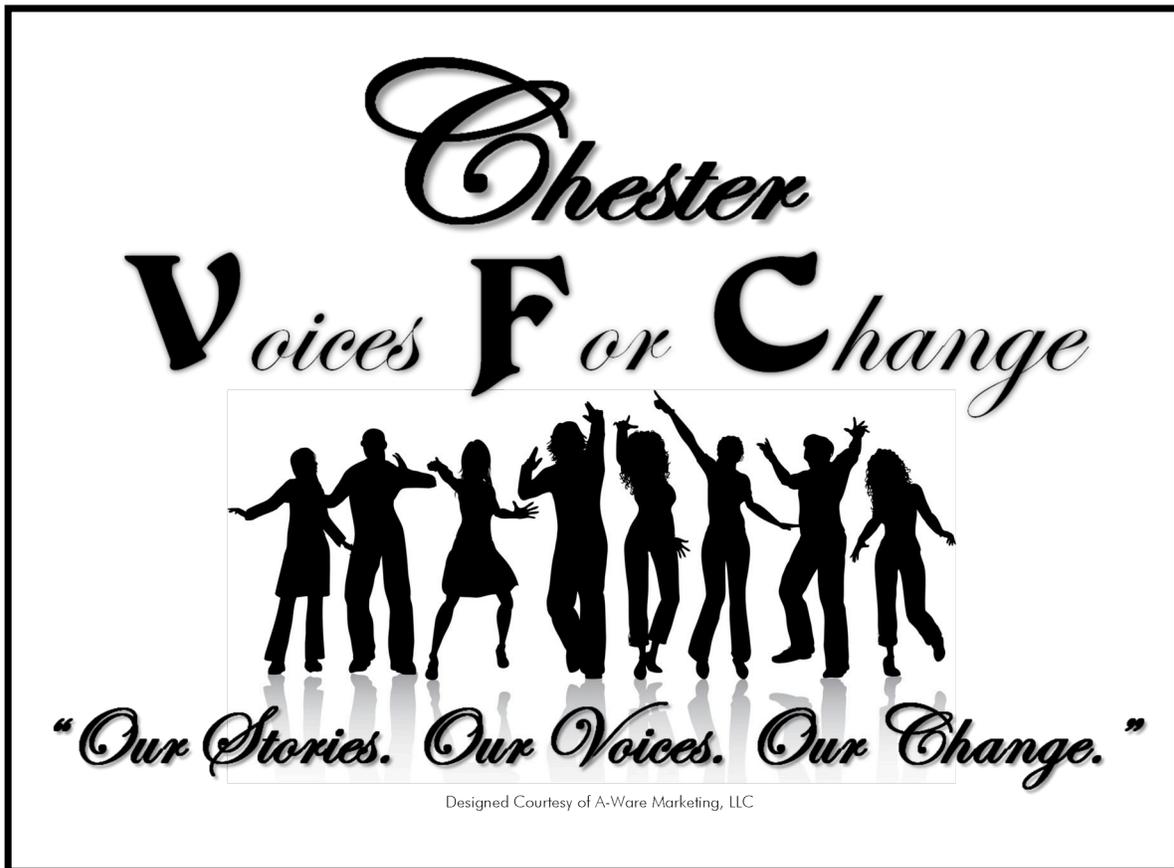


Cameras Rolling, and... ACTION!

Youth Development in a Media Production Program



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Thesis Abstract

This work focuses on research conducted at the Chester Voices for Change (VFC) Summer Institute, my Lang Opportunity Scholarship project. Over the course of six weeks, I worked with ten African American teenagers from Chester, Pennsylvania in a film production program. By the end of the summer, the teens formed partnerships with community businesses and fully produced a 45-minute film entitled "Through Our Eyes." My participatory action research on this group focuses on the youth development that occurred in this program. Specifically, it highlights individual development in the form of possible selves, or ideas of oneself in the future, and group identity development. My findings indicated that possible selves in the program took three main paths of development: creating new possible selves, revising previous possible selves, and reaffirming previous possible selves. Furthermore, group identity and membership in the group of teen participants proved to be a new source of social capital for the VFC participants as it gave them protection, provided positive group association within the community, and forced positive peer pressure from other participants. In examining these effects, I also provide an overview of pedagogy that helps to develop learning environments in which such individual and group development can occur.

Keywords

youth media production, possible selves, group identity, group membership, social capital, pedagogy

Acknowledgements

I'd Like to Thank the Academy...

