

Explorations Through Digital Video

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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University of Victoria

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ABSTRACT

Previous learning experiences, that transformed my understandings of learning as a student learning to use digital video at Gulf Islands Film and Television School (GIFTS), resulted in an interest to learn more about the experiences of others while working with digital video and film, hence this study. This study involves the use of digital video to gather information and digital video as a form of representation for the study. The purpose of this study is to explore the nature of one's experiences while working with digital video and film, with a focus on what matters and what makes a difference for students and mentors while learning and teaching about digital video and film during a one-week session offered to youth and adults at GIFTS. Data were gathered through on-site observations, field notes, questionnaires, and digital video recordings of participant interviews, conversations and activities. The video recordings provide visual, auditory and contextual detail about the film school and the participants and their learning experiences for both the thesis and video components of this study.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you Ted, Theo, and Tessa for your patience, support, and positive outlook throughout my graduate studies. Thank you Mom, sisters, brother, mother-in-law and extended family for your interest in and concern for my time and efforts over the past few years. I wish to express my gratitude to all my instructors and classmates who illuminated many possible paths for learning during my coursework. I extend special thanks to Dr. Budd Hall for your dedication and mindful insights, which contributed to the completion of this study, and special thanks to Dr. Andrea Walsh and Professor Jennifer Thom for your valuable feedback, guidance and encouragement throughout this study. Thank you Dr. Laurie Baxter and Dr. Deborah Begoray for your assistance.

It is an honor to have learned from the wisdom of each participant in this study. I am grateful and indebted to George Harris, Co-founder & Director of Gulf Islands Film and Television School and the staff at GIFTS for providing me with life-long learning experiences, which continue to inspire me. I especially want to thank the students and mentors, technicians and staff whose participation made this study possible. Thank you Kenna Fair, Marcus Youssef, Vern Bevis, Suez Holland, Jennifer McNeely, Alex Taylor, Raechel O'Hare, John Friedrich, Rebecca Simonetti, Shawon Kinew, Scott Lewis, Staphanie Hutchings, Zack Kasta, Jayme Black, Tyson Irmey, Nicholai Kuper, Emily Bodenber, Elizabeth Israel, Metta McLeod, David Warren, Rachel Baker, Krista MacIsaac, James Smith, Callianne Bachman, Jaymie McAmmond, Bronwen Marsden, Ryan Sinz, Vanessa Jones, Nicholas Middleton, Roger Taylor, Amelia Drinkrow, Serena Desmarais, Tim Fairbrother, Gary Cramer, and Frank Henville.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to honesty, respect, trust, hope and pride, and all that nourishes a person's wholeness and personal growth, which come from thinking, listening, behaving and speaking from the heart.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Study

Setting for a Beginning

Since 1995, the Gulf Islands Film and Television School (GIFTS), located on Galiano Island, British Columbia has offered video and film programs to youth and adults. Sessions vary from one week to one month to produce a video or film. The student registration fee pays for instruction, use of filming equipment and production suites, lodging, meals, a video compilation of the week's video projects and bus service from and to the ferry. GIFTS provides an immersion, closed-campus learning environment. My experience, while immersed in a one-week video production session at GIFTS, caused me to reflect on the learning that occurred for me and inspired me to learn about the experiences of others while working with digital video or film while at GIFTS.

Digital video is a recent technology used for producing movies, films, and videos. The terms 'digital video,' 'video,' and 'film' are often used interchangeably. Production processes, concepts, and techniques used for creating a digital video are similar, yet different from filmmaking in that digital video production involves the use of computers to capture, download, and edit video/film footage. Current computer editing software techniques allow makers of digital videos to apply and achieve similar effects for editing footage such as clip sequencing, adding transitions, titles, and sound.

Both film and digital video can be combined to create a 'hybrid' so to speak of film and digital video. For instance, Super 8 mm film footage can be re-recorded digitally and downloaded into a computer for further editing to produce a final digital video.

Today's films feature digitally enhanced visual effects and animation films are often entirely digitally produced. Although it may be unnoticeable by someone not familiar with the differences of film and digital video, a trained eye for film and digital video can distinguish differences in the appearance and image qualities of digital video and film. For instance, the images produced digitally appear sharper with higher contrasting edges compared to the softer edge appearance of subjects in film productions.

The overall method for creating a digital video that emerges from filmmaking involves storyboarding, writing a script, managing a location for shooting, designing a set and wardrobe, acting, as well as production crews for camera, sound, lighting, and editing. Different genres of film and video use different techniques. For example, documentary films may not use a pre-written script, as do drama productions. Developing a narrative in documentary films focuses on what the subject brings to the video or film project. Documentary films and videos are usually shot in the moment, on location where the story unfolds.

There are many kinds of digital video cameras and equipment ranging from consumer level to professional standard. In this study, I do not go into detail about the technical aspects of film and digital video, however, it is important to note that creating a digital video involves the use of computers, digital video cameras, and digital video editing software. The digital video equipment available to public and professional users is more compact and less expensive than traditional filmmaking equipment. These changes in filmmaking technology offer the general public easier access to and more capability in creating videos.

Digital video recording technology and computer software applications for digital video editing have become accessible to the general public on a broad scale over the past several years. Recent applications of digital video technology make it possible to capture digital video footage that can be downloaded to a computer for editing purposes. Easy to use and inexpensive digital video editing software that utilizes features such as titling, transitions, special effects, and audio control, among other production options, enables novice users to produce videos. The emergence of these technologies allows a shift from the role of consumer of video media to that of creator and producer of one's own video narratives.

Purpose of the Study

My experiences while working with digital video led me to wonder about the nature of the experience for others while learning about and working with digital video. As a way to open my study to the experience of others' while working with digital video, at GIFTS, I considered revisiting the school to carry out my study. Having GIFTS as a site for study would allow me to re-enter the environment in which I first learned about video and filmmaking, but from a different perspective as GIFTS graduate and researcher.

In this study I used a case-study approach to explore participants' learning experiences and find out what they valued in their experience as creators and producers of digital videos during a one-week session at GIFTS. Digital video has been used as a means to collect data by video recording participants' interviews and activities throughout the week. The footage collected has informed the writing of this thesis and has been edited into five final digital video sequences that make up the video presentation

of this study. The findings, which emerged from the points of view of the participants in this study and me as researcher, informed the combined thesis (written text) and digital video ethnography.

Research Questions

In this study I explore the application of Pink's (2001) theoretical understandings in the approaches and uses of visual anthropology in social science research and ask; can digital video ethnography be used to study a teaching and learning experience which is itself an application of digital video technology? Pink points out a need in visual anthropological research to further consider the processes of carrying out ethnography in relation to the researcher's own experiences, reflexive methods, uses of visual images as data provided by the participants, and issues of research interpretation and representation. I also draw upon Ruby (1991) for insight into current questions of "voice, authority, and authorship...among documentary filmmakers and anthropologists" (p.50) and issues of documentary and ethnographic film for social science research purposes.

Furthermore, in this study I investigate a constructivist perspective on learning and draw upon similarities to the teaching and learning that takes place at GIFTS. All of the above considerations as questions and points of departure in carrying out this study are reflected upon in the concluding chapter to discuss implications of the findings in this study for thinking about learning experiences involved with working with digital video, the significance of using digital video for education and carrying out research and the relationship between visual text and written text in this study.

Interview Questions

Interview questions for the students, mentors, technician, and director provided a means for them to reflect on and tell about their experiences while working on video and film projects at GIFTS. Video taped interviews and activities, questionnaires, conversations, and field notes based on my observations are key sources of information that contributed to the writing of this thesis and the creation of a video for my study. In this study I strived to maintain a direct presentation of the information provided by the participants in the written thesis through direct quotes and field notes and through participant's images, voices, actions, and surroundings included in the video.

For the students, interview questions focused on their experiences at the beginning, middle, and final stages of carrying out their video projects. Questions for the mentors and director focused on their past experience with working with digital video and film, their expectations for the students, and what stood out most for them in their experiences and feedback from students while working on video and film projects at GIFTS. I offered a questionnaire to participants who chose not to be videotaped for an interview. One student provided an interview at the beginning of the project as well as written responses to 'middle' questions via e-mail. Another student completed three portions of the questionnaire, while one student completed the first portion of the questionnaire. Two students were also interviewed one week after the session.

The following is a list of questions that guided the interviews and questionnaire for this study. During the interviews, questions often evolved into further questions and conversation relevant to the initial questions listed below. The star symbol '★' indicates which questions resulted in the most informative responses from the participants.

Beginning of Video Project

1. Do you have previous experience with digital video production? If yes, please describe your previous experience.
2. How many students are there in your project group?
3. Do you prefer to work in a group or on your own? Why?
4. What made you decide which group to work with?
5. What interests you about digital video production? ★
6. What excites you most about making your video?
7. What do you want to learn about by making a video? ★
8. What is the topic of your video project?
9. How did your group come to the topic of your video project?
10. What do you know about your video topic?
11. What is the message of your video?
12. How will you reach your audience with your message?
13. Describe how you feel at this beginning stage of your project?
14. How will your group make decisions about your project?
15. Do you think the group process will work in your project?
16. Who do you think will view your video?
17. Do you have any questions for me?

Middle of Video Project

1. What have you learned so far about using digital video?
2. Is there anything that stands out for you about your experience with your video project at this time? ★
3. Is there anything in particular that seems to help you carry on with your video project? ★
4. How do you feel about your project at this time?
5. Have you experienced any changes in your ideas and expectations from when you first started your video? Please describe what influenced these changes to occur.
6. What has influenced you most about how you feel or the decisions you make while working on your video project? ★
7. Who is your audience and what effect do you want your video to have on your audience?
8. What are your next plans for your video?
9. Do you have any questions for me?

End of Video Project

1. How do you feel now that your project is finished?
2. How do you feel about the process in doing your video and your finished project?
3. How do you feel about presenting your video to your audience?
4. How do you expect the audience to react to your video? How do you hope the audience will respond?
5. What changes would you make to your video? What do you want to remain unchanged in your video?
6. What will you do next with your video?
7. Describe what stands out for you in your video production experience. ★
8. What do you think you have learned by working on this video project? ★
9. What did you enjoy doing most in your project?
10. If you could do anything, any project using digital video, what would you do?

11. Is there anything that has changed for you as a result of this experience?
12. What have you learned now that you have completed your video compared to what you knew at the beginning of your video project?
13. What is the most important learning that took place for you in this video project? ★
14. Do you think you will continue to use digital video?
15. What advice would you give to someone who is starting a video project? ★
16. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Mentor/Technician/Director Oriented – Throughout Session

1. How or why did you become involved with digital video production? ★
2. How long have you been involved with digital video production?
3. How long has GIFTS been providing video-making programs?
4. How is it decided upon which project students work on?
5. What do you want to provide for the students so that they get the most out of this experience? ★
6. What do you expect or hope that students will learn by working with the medium of digital video? ★
7. How do you think students, overall, experience GIFTS? ★
8. What have students said they learned from the process of creating a video?
9. How have these video projects worked in the past?
10. How do these projects work today?
11. What stands out for you in regards to your experience and the students' experience with working with digital video at GIFTS? ★
12. Describe what an ideal digital video learning environment would be for you.
13. What do you think is the future of your students?
14. What do you think you have learned by working with digital video and the students?
15. Is there anything that has changed for you as a result of your experiences with students working on video projects? ★
16. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Study Structure, Participants and Data Collection

The structure of this study combines a text-based narrative and a video-based representation of the Gulf Islands Film and Television School experience for a cohort of students and staff. This thesis moves between a reflective analysis of my experiences as a student at GIFTS in August of 1998 and the experiences of students, mentors, technician, and director at GIFTS in August of 2002.

The participants in this study are the students, mentors and technician attending the one-week filmmaking session and the director/co-founder of GIFTS. While attending GIFTS for one week, as a participant observer to carry out my study, I conducted digital

videotaped interviews with fourteen students, four mentors, one technician, and the director of the school for the purpose of gathering information and to capture the meaning of their experiences in the midst of their unfolding. Three students completed portions of the questionnaire. Twelve hours of digital video footage shot over the six days of the film camp session provided the raw material for the 49-minute video compilation to complement my written narrative in the form of thesis.

Qualitative inquiry methods that borrow from visual ethnography and field study are used to interact with participants, record interviews, conversations, activities, and happenings during the week of their video and film production as a way to collect detailed information about the experiences of the participants. Their telling about their experiences provided in-depth, detailed information for developing further understandings of using the medium of digital video and film while at GIFTS for this study.

Structure of the Written Narrative

This thesis is written in six chapters. In this first chapter I describe the key components and goals of this study. In Chapter Two, I provide a review of the literature written around the topic of digital video and film related to one's experiences with using these mediums in the classroom and in doing research. Chapter Three includes an explanation of the methodological and theoretical approaches I borrowed from in carrying out this study. A field journal account of my return to GIFTS for the purpose of documenting and gathering information for my study is presented in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five I focus on recurring themes I have noticed in the videotaped interviews and conversations of the participants. In Chapter Six I offer implications for the findings of

this study regarding student learning, uses of digital video for education and research, and conclude with further reflections of the significance of this study.

Structure of the Video

The 49-minute video, "Offerings of GIFTS" is a compilation of five sequences, which combine to offer an overview of the history of the school and the goings on and activities involving the participants during this one-week session of film camp. The video begins with a brief historical account of GIFTS by the director/co-founder and goes on to include the participants' points of view from the beginning production processes to final video screenings and my further reflections on this study.

The first sequence, "Overview" (20 min) presents the director's account of the history of the film school from its inception eight years ago to present. Also included in this sequence is the vision and philosophy for the school from the director's point of view. Mentors and students also provide their perspectives and insights into their experiences while attending learning about video and film while at GIFTS. In the second sequence, "Mentors Speak," (14 min) three mentors and a technician talk about their roles as facilitators, their experiences with working with digital video and film while working with students, and what they hoped students would learn while at GIFTS. The third sequence "Students Speak," (5 min) features GIFTS students telling about their experiences while working on their projects and what they consider the most important learning that took place for them throughout the week. The fourth sequence "Quick Take" (1 min) is a brief presentation of an unexpected interaction between one of the students and me, as researcher. This incident provides contextual detail regarding researcher and participant interactions that are often spontaneous. In the fifth and final

sequence, "Reflection" (8 min), themes that stand out in the participants' experiences as well as my experiences as a GIFTS graduate and researcher are presented in text overlays.

My Experience as a Student Attending GIFTS – An Autobiographical Account

As a way to introduce the beginnings of this study, I reflect on the setting and happenings during my experience while attending GIFTS for the first time as a student. The understandings, which I learned from this previous experience, form the foundation upon which this study is constructed. I agree with Parker (1999, p. 37) who suggests the following in his discussion of reflexivity.

Although, for the purposes of getting on with business, reflexivity must be 'forgotten' within normal professional life, it is important, nevertheless, that it forms the focus of the research stance so that it may be appraised and its validity increased 'by showing more fully its foundations' (Winter 1989: 42)...By making explicit the reflexive basis of judgements in 'personal interpretive systems' we establish that 'the basis of the account is not simply factual (and thus indisputable) *nor* a universal law derived from an agreed body of knowledge (and thus necessarily true)' (Winter 1989: 44).

Jarvis (2002) provides further insight in his discussion of the meaning of reflexive society:

That society has emerged in the way that it has means that it takes risks when it implements 'solutions' to its problems because there is not necessarily proven answer. Consequently there is always a need for it to confront itself about the outcomes of the decisions it make, or fails to make. This is a reflexive society...Individuals are forced to take risks, to learn and reflect upon their decisions and so forth...individuals are learning more often throughout their lives – both reflectively and non-reflectively. This is 'learning all the time'...upon reflection learners can be critical about what they have learnt. (pp. 16-17)

Relative to reflexivity from a personal perspective, Ditchburn and Prasow (1990) provide a succinct view of reflection.

The concept of reflection draws upon Dewey's continuity principle of experience. All present experience is framed by prior experience and, in turn, shapes future experience. As we approach a new experience we bring to it our past, our expectations and our beliefs. Thus, our prior experience gives formation to presuppositions, our anticipation of future events. In this sense all experience is framed by our presuppositions. Teaching reflectively demands that these presuppositions are made explicit in order that they may be critically examined. (Williams & Cross, Eds. 1990, p. 105)

Practicing reflexivity, as a starting point for this study, describes the basis for my 'judgements,' as noted by Parker, and drawing upon experience as noted by Ditchburn and Prasow, contributes to developing a contextual framework for which this study begins and is carried out from the point of view of researcher. A narrative account of my previous experience provided in this thesis offers the reader in-depth information, open to further interpretation and assessment of the foundations, that I bring to this study. The following is a reflection of the beginnings for this study.

Entering the Setting for the First Time

On August 30, 1998, I began a weeklong immersion at the Gulf Islands Film and Television School (GIFTS) film camp offered to youth and adults. No previous experience in filmmaking was required to enroll in this week's session of filmmaking, which I hoped would help me decide if filmmaking was an area I wanted to pursue for further study.

