and collective experiences as

central to their research and media production, “is alien to many schools” (p. 13). However, such approaches would fit nicely within the contexts of critical and polycentric multicultural education.

Multicultural Art Education and Locating Representation

Kincheloe and Steinberg (2001) argue that “pluralist multiculturalism” is the most mainstream form of multicultural education practiced in the United States today. Pluralist multiculturalism teaches students to celebrate and/or tolerate the cultures of others (meaning non-whites) through lessons about cultural productions such as foods, dress and art objects. This multiculturalism celebrates equality and diversity without examining larger issues of oppression and disparity of resources. Other cultures are studied (and exoticized) for their differences from the “normal” and centralized experiences and history of white North Americans.

Mohanty (as cited in Desai, 2002) writes how it isn’t sufficient simply to share narratives or representations of others, especially those of underrepresented communities. She argues that such representations of daily life must be located within a socio-economic and political context at both the local and global level. If the hope of an artist or educator is to transform systems of domination and subjugation, everyday experiences must be understood in relation to local and global access to power (Desai, 2002). Similarly, educators teaching about works created by marginalized or non-Western groups, must examine their own social position and how it relates to both systems of power and the social and political context of the artwork being represented (Desai, 2000).

Unlike the lessons common in pluralist multicultural practice, Wills & Mehan (1996) argue against treating individuals or groups as representatives of a static culture. Instead, they

advocate for more inclusive and critical social studies and history curricula that examine how societies function through interactions with others. In this way, marginalized groups are seen as actively participating in the greater social and political landscape rather than in isolation.

Many of these ideas are echoed in the calls for critical and polycentric multicultural education. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2001) propose a pedagogy of *critical multiculturalism* dedicated, in part, to ending social inequality and suffering, critical multiculturalism focuses on structures of power and how racism, sexism and class bias are institutionalized by dominant perspectives. By identifying the links between power and oppression and by embracing subjugated knowledge as crucial in forming students' understanding of the world, critical multiculturalism adopts from critical pedagogical theory the notion of education (not limited to schools) as a site of transformation and social change.

Stam and Shohat (1994) argue that multiculturalism cannot be separated from a critique of eurocentrism, the hegemonic process by which Europeans attained and maintained power, in part, by normalizing their dominance and worldview throughout the globe. Stam and Shohat propose a *polycentric multiculturalism* that examines different communities in their relationship to power throughout history. Rather than simply bridging barriers that exist between diverse groups, they argue that we must study what factors created such barriers in the first place. Aligned with marginalized groups, polycentric multiculturalism “globalizes” multiculturalism and seeks to re-envision more equitable distributions of power within nations and across the planet. This approach seems increasingly relevant given the latest era of globalization.

Globalization and Critical Citizenship

There is no single definition for globalization. MacEwan (2001) traces globalization back to the earliest European invasion of the Americas and their expansion of trade into Africa and Asia. While this proved financially beneficial for many Europeans it was also responsible for the slaughter, enslavement and subjugation of indigenous people around the globe. MacEwan claims that modern globalization is different from earlier forms in that economic power is situated in the United States rather than Europe and that capitalism - a system based on production for profit and wage labor - and free trade govern global economic relationships as never before.

Castells (2001), however, discusses globalization as a system of networks not connected to one single state. This network can be thought of as a global, technological-economic system made possible by the widespread deregulation policies of the 1980s and the technological advances in communications, transportation and information systems. Castells argues that governments are not only non-representative of their constituents but that power is no longer situated locally but globally. Activists must, therefore, begin to act globally in order to affect change where power lies.

Apparudai (2001) writes of globalization as five areas of movement or flows: people, capital, information, technology and media. These flows create “disjunctures” which, in turn, create social problems, suffering and injustice. For example, notions of human rights may flow across national boundaries and inspire demands by citizens for better working conditions which may, in turn, be met by state violence that is supported by the global arms trade. Such is the nature of these disjunctures: local problems that lie within a global context. The very “imagination” that allows one to be influenced and controlled by dominant forces also allows one to resist and think of solutions beyond national borders. Appardurai concludes with a call for an

educational approach that can inform a wider population, particularly those who are most negatively affected by global policies, of the complexities of globalization itself. In this way, informed and effective collaborations towards equality can be formed between members of different social and geographic positions.

It is clear that the process of globalization is about much more than just economics as evidenced by the massive anti-globalization protests that encompass multiple issues from human and labor rights to environmental concerns (Bigelow & Peterson, 2002; MacEwan, 2001; Tavin & Hausman 2004). Often defined by the economic policies of free trade and neo-liberalism - policies that favor deregulation, privatization and the unrestricted flow of capital creating maximum profit for private business while eliminating public expenditure for social services (Martinez and Garcia, 2006) - globalization has created a global interdependence that diminishes the significance of national borders (Adams & Goldbard, 2002). While this interdependence is driven largely by international business, the systems of connecting with others also presents potential for furthering the struggle for human rights and social justice by enabling groups around the world to communicate and organize.

Bigelow and Peterson (2002) argue that globalization is primarily a profit-driven system willing to exploit people and the environment for economic gain. This system furthers the unequal distributions of power that began with colonization – inequalities often enforced by military intervention and notions of white supremacy. The relationship created between those that consume and those that produce (and are often exploited in the process), calls for a global education that enables young people to explore their personal connections to such relationships and become future advocates of social and economic justice.

This idea of global education is echoed by those who support an education for critical citizenship. Sassen (2003) writes how the phenomenon of globalization has changed previous ideas about citizenship by creating migratory communities with transnational identities as well as individuals that identify with and are protected by international business corporations and organizations rather than a single state. Osler and Starkey (2003) argue that such realities of globalization require a new education of citizenship that prepare students to live and effect change within diverse and interdependent local and global communities. This education should empower young people to work for peace, human rights and democracy in multiple contexts.

Adams and Goldbard (2002) write how community cultural development projects are some of the best ways of teaching for critical citizenship. Community cultural development projects are loosely defined as collaborative work that empowers, draws from many cultural forms (visual and performing arts, media, storytelling, social activism, etc.) and links with ground-up community development practices. Such projects encourage participants to consider both personal and greater community interests while developing skills in problem solving and critical thinking while identifying and questioning their own beliefs. They embrace Freire's (1968) concept of *conscientization*, explaining that before individuals can resist or help determine how forces of globalization will affect their communities, they must first value their own experiences and be given the opportunity to communicate their perspectives. Through the process of *conscientization*, one develops a more critical awareness through dialogue, thus breaking from the patterns of subjugation and engaging with the world as an agent of change. They conclude that one of the most pressing questions in the face of globalization is how communities can create empowering relationships with one another and the world at large.

Tavin and Hausman (2004) also support an education towards critical citizenship and makes the case for addressing issues of globalization in the art classroom. Many art and media educators have discussed the transformative possibilities of art-making. They describe art as a vehicle through which young people may expand their consciousness and critically analyze and re-envision the world around them (Goodman, 1994, 1996; Tavin & Anderson, 2003; Villaverde, 1998).

Conclusion

All of research described above has contributed to the theoretical framework that inspired the *Re-Presenting* project. The referenced youth projects and work of youth-media educators, particularly those who work with video, have been especially influential in developing the approaches used to facilitate the project. In the following section, I will describe the set of actions taken to initiate *Re-Presenting* as well as the methods used to facilitate the project and assess it's meaning for both myself and the youth participants.