Dreams

Hold fast to dreams
 For if dreams die
 Life is a broken-winged bird
 That cannot fly.
 Hold fast to dreams
 For when dreams go
 Life is a barren field
 Frozen with snow.
 ~Langston Hughes

Thank you to these people for helping me to hold fast to dreams.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the 2009 Voices for Change participants. Ashley, Angel, Chris, Faith, Jamal, Madison, Michelle, Olivia, Sean, and Tony, you have all taught me so much and helped to set my own direction in life. I cannot express how much you have all helped me, and I only hope that this work reflects some portion of your own stories from this summer. Thank you.

In addition, this work would not be possible without the support of the many people and groups who supported the Chester Voices for Change program. Thank you to Cory Long and Brian Warren as well as the rest of the staff at both the Chester Police Activities League and Team Making A Change. Your support, encouragement, and trust made this possible. My volunteers, Brian Hunscher, Levi Mahan, Alvin Melathe, Lauren Ramanathan, and Travis Rothbloom, you all were a burst of energy and support for the teens and for me. I cannot thank you enough for your expertise, energy, and encouragement. Specifically, Brian, your unwavering support and dedication to the program helped me manage the program and maintain my sanity, so thank you.

The project and I owe a great deal of gratitude to the Lang Opportunity Scholarship program. This scholarship helped me set up my advisory committee. The guidance and advice from

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Introducing... : Chester Voices for Change



The 2009 Chester Voices for Change Summer Institute participants, from left to right:
Chris, Madison, Faith, Sean, Tony, Olivia, Angel, Jamal, Michelle, and Ashley.

Inspiration: Starting the Idea

When people ask me how I came up with idea for the Chester Voices for Change program, and I respond that “it just kind of came to me.” I had been planning out this athletic mentorship program to connect college athletes with teens in Chester, but the idea lacked zing. One night, after talking to my dad, the idea really did just come to me. He told me to think about what I enjoyed and what made a difference to me in high school, and there it was. As important as athletics was to my development as a person, my high school journalism experience had really influenced and engaged me with my community in a new way. That was it. I had to come up with something that would let me give teens in Chester a chance to be engaged with their community and would let them tell their stories through media. With that, I was off, ideas flowing and my pen scrambling to keep up with my thoughts. Little did I know that two and a half years later that idea would be a defining part of my own identity, serving as the research site for my senior thesis, and setting me on a path of community involvement for the rest of my life.

30 Second Advertisement: An Overview

The Chester Voices for Change (VFC) Summer Institute was a six-week summer program for teens from Chester, Pennsylvania to learn the basics of film production. It started in July of 2009 and ran through the first two weeks of August with a group of ten adolescents who worked together to fully produce a 45-minute film. The teens wrote the script, acted, directed, filmed, and edited the film, which was called *Through Our Eyes*. With the help of some college student volunteers, the group was able to complete a film that focused on issues that they dealt with as at-risk teens. The program met from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. every day and provided daily instruction and guidance in film development. In addition, two afternoons a week, the participants went in pairs to local internships. The internships gave students a chance to work with community businesses in the fields of journalism, media, communications, and graphic design. These internships and the group work on the film culminated at the end of the summer in a final celebration in which community members and the participants' families came together for an award ceremony, movie premier, and dinner.

The VFC participants applied and were interviewed before being accepted into the program. In addition, all of the students had a strong connection to the city of Chester. All were previous or current residents of the city, and all spent significant amounts of time in the community. To ensure that teens could participate regardless of family monetary constraints, all participants were also given a stipend of \$500 upon full completion of the program. After the interviews and selection process, the first ever VFC Summer Institute included ten teens, for whom pseudonyms have been used: Angel, Ashley, Chris, Faith, Jamal, Madison, Michelle, Olivia, Sean, and Tony.

I ran the VFC program as my Lang Opportunity Scholarship project in conjunction with the Chester Police Activities League (PAL) and Team Making A Change (MAC). The Lang Opportunity Scholarship is made possible by the gift of Eugene M. Lang, Swarthmore Class of 1938, and the scholarship and support from the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility at Swarthmore

College were critical to the formation of the project. In addition, the project was started with support from two local community partners: Chester PAL and Team MAC, both of which provide opportunities for youth to engage in positive activities outside of school. The support provided by these three organizations and their staff made the 2009 Summer Institute possible.

Learning the Lingo: Working Definitions

Before delving more deeply into the project and the research findings, it is necessary to provide a basic understanding of the vocabulary used throughout the rest of this piece. Countless researchers have informed these definitions, but the descriptions included here illustrate my understanding of the terms, which is how they will effectively be used throughout this work.

Social identity is a sense of self that is created and reinforced by interactions with others. It makes up who we are and how other people see us. For the teens in the program, being a teenager is one of their social identities, as is being from Chester.

Group identity is the sense of self that is created and reinforced by participation in and interactions with a particular collection of people. This is a kind of social identity in which we associate with a particular group of people. Several of the program participants had a group identity with their respective athletic teams and/or with their churches.