Loaded down with my sleeping bag, pillow, and toiletries enough to last a week, I walked onto the ferry en route to Galiano Island. I noticed many passengers, at least two and a half decades younger than me, also carrying sleeping bags and pillows. I assumed that they were also on their way to GIFTS. I hoped other adults my age would be attending camp. In the midst of uncertainty about the week ahead, I felt excited and

scared. Halfway through the ferry passage, my home, family, and all things familiar felt very distant. I recall how the reflection of the moonlight on the ocean comforted me as I tried to imagine what it would be like during the next six days of film camp.

The ferry docked without incident at Sturdies Bay on Galiano Island. I walked across the dimly lit loading ramp along with the other foot passengers. Approximately ten students and myself shuffled up the hill to the GIFTS “reels on wheels” bus. The driver (the director of GIFTS) tossed our belongings into the back of the bus as we boarded. I sat alone, near the front. No one spoke. Everyone avoided eye contact with each other and stared at the winding road ahead as the bus surged along. The trees on the roadside swayed in the warm evening breezes that whistled through the open windows of the bus. Road signs warning of deer, curves, and “aliens ahead” guided us along. We stopped and picked up three hitchhikers who knew the bus driver. They sang, told jokes, and laughed all the way to camp while trying to engage us, the new students. (The hitchhikers happened to be our mentors for the week.) I recall how my senses had piqued in response to strange surroundings and destinations. I was mesmerized by feelings of strangeness in this unfamiliar place, surrounded by people I did not know.

Once at camp, everyone gathered in what was called “the screening room.” We sat in a circle that reached completely around the room. The director informed us of the camp rules and agenda for the week. We took turns telling our name to the group and saying something about ourselves that, “we did not want anyone to know about.” This ‘icebreaker’ resulted in giggles and laughter, relieving tension we may have felt about speaking to a group of strangers.

The surroundings were not what I expected for a film school. The buildings consisted of old and new construction. The screening room, editing suites and open courtyard were newly built while three older, modified trailers provided sleeping bunks, a kitchen with a dining area and washrooms. Each building opened onto the center courtyard. Tall fir and cedar trees reached into the deep starry sky surrounding the camp with cool fresh air, darkness and silence.

It was late in the evening when my excitement and anticipation eventually shifted into heavy tiredness. I found my way to the women's washroom behind the kitchen area to wash up and brush my teeth before bed. I planned to wake up early the next morning so I could shower without waiting in line. I was relieved to share a room with a student closer in age to me, as I imagined the disappointment a much younger student might feel about sharing a room with someone old enough to be her mother. I wondered how 25 or more students and staff would manage being together at this camp for one week.

Curiosity and Encountering Unfamiliar Situations

Curiosity allowed me to enter film camp without preconceived notions of what the weeklong program would be like. It allowed me to be open to surprises, the unexpected, and unfamiliar. Unfamiliarity of my surroundings piqued my senses as I strived to get to know my surroundings. At times I felt uncomfortable with being in a situation of uncertainty and strangeness. There were moments when I considered fleeing, but recognizing these feelings as normal in my situation as 'newcomer' and 'learner' enabled me to stay. The more familiar I became with my surroundings, the more I felt at ease towards participating and interacting with others.

Choosing a Topic for Our Video

Early the next morning we were assigned, according to our interests, to groups of three or four students to either documentary, experimental, drama, or animation production. As soon as our group of three was formed to work on a documentary, we began brainstorming ideas for a topic and title, storyline and shot list. I recall the advice given me by a recent graduate of GIFTS to “bring lots of ideas” for a video topic. One of the most difficult tasks for our group during the brainstorming process was to agree on a project theme and title. As a way to deal with our dilemma of wanting to contribute to the title without second guessing or influencing each other’s ideas, our group decided to write our ideas on pieces of paper, which we folded and put into the middle of a table. After reading each other’s suggestions we agreed upon a topic that connected with each of our ideas. In carrying out our documentary, we planned video sequences that would include interviews of people telling their stories about the topic we had chosen for our video.

As the group process continued, we found that respecting each other’s ideas was crucial to continuing discussion and planning our video. I experienced the meaning of ‘respect for ideas of others’ in a concrete way, through the respect I received from other group members. This experience enabled me to reciprocate respect for my team members.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming sessions involved each group member’s participation. At first, we were shy towards each other. Once we discussed ideas and made some decisions, I began to feel responsible and committed to participating in the group process of creating a

video. Dialogue was key for our group to arrive at a collective agreement of ideas for our video. Expressing ideas to the group and having others listen and consider them for our video gave me a feeling of connection to both our group and our video. I felt involved and that my input mattered. We had developed a sense of commitment to each other and our video.

Discovering and Changing

Out of the exploratory nature of curiosity emerged discovery of new ideas, which challenged my understandings at that time. While at GIFTS, I experienced a new feeling for what it is like to discover. Discovery felt as if trying something for the first time, as in learning something new or relearning something in another way as compared to finding something that already existed and waited to be found. Discovery involved a process of encountering new situations that caused me to reflect on and question my current understandings. I experienced many discoveries, which impacted my understandings and caused shifts in my perspective resulting in varying degrees of changes in my 'knowing' or what I understood 'to be.'

Group Effort

Group work required effort and commitment. There were times when one's ego became an issue amongst our group if anyone attempted to block another's suggestions, creating feelings of tension and disconnection. As a result, I learned to let go of ideas and developed a trust in group process and the possibility that these ideas would be suitable elsewhere in our video or perhaps, not at all. Our group's discussions with everyone's input lead to new ideas and imaginations. One person's ideas inspired another's resulting

in countless possibilities we imagined for our video. It was exciting to watch ideas merge and transform into a visual form (our video) and become something onto itself.

After one day of working together, we learned important aspects of teamwork, developed a sense of trust within the group and decided on a topic for our video. Being an active group member required communicating, listening, collaborating, and being open to differences of opinion, all of which was facilitated and guided by our mentors. We felt ready to go on to the next stage of creating a storyline and planning a shot list for our shoot the next day.

Respecting

As I reflect upon my participation as a group member, I recall how respect was a key factor in interaction amongst students, mentors, technicians, and staff. Actions of respect involved acceptance and tolerance for differences. The process required practicing open-mindedness towards the unknown while working with strangers in unfamiliar surroundings if the project was to survive. Learning continued through teamwork and collaboration. We listened to and incorporated each other's ideas into the final video.

Orienting

Orientation workshops to acting, script writing, storyboarding, and video equipment were offered during the first two days. Acting workshops helped break through shyness by expressing ourselves openly and honestly with other students. I recall how joking and laughter released tension amongst the group. Script writing and storyboarding helped our group visualize our story. Our mentors reminded us to think

about who our audience would be. We decided our video would be suitable for an audience of all ages.

Orientation to filming equipment occurred through a hands-on approach while our mentor guided us in taking turns setting up the camera, sound, and lighting equipment. At first, I was nervous about handling the equipment for fear of unwittingly causing damage. I was introduced to a new vocabulary that included words such as bounce board, gels, white balance, digitize, rough cut, master tape, boom, establishing shot, the rule of thirds, paper edit and many more as part of filmmaking language. I was surprised not to receive pamphlets or brochures to guide us along in learning the technical skills.

Learning Processes

The notion of process was important in finding ways through many stages of confusion, uncertainty, enthusiasm, anticipation, and dealing with surprises we all encountered while creating our video. Processes in creating our video involved establishing commitment, patience, trust in others, open-mindedness, and receptivity to uncertainty and differences. Processes became illusive if I did not trust in 'the process' or take risks while participating in our video project. The process of reviewing our understandings and meaning came about through reflection and expressing our ideas through speech, image, printed text, and music, which made up our video.

Learning took place through teamwork and collaboration with the others. Having my ideas respected and included in the title for our video, allowed me to feel connected to the group and our video. Positive feelings and developing a sense of self-worth through empowerment influenced me to reciprocate with members of my group so that

they may experience the same. This process is something our group developed and discovered for ourselves as guided by our mentors.

The Shoot

In two days of shooting our group gathered 90 minutes of raw footage. We took turns setting up equipment, operating the camera and boom mike, and managing the site during interviews with local people who agreed to be in our video. I recall feeling humbled by the openness and trust given to our team as they told their stories. The possibilities for our video seemed endless as we discussed the stories told to us by the interviewees and thought about what aspects of these stories we would use for our video. We were excited to return to camp to view and listen to what we had captured on videotape. We were ready to go on to the next step of editing our video using desktop editing software on a computer.

Negotiating and Meeting Deadlines

Completing our filming tested our group's ability to work as a team. We accomplished a major task and met a crucial deadline in capturing our raw footage. We were inspired to continue onto the next stage of editing over the final two days of camp. Reviewing our raw footage, transcribing interviews, preparing a paper edit of the main ideas noticeable in the raw footage and deciding on music accompaniment throughout the video were all part of the process of editing. Beautiful images shot in extreme close up range and key comments from the interviews formed the central themes for our video.

Editing our 90 minutes of raw footage into a final seven-minute video was most challenging. We shared moments of frustration and disagreement while deciding on which footage to cut or include in the final video. Many times each of us experienced

letting go of an idea when a compromise decision did not seem possible. We worked hard to get along and stay together as a team.

The looming deadline of completing a video for Saturday's screening was foremost in our minds. We were slow at finishing film sequences during our first day of editing because we were all novice at working with the editing software. I was amazed to see clips of our raw footage appear on the computer screen arranged in image and audio tracks that we manipulated by trimming, adding effects, transitions, and sound with the click of a mouse. The editing software provided immediate results of our editing choices. The ability to undo any of the editing was easy with the command click of the mouse to revert to the original clip and try another editing feature.

Throughout the editing process we became aware of issues embedded in images and comments. Our discussions about these issues reached deep into each of our understandings and assumptions of the meaning and suitability of certain clips and comments for our audience. For example, comments made by interviewees intended for adult audiences only, we decided not to include in our final video since our video was intended for audience of all ages. At times, our difficulty in articulating our interpretations of a particular image or interview resulted in misunderstandings amongst the group. When this happened, we chose to leave out the clips and comments in question hoping that they would be suitable elsewhere in the video. We seemed to be relearning the negotiating we had developed earlier during the week while our roles as group members continued to be challenged each time we engaged in something new or different during the video production process.

Facilitating and the Role of Mentors

At times our team was faced with irreconcilable differences of opinion about our video. Our mentors were key to keeping our group together and on task. The mentors showed awareness and respect for the many processes our group was going through by offering ways for us to accept our frustrations and disagreements as natural to group work. We found ways to move through our struggles all the while practicing respect for each other and our differing viewpoints. We were reminded that there were no right or wrong answers.

Mentors learned alongside students as they guided us through orientation workshops and video production. The mentors' motto was, "If we don't know how to do it, maybe we can find a way." This attitude of finding a way in the midst of uncertainty encouraged us to experiment using a hands-on immersion approach to learning in all aspects of the program from learning about equipment, filming and editing to working in a group.

Video Screenings: Entering a Public Space

On the final day of camp, after 24 hours of exhausting, around-the-clock editing, our group experienced a tremendous feeling of relief and satisfaction in completing our video. I recall the nervousness and excitement we felt during the premier screening of each group's video to an audience of peers, friends, family members and residents of Galiano Island. Each student, now a "GIFTS Graduate," received a compilation of the videos made that week and a course completion certificate. I recall feeling humbly indebted to our mentors who, through their support and belief in our ideas throughout the week helped make our video possible. By screening our video to an audience, a sense of

achievement provided fuel for long-term self-esteem in that I felt I had the confidence, ability, and interest to continue to work with digital video.

From the nurturing, protective space of our group's editing suite, our video had entered a public and unpredictable space offered by the screening. I became more aware of messages embedded in our video in relation to the attending audience of all ages. I hoped our video would not offend anyone and that it offered something meaningful and positive to the audience. Watching the video for the first time in its final form and sharing it with an audience was overwhelming. I saw and felt something 'beautiful' in the merging of our group's ideas with the stories of the participants into a final video. Our video, now an artifact, became a powerful representation of our group's experience in making the video and the stories told by the participants. I felt a sense of pride and accomplishment and I valued having a video to share with other family and friends.

The week's program provided a complete cycle of learning experiences from the beginning to final aspects of video making. I had acquired technical skills to carry on working with the medium of digital video creating my own videos. I had developed understandings of creative processes necessary for completing a video. While working in a group, I developed an awareness of and understandings of social processes necessary for working in a group. I developed a sense of confidence and appreciation for my ideas being as relevant and important as another's. I felt I had learned a lot and that I had crossed many bridges into new fields of experience and learning. There was something magical about this place where "magic" could happen if I allowed it to happen. These experiences contributed to my personal growth emotionally and socially.

Acknowledging Achievement

Later, in the following spring, GIFTS hosted a one-day film festival in Vancouver that highlighted videos made throughout the year. Nominations for achievement awards in various categories such as cinematography, acting, script writing, and drama, experimental, and documentary production were screened throughout the day. Former students reunited to take part in the screening and awards presentation ceremony during the evening. Our video received an award for best cinematography. Again, our video entered another environment where it was showcased and acknowledged by a larger audience and in the context as an award winner.

Expressing and Finding Voice

The GIFTS experience allowed me to discover and experience my voice in new ways. As a newcomer to digital video making, I was unaware of encountering experiences around 'voice.' The process of creating a video and the video itself provided a way for our voices (our messages and ideas) to become visible as articulated in image, sound and action in our video. The nature of my voice and articulation when visible in image form or heard in audio enabled me to reflect on as to re-hear, re-see and re-learn about the meaning of my voice. I valued being able to do this. I experienced how my voice connected strongly to my experiences and personal aspects of who I am. Through my voice I communicate and connect with others. Group process and collaboration for our video required all of our voices to contribute to the final product. Without one of our voices our video would have been different.

Transforming and Establishing Meaning in My Experiences While at GIFTS

Working with the medium of video introduced our group to powerful aspects of representing our ideas audio-visually. Watching our ideas take the form of actions, speech, sounds, and images provided a rich audio-visual representation and contextual background for our narrative. We witnessed and felt the merging of our ideas into a story onto itself developing its own form, taking on and becoming something different from what we each had imagined. Each of our contribution of ideas combined to make up a final, complex visual and audio representation of these ideas.

The technical skills and social skills we learned helped 'demystify' film/video production through creating our own messages and stories from the beginning to final stages of our video. The understandings I have of my learning and learning processes as a result of my experience at GIFTS have transformed the way I see, feel, and think about further learning. I became aware of learning processes that affected my learning. Telling our story through video offered new meanings for creativity, group work, hands-on learning, mentoring, facilitating, self-esteem, expressing ideas visually, developing understanding, and reflecting. These experiences inspired me to find out more about this phenomenon as it relates to working with digital video while attending GIFTS through this study.

Looking Back at Learning: The Foundations Upon Which I Build My Study

Intense learning experiences from this week happened through collaboration while working in our group of three. Our group experience involved respecting each other, taking turns speaking and listening and trusting in the process of completing our video project. Dialogue, collaboration and taking ownership of our ideas fostered a sense

of pride and responsibility to create and participate as a group member for the purpose of completing a final video. Seeing and hearing my ideas, as well as other group members' ideas expressed in video form, was emotionally moving, humbling and empowering. I began to understand how the medium of video and film provided a dynamic common ground for sharing, communicating and expressing thoughts and ideas in co-creating a video. Our learning consisted of immediate, concrete experiences for finding out about video and film production.

Learning can be motivating, empowering and transformational. What I learn influences my further learning, evolving and changing. Participating, reflecting, sharing, respecting, speaking, listening and paying attention to my ideas, influence further learning and opens to excitement, inspiration and empowerment. As an empowered learner, I may pass on or treat others in ways that I have come to understand and know about the nature of empowerment, thus engaging with and empowering others. Experiencing and practicing many of these aspects of learning, serves as a basis for respecting others and their ideas and further learning

In summary, all of the experiences described above were a result of my video-making experience while at GIFTS in 1998. These were important lessons I learned while working with digital video while at GIFTS. I have come to know this as a *transformational experience* that changed my understandings and felt meanings of 'learning.' I understand learning to happen through processes that connect experiences, ideas, understandings and meanings, all contributing to my knowledge. I learn through interacting with others and my surroundings. Interaction is a way of communicating which opens to further learning. Interactions are complex, varied, and dependent upon

what I bring to the interaction. The environment in which learning happens also influences the learning that takes place. Exercising my ideas and feeling ownership of these ideas provides for further learning and personal growth. These new understandings have become the foundation for my further learning through explorations as a researcher in this study of others' experiences while working with digital video and film at GIFTS.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

In this chapter, I provide a review of the literature relevant to this study - explorations through digital video as experienced by the creators of digital videos. To begin, I focus on current media trends to provide contextual background for thinking about people's relationship as consumers and producers to the field of media. Following this, I review research and theory relevant to the uses of video as a research tool. Further considerations for digital video for the purpose of carrying out research are discussed in Chapter Three, which focuses on methodological aspects of carrying out my research. Finally in this Chapter, I focus on literature relevant to learning experiences of researchers, educators, and students who have used video and film in educational settings. In regards to educational settings I discuss a constructivist approach to learning.

Using various databases, such as EBSCO Host and ERIC, and conducting searches for E-Journals provided few sources of information pertaining specifically to 'digital' video productions by students and educators and their experiences. This is likely due to digital video's recent introduction to visual technologies and in particular to its recent accessibility by educational venues and the general public. Many writings include comment on the uses of computers in the classroom with an overview of the various software applications that enhance teaching and learning of particular subjects of study, but few report on the 'experience' of the users and makers of 'digital' video.

Current Relationship to Media

Given the similarities between the mediums of video, film, and digital video I have considered literature that discusses all of these forms. As noted in Chapter One, digital video, video, and film are terms used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

With the overwhelming presence of computers, Internet service, cable and satellite television broadcasting of hundreds of TV channels, convenient video rental outlets, multiple cinemas, video games, and music videos, today's world may be described as:

An imagistic world overloaded with information. One worry associated with the postmodern condition is that we have more information about everything than ever before....This explosion in information itself functions to undermine our sense of control, of knowing where we are in time. First there is so much information that it becomes impossible to "stay on top of it all," but perhaps more importantly, information itself increasingly replaces any traditional understandings of it. As several observers have noted (Postman, 1985; Mander, 1974; Jameson, 1991; Hertzgaard, 1989), television and newspapers increasingly present information but do not appear to make sense of it, or even to discriminate between bits of information (Lasch, 1984). (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, Taubman, 2000, p. 470)

The above statements suggest that not being able to keep up with or make sense of the information presented to us may result in inaction, disconnection, and lack of control in the information we receive leading perhaps ultimately to a disconnection with our own culture. These comments are echoed by Goldfarb (2002) who suggests it is important to think about our experience with media and media pedagogy particularly because of how media is situated in our society at this time, "...as media, and visual culture generally, increasingly are the means through which we experience and interpret our world.

Computer media and the impact of media convergence on the distinctions between text and image will play no small part in this cultural transformation" (p. 83).

Digital technology is part of our 'imagistic' world and the production of digital video using desktop computers has become accessible to the public on a broad scale over the past several years. Digital video cameras (consumer price range of \$800 - \$1,200 in Canada) and desktop applications for video editing are now relatively affordable compared to professional standard video/film equipment. The most recent applications of digital video technology allow one to capture and edit video images with ease. Finished productions can include features such as titling, transitions, special effects, customized audio and many other production options reflective of professionally produced video.

Lasch (1984), according to Pinar et al, (2000), and Goldfarb contend that the current state of media in our society influences the ways we understand and perceive our world. If as consumers of information we are unable to connect to, make sense of, and be active participants and makers of the very media we consume, we are also less likely to develop a meaningful sense of affecting or being part of a powerful aspect of our culture and society. These ideas connect with the notion of 'reification' as discussed by Muffoletto (1984) in relation to the role of instructional media and the teacher as "manager ...trained to utilize media as a packaged curriculum resource, or as commonly coined, an audio visual aid." Muffoletto explains that, "teacher education programs offered no social or political analysis of educational media's epistemology, nor any training in the mediation of the medium itself...Technology was, and is viewed in the words of Skinner, as "ethically neutral." (Skinner, 1972, p.150) and, "Because of this belief in the neutrality of media and the creation of media's content and form by curriculum experts and educational specialists, teachers were (are) never provided with interpretive models with skills to unpack the meanings within the media package. The

result was a reification of knowledge and meaning.” The following quote cited by Muffoletto, explains more fully the consequences of such reification.

Reification is the apprehension of the products of human activity as if they were something else than human products...Reification implies that man is capable of forgetting his authorship of the human world, and further, that the dialectic between man and producer, and his products is lost to consciousness. The reified world is, by definition, a dehumanized world.” (p. 89). (p. 5)
(Berger & Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality*, 1966).

As indicated in the above description of a reified world, one way to exercise more connection and develop a meaningful relationship with information or media is to actively engage in the interpretation, construction, and production of information. By doing so, I agree that we may develop further understandings of our relationship to the media and hence become more active in creating our own media and thereby have greater understanding, influence, impact, and control of the media and a consciousness as author and producer of one's world.

Video for Research Purposes

In regard to the use of visual mediums for research purposes, Pink (2001) provides an opening for working with video as part of research. Pink notes:

It has been suggested that photographic and video images can act as a force that has a transformative potential for modern thought, culture and society, self-identity and memory and social science itself. Therefore by paying attention to images in ethnographic research and representation it is possible that new ways of understanding individuals, cultures and research materials may emerge. (p. 13)

It is exciting to imagine the possibilities for uses of visual representations, especially if it is embraced by academia creating a dialogue amongst many discourses. Research that incorporates images and all that accompanies image in video, such as sound and rich

contextual information about the setting and subjects of the video would complement other forms of research, such as the thesis in this study.

Pink approaches visual material as having many possible applications and uses for research and suggests:

In the broadest sense a video is 'ethnographic' when its viewer(s) judge that it represents information of ethnographic interest....This broad and contextual definition of ethnographic video invites the possibility for a range of different genres of video to be 'ethnographic'. This includes not only ethnographers' video footage, but (for example) home movies, events videotaped by informants for ethnographers, or indigenous videos made for self-representation to external bodies. None of these recordings are essentially ethnographic, but may become so when they are implicated in an ethnographic project. (p. 79)

In regard to the digital video created from this study, I consider the raw footage shot during my stay at GIFTS to be ethnographic material used in the construction of the final video. Furthermore, Pink (2001) defines ethnography as:

...an approach to experiencing, interpreting and representing culture and society that informs and is informed by sets of different disciplinary agendas and theoretical principles. Rather than being a method for the collecting of 'data', ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers' own experiences. (p.18)

In variation to Pink's point of view, Ruby (1975) expresses concern for lack of use and acknowledgement of ethnographic film and suggests that:

If film is to be a serious and scientific means of communicating ethnography then ethnographic filmmakers as well as viewers and, most particularly, teachers of anthropology will have to become more concerned with the study of visual communication and the development of anthropological visual codes, and less interested in producing "pretty pictures." (p. 110)

Keeping in mind Ruby's concern that more study and attention needs to be paid to use of ethnographic filmmaking, he also notes that:

Being able to hear people tell their stories and observe their lives instead of being told what they think and the meaning of their behaviour clearly offers subjects a

greater say in the construction of their image....It recognizes that the opinions of the experts and the vision of the filmmakers need to be tempered by the lived experience of the subjects and their view of themselves. It is "speaking with" instead of "speaking for." (1991, p. 54)

I find Pink's and Ruby's comments relevant to this study in that I use digital video as a means to gather data and include the experiences as mentioned by the participants, which are represented in final digital video along with written text. In the thesis I articulate the nature of my past experiences as a former student and researcher at GIFTS and present the participants' perspectives of their experiences while at GIFTS. All of these are crucial as contributing information presented in the digital video and thesis from which further interpretations and understandings are developed by the viewers and readers in regards to this study.

McLuhan & Zingrone (1995) note in a statement by McLuhan (1971) that:

You are the content of any extension of yourself, whether it be pin or pen, pencil or sword, be it palace or page, song or dance or speech ...The meaning of all these is the experience of using these extensions of yourself. Meaning is not "content" but an active relationship. (p. 280)

In McLuhan's view, we are the content of whatever medium we choose to express ourselves, such as print or audio or visual, and our experience, our 'active relationship' with these mediums constitutes meaning. The thesis and video components of my research reflect understandings about the field study and what transpired during that week for the participants and myself as researcher. Through interviews, participants and I delve into the extensions of who we are and what we understand. Both the thesis and video for this study are dependent upon and emerge from the participants' points of view and descriptions of their experiences as stated by them and shown in the video. Through this, I strive to generate meaningful insights into the experiences of the participants' during

video and filmmaking session at GIFTS as well as provide a rich source of material for further interpretation.

From Consumer to Creator of Video Narratives

The emergence of digital video technology allows one to shift from the role of consumer of video representations to that of creator and producer of video narratives. In this way, digital video as a medium, allows learners to explore their relationships with media, message, representation, and feedback in an experiential way. In regards to students, media and education, Goldfarb (2002) cites Donald (1992) who offers similar thoughts on students as “critical producers” rather than “passive consumers” (p. 68).

Goldfarb in reference to Donald, mentions:

By learning the production techniques that go into the making of a given text, students can understand the mechanisms of ideological construction at the level of the medium. By producing media texts themselves, students learn that there is an alternative to resisting interpellation through mainstream media, or critical reading alone. They can appropriate the means of production to produce new sorts of meanings. His idea is a prescient expression of the “author as producer” ethos of the 1990’s, the decade that brought us desktop publishing and personal Web sites. (p. 69)

Given the capability of uncovering underlying influences on media productions through producing one’s own media, makers of media also learn how they can influence and impact messages in their own productions. Goldfarb provides an example of this in the work of Hilton, a high school teacher, and her students as described by Agosta, media educator with The Educational Video Centre (EVC) in New York. The project, facilitated by Hilton where students take apart or deconstruct media:

...provides students with ideas about how to compose their own texts. In the process intellectual skills associated with a range of disciplines become an integral part of learning the “technical skills” needed to compose one’s own media. Likewise, technical processes such as publishing, printing, and editing

become points of focus in students' critical readings of their studies in more typically academic areas. Texts are no longer regarded as fixed products. Rather, students learn to see them as moments in a process of meaning production – a process that neither begins nor ends in their reading of the text. (pp. 74 -75)

As indicated by Goldfarb, deconstructing and constructing media is a means to recognize key aspects of producing one's own media as well as to develop an awareness regarding media from which to view other media productions. Goldfarb concludes that these media programs helped students connect to community and bring their own issues into their media work thus raised their political consciousness. For example, these media programs generated:

...a means for working through the social and psychological issues that play a role in these students' ability to make it through the school system and life, and to help students make meaningful connections to their communities through the production process....The skills training and, or versus, curricular learning take a backseat as the more pressing issues that these students face in everyday life become the focal point of the production process. The projects tend to be exercises in political consciousness-raising, addressing less overtly the agendas of workforce preparation and academic learning that are nonetheless intended outcomes of the curriculum. (p. 72)

Goldfarb goes on to suggest, "...experience with production can offer a different perspective from which to understand how meaning is processed, what functions media texts serve" (p. 73-74). It is apparent that through the process of media production, students learn how messages are constructed and the ways in which media may be used and for what purpose.

The examples and insights provided by Goldfarb regarding people's relationships with media as active receivers and producers offer inspiration for decreasing our role as passive consumers of media and increasing our role as active participants of media creation, production, and reflection. It appears possible and imminent that meaningful

relationships with media can be developed by engaging with media through interpreting, creating, and producing our own media. These possibilities offer incentives for people to develop skills as producers of their own media production as an alternative and in addition to mass media productions.

A Constructivist View to Learning

An approach to learning that involves brainstorming, group effort, learning processes, and facilitating that resonates with key aspects of this study is known as constructivism. Brooks & Brooks (1993) describe constructivism by distinguishing between traditional and constructivist classrooms approaches to learning related to curricular activities, views of students, views of teachers, teaching objectives and students' ways of learning.

Curricular activities in a traditionalist environment, as described by Brooks & Brooks (see Figure 2.1 of Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. 17): “rely heavily on textbooks and workbooks” compared to “curricular activities rely heavily on primary sources of data and manipulative materials” in a constructivist setting. In a traditional setting the students are “viewed as “blank slates” onto which information is etched by the teacher compared to the constructivist view that “students are viewed as thinkers with emerging theories about the world.” The view of the teacher in a traditionalist view is “teachers generally behave in a didactic manner, disseminating information to students” compared to “behaving in an interactive manner, mediating the environment for students” as in a constructivist framework. Teaching objectives in the traditional setting is for “teachers to seek the correct answer to validate student learning” compared to the constructivist view where “teachers seek the students’ points of view in order to understand students’ present

conceptions for use in subsequent lessons.” Finally, the learning style in a traditionalist setting is “students primarily work alone” compared to “students primarily work in groups” in a constructivist setting.

Kahn and Friedman (1998) in their writings about the relationship between humans and technology, transformations of knowledge, educating computer scientists, and their wondering “How do we teach students that humans, and often students themselves, control computer technology and are responsible for the consequences of computer-mediated action?” (p. 163) suggest a constructivist approach to education similar to Brooks and Brooks. Kahn and Friedman build on “four constructivist principles proposed and practiced by DeVries and her colleagues (DeVries, 1988; DeVries and Kohlberg, 1990; DeVries and Zan, 1994)” (p. 163).

The first principle, “From Instruction to Construction” describes a constructivist approach to learning that:

...involves neither simply the replacement of one view (the incorrect one) with another (the presumed correct one) nor simply the stacking, like building blocks, of new knowledge on top of old knowledge, but rather transformations of knowledge. Transformations, in turn, occur not through the child’s passivity, but through active, original thinking....Constructivist education, therefore, centrally involves experimentation and problem solving, and student confusion and mistakes are not antithetical to learning, but a basis for it. (p. 164)

The above perspective emphasizes active engagement of learners resulting in changes in their understandings and knowledge and that may contribute to students developing an awareness of learning.

In the second principle, “From Reinforcement to Interest” the constructivist view of the teacher’s approach to learning is described as to, “...find out what interests their students and build curriculum to support and extend those interests. They allow students

to help shape the curriculum and the freedom to explore, take risks, to make mistakes” (p. 164). This view invites learner input into the curriculum and recognizes that “...children construct meaning more fully when engaged with problems and issues that they find meaningful, that captivate their interest” (p. 164).

The third principle, “From Obedience to Autonomy” suggests:

...teachers should move away from demanding obedience and toward fostering the child’s autonomy....something like independence from other...we do not mean a divisive individualism....Rather, within a constructivist framework (Baldwin, 1897/1973; Kohlberg, 1969, 1984), autonomy is highly social, developed through reciprocal interactions on a microgenetic level, and evidenced structurally in incorporating and coordinating considerations of self, others, and society. (p. 165)

This view indicates that an individual can learn autonomy through interacting with others and learning from others which leads to the fourth principle, “From Coercion to Cooperation,” in that “cooperation entails incorporating and coordinating one’s own feelings, values, and perspectives with those of others” (p. 165). All of the above aspects of constructivist approaches to learning resonate with what I understand about my experience as a student at GIFTS such as; group work, respect for the students, mentors as facilitators and guides in our learning, and learning that started with students’ perceptions and changed with the understandings students gained from their experiences.

Student and Teacher Relationship

Another important consideration when thinking about the experience of learning is the relationship between learner and teacher. As hooks (1994) suggests, “To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin” (p. 13). Furthermore, facilitated learning where “facilitators are people with the skills to

create conditions within which other human beings can, so far as possible, select and direct their own learning and development” (Gregory, 2002, p. 80) is also important to this study.

Gregory (2002) contends that “helping learners realize their capacity to learn is the hallmark of the facilitator, moving education from a delivery of static knowledge to a dialogical relationship where knowledge is co-created....A facilitator is a ‘process guide who works with a group to assist it to achieve its self-defining purpose (Hunter, 1999, p. 118)” (p. 80). Mentoring is closely related to the facilitation of learning. Nicholls (2002) notes that “the essential attributes of nurturing, role model, the focus on professional/personal development and a caring relationship underpin all aspects of mentoring” (p. 134). As noted in Chapter One, the mentors at GIFTS are exemplary of the descriptions cited above.

Digital Video and Similar Mediums as Motivators for Learning

An article by Howard (2001) tells of students using digital video and iMovie editing software in their Social Studies class for enhancing field trips by providing a preview for the students about the upcoming field trip. Students also used the iMovie program to “...create video photo albums of student family histories, student biographies, or even ancestral biographies....Older students could even add interviews with various family members” (pp. 18-21). Howard further describes how students created storyboards, wrote a script, used photos and music and developed interviewing techniques for carrying out interviews and, “As a bonus, students would have to communicate more with family members to gain information for this project.” Howard concludes by stating:

The research and production aspects of video projects naturally call for cooperative planning between the classroom teacher and library media specialist, especially in light of the library media specialist's expert knowledge of production elements such as storyboarding. Video productions are guaranteed to "fire up" everyone involved, especially the students. (pp. 18 – 21)

Reference to the use of digital technologies often involves fun and engagement in students' experiences using these technologies.

The Apple Website reviews the applications of digital technology for learning and states that "research shows that students learn better and master skills in less time when they are engaged in learning. Technology, particularly digital media, engages students so they spend more time on task than with traditional paper and pencil approaches"

(www.apple.com - Digital Tools for Digital Kids).

In a recent article in Maclean's newsmagazine (September, 22, 2003), "The ABC's of Classroom FUN," Ferguson reported on various studies on student learning in relation to the arts and technology and cites Scardimalia, in reference to students' use of computers and the Knowledge Forum software, that allows students to "construct their own knowledge-building community..." and that the Knowledge Forum works well "because it brings ideas – instead of tasks and predefined goals – to the center of learning" (pp. 21-22). Ferguson also highlights comments made by Uipitis, that research indicates "kids who are turned on by school tend to do well. It's about joy..." (p. 17).