Social capital is made up of the personal assets that come in the form of societal symbols like social networks or mastery of different discourses. Many of the teens had some social capital in the form of connections in their community. They were known as “good kids,” and that status combined with their connections helped them achieve success within their neighborhoods. At the same time, many had also developed the ability to communicate within the dominant discourse of white America. This gave them another kind of social capital, which helped them succeed in school and other areas.

In-group is a term that refers to an exclusive collection of individuals who share an identity or interest. The VFC participants, like most adolescents, used their in-group status in one clique to let them in on inside jokes and gossip, but it also kept them out of another clique. For example, over the summer, the participants developed a sense of in-group identity, giving them strong ties to each other and helping them create positive, supportive relationships.

Possible selves are people's ideas of themselves in the future, which can be positive or negative, likely or unlikely. For many of the students, their possible selves included them having a strong career related to media or communications.

Salient others are people who are important enough to influence one's plans and decisions in life. They are the mentors, teachers, friends, and family members who we actually listen to and seek advice from. The program participants had many salient others. For most of them, their parents or guardians were salient others, as well as others found community members, coaches, or siblings who also served in this capacity.

These working definitions will be used frequently throughout the rest of this work because they help to form the core ideas of my research analysis. Each chapter that follows includes a brief review of the key terms that can be found in boxes at the start of each chapter.

Coming Soon to Theaters: My Research Questions

Although the existing research provides useful ideas for developing a youth program, there is little research that details the relationship between media production, educational or personal success, and social change. By interviewing teens before and after their participation in the VFC Summer Institute, and observing their interactions throughout the program, I want to begin to fill this hole in the research. I hope to further a new domain of research that examines the specific results of teens involved in media production. Too often, existing research remains focused on youth as consumers of media and the educational and social importance of teaching them to think

critically as consumers. While this is a crucial part of education today, it is perhaps even more important to look at the outcomes of teaching teens how to produce their own message through media. By exploring the effects of media production as both an educational and social tool for young people, I hope to be able to further this field of educational research. I want to examine the effects of media literacy and production on teen's social identities and possible selves, looking at how participation in the VFC Summer Institute provides students with new opportunities for group identity development and the growth of possible selves. In doing this, I hope to contribute to a relatively new body of research that involves teens as both producers and consumers of knowledge and media, giving them a chance to develop their own sets of social and cultural capital through participation in a media production program.

Key Questions

My guiding research question is how does involvement in a youth media production program influence the ways in which young people think about their social identities and possible selves. In addition, I hope to look at how any personal transformations can influence others who are not directly involved in the program, essentially examining the extent to which these teens can act as agents of social change. Below are some of the sub-questions I also hope to look at through my research and analysis:

- How does media literacy help teens to think critically about their social identities and current societal situations?
- How does involvement in media production enable youth as change agents?
- How does active participation in the Voices for Change Summer Institute influence and change the participants' plans for the future and their planning abilities?
- What do teen participants see as the important and helpful aspects of the program? What do adults see as the important and helpful parts? How do those differ, and why?

Methodology

In working on this project I utilized three main data sources: observations, interviews, and surveys. Each week during the program I took time to write down observations and reflections about the week. I went through the list of participants and thought about each one, thinking about any changes I had noticed, relationship developments within the group, and general interactions with the other participants. When there were important events during the week, I would first write down my observations of the event, focusing on what happened and how it happened. Then, I moved on to my reflections on the event, thinking more about why it happened and what it might mean for the group or individuals involved. These observations served as a way for me to track students' changes and development through the program, but they were also a method of reflection for me as I tried to process everything that was happening.

In addition to the observations, I conducted two sets of interviews with all of the VFC participants. I met with each participant individually, once before the program started and once immediately after it ended. The interviews were recorded and typically lasted between 7 and 15 minutes each. The interview questions focused on gauging participants' interests, their thoughts on the program, and their plans for the future. The complete interview protocol can be found in Appendix A. For each interview the participant's responses were transcribed in their entirety, and those transcriptions can be found in Appendix B. The interviews gave me a deeper look into the students' ideas of self as well as their views of the program, helping me to examine how they changed over the summer and how my observations compared to the participants' own perceptions.

Finally, I also used surveys as part of my research on VFC. Along with the participants' interviews, I had them fill out a survey before and after the program. The survey had students rank activities based on interest, ability, and liking, and it also asked them about their futures and how they see themselves. All the participants except for Madison completed both surveys. Madison only

completed the pre-program survey. These surveys added to the depth with which I could examine students' experiences and provided more quantitative data to illustrate any developments in the participants. I also gave the participants' parents/guardians a survey at the end of the program to ask about any changes they had noticed in their children over the summer. These surveys asked the adults to describe any changes in their children and also rank them in specific areas. The survey questions for parents/guardians can be found in Appendix D. It is important to note that only five of the parent/guardian surveys were returned and not all were fully complete. Due to these limited results, these surveys play a limited role in the analysis of the teens' and the program.