The above comments refer to connections between the use of computers, student engagement and enjoyment, and student achievement in school. In this study, I do not focus on the relationship between computers per se to learning, but I do consider aspects of student engagement and student centered learning as important to student learning

experience. For this reason, I suggest that these comments be considered in further study of the experience of students who use digital video to create their own videos.

Other educators, researchers, and students working with video and film, have offered insights into their experiences. For instance, Lawson (1995) states, "as a media educator, I use the process of media production to build teamwork and skills in writing and public speaking. Introduction to media reaches through hands-on experiences with video equipment, rather than always attempting that polished final product" (as cited in Kyker & Curchy, 1995, p. 28). Lawson refers to the processes of media production that encourages development of social skills and working as a team through group work as well as exercising forms of expression through writing and speaking.

In regard to learning literacy skills, Rice and Mukerji (1973) remind us that, "all literacy requires writing or sending as well as reading or receiving. A truly literate person must not only accept communication but also be able to produce his [*sic*] own messages" (p. 1). In this regard, working with visual mediums such as video and film to produce one's own narratives in turn helps the maker of messages understand messages of others who use similar mediums, thus becoming literate in that medium.

Also, as noted by Lawson, media production involves a hands-on approach in video production. Hands-on learning provides for concrete, tactile, and experiential learning.¹ It is as if Lawson has found these types of learning to be inherent in the process of media production and group work. Lawson also mentions that the learning experiences

¹ Meaning of experiential learning in relation to Heron (1989, p. 13) regarding experiential knowledge "...is knowledge gained through action and practice. This kind of learning is by encounter, by direct acquaintance, by entering into some state of being" and Kolb's (1984, p. 38) description of learning "as the process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience" (Gregory, 2002, p. 99).

that are part of the process of media production are more important than the product – the video itself.

Herrell & Fowler (1998) provide further examples of what is involved in video production.

The writing of a script for a video production combined with the planning of shot sequences and prop and scenery needs encourages the use of reading, writing, speaking, listening, artistic, interpersonal, spatial, and logical-mathematical skills....The use of video in the classroom provides opportunities for students and teachers to become actively engaged in teaching and learning. Video production is by definition an integrated approach for which students and teachers must use their skills in language, arts, visual arts, music, and technology and must collaborate. (p. 4)

As noted above, many skills that reach into other areas of study where students develop literary, math, and social skills are connected with video production. In addition to acquiring various academic and media skills, Herrell and Fowler also indicate, as Lawson does, that video production engages students and teachers to collaborate in developing these skills.

Another example of video used in the classroom is the work of Egenberger (1997) and her students. As a result of the production of the video, Egenberger notes that students learned to operate the equipment, formulate questions around their research topic, write a script, and videotape. Egenberger also mentions that

...the research needed to create the video lead students on a quest beyond textbooks and into a new sense of themselves as component learners who can take charge of their own direction and even bring some new knowledge to their teacher. Textbooks lead us to learn more about less. This project can help your students learn more about more, and integration through video will help your students see their work and learning in a new way. (p. 57)

As indicated by Egenberger, video offers students another way of learning as well as reaching beyond the medium of print.

Edwards (2001), an Associate Professor of Broadcasting and Cinema at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, writes about learning processes that include technical skills and social skills in video production classes. Edwards states, "through learning about and participating in the media production process, students develop critical thinking, leadership and management abilities, aesthetic sensibility, communication, and problem solving skills" (p. 11). This is another example where media production leads to learning in a variety of ways that include critical thinking and developing social and communication skills.

If a student's video production encourages literary, math, and social skills in an engaging way, as noted by Herrell and Fowler, video production may also be considered a motivator for a variety of learning. As noted by Graves, 1995; Hepler, 1991; and Staab, 1991, "Much of the recent research in learning and motivation suggests that students are more motivated to learn when they have ways to become actively engaged in the learning process" (in Herrell & Fowler, 1998, p. 4). Research on the relationship between learning and motivation, suggests that learning comes from the desire of the student to learn something that is grounded in ways of being actively engaged in those learning processes.

As well, Eisner (1997) in discussing cognition and forms of representation states, "...forms of representation can be combined to enrich the array of resources students can respond to." In reference to using a variety of forms of representation in addition to learning about language and number, he also states, "...displays that make available to students ideas couched in visual, verbal, numerical, and auditory forms increase the resources available to the student for making meaning. When resources are rich, the number of avenues for learning expands" (p. 352). Eisner suggests that a variety of

forms of representation enrich student learning and that visuals and audio are examples of these. The focus however, is on what students learn through video and visuals as a medium used in educational settings rather than on the experiences of the students and their perspectives of what they learned by using video which is the focus of this study.

Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed current social and educational and individual aspects related to visual mediums such as video and film and which are of relevance to this study. My reviewing the literature indicates that our relationship to visual mediums is complex and integrated. The literature refers to students as creators and producers of their own video narratives, who, as active learners acquire technical skills and develop understandings of how media works. Learning media production skills contribute to the development of social, writing, and speaking skills, which are all part of learning to use these mediums. Current thinking about new technologies such as digital video and its use in education centers is based on an awareness of the ubiquitous presence of visual media and the recent access we have to these new visual technologies. With the ability to create and produce our own narratives we may develop a better understanding for our experience and relationship with visual and auditory mediums such as digital video.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology: Connecting Experience with Doing Research

Developing My Research Topic

“Selecting a good topic follows from a play between deep personal needs, and the structure of the field of inquiry, and the opportunities one has (makes)” (Bentz, Shapiro, 1998, p. 79). The topic of this study, “explorations through digital video” as described in Chapter One, begins with my personal need and interest in finding out more about the experience of working with digital video. Getting started on this research and how I imagined carrying out this study resonates with Carr (1966) in her approach to painting as noted in her journal dated Wednesday, January 28th, 1931.

For the first time in two months the pendulum has begun to swing. I was working on a big totem with heavy woods behind. How badly I want that nameless thing! First there must be an idea, a feeling, or whatever you want to call it, the something that interested or inspired you sufficiently to make you desire to express it. Maybe it was an abstract idea that you've got to find a symbol for, or maybe it was a concrete form that you have to simplify or distort to meet your needs, but that starting point must pervade the whole. Then you must discover the pervading direction, the pervading rhythm, the dominant recurring forms, the dominant colour, but always the thing must be top in your thoughts. Everything must lead up to it, clothe it, feed it, balance it, tenderly fold it, till it reveals itself in all the beauty of its idea.... A picture does not want to be a design no matter how lovely. A picture is an expressed thought for the soul. A design is a pleasing arrangement of form and colour for the eye. (pp. 25 - 26)

Carr reflects on her experiences while working to express what she sees and feels in nature in the form of her painting, which is similar in many ways to how I approached my research in the form of a thesis and video. She mentions that first there must be an idea or

inspiration. The idea or inspiration for my study is the learning experience that happened for me while learning to produce a video for the first time, as described in Chapter One.

While working on a painting, Carr describes processes of exploring and discovering dominant themes, which inform the idea until it finds its way to the canvas and is represented in the form of a painting. Carr's method of creating a painting involves discovering direction, rhythm, forms, and colours that she will arrange for her painting. While carrying out my research, I also discovered themes, images, sounds, and messages that I arranged in a final video and thesis. Creating a video involved expressing my ideas in visual and audio forms. In this regard, the process of making a video was as important as the final product. Similarly, writing a thesis involved expressing ideas in text form. Key aspects of themes, methodology, and theory represent the processes for carrying out this study resulting in findings that emerged from this study.

In her journal entry, "A picture does not want to be a design no matter how lovely. A picture is an expressed thought for the soul." (p. 26), Carr suggests that the processes of creating her painting are as important as the finished painting. Similarly, I have found that creating my video and writing my thesis involved complex processes of developing understandings of ideas or topics emerging from the study. These understandings I have expressed in audio visual and written forms. In this way, the video and thesis represent, as Carr describes, "an expressed thought for the soul" or in other words, an expressed thought for all that makes up a person's understanding and knowledge of a particular idea.

Central to working towards a final painting, as for Carr, and central to working towards a video and thesis is an interest in an idea that carries one through the processes of learning about and expressing the developed and emergent understanding.

Furthermore, I agree with Dewey (1895) in that “effort is the result of interest, and indicates the persistent outgo of activities in attaining an end felt as valuable; while interest is the consciousness of the value of this end, and of the means necessary to realize it” (McDermott, 1981, p. 429). One’s interest can motivate effort towards an end such as understanding expressed in a particular form such as a painting, video, or poem, which is valued and in turn valuing the processes necessary to achieving that end. Interest and effort are both important to processes reaching an end.

Utilizing a Qualitative Research Paradigm

As researcher and graduate student in carrying out this study, I consider my approach to be as learner. This is my first time in carrying out research where I am principal investigator. My thesis and video represent my interpretation of the data gathered in this study as a way to arrive at understandings that inform implications and suggestions for further consideration by educators and learners regarding uses for the medium of digital video for research and learning. The approaches used in qualitative research suggest carrying out research in a manner that focuses on peoples’ experiences and their understandings of their experiences. Herein lies my interest in finding out about the experiences of using digital video and in particular, while at GIFTS, by using digital video to record participants’ comments, statements, actions, and happenings.

Five features of qualitative research as presented by Bogdan & Biklen (1992) informed my study. They are:

1. Qualitative research has the natural setting, as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument. Qualitative researchers go to a particular setting under study because they are concerned with context.
2. Qualitative research is descriptive. The data collected are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers....The data include interview transcripts, field notes, photographs, videotapes, personal documents, memos, and other official records.
3. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products. How do people negotiate meaning? How do certain terms and labels come to be applied?
4. Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively. They do not search out data or evidence to prove or disprove hypothesis they hold before entering the study; rather, the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together.
5. "*Meaning*" is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. Researchers who use this approach are interested in the ways different people make sense out of their lives. (pp. 29 - 32)

As suggested in the first feature above, my study took place on site at the film camp where participants in my study engaged in the process of video and filmmaking. This research also borrows from a case study approach in that "a case study is a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event" Merriam (1988), as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, (1992, p. 62). This study focuses on one site for a one-week period. I chose to return GIFTS as the site for my study because my experience as a student at GIFTS enabled me to notice aspects of my own learning processes and initiated my journey of seeking understanding of the meaning and significance of this learning through course work and research.

In regards to the second feature of qualitative research listed above, descriptive information provided by the participants regarding their experiences as they created their video projects is provided in this study. By being on site I became familiar with the film camp environment and the activities of the participants. Data collected are in the form of video and audio recordings as well as field notes as noted in the second feature of

qualitative research cited above. Exploring aspects of the experiences users have when working with digital video takes this study into the processes important in producing a final video as described and explained by the participants (see features three and four above). I anticipated that important understandings about participants' experiences would emerge from review of the data as compared to proving or disproving a particular hypothesis that has been suggested prior to initiating the study (see the fifth feature of qualitative research listed above).

Also in consideration of the fifth feature of qualitative research above, this study focuses on developing understanding through finding meaning. I employed an individual perspective for approaching and carrying out my analysis so as to "give meaning to a fabric of data, rather than predict or control some particular event" as well as, "seek to understand, to gain access to the meaning of human phenomena as expressed through an individual" (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, pp. 98, 109). Video recordings, observations, field notes, reflexive journal, questionnaires, and interviews as ways to explore the nature and meaning of the experiences of the participants. In gathering information for my study, I asked participants to tell about their learning experiences over the week. From conversations, interviews, and observations I searched for themes that appeared key to learning experiences for participants while at GIFTS. I expected that this study would reveal similar and different experiences to mine. By engaging in this research, I hoped to provide a broad source of material for others to consider when thinking about learning through digital video and learning in general.

The qualitative approaches described above connect strongly with aspects of visual ethnographic approaches in research. In the following quote, Pink (2001) provides a definition of ethnography that is also considered for this study.

Rather than being a method for the collection of 'data', ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers' own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or 'truthful' account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced. This may entail reflexive, collaborative or participatory methods....It should account not only for the observable, recordable realities that may be translated into written notes and texts, but also for objects, visual images, the immaterial, and the sensory nature of human experience and knowledge....it should engage with issues of representation that question the right of the researcher to represent 'other' people, recognize the impossibility of 'knowing other minds' (Fernandez, 1995: 25) and acknowledge that the sense we make of informants' words and actions is 'an expression of our own consciousness' (Cohen and Rapport 1995: 12). (p. 18)

Similarly, for the purpose of this study, the process of "creating" and "representing" is based on my experiences as GIFTS graduate and researcher. Furthermore, in this study I do not purport to present a "truthful" account of the experiences of the participants of this study, but I do attempt to provide an accurate representation of aspects such as the setting, conversations, interviews, actions, happenings, relationships, learning experiences, and all other unforeseen aspects of the study. The representation forms of video and printed text in this study are intended to be open for further interpretation by viewers and readers. In this regard, this study is carried out with awareness that the means in which I represent another's words or actions is my own and one interpretation of many.

Using digital video to collect information is a means to present "thick description" of the participants' experiences, understandings, and actions as well as the context in

which this study takes place. In reference to Geertz's and Ryle's explanations of thick description, Goldman-Segall (1989) contends, "In a video environment, *thick descriptions* are images, gestures, or sequences which convey meaning. Neither the quantity nor the resolution of the images makes the descriptions thick. What creates thickness is the ability of the visual description to transmit what is really being 'said'" (p. 1).

As part of the video, the visuals and voices of the participants are sources from which I interpreted and constructed the video. The video provides visual and audio presentation about the people, location, and happenings at that time of this study of which the viewer will also interpret. The material presented in the video and thesis serves to "...add to knowledge, not to pass judgment on a setting. The worth of a study is the degree to which it generates theory, description, or understanding" (Bogdan & Biklen 1982, p. 42). Furthermore, "the intent is to create the conditions that will allow the reader, through the writer, to converse with (and observe) those who have been studied" (Denzin, 1998, p. 324).

As ethnographer and video maker, I recognize that as writer of thesis and maker of the video, I interpret and choose what to include or leave out of the video. Given that the digital video and study focuses on the experiences of the participants, I have constructed the video with the voices and actions of the participants. As a form of narrative the video interacts with and serves as a reference for the thesis narrative. The video for this study offers a detailed, descriptive, contextual representation of ideas, information and complex nuances through image and sound that opens to further interpretation by the audience. Also, given the richness of video as a medium for

expression, the participants' image and voice are able to predominate as they are seen and heard throughout the video. In regards to the video for this study, I agree with Pink and intend the video to "...allow participants to 'speak for themselves' and introduce interviewees' voices and visual self-representations into a presentation. Interviewees speak through actions, and by showing researchers images and artifacts as well as words" (Pink, 2001, pp. 149-150).

As Young (1995) comments in his writings about observational cinema and filming as a method for "...examining human behaviour and human relationships in detail..." he suggests that

...you have to be close to it and follow it intimately...but the difference between this and simple note-taking is that the film CAN represent the original event or situation directly. The filming process can be as much like observation as possible; the finished film can represent the event observed. (p. 67)

Although film can represent the observed, it is important to consider aspects of reality and how they are represented in film or video. Young refers to various styles of representation in film and notes a difference "between TELLING a story and SHOWING us something" in that some films lock the audience into a "single argument....We inherit someone else's views of the subject (not always the filmmaker's) and are given a take-it-or-leave-it option" (p. 69). These are examples of films "that don't let you see" because the editing interrupts the flow of the event, it does not allow the viewer to "experience the event and make our own analysis" (pp. 69-70). Young also comments that other films leave the viewer "space to fill and we participated" or "We will need help in understanding its significance, but we are allowed to feel it without interference" (p. 69) in reference to how the film was edited.

As regards the construction of the video for this study, it is important to be aware that, I am the filmmaker in all aspects of the video as recorder, researcher, observer, interviewer, analyst, and video editor. In reference to Hall (1998, p. 8) and his insights in regards to collecting data, he states, "You are the instrument of research." In light of the previously discussed aspects of film and research, I appreciate the need to consider how I am situated in regards to intentions and perspective. One way to do this is based on Pink's approach to visual ethnography.

Just as reality is not solely 'visible' or observable, images have no fixed or single meanings and are not capable of capturing an objective 'reality'...the connection between visual images and experienced reality is constructed through individual subjectivity and interpretation of images...and that realist uses of the visual ethnography should be qualified by a reflexive awareness of the intentions behind such uses...(p. 24).

A reflexive account of my intentions and purposes for using video for this study is presented in the next section of this chapter.

Situating 'Self' Through Reflexivity

As Pink suggests, a researcher should examine her existing understanding and knowledge of a given topic. In Chapter One, I introduced my GIFTS experience and highlighted some of the key processes and events that were an integral part of that experience. In describing how I am situated in relation to the study, it is important that I acknowledge the orienting stances that are rooted in my GIFTS experience of 1998. Stemming from that experience, I have brought a particular set of assumptions to the phenomenon I was investigating.

In this study I have many roles. I am a visitor, researcher, university graduate student, a graduate of GIFTS and middle-aged, female. As researcher, writer of thesis,

and video maker, I offer one interpretation of the information gathered for this study. I am also cognizant of how, as researcher, I represent the knowledge and understandings of participants in my study and agree with Pink that it is important to recognize my interpretations are my own and only one of many possible interpretations.

The Setting

Initial contact and meeting with the director of GIFTS took place in May 2002 to discuss my interest in the school as a site for my study. The director was open to my ideas and granted me permission to attend a one-week session during the fall of 2002. The GIFTS campus provided a retreat-like setting with many spaces for students to meet such as the courtyard with its picnic tables and central location to all the buildings on site. The kitchen with its large tables, benches and booths, the editing suites, screening room, and yard site also provided places for students to meet and use for their video production needs. The campus environment enabled students to focus on their video projects throughout the week. Students' connection with the outside world was available but limited by one payphone.

Participants

Twenty-two students, ages fourteen to twenty or more years (seven groups of three or four students each), four mentors, three technical support staff, two chefs, two office staff and the director took part in this "youth/adult media intensive week." Nearly one third of the students had attended GIFTS once or twice before. The participant consent form, which describes and explains my study, was provided for each person who chose to take part in my research project on a voluntary basis. I offered a questionnaire to students who did not want to be interviewed. I also reminded participants that they could

withdraw from the project at any time and they could determine whether any existing records (e.g. videotapes, interviews) about them shall be destroyed. In the thesis text I have used pseudonyms for the participants, while in the video the participants are identifiable.

Methods and Procedures Implemented in Carrying out This Study

Ethnographic Narrative - Field Notes and Journal Writings

I have practiced journal writing since my first visit to GIFTS and throughout my master's program. Journal writings served as a reminder of the context in which I began thinking about a topic for my study and to the final stages of this study. Writing field notes allowed me to reflect, summarize the day's events, and record my experience while doing the study. This has provided for a rich source of information of the daily activities while on site. My observations are from the point of view as visitor, GIFTS graduate, university graduate student and researcher.

Documenting with Video

An intrinsic aspect of this study involved using digital video to record, document, and present about this study. A dilemma surfaced for me about the degree to which I could be present amongst the students without interfering to the point of disturbing their learning processes. I hoped students and mentors would develop a sense of belonging to the camp and their group before I engaged them in the formal aspects of my research, such as videotaping interviews. I avoided interrupting student conversations and group activities as students were getting to know each other and becoming familiar with their surroundings. For the first visits to the campus, I stayed on the margins of student activities by sitting at a table or on the steps in the courtyard watching, listening and

acknowledging students with a 'hello,' smile and brief eye contact. Within a couple of days students and I had become familiar with each other and I felt comfortable about entering the students' space while they worked on their video projects. As it turned out, most students and mentors were keen to be part of my study and consented to being videotaped. By late afternoon of the first day, I began videotaping. My first videotape recording featured candid shots from a distance of students working in groups discussing their video projects. These candid shots provided rich visuals of group activities and their surroundings.

Digital Video Recorded Interviews

Interviews in research are methods for "creating field texts....Interviews can be turned into written field texts through transcription note taking, and/or the selective use of interview segments" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p. 165). Review of the videotapes and field notes from this study have enabled me to recall and reflect on the week for the purpose of noticing themes present in the interview comments, actions, and activities of the participants throughout the week at GIFTS.

As researcher and inquirer, to the degree that it is possible to do so, I strived to maintain a neutral approach towards participants in this study. Interviews provided a means to connect with the participants and to include their voices, images and actions. Videotaped interviews took place with twelve students, of which six students chose to be interviewed in their respective groups. Five mentors, one technical support staff and the director also consented to a videotaped interview.

The interview questions developed for this study come from my curiosity and interest in finding out as much as possible from students and mentors about their

experiences while working with digital video and film. I strived to keep questions open-ended so that the participants would interpret the questions relevant to their perspectives and comment on what stood out for them about their experiences while working on their projects. There were no wrong or right answers in response to these questions. The interviews were a means for participants to connect with the study through their articulation of their understandings of the topics discussed during the interviews and for me to connect with the participants.

The interview questions and questionnaire for student participants at GIFTS focused on the beginning, middle, and final stages of their video projects. The first set of questions focused on previous experience working with digital video, reasons for attending GIFTS, and what they hoped to learn while at GIFTS. In a second set of questions, I asked students about what they learned up to the mid-point in their projects and what expectations they had regarding group process. The final set of questions focused on what students thought they learned from their course, how they felt about their finished video and what advice they had for students attending GIFTS for the first time. Four students completed all three sets of videotaped interview questions. Three students completed two sets of videotaped interviews. Eight students completed the first set of videotaped interview questions. I also videotaped student comments and conversations and activities throughout the week. One student completed the questionnaire while two students partially completed the questionnaire.

I interviewed four mentors and asked them about their previous experience with visual media, philosophy as mentors, and their hopes for the students' learning

throughout their projects. An interview with the director focused on the history and philosophy of the school and his expectations for students' learning while at film camp.

Relationship of Thesis and Video

An intra- and inter-dependent relationship has developed between writing a thesis and creating a video. Visual and audio details of the activities of the participants and their surroundings are captured on videotape. I am able to 'fine-tune' my account of what happened and what participants said and did. The video recordings reconnected me to my experiences of carrying out the study and what happened while at GIFTS. The video contributes information and context for further reflection on what occurred while carrying out my research.

For the thesis writing, I referred to field notes, journal writing, videotaped interviews, candid shots, questionnaires, and literature to tell about this study. As well, in constructing the video, I reviewed videotaped interviews and candid shots to develop five components of final video totaling 49 minutes distilled from 12 hours of videotape footage, which is considered as data. Developing the video involved reviewing videotapes, noting main ideas and time codes, reviewing field notes for themes, downloading video footage into a rough cut, fine editing, adding transitions, overlaying images, titling, and credits. It was difficult choosing footage from the broad spectrum of images and audio. It was also difficult to work towards dominant themes in the material because many themes were interdependent of each other.

The video in this study complements and extends the writing through the visuals and comments that are not included in the thesis text. The video and thesis combine to present as complete and detailed as possible the data collected during the field study.

Interpretation and Data Representation

My thesis, as text, articulates my interpretation and description of a particular phenomenon. The nature of the text indirectly explains my interpretations of material from a key source – the participants of this study. I have found that text limits my descriptions, as words alone cannot convey what I saw and heard. Apart from direct quotations, it is difficult to capture and provide the reader with a sense of what happened or what someone said and did using only written text. Writing involved increased interpretation of information gathered for this study while video provided supplementary rich description for the writing and allows for further in-depth interpretation by its viewers. Devereaux and Hillman (1995) illuminate this interplay between ethnographic film and writing.

Whatever its claims or disclaimers about its relation to the real, the ethnographic film cannot escape its ties to the specific. The specific can be made to stand for the general; there is no ontological imperative toward nor guarantee of the actual in ethnographic film, but there is the opportunity for a visual immersion in the particular, which is the condition for its affinity with anthropology. Writing especially academic writing, flees the particular and takes hold of the abstract, that enemy of experience. . . . sticking to close to experience, is, if anything, more possible in anthropological film than in writing. Writing takes place after the experience. It revises in the light of the intervening moments. Each take in film is constructed in the moment of filming. Its contingency is the contingency of the experiencing filmmaker. Editing, narrative, or expository construction are still to come, of course; *this possibility of sticking with the moment is easily lost, but it can be preserved or built upon.* (pp. 71, 72) [emphasis added]

The video provides material, which I am not able to provide for readers of my thesis.

Words, perspectives and themes described in my thesis are not as immediate in presentation in comparison to what the video can provide for viewers. As Devereaux and Hillman (1995) note, “The richness of the image, the context in which the utterance was made, is often far more illuminating than a transcribed speech in text, as gesture and

aspects of context can be present for the viewer” (p.72). The images and sounds offer a complex, rich representation of participants’ account of their experiences as a source richer than text from which to interpret and thus for the purpose of this study, construct a video and thesis.

Interpretation occurs from the beginning through to the end of this study. Peshkin (1995) notes that interpretation in research “...entails perceiving importance, order, and form in what one is learning that relates to the argument, story, narrative that is continually undergoing creation” (p. 9). Peshkin also contends that interpretation has to do with “questions, images, and ideas that are the starting point of my inquiry...where I choose to look to see that something going on...the judgment of what to collect that provides documentation...what to select for writing...and a perspectival accounting for what I have learned” (p. 9). Interpretation is something we do in every aspect of thinking about research whether planning, doing, writing, video making, viewing, and reading.

Review of video taped interviews with participants, conversations, activities, field notes, and questionnaires informed my interpretation. During the review of the video tapes, I noted key comments and actions of participants that stood out for me as important in regards to this study along with corresponding video tape number and time codes for further reference for writing and editing purposes. My master’s thesis and video combine to present written and visual articulations of my interpretation of the participants’ experiences as well as my own experiences while working with digital video or film. My thesis and videos have developed concurrently, combining to provide a broad spectrum of information for consideration in learning about participants’ experiences while at GIFTS.

CHAPTER FOUR

Returning to GIFTS – An Ethnographic Narrative

In this chapter, I provide excerpts of field notes, transcriptions from video recorded interviews and conversations, observations, reflections, and interpretation for creating a description of what took place during this study in regards to the experiences of the participants during a one-week program of creating digital videos at Gulf Islands Film and Television School (GIFTS).

Arriving at GIFTS

On Sunday, August 25, 2002, my family, two dogs and I traveled from Vancouver Island to Galiano Island by ferry. Our car was packed to the roof with camping gear, blankets, pillows, dog supplies, a portable solar shower pack, toiletries and change of clothing, camera equipment and research supplies enough to last a week. We arrived late in the afternoon to set up camp, which was fifteen minutes away by car from GIFTS. The tent pegs bent and broke as we hammered them into the hard, dusty, gravel ground while setting up camp.

At 8:30 PM we drove to GIFTS, in time for me to attend the introduction session for students and staff. We turned at the familiar GIFTS school sign posted alongside the road and slowly made our way up the potholed road towards the campus. Dust covered the back window and billowed inside the car. We parked near the tenting area. I noticed quietness as I got out of the car. It reminded me of my first time as a student here. A light was on in the courtyard and I saw two young women sitting on the steps. I asked them if they were mentors for the week. They were university students from Ontario. They talked

about “their interesting experience” of hitchhiking from the ferry to GIFTS.

(Hitchhiking is common on Galiano Island.) They had heard of GIFTS through friends and found out more about the school through its Website. They said they chose this school because it was affordable and offered a short, intense program that covered a wide range of learning about video and film.

Several vehicles started arriving at the site around 9 PM. A SUV parked alongside our car. Music and laughter came from inside the SUV as five students, who appeared to be high school age, hauled their suitcases out of the hatchback and ran off towards the courtyard. They seemed to be familiar with the camp. Just before 10 PM the GIFTS “reels on wheels” bus groaned its way up the hill and stopped at the entrance to the courtyard. The driver (director) jumped out the side door and hauled out the students’ luggage from the back of the bus. There were about 12 students. They were quiet and appeared tired. Each student checked out their assigned sleeping quarters, which were posted outside the trailer bunk doors. I asked permission from the director to join the group in order to introduce myself and explain the purpose of my visit and study. He invited me to attend the introduction session.

We assembled at 10 PM in the common room (screening room) for orientation and introductions. The room filled with thudding and shuffling sounds of footsteps and chairs squeaking as people sat down. Over 20 of us sat quietly in a circle. Many students smiled as they exchanged glances with each other. The director introduced me to the students and mentors. He started the circle by stating the safety rules, campus policy, and student responsibilities. He explained that drugs and alcohol were not allowed, that GIFTS was a closed-campus where no one was to leave without permission and visitors

were not allowed to stay overnight. Students were reminded that the walls of the buildings “can hear.” Drinks and treats could be purchased by the “honour system,” (which depended on everyone’s honesty to pay and make change using the cash container near the freezer outside the kitchen). The director also mentioned that tea, coffee, and soup were available in the kitchen throughout the week and for students to help themselves. Students were expected to take turns “doing dishes” and were reminded to “sleep and eat.”

Introductions began with each person stating their name, telling where they were from, and sharing something about themselves that they did not want anyone to know about. This led to chuckles and helped to break through our nervousness of speaking to a group of strangers. When it was my turn to speak, I explained that I was interested in talking with people about their experience while working on their video and film projects and following them around for the week. It appeared that everyone in the group was open to this idea.

At first, my goal was to find seven students who would be interested in participating. From the interest people seemed to have in this study, I considered the possibility that more than 20 students and mentors might be interested in participating. I thought how limiting the number of participants by excluding people from participating in the study could create tensions for everyone. I also thought how a large number of participants would provide me with more opportunities to interact with students, record their activities, and conduct interviews. I chose to let everyone who was interested participate in the study and realized I needed to prepare more consent forms.

Students had traveled from as far as Maine, New Jersey, and Ontario to attend GIFTS. Many students came from Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia. Students ranged in age from fourteen years to early twenties. This week's session was open to both youth and adults. There were 12 female and 10 male students, many of whom had been to GIFTS one to three times before. After 45 minutes into the circle, I got up to leave and apologized for interrupting the circle. I had to return to our campsite before the entrance gates closed at 11 PM. I was disappointed to miss the remainder of the student introductions, as I wanted to get to know students as soon as possible.

My family and I arrived back at our campsite at 11:20 PM to find the entrance gates still open. Today seemed long and exhausting. Our campsite was unusually dry and dusty from near nine weeks of hot weather and no rain. I washed grit from my face and hands with a moist facial napkin as I prepared for bed. I welcomed stillness, quiet, and sleep as I crawled into my sleeping bag. All was quiet except for snoring coming from the trailer in the campsite next to ours. Once I took a moment to relax and reflect on the day, I realized I left my tripod at home! At first I panicked thinking about the possibility of not being able to borrow a tripod. I then considered how shooting handheld without a tripod may work out better with keeping up with the students and mentors.

First Day (Monday)

At about 4:30 AM, an animal sound awakened me. It called out as it came towards our tent. Everyone else seemed to be asleep. I lay still and held my breath as I listened and became very aware of the flimsiness of the nylon walls of our tent. I hoped the animal would soon leave. At 5 AM I was awakened again by more animal sounds –

screeching and snarling which I imagined to be raccoons. At about 5:30 AM the animal I heard earlier came towards our tent a second time as if on its way back into the forest. At 6 AM a robin's call woke me up. I felt tired, yet not able to sleep. I hoped I would have enough energy to carry on with the rest of the day while at GIFTS.

At 7:30 AM I prepared field notes, checked and rechecked my camera equipment, consent forms, questionnaires, and supplies. I heated water on the camp stove for tea and had juice and granola for breakfast. I heated more water for sponge bathing. An hour had passed by the time I had prepared for the day and locked up camp.

I arrived at GIFTS around 9:15 AM, which is later than I had planned to arrive. A hum of voices and footsteps came from the courtyard as students mingled after finishing a media literacy workshop. Students were smiling, laughing, and jostling about. One student came up to me and said she would like to participate in my study. I offered her a consent form to read and sign. She mentioned she would be working on a drama production. Many students were less shy this morning compared to last evening. Some students seemed immersed in thought as they sat around the tables and on the courtyard steps.

I focused on learning people's names. Everyone seemed friendly as I mingled and talked with more students asking where they were from and what they did earlier in the morning. I wanted to avoid interrupting or interfering in the process of the students getting to know each other and their surroundings. I heard a phone ring and a low hum of motorboats in the distance. The chef was busy putting away boxes of Shreddies, Cheerios, Just Right, granola, bread, and peanut butter left over from breakfast.

I passed out consent forms for people to read. I suggested that they could return the consent forms to me the next day to allow enough time for them to review the outline of my study. Most students read the consent form and signed immediately. I reviewed the consent form with each participant reminding them that they could withdraw from the study at any time by letting me know. The mentors seemed pressed for time and I thought that a scheduled interview would be a way to ensure time to meet with them. I met with three of the mentors and arranged an interview for Tuesday and another for Friday.

Students attended a workshop on 'visual storytelling' around 11:00 AM, which I sat in on. I chose not to videotape this session, as it was the first session I attended and I did not feel familiar enough with everyone to videotape. The students were energetic, focused and polite towards each other and were attentive during the workshop. The mentors reminded students that their videos were about choices in what to present on the screen. They talked about picture composition and creating a shot list.

Throughout the workshop, I noticed many students saying, "That's just like the movie..." to each other. The mentors spoke to the students about "being open to difference, respecting difference, and keeping in mind their audience," while planning their video and film. Mentors also recommended that the students "keep their project simple" and "let the audience fill in the blanks" when deciding what to include in their videos.

Students joked and laughed a lot in the next workshop on scriptwriting. The atmosphere felt open to humour as the mentor talked about "collaboration and jamming" and suggested that students use phrases such as "that's great" and "that sounds great" as ways of "being open" to each other's ideas when working in groups. I videotaped a short

portion of this session as students spoke about their ideas for their videos. I was pleased that no one objected to my videotaping. The workshop activity and discussion I anticipated would provide valuable input for my study. I would remind the participants to let me know if they did not want to be videotaped. At first, I experienced problems with the sound recording but readjusting the sound output level remedied the problem.

I enjoyed being back at GIFTS and becoming familiar with the surroundings once again. I noticed there were more editing suites, including new 8 mm film developing suites. The buildings, kitchen, screening area, bunks, and showers were just as I remembered. Time passed quickly for me while on site. I was still very conscious of not wanting to interfere with the processes students would be going through while working on their video projects. I hoped that if I carried my camera at all times, students would become better used to the idea of me videotaping them throughout the week and during their interviews.

Second Day (Tuesday)

Around 7 AM I got up feeling tired even though I was not awakened by animal sounds during the night. I noticed the sound of wasps buzzing around the tent and the calls of towhees, robins, crows and tree frogs in the surrounding trees and bushes. For breakfast I had a packet of cold cereal, juice, and coffee. After breakfast, I shampooed my hair with the cold water from the solar shower pack. The cold water woke me up and left me feeling refreshed. While camping more time was spent preparing meals, washing up, cleaning, packing, and walking to and from the washroom located ten or more campsites away.

I arrived at GIFTS just after Noon. I met with two more mentors and confirmed interview times with them, one after supper and one for Wednesday morning. Many students were working in groups. Some students had formed groups with people they knew from school and previous sessions at GIFTS. Ten students were now signed up to participate in my study. Some students enjoyed talking to me about their projects and were eager to participate. I offered questionnaires for the few students who did not want to be interviewed in case they were interested later on in responding to questions.

For the first two days, orientation workshops focused on creating a video or film which involved brainstorming for a topic, writing a script, creating a storyboard, finding actors, props, shooting locations, learning to use the camera, sound and lighting equipment, and editing their footage into a final video. The mentors were supportive of my efforts to do a study on the experience of working with digital video while at GIFTS and they wanted to know what I would do with the information given to me. I explained that my study was part of a master's degree and that the video and thesis would be viewed and reviewed by university professors and students. I also mentioned that the video might be shown at academic gatherings and conferences.

My first videotaped interview with one of the mentors went well. I was impressed by his insight and detail in response to my questions. I asked him about his work and role as a mentor and what his hopes were for the students while at GIFTS. He spoke about what he noticed in the students' experiences and their video projects. I worked hard at listening to his comments and tried to respond with questions that would flow into another question so as to take on a conversation. At times, my questions did not flow with

the topic of discussion and I planned to practice my questions in preparation for my next interview.

The second interview was with a student who seemed relaxed, personable, and trusting of my questions. I felt fortunate that participants were open to being interviewed and taking in the study. I wondered if the students' felt comfortable towards the camera because of their previous experience with working with video and their interest in working with video.

Some groups had finished their scriptwriting and started storyboarding. Students now called me "docu-lady" and my daughter "docu-daughter" as she helped me with my sound equipment in recording the interviews. Having been given a nickname indicated to me that I had been accepted amongst the students as a visitor and researcher and that they felt comfortable with this situation.

At 8 PM, I interviewed another mentor. This was my third interview for the day. He talked about his experiences with working with video as a student and mentor. He spoke about the positive experiences he had as a student and mentor at GIFTS. I was keen to hear more about his experiences that had to do with learning processes, hands-on learning and many more experiences similar to mine while at GIFTS four years ago.

An hour later, I interviewed another student. She was interested in my questions and spoke about the notion of process, giving many details about her experiences over the first two days of camp. Each subsequent interview seemed to flow better than the first interview. With practice I got better at comprehending the participants' comments and asking questions relevant to their answers, resulting in a smoother dialogue.

While on site I did not actively take part in the project orientation sessions. I observed and engaged in conversation. I video recorded only when the mentors and students indicated to me that it was okay to do so. At first, I noticed students were conscious and somewhat shy about my presence and the video camera. Footage, that included people who expressed that they did not want to be recorded, has not been used in the thesis or video for this study. Towards the end of the day, students seemed more focused on their projects and less concerned about my company. One of the technicians offered to help me with sound if her break time coincided with the interview times. Knowing that people were interested in what I was doing and willing to help, comforted me.

During the interviews, I also noticed the students and mentors provided unspoken respect and trust by responding to my questions and consenting to being videotaped during their interviews and while working on their projects. I felt humbled and respectful of their trust, which resulted in my feeling greatly responsible for 'taking care' of their stories and paying close attention to how their stories would form part of the final thesis and video. Again, by the end of the day I felt very tired. I felt I needed a break from my study and yet hesitated because the evenings would also be a good time to observe and videotape. I reminded myself that there would be many more opportunities over the next few days to observe, meet with students and mentors, and videotape.

Third Day (Wednesday)

I arrived earlier in the morning at GIFTS. The aroma of toast reminded me how much I missed having toast for breakfast. The campus was peaceful this morning. At 9:30 AM I spoke with two more students who consented to an interview. Excitement and

commotion spread over the campus as groups prepared sets for their shoots. One group worked in the kitchen, two groups worked in the Super 8 film suites, and another group went on location to a nearby beach. The courtyard, picnic tables, kitchen and dining area, screening room, editing suites, and yard site were all available and used as places to meet to discuss, find props, and set up for shooting. The editing rooms comfortably held groups of four to six students.

By the afternoon, seven more students and mentors signed consent forms. I interviewed one mentor, one student, and a group of three students. I was fascinated by the participants' comments during their interviews and I anticipated how difficult it would be to edit all the interviews into an hour or less of final video. There was much to observe, listen to, and record. It was difficult, even with the use of a video camera, to capture all that I saw and heard during the interviews or throughout the day.

After having supper at a local restaurant, I returned to GIFTS. Many students were working on their shoots, doing scratch film, processing film, taking short breaks, or watching a video on the television monitor in the screening room. People seemed quiet and moved about slowly, perhaps tired or lost in thought.

Fourth Day (Thursday)

I got up at 6:30 AM. I heard raccoons again during the night behind our tent as well as the larger animal I heard the first night at camp. For the first time I noticed trails through the brambles behind the tent, which I assumed raccoons and other smaller animals used for going from one campsite to another.

I arrived at GIFTS around noon after packing up the tent in order to relocate to GIFTS. A group was shooting nearby. For about fifteen minutes, I walked along a trail

that zigzagged up the mountainside and arrived on set as the group was in the midst of filming. The mentor indicated to me that this was not a good time to videotape. I sensed tension in the group. Today was the first time I noticed increased tension amongst the groups. I assumed that the students and mentors were feeling weary as a result of working long days to finish their shoots. The demands of achieving the desired lighting, sound, and acting in the shots, which often resulted in retakes, would understandably challenge the students' and mentors' patience and ability to cope with the overall pressure to wrap up their filming in order to get onto the next stage of editing. I wanted to avoid interfering with the sensitive issues this group was dealing with and decided to go back to campus to see what the other groups were doing.

After lunch, I arranged to interview three students as part of a group. During the first stage of the interview, they seemed to respond to my questions in a joking manner. I asked what they expected to learn from the week and some of the things they had learned so far while working in a group. At one point I wondered if I should cut short the interview, but realized that this interview would illustrate a variety of aspects of playfulness and attitudes the students had towards their project and towards me as researcher. Near the end of the interview, the students' comments were less repartee in nature. When asked to describe how they managed to involve everyone in the group in working on their project, they explained what happened in a sincere manner rather than not answering my question by making up a story and generating laughter.

Asking questions, observing, listening, and being alert to all that goes on during the interview was very demanding. Shooting without a tripod and using a handheld shotgun microphone required that I juggle video taping, checking for sound, asking

interview questions, and offering relevant questions to the comments of the interviewee required all of my attention and energy. By the end of the day, I felt exhausted and in need of a break.

From 5:30 to 7 PM I set up my tent on a grassed area near the kitchen and washroom facilities. I was relieved when one of the students helped me set up my tent, as it is a large tent and near impossible for one person to balance the middle support poles while trying to set up the supporting poles for the sides of the tent. After setting up the tent, I quickly showered for the first time since arriving on Galiano Island.

I strolled around campus until 12:40 AM. Lights were on at all times in the courtyard, kitchen, and washroom areas. The courtyard was empty as students huddled in editing suites to do their final edits. I thought about the suggestions students offered me for shooting my video. I enjoyed the spontaneity of these interactions. One student reminded me that while shooting it was important to capture all of the movement of a person doing something from the beginning to the end and to let the subject walk out of frame as a way to end the shot. I appreciated the advice, and practiced using this technique for the remainder of my shooting.

I also recalled the advice my daughter gave me. She advised me to “be a mom, don’t say ‘cool’ and don’t videotape anyone looking off to the side (avoiding the camera).” I took this as good advice as I thought she would have insight into the participants’ reactions to my presence from the two days of helping me with the sound equipment.

One of the technicians mentioned that many people had been to GIFTS to do interviews, but no one had done a study here before. I felt fortunate to be able to be here

and appreciated how open everyone was towards being asked questions, observed, and video recorded. I noticed a quiet acceptance, respect and support for each other's differences and ideas. Group interactions and group dynamics involved each group member's participation through continual dialogue. I was reminded that there was something beautiful and magical about this place that I could not quite describe, but that something, as I recall from my first time at GIFTS, continued to be the glue that kept people working together throughout the week.

Fifth Day (Friday)

Around 6 AM, I was awakened by bumping and scratching sounds on the sides of my tent. I peaked out the tent door and saw three kittens chasing each other. The stars were bright in the all clear dark blue morning sky. I heard a woodpecker, a Steller's jay, a towhee, and a tree frog calling. I also heard the low hissing of vehicles traveling along the highway nearby and a floatplane in the distance. For the first time this week, I woke up feeling rested. I appreciated stepping out of my tent onto soft grass instead of gritty gravel at the campsite.

At 8:20 AM I reviewed my files and noted what I needed to do in order to wrap up my study on this last full day at GIFTS. Someone rang the meal chime at 8:30 signaling that breakfast was ready. I dressed for breakfast and noticed my clothes fitted loosely, as if I had lost some weight. I looked forward to coffee and toast.

Someone rang the breakfast chime a second time. It was 9:00 AM. Many students were sleeping-in this morning. One student was searching for the Captain Crunch cereal, which was probably eaten, as according to the chef that was everyone's favourite cereal.

After breakfast, I drove into town and purchased cards for making a combination thank you note and a contact card to give to each participant for Saturday morning. I prepared a contact list for the participants to fill in if they wanted to keep in touch about the study. Later that afternoon, a student told me that two of the students' grandmothers had passed away. I wondered if the soft speaking tones and quietness I noticed last night was partly due to the sympathy students felt towards their fellow students.

I completed two more interviews, one with a student and one with an editing technician. An interview I had planned earlier in the week with one of the mentors was cancelled due to the busy schedule she had working with her two groups. After dinner, groups mingled in the courtyard. One of the mentors reminded one of his groups that, "you'll probably be done editing around 10 PM tonight, if not midnight, if not 2 AM, if not stay up until it's done." I chuckled as I recalled from previous experience that mentors often stayed up for as long as they were needed to help finish the videos.

Around 11 PM, I interviewed one of the students whom I interviewed at the beginning of the week. She mentioned she had learned a lot, especially about "group process" and "getting along with others." Many groups were close to finishing their projects and they appeared more relaxed about their project. Laughter amongst the groups occurred often once again as it had earlier in the week. A couple of groups continued editing at 1 AM taking breaks every 1 to 2 hours for hot chocolate, tea or coffee, and soup. At 1:30 AM after working hard to stay awake, I decided to go to bed.

Last Day – Screening Day (Saturday)

A roar of laughter from the courtyard woke me up around 4 AM. I was too tired to get up to find out what was happening and went back to sleep for a couple more hours. I enjoyed the cool, fresh morning air as a break from the hot weather we had throughout the week. The clear morning sky indicated it would be another hot day and near ten weeks without rain.

At 6 AM I walked over to the courtyard to check for signs of what had happened earlier. One of the students told me there had been a water fight, which explained the raucous I heard earlier. All was quiet now and many of the students had gone to sleep on the courtyard deck.

I quickly showered around 7 AM hoping to finish before any of the students needed to use the washroom. Technicians were setting up the screening room and dubbing final copies of the videos. Towards noon, many students were packed and ready to leave for home. Students sat quietly in the courtyard while one of the chefs and one of the technicians took turns playing an acoustic guitar and singing.

This was my last chance to interview the director, whom I thought would have key insights important to my study. I managed 15 minutes of interview time with him. It was a hectic interview, as students and staff packed up their gear and prepared to go home while at the same time people were arriving for the screenings. I attempted another interview with a student, but cut it short because we were unable to focus on the questions. It was time to end my research at GIFTS.

The screenings started just after 2:30 PM. For each screening, students received completion certificates and congratulatory comments from the mentors as they described

some of the highlights of week for each group. Many groups fell into a 'group hug.'

This appeared to be an emotional time for mentors and students.

The videos had entered a public domain where an eager, appreciative audience of approximately sixty people watched tentatively and offered loud applause after each screening. The videos and films were very well produced with excellent sound and image quality. I was amazed, once again, at what the students had accomplished in only six days working as a group. I wondered how aware the audience was of the effort students had put into creating their videos, as the videos did not show behind the scenes planning, frustrations, surprises, and decision-making that went into its creation. Once the videos had been shown, students, mentors, and many of the people who attended the screenings quickly left GIFTS to catch the last ferries back to the mainland and other islands.

I reflected on the week as I waited at the ferry terminal. I recalled the fun and challenges of the past week and how much I enjoyed my second time there. I felt I now had a better sense of what the experience of GIFTS meant to the students, mentors, and director, as well as to myself. I looked forward to starting the process of producing the video and writing about this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Interview Findings

As mentioned earlier, the video recorded interviews open this study to include participants' perspectives in the form of their voice, actions, and images. Connected to these perspectives are the surroundings and the learning processes the participants became part of and in which they participated. As a participant observer in this study, I engaged with the participants, observed goings on and carried out interviews. The focus questions answered by the participants in this study helped provide an overview of their experiences while working with film or digital video. My interpretation of the data collected and my telling about these understandings include quotes and observations written in this thesis along with images, actions, and voices presented in the video.

Emerging Themes

Comments made by the participants in this study illuminate key aspects important to people's learning experiences while working with digital video or film that contribute to themes. The interview with the director established the beginnings of GIFTS and provided a brief overview of the past eight years. Since the director is also the co-founder of GIFTS, I considered it important to learn about the vision he had for the school and what he hoped students would learn from the school programs.

Interviews with the students focused on their first impressions of GIFTS, what they wanted to learn during the week of creating a video project, and the most valuable learning for them over the week. Eleven students were interviewed in the early part of the week. Many of the students expressed a desire to have fun, gain confidence with working

with video and film, work with others on a project, come up with ideas for what was possible and keep an open mind to what unfolded during the week.

I noticed that the comments of the students, mentors, and the director complemented one another resulting in a complex picture of what it was like for them learning about digital video and film while at GIFTS. The following themes are evident in the comments made during interviews and conversations of the participants: 1) vision of the director and mentors for the school and the expectations of the students, 2) mentors' approach to learning and teaching and the student's perceived learning 3) digital video as motivator for learning, 4) group work and collaboration, 5) role of mentors and learning environment, 6) learning can be meaningful and fun, and 7) learning focused on the students and their ideas resulting in personal growth. All of these themes are a result of active, experiential learning of technical and social skills while learning with others to creating a video.

1) Director's and Mentors' Vision for the School and Students' Expectations

During the interview, the director described the beginnings of GIFTS, when in 1995 a week arranged for students to learn about making videos resulted in unforeseen success and possibilities for video making. He mentioned people were "amazed" by the videos the students were producing and the school has continued since then. His vision for the school is to provide a place for learning about film and video making that "matters to youth and adults alike." The school is meant to provide a drug and alcohol free environment, meals and lodging. He hopes students would come to the school and be successful as "for many students this is their first big success." The school is meant to be a positive place where learning is fun and students have a video to take home with them

“to show their friends and go out to festivals.” He mentioned that many of the student evaluations say that their experience at GIFTS is “the best experience ever...the most learning...the most fun.” The combined visions of the mentors and director for the school provided a strong source for ensuring meaningful learning experiences for students through their active participation, positive feedback and success in completing a video.

The director and mentors shared the vision that students would be supported in what they wanted to learn about video and filmmaking. Sue commented that the director of GIFTS is “trusting and open” and “he loves young people and the culture and the need for tools and freedom,” where “students run the place...the ones learning get to bend the rules a bit.” The care and interest shown by the director and mentors enables students to trust their own ideas and be open and trusting towards others.

Many of the mentors described GIFTS as a place that offers an alternative to public school education and is not “Hollywood.” Students come here to be “immersed” in their video and film projects. Mentors and students stayed “together at the camp and have uninterrupted time to focus on their projects.” Kris mentioned that during the week a ‘community’ begins to develop for everyone participating in the sessions. She also mentioned that the learning that happens at GIFTS is part of a process that stresses the students have fun and that the videos and films are a learning piece, not a “quintessential” piece. Students are offered an alternative to traditional styles of learning in that they are immersed in the program and work on projects that are of interest to them. A development of a sense of community seems to result from continual group work and interaction amongst participants.

Vic noted that GIFTS is “about film, media lit, visual storytelling, camera and editing” where students get to “hang out” with people and go through the experience of making films and videos together. Mark mentioned that GIFTS is a place that offers an alternative to “having the right answer” and that there are “multiple ways to learning” about film and video. As indicated by Vic and Mark, GIFTS offers further alternatives to mainstream schooling where students gather for a week-long session to focus on creating their videos and not concerning themselves with correct or incorrect ways or answers, and focus on many different ways of learning.

As advice for students attending GIFTS for the first time, Sue suggested, “be open to it” (GIFTS) and “go into imagination and dream world...it’s about group process, not just a film camp.” Vic suggested that newcomers “be able to listen” and “prepare to let go of their own knowledge and ideas” and “prepare to have fun.” The mentors are aware of the broad range of learning that takes place all the while valuing creativity, imagination, group collaboration, and encouraging students to have fun working on their projects.

From a student perspective, Beth’s first impression of GIFTS was, “weird at first” and “now I like it.” Ruby’s first impression of GIFTS was that “people laugh at my jokes” and “I’m in a place where I’m loved, accepted and appreciated.” These comments seem typical of other student comments including my own first impressions as a student.

In regard to what students expected or wanted to learn during their week at GIFTS, Dee wanted to “get more experience and ideas for what is possible...practice group cooperation...how to make a script...learn how to use the camera and the whole process.” Beth hoped “to build confidence.” Shana wanted to “learn more technical skills.” Students said that they wanted their video to be “funny” and one group said that

they “don’t expect anything” in particular for their audience. Students were given opportunities to learn about fundamental procedures in creating a video such as brainstorming, scriptwriting, storyboarding, filming and editing.

GIFTS offered students an immersion into learning about working with video and film. Students were provided with lodging, meals three times daily, and mentor guidance throughout the week in completing their videos and films. Learning was intended to be a positive experience for youth and adults of all ages to work together on a video project and achieve success. The school fostered a community approach to living and working together at camp for a week. This was facilitated by the mentors who provided models of attitudes of respect for each other’s differences. Students became aware of these themes as the week progressed.

2) Mentors’ Approach to Learning and Students’ Perceived Learning

The director, mentors, and students suggested ways that allowed their philosophies and visions to affect the learning that took place. When I asked Mark if he preferred to be called mentor or teacher, he said he preferred to be called a “mentor” as he “works with groups to work collaboratively with people they don’t know, which is often challenging.”

As a mentor, she saw her role as “facilitating” and “setting up the scenario” for students to learn. Sue saw herself as an “information source...to be slightly invisible...the suggestions I give are like a whisper in their ear...as a way for students to feel like they already know what to do.” Sue hoped students would learn “empowerment, team skills...and empowerment in that they know they can and that they are filmmakers.” Sue stressed that students would learn from “experience” and by using their “hands.”

Vic viewed his mentor role as providing “bits of knowledge” with little explanation and getting students “directly into the hands-on experience...because students will not listen if something is boring...or someone goes on and on talking about something...if they’re not listening, they’re not learning.” Vic also mentioned that as mentor, it was important to respect “students’ knowledge.” Students learn all aspects of video and filmmaking from the beginning ideas to a creating a final product as guided by their skilled, experienced and attentive mentors.

Jay and Vic both described GIFTS as providing “hands-on learning.” Vic mentioned everyone gets a chance to get his or her hands on the equipment. Jay explained that students become involved with a process of participating in all aspects of video and filmmaking, which includes working with the camera, sound and editing equipment and acting in other group’s videos. She said, “This place goes right into film.”

The mentors talked about and modeled openness to differences, respected students’ ideas, and facilitated the group. Mentors and technicians worked alongside the students throughout the week providing orientation to script writing, story boarding, acting, film and video equipment and editing procedures. Some mentors stayed on site throughout the week. The mentors were experienced video and filmmakers with training from film and art colleges.

As for the students, Rose mentioned that the “mentors set the mood” and the physical “setting of the camp provides places where people can meet...that it focuses on interaction...becoming a group...a family.” Beth wrote:

Mentors actually have a big effect on how we feel about our ideas, and making good decisions. Mostly they are encouraging because they believe in our ideas. I

know it sounds cheesy, but its true. Our age group doesn't get a lot of opportunities to work with experienced adults on a creative and professional level.

One group mentioned they were surprised that their mentor was very experienced in "leadership" that he "relates to them at their level" and that his policy on learning is "if I'm not having fun, I'm not learning." The students recognized and appreciated the fun approach towards learning.

A hands-on learning approach allowed students to experiment with handling filming equipment at all stages of film production. This approach also allowed for experiential learning to take place especially while learning technical skills. Students learned by doing and working with direct, concrete reference for their experiences. Students were also expected to learn through collaboration with others and develop social skills in working as a team and a team member. Mentors and students worked together, learning from each other.

3) Learning Processes and Digital Video as a Motivator for Learning

I asked students what they liked about working with digital video or film. Al said he "enjoyed the advantages of learning to work with digital video because, it is easier to play around with – that one can try out ideas on the computer," that "no harm can be done," and digital video is easy to "setup, run and gun." Al also mentioned, "it's best to start with digital video to get used to some techniques because it's so versatile and affordable ...cheaper and easier to do than film. One group said they liked the "creativity" that digital video allows. Beth stated in the questionnaire that, "The thing I learned that stands out the most about digital video is how it can be customized/made into whatever you want it to be. With different sounds, lighting, texture, angles et cetera, you

can make the same medium look like a million places or feel like a million emotions.

It's pretty cool." Mentors encouraged students to experiment with ideas.

In answer to what students liked about their experience, what excited them most about making their video or film, and what they learned by working on the project, Al mentioned that he liked "being open" and "he can talk to everybody." He enjoyed "editing," and noted, "problem-solving can be frustrating." He said, "...it is fun to collaborate and to brainstorm...work in a group...and watch the finished piece." Shana said, "I love the challenge. I like that we have one week to come up with something and that by the end of the week we will have a product...knowing that in a week I will have something." The effort students apply to their projects pays off with the successful completion of a video and a copy of the video to take home with them and enter in film festivals if they choose to do so.

Martha wrote how she enjoyed the "journey along the way," and the "finished product." During the mid-point of the week, Beth felt "she had a lot to learn" and "kind of over her head." Al mentioned that "we got a lot done...we finished all our shooting in one day." Rose said, "it's been a roller coaster...you go through a process...it taught me about my character...the themes, the lessons of working with people and dealing with having my own space. It is different knowing something and doing something." Jack stated, "...our cooperation with each other...with group members...learning how to jam...and making a film is not as complex as it seems." Students enjoyed the challenge of working with digital video and film even though they also experience frustration and challenges in learning technical skills as well as getting along with other members of their group. The learning that students go through explains or shows the behind the

scenes aspects of creating a video and hence demystifies video and filmmaking as they learn the skills to produce their own videos.

In response to what the most important learning experience was for students, Al mentioned, "working with a team" and "that at GIFTS everyone wants to be there." Beth said she learned "a lot about technical aspects" and that "this week gives me a lot of confidence" and "feeling connected with others."

4) Group Work and Collaboration

Vic mentioned that mentors and students worked together and they become "working friends." The mentors facilitated the group process of collaboration and respecting each other's ideas and opinions throughout the entire production process. Some students mentioned they hoped to build self-confidence through working with others. In working with her group, Sue expected to be positive "at the start" and help students with "jamming" and not "blocking" each other.

In regards to what students noticed about working in a group, students referred to group process, brainstorming, having open-ended ideas to build off of, and listening to the group and finding a medium everyone was happy with as being important to working in a group. Rose said her group seemed to "merge ideas by talking and dialogue" and that they have to "let go" of some of their ideas. Shana said that as partners they "spend hours and hours of discussing, then processing." Beth mentioned that "everyone has input" and that "creative input knocks down walls" and that "walls are usually shyness." Jack commented that group process worked in his group because they "are respectful of each other." In dealing with problems, one group stated that, "we work it out by talking."

When I asked what influenced the students most in how they feel or the decisions they made while working on their video project Jack wrote “group cooperation.” Mentors, director, and students mentioned processes of learning that involved students interacting with each other so that each student felt supported and each other’s ideas mattered to the group.

While developing technical skills of making videos and film, students took turns and helped each other with handling the equipment. Group work started immediately as students gathered the first day to discuss their project and decide on a topic or story line. Group work continued throughout the week working on their projects in order to meet shooting and editing deadlines. Students were encouraged to respect each other’s ideas and to collaborate through group process when creating their video. Collaboration and respect for the ideas and differences of others were valued amongst the students and mentors.

5) The Learning Environment

When I asked the mentors how GIFTS compared to other schools, Sue said she thought most schools were “designed for product,” and “GIFTS is about process.” She noted that there are “mentors at GIFTS...and mentors do what they teach,” and that it was that the mentors brought with them ‘experience’ in video and filmmaking.

Students’ responses included, as Al mentioned, that “schools are supportive” but they “don’t have the resources” to offer what GIFTS does. Barb, Cathy, and Jill agreed that, “schools are not close ... here it is more spontaneous ... not as many schedules ... the people and mentors are supportive, making sure we have everything to work with. It is relaxed at GIFTS, which helps our creativity ...we are here to do our film and you can

focus all your energy on it.” The students became aware of the support they have while at GIFTS and found this to be an important aspect of working throughout the week to complete their videos.

In response to the questions about if there was anything that seemed to help students carry on with their video project Beth wrote:

As long as the creative process is constantly going on, I can keep up the work. If we are just carrying out plans for what we are going to do, I get restless. I prefer to, even when shooting, be experimenting with things, and keeping up the ‘creative process.’ This can mean lighting, or texture, but just trying things out, instead of just point and shoot.

Mentors mentioned it was important that students feel part of the process, to have ideas included in the process, to be part of what they create, and the video or film are an artifact of their experience. They mentioned that it was important to being open and supportive to students’ ideas, providing many places for students to meet and discuss. Lodging and three meals a day provided essential and basic support and focussed on the needs of the students in order for them to become immersed in the program.

6) Learning Can Be Meaningful and Fun

The director commented that the school is a place that is meant to be fun for all ages. Vic suggested that if the students “aren’t listening they aren’t learning” and in order to engage students he found that the “hands-on approach” and “having fun” motivated students to learn. Jay hoped that students creating their own videos would help “demystify” film and video for them. She hoped students would “feel good about themselves after the week is over.” Jay also mentioned that while at GIFTS students seemed to develop an attitude that they will do “it” no matter what their “resources” or “limitations” are and “many of the students become filmmakers.”

Mark found it “amazing” to see students “work long hours to complete their (video or film) projects.” Sue commented how she enjoyed the “spontaneous situations” that happened during the week and the “energy of the shoot” where students were “focused and using all the gear” and the “weird late night of editing on Friday” the final stages of editing before the screenings on Saturday afternoon.

Many students returned to GIFTS because they had a “good experience” and “a lot of fun” the first time. Fun and meaningful learning involved students doing all that was technically and socially necessary to complete a video as a group. Commitment to finishing their videos brought students and groups together as each person goes through similar situations. From this, I think students developed a sense of empathy and understanding towards others.

7) Learning Focused on the Students

Vic described the environment of GIFTS as being “open to students’ ideas – something that they are passionate about,” which is where their learning starts. Mark hoped students would feel “successful” after their week at GIFTS and he thought this may happen through being able to experiment, “see something transform,” and learn to work “collaboratively in a group.” Vic hoped that students would “evolve” from the week and go home and see things differently...and that they could be “whoever they want to be” indicating that students would learn something that would change the way they view things by the end of the week. Vic stated, ‘learning is the best way of evolving.’ Some of the feedback mentors received from their students about their experience at GIFTS was that it had been “transformative,” in that they experienced changes in themselves, “there are no distractions” and GIFTS was a place where “...students feel respected.”

In response to the question of how students felt at the end of their project, Rose said, "This is the beginning...experience doesn't go away...it's one of those memories that is like a blanket that you can pull around you, love is very strong." Zoey talked about being up 24 hours and how each experience at GIFTS was "different, each one just as intense and different," that "you collaborate with people," "sacrifice big," and that "you can be passionate." The experience helps you "grow as under pressure with people."

Students' advice for newcomers to GIFTS was plentiful. Al suggested, "...always keep an open mind and try to work together, because at GIFTS there are many different people, all people who love film and do as much as you can, versus school where there is a lot of segregation." Rose suggested, "...do something with collaboration. Keep an open mind at all times, get used to being afraid of equipment, showing your body, coming out of your comfort zone, expect the unexpected, expect that you might get sick, and check attitude at the door." Zoey advised newcomers to, "...aim for early and then maybe you'll get it done on time." Ruth's advice to new students was to "...take scrupulous notes with logging time, and make very clear storyboards."

Learning about digital video while at GIFTS started with what each student brought to the program. Students did not need previous experience to attend this camp. Each student had an opportunity to learn video and filmmaking from choosing a topic, deciding on a storyline, preparing a shot list, acting and directing, operating the camera, sound and lighting equipment, preparing the set, and editing. Some students were advanced with their skills and were encouraged to try out their ideas with minimal help from the mentors. Students carried out all the procedures necessary to complete a video and film with the guidance of mentors. Students also had the option not to participate if

they preferred not to. Working in a group, learning technical skills, the support of the GIFTS staff, and the campus environment all contributed to the well being of the student throughout the week. This week nurtured personal growth through strong learning experiences that enabled students to change and become empowered. Overall, the director and mentors provided a way for students to go into film with what students brought to the camp in the way of ideas and skills.

Summary

Many students attended GIFTS for the first time while near a third of the students had attended GIFTS before because of how much they enjoyed their previous session. Brainstorming and orientation sessions immersed the students in planning and preparing their videos while developing technical and social skills. Mentors facilitated students' learning through a hands-on approach to working with the filming and editing equipment. Such exposure provided students with opportunities to be involved in the many processes of creating a video. Many aspects of the students' learning experience of working with digital video at GIFTS was about personal growth and transformation.

CHAPTER SIX

Bringing it All Together

The nature of this study has been an “experiential reporting” from the views of the participants and my point of view in regards to digital video and film production. This study, presented in the forms of thesis and video, offers detailed contextual information regarding experiences of participants who engaged in explorations through digital video and film. I have searched for what is important for others in regards to their understandings of their learning through the use of digital video and film.

Implications For Learning Based on the Findings in this Study

This study focused on exploring learning experiences of students and mentors while working on digital video and film projects at Gulf Islands Film and Television School. The participants’ experiences connect strongly with constructivist views to learning, as noted in Chapter Two, in that: learning focused on what the students bring to their learning, students were actively engaged in their learning, learning started where the student is in his or her knowledge, and the learning that takes place contributes to personal growth. All of these are evident in the perspectives presented by the participants in this study. The following is a list of implications that may be considered for educational settings regarding learning through digital video and filmmaking as experienced by students and mentors while at GIFTS.

- Learning about and working with digital video to produce one’s own video narratives allows for a broad spectrum of learning to take place from acquiring technical skills to construct visual and audio texts to learning interpersonal skills through group work. Students develop skills to problem solve, negotiate,

compromise, empathize, express ideas, reciprocate, listen and collaborate. The creation of a video enables students to develop confidence and experience success by completing a video or film.

- Digital video making is motivating and engaging for students to complete a project from start to finish. Students commented that it was “fun.” The final video is an artifact of their efforts and experiences in creating their video.
- Digital video desktop editing allows for easy manipulation of video images in creating a video while students experiment with ideas and imaginations quickly and easily in a concrete visual form.
- Digital video production can readily become part of a learning curriculum due to its affordability and availability to the general public as well as the relative ease in learning the technical skills to operate digital video equipment and editing programs.
- The learning environment offered at GIFTS, supports, motivates, and nurtures a variety of forms of learning for students to experience increased confidence, a sense of achievement, openness to differences, and respect towards others.
- Mentors are experienced in what they teach. Their experience in learning processes and technical skills are key to facilitating group effort and the successful completion of a video. Attitudes of the mentors influence attitudes of the students. Mentors serve as role models and become “working friends” who take an interest in and care for the students
- The makers of video and film become aware of processes and procedures that demystify filmmaking. Students learn to construct their own messages and stories into digital video or film form.
- Student achievement is recognized through completion certificates and public screenings.
- Screenings allow each video to enter the ‘public’ environment through the audience, which enables feedback to the video makers. In this way, video is highly reflective and allows for further reflection that may result in further learning.

Learning to work with the medium of digital video and film reaches beyond ideas of product and into the realms of personal growth.

Implications for Using Digital Video for Research

Through this research I attempted to provide a broad palette of reference for others to also interpret. This thesis and video represent a qualified interpretation of what I have become aware of through my study. The thesis and video complement each other as representations of this work. Considering that text is most often used as a medium to

present research in academia, using video to present a research study remains to be developed and further understood. However, I offer the following points for consideration in further thinking about uses for digital video as a visual and auditory medium in this study and hence implications for other social science research.

- Digital video is a key component to the overall study as it complements and enriches the written and visual representation of the study. It is difficult to write so as to present simultaneous descriptions of conversations, actions, and gestures as can be seen in a video.
- Digital video provides actual recordings of the time, place and people in this study through image, sound, and action, which can be difficult to describe or express in words. Digital video provides a rich contextual means for introducing the audience of readers limited to my writings to become an audience of viewers and listeners. As viewers, the audience is exposed to a broader spectrum of ideas and images as presented in the actual voices and images of the participants of the study.
- Creating the video provided a means to present the participants' point of view as complete and accurate as possible through recorded interviews, conversations, and actions.
- My interpretation as represented in the video is offered along with the voices of the participants, creating a harmony of their voices and mine. I understand the video to be guided by both the participant and myself. The participants' comments and actions guide the decisions and interpretations I make, or in other words, my interpretations are based on what the participants offered me during the study.
- Digital video provides a rich source of interpretive material for its audience as regards to the degree of closeness we can imagine and feel from seeing and hearing the subjects in the study. The video allows the viewer to engage more complexly through visuals, sound, and action with the subject of this study.
- The video invites the viewer to ask questions and interpret as inspired by the participants in the video, rather than as inspired by me, the researcher, writer of the thesis, and video maker.

In view of the above, I recommend visual mediums be used more often for data collection, analysis, and representation of research.

Further Reflections

Participating in a digital video and film program at GIFTS has provided me with a broad spectrum of learning experiences that continue to inspire me. Using the medium of

digital video in carrying out this research and developing a video as a form of expression enables me to understand the constructed nature of this medium. The use of digital video for this study further demystifies video and film production for me in regards to its role in carrying out and representing research. I have become more critically aware of what is involved in and the meaning of shifting from consumer to producer of video production. As producer of visual narratives I am aware how they may be constructed and therefore wonder about the nature and meanings of the constructions done by other users of visual narratives. It is important that the use of visuals, audio, and moving images continue to be represented in the discourses of education and research.

I have traveled a long journey and I feel as if I have come full circle as I consider possible conclusions for this study and a beginning for carrying on with understandings resulting from this study. Through reflection and being open to what I have come to understand, I strived to present the thesis and video as emergent from the processes and experiences of carrying out my study.

A Home for Learning

From this study, I have noticed that an important aspect of learning has to do with the place for learning or the “home” for learning. The “home” for learning includes attitudes, philosophies, and visions of the educators as well as the expectations the students have for their own learning. GIFTS, as a home for learning, provided learning opportunities for developing technical skills for using digital video and film technologies. It also provided a means for students to develop social skills for learning as a part of a group. Students interacted with others while collaborating to create and develop a video or film from its beginnings to final form.

The forum in which these learning processes take place affected their learning. The vision of the school held by the director and mentors, the learning environment established by the director and mentors and students, the attitudes of the facilitators, mentors and students, student participation, group effort, dialogue, collaboration, and respect are all important to the learning that participants have described in this study.

As indicated in the participants' responses in my study, in order for any of the above to take place, there needed to be "respect" for one's own ideas and ideas of others. The significance of one's experiences of working with digital video as a medium for telling a story or relaying a message involved the video creator's exposure to a variety of possibilities of expressing and creating. Bowers, as cited in Pinar et al, describes the importance of exploration of one's ideas and imagination.

Existential choice is thus expanded in proportion to the complexity of the symbolic code the individual acquires. A complex symbolic world provides the means for choosing among different interpretational schemes, as well as imagining future possibilities that would result from different scenarios....What cannot be imagined cannot be chosen. (p. 47). (Pinar et al, 2000, p. 275)

The GIFTS learning environment provided a place for students to explore ideas in their use of digital video and filmmaking. The medium of digital video can be considered one of the choices of 'interpretational schemes' with which one can imagine possibilities.

The mentors facilitated students' expressions of their ideas through helping them create video and film stories. Students entered the site holding to their ideas and collaborated with others as they co-created a final video. Through this process, students learned the meaning of respect in an experiential way and they also learned about and valued merging ideas with others to create a visual representation acceptable for all members of the group.

The participants' comments about the learning that took place at GIFTS while working with digital video and film, centered on a balance of social skills and the technical skills in producing a video. Some students noted that the most valuable learning for them had been learning to get along in a group, and that key to doing this was through respect for others and their ideas. The words of Aoki (1990) help qualify this approach to learning.

To me, an educated person, first and foremost, understands that one's ways of knowing, thinking and doing flow from who one is. Such a person knows that an authentic person is no mere individual, an island unto oneself, but is a being-in-relation-with-others, and hence is, at core, an ethical being. Such a person knows that being an educated person is more than processing knowledge or acquiring intellectual or practical skills, and that basically, it is being concerned with dwelling aright in thoughtful living with others. (p. 42)

Interaction begins and continues through reciprocal participation by each person in the form of a dialogue that involves speaking, listening, and reflecting resulting in changes for each that may range from subtle or transformational. Continued learning happens through further interpretation, establishing meaning, and reflecting. I conclude and make assumptions based on this learning. Questions emerge. Choices are available for action. My first action is choosing action. Learning is a process of experiencing, expressing, thinking, knowing and interacting. The following describes how I experience the process of learning and developing understanding through interaction with others and my environment.

At first, my voice is silent. I express my ideas and understandings briefly and with some uncertainty and caution. I experiment with words that best describe what I mean. The voice of another responds. I ponder the message for an understanding and reply with a question or an affirmation of what was said. After further conversation, I become familiar with the context of the conversation, and draw upon what I know about the topic and voice some of these understandings. My words and voice are extended beyond the body and experience the realm of

expression through dialogue. Just as my body notices changes in my surroundings, I notice the environment my voice has entered and is being heard. Interaction with others informs me about my own voice and hence my experience and understandings of my voice. (Class Writing Assignment for A. Oberg, instructor EDCI-531B, 2002)

We are all learners participating in a world around us, living in differences and similarities. We are all important to relationships established as a living being. I continually seek to understand my relationship to the ways of being. There are ways that enable me to feel empowered, responsible for my actions, responsible for participating and belonging. Feelings of empowerment also connect me to aspects of disempowerment. Conflict may rise out of interaction. I have choices to consider prior to acting. Choices involve respect for choosing, accepting responsibility and ownership of consequences of these choices and opening to further learning.

The insights provided by the participants in this study strengthen my support for approaches to learning that nurture personal growth through caring, respecting and openness to difference and possibilities. The following expresses the essence of what I have come to understand from carrying out this study, coming full circle, feeling calmness and opening to further possibilities of learning.

The sound of pencil on paper,
scraping lead on refined wood.
Ideas emerging onto this page.
Images and sound captured on video.
Memories to grow with.
Learning, ready to evolve.
Human living,
living being.
...Being...

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APPENDIX A

THESIS AND VIDEO OUTLINE

THESIS AND VIDEO OUTLINE

Thesis

“Explorations Through Digital Video”

Setting for a Beginning

The GIFTS Experience

Literature Review

Methodology

Returning to GIFTS – Journal & Field Notes Account

Participants Speak – Interviews with the Director, Mentors, Technician, and Students.

Study Findings – Themes emerging from interviews, conversations, and activities.

Bringing it All Together: A Home for Learning

“Offerings of GIFTS” Video

1) **“Overview”** provides an account of the history of GIFTS by the director, his vision and philosophy for the school, and perspectives from mentors and students. (20 min)

2) **“Mentors Speak”** includes mentors’ philosophies and approaches to learning and facilitating at GIFTS, their hopes for students’ learning, and their experiences while working with students producing digital videos and films. (14 min)

3) **“Students Speak”** presents student perspectives on their experiences and learning while at GIFTS. (5 min)

4) **“Quick Take”** provides behind the scenes encounter that provides context for student/researcher interaction. (1 min)

5) **“Reflection”** presents what stands out for me in my experience in carrying out this study combined with the learning experiences described by the participants in this study. Text and image convey these key points. (8 min)

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT CONSENT
 FORM UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
 OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT,
 RESEARCH
 HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS
 COMMITTEE

Participant Consent Form

**A Study of Explorations Through Digital Video
 (Participant Consent Form)**

You are being invited to participate in a study entitled **A Study of Explorations Through Digital Video** that is being conducted by Janet Riecken. Janet Riecken is a graduate student in the department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria and you may contact her by phone: (250-474-4439) and by E-mail to: janetr@uvic.ca. If you have further questions you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Laurie Baxter, Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum & Instruction by phone: (250-721-7777) or E-mail to: lbaxter@uvic.ca.

This study is undertaken in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree. The purpose of this research project is to develop an understanding of how people use digital video to communicate their ideas to others to explore what people think about the process of working with digital video.

Research of this type is important because the emergence of this technology allows one to shift from the role of consumer of video representations to that of creator and producer of one's own video narratives.

You are being asked to participate in this study because of your involvement with digital video. The subject of this research is explorations through digital video with a focus on how does one experience the processes with using this medium.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include being videotaped during interviews and while working on your video project. I will videotape interviews with you individually and in a group, formally and informally throughout your video project. I will also present a questionnaire about your video project and your experiences at the beginning, mid-point, and the end of your project. All interviews and questionnaires will be carried out according to your voluntary consent. Participation will be on an ongoing voluntary basis for the duration of this research. You will have the option to not participate at any time throughout the study without negative consequence.

There is the chance that participants taking part in this study may encounter inconvenience through difficulty in committing to time to participate in interviews outside the time spent on their video project. Therefore, data collection and videotaping will be done in a continual way throughout the video projects which may allow for more fluid, flexible participation and data collection.

You are encouraged to feel free to ask questions at anytime during the study.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. There are however, some inconveniences including an estimated three hours of interviews spread over three pre-arranged visits.

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include that you may become aware of processes that may be self-empowering while working with digital video. As a participant, you will contribute to information that may benefit society, community, and individual understandings of the use of digital video as a medium for telling a story and other narratives, and relaying a message. The associated

benefit to you as participant is that you may experience pride and awareness in participating in the development of further understanding of the use of digital video as an important medium for communicating.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study you will determine if your data shall be destroyed and I will do so upon request.

In order to assure I have your continued consent as participant in this research, I will ensure that you are aware of my presence as a researcher and I will ask for your consent to videotape or audiotape. You have the option to not be included in the data collection and may choose to do so at anytime without consequence.

In terms of protecting your anonymity, you need to be aware that it is possible that your image and voice will be recognized if present in the research video and audiotape material. If you indicate that you wish to remain anonymous, your anonymity will be protected by not including your image or voice in the video part of this research. Pseudonyms will be used where transcripts and other information are taken from videotape or audiotape and presented in written form.

The nature of this research involves videotaping and the creation of a video around this study, which will include images, voices, and stories of the participants regarding their video-making experience. The research video may be shown to audiences such as the university, community, teachers, researchers, and peers.

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by keeping videotapes, audiotapes and other research data stored in a locked compartment on site during data collection and locked in a filing cabinet in my home while finalizing this study. Once the study is complete, all data information will be destroyed, audio and videotapes will be erased.

It is anticipated that the information collected will contribute to the making of a video and thesis that will be shared with others including participants, university and school communities, researchers and peers in completion of this study. This study, including the video and written thesis, may result in published papers, reports, and presentation at scholarly conferences, seminars, and meetings. The video and research thesis will be maintained and stored for the purpose of safe keeping for academic, teaching, and learning communities and the community in general.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others through video and thesis dissertation and presentation, presentations at scholarly meetings and conferences, reports, and published articles. You will be provided with a summary report of this study. Prior to its completion, you will have the option to view the video and review the summary report for comment and feedback.

All videotapes, audiotapes, and other data will be stored in a locked compartment on site during data collection and locked in a filing cabinet in my home while finalizing this study. Once the study is complete, all data information will be destroyed (audio and videotapes will be erased).

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and the supervisor at the above phone numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria at (250-472-4362).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Date: _____

Youth _____
(age 13 – 19)Adult _____
(age 20 and up)

Male _____

Female _____

(Above information Optional)

Beginning of Video Project

1. Do you have previous experience with digital video production? If yes please describe your previous experience.
2. How many students are there in your project group?
3. Do you prefer to work in a group or on your own? Why?
4. What made you decide which group to work with?
5. What interests you about digital video production?
6. What excites you most about making your video?
7. What do you want to learn about by making a video?
8. What is the topic of your video project?
9. How did your group come to the topic of your video project?
10. What do you know about your video topic?
11. What is the message of your video?
12. How will you reach your audience with your message?
13. Describe how you feel at this beginning stage of your project?
14. How will your group make decisions about your project?
15. Do you think the group process will work in your project?
16. Who do you think will view your video?
17. Do you have any questions for me?

Middle of Video Project

1. What have you learned so far about using digital video?
2. Is there anything that stands out for you about your experience with your video project at this time?
3. Is there anything in particular that seems to help you carry on with your video project?
4. How do you feel about your project at this time?
5. Have you experienced any changes in your ideas and expectations from when you first started your video? Please describe what influenced these changes to occur.
6. What has influenced you most about how you feel or the decisions you make while working on your video project?
7. Who is your audience and what effect do you want your video to have on your audience?
8. What are your next plans for your video?
9. Do you have any questions for me?

End of Video Project

1. How do you feel now that your project is finished?
2. How do you feel about the process in doing your video and your finished project?
3. How do you feel about presenting your video to your audience?
4. How do you expect the audience to react to your video? How do you hope the audience will respond?

5. What changes would you make to your video? What do you want to remain unchanged in your video?
6. What will you do next with your video?
7. Describe what stands out for you in your video production experience.
8. What do you think you have learned by working on this video project?
9. What did you enjoy doing most in your project?
10. If you could do anything, any project using digital video, what would you do?
11. Is there anything that has changed for you as a result of this experience?
12. What have you learned now that you have completed your video compared to what you knew at the beginning of your video project?
13. What is the most important learning that took place for you in this video project?
14. Do you think you will continue to use digital video?
15. What advice would you give to someone who is starting a video project?
16. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Mentor/Director/Technician Oriented – Throughout Session

1. How or why did you become involved with digital video production?
2. How long have you been involved with digital video production?
3. How long has GIFTS been providing video-making programs?
4. How is it decided upon which project students work on?
5. What do you want to provide for the students so that they get the most out of this experience?
6. What do you expect or hope that students will learn by working with the medium of digital video?
7. How do you think students, overall, experience GIFTS?
8. What have students said they learned from the process of creating a video?
9. How have these video projects worked in the past?
10. How do these projects work today?
11. What stands out for you in regards to your experience and the students' experience with working with digital video at GIFTS?
12. Describe what an ideal digital video learning environment would be for you.
13. What do you think is the future of your students?
14. What do you think you have learned by working with digital video and the students?
15. Is there anything that has changed for you as a result of your experiences with students working on video projects?
16. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

APPENDIX D

GIFTS PROGRAM of SCREENINGS

GIFTS Premiere Screening Y/A Media Intensive Program

August 25 - 31, 2002

Same Time Next Week

5:50 Drama

A Video Made By:

Emily Bodenberg, Elizabeth Israel, Raechel O'Hare, aka: Ruby

Redman

A love affair begins when two strangers break into an unsuspecting woman's home.

The Perfect World

4:37 Drama

A Video Made By:

Jayme Black, Nicholai Kuper, John Friedrich, Alex Taylor

A humorous look at a polite tact 50's spoof informational video showing how the world would be with manners in every situation shown.

Cat

4:26 Drama

A Video Made By:

Metta McLeod, Rebecca Simonetti, Tyson Irmen, David Warren

You see yourself as one thing, but do others see you the same way?

Romanticide

4:11 Drama

A Video Made By:

Callianne Bachman, Jaymie McAmmond, Bronwen Marsden

Romanticide is an exploration of a typical heterosexual relationship.

Fairy In A Bucket

2:12 Drama

A Video Made By:

Shawon Kinew, Scott Lewis

Fairy in a Bucket was shot the gulf Ilands Filmand Television School with the use of a Super 8 camera. The hand processed film is about chasing inspiration.

Intemperance

5:51 Drama

A Video Made By:

Zack Kasta, Ryan R Sinz, Stephanie Hutchings

A journey through a dream where a young woman indulges in the strange solace she has discovered.

Imprint

3:27 Drama

A Video Made By:

Rachel Baker, Krista MacIsaac, James Smith

A routine jog is transformed into a haunting journey with lingering effects that nipple beyond measure. This films skims the surface of comfortand reveals the betrayal of basic natural instincts.

APPENDIX E**EQUIPMENT USED FOR CREATING THE VIDEO****Video Recording Equipment:**

Sony Digital Video Handycam TRV 315 (360X Digital Zoom)
Maxell XR Hi8 Metal Particle Professional Camcorder Tape
(Compatible with Digital 8 Cameras = 1 hour recording time)

Sound Recording Equipment:

Azden Shotgun Microphone – 2X

Digital Video Editing Software:

Final Cut Pro 2