With these three main data sources and my focus on participatory action research I was able to create a fairly detailed description of each participant and his or her progress throughout the summer. It is important, however, to note my potential biases. Having dedicated so much time and energy to the program, I went into the research hoping and looking for evidence of success, something to show that my efforts were worth it. I did my best to keep my observations neutral and share my reflections with other people both inside and outside of the program as a way to check myself. Although, my biases may have helped to motivate my goals and plans for conducting the research, the survey results, parent comments, and participant responses are all real, untouched by my own motivations. As with any anthropological work, I will rely on the words of the participants to show the results, incorporating the words and ideas of the adolescents as much as possible.

Implications

As described earlier, my research and analysis for my thesis will help develop the use of media production as an educational tool and a technique for creating change agents. I hope to provide practical feedback in regard to the effective methods to teach media production and engage at-risk, urban youth in the development of their own media program. Furthermore, this research will serve to connect many domains of education and sociology/anthropology. Looking at the ways in

which media production can affect participants' possible selves and their understandings of their social identities, I will detail the ways in which media production is an effective educational tool for adolescents. In addition, by examining the participants' roles and self-concepts in the context of the Chester community, I hope to provide a critical sociological account of teens' lives in Chester. Throughout this project I want to deepen the understanding of media production as a tool for enhancing education, creating possible selves, and developing youth as active change agents.

Based on a True Story: Research Expectations

Since I was working daily with the teens in a program that I had developed over the course of two years, I decided to utilize *participatory action research*. This technique allowed me to reflect on the program and the individuals involved, while also focusing on my role in the program and what I could do to improve the program based on my observations. In addition, I set out with the general idea that youth media production should affect the lives of young people. Since so much of today's youth culture is both influenced and produced by media, I thought it was important for teens to understand how their culture and identities are created. By engaging students in the production of films and allowing them to voice their stories and opinions, it was an opportunity to actually create their own version of culture. I also thought teens would take the experience as an opportunity to positively develop as individuals. Furthermore, I had a general interest in social identities formed during adolescence, and I knew that I wanted to look more deeply at how participation in a youth media production program could affect teens' identities and senses of self. These interests helped me to create interview questions and focus my observations about the participants. Thus, my observations centered around the participants' behavior, their interactions and relationships, and their perceived roles within the program. I was looking for the ways that they expressed their identities, and I noted these in my weekly written reflections on each student. Finally, I also had certain expectations because of my own experience with high school journalism. Knowing that I was

greatly affected by being given the chance to share my own stories in high school, I thought film production would provide similar opportunities for the teens I worked with in Chester.

This thesis focuses on two of the main findings from this work. First, I found that the teens formed a cohesive group, and their identification with that group membership helped and supported students. In essence, it allowed them to create a sense of group identity with the other participants, which gave them several new kinds of social capital. The other main finding revolved around individual development throughout the program, looking at how teens' ideas and plans for their futures changed over the summer. In pre- and post-program interviews, I focused on students' plans for the future as a way to look at their development of possible selves throughout the program. These two topics, the effects of group membership and the development of possible selves, are discussed in depth in later chapters.

However, there are also important limitations to this study. First, since I was working and researching on a project that had been the product of two years of planning, I was looking for positive aspects of the program. Although I have worked to provide unbiased analysis, my role in the development and activities of the program cannot be ignored. My connection and investment in the VFC program likely influenced what I thought was happening with the participants. In addition, the teens that I worked with were essentially the best of the best. They were all engaged in school and had at least one parent or mentor who supported them, which likely also influenced their participation and decision-making, in turn affecting the results of this study. Finally, the research collection ended only a week after the end of the program, so any lasting effects of the program cannot be determined at this point. Further research is needed to investigate whether or not the findings in this piece carried over to affect the teens' lives after the program ended.

Warning! Contains Spoilers: Thesis Outline

The rest of this piece provides more detail about the project, the research, and the findings. In the second chapter, “Cast and Crew,” a more extensive description of the VFC program is provided. This gives a context from which the rest of the research and analysis can be understood. The third chapter, “Top Box Office Hits,” provides a comprehensive review of the literature. With more details about social identity, group membership, possible selves, and salient others, as well as details about how the program worked to meet adolescent needs, this chapter gives necessary background for the analysis. After establishing the context of the program, the research site, and the academic context in the literature, this work moves to a discussion of the research findings.

In the second half of this piece, the two main research conclusions are explored in depth and applied to informing a pedagogy that supports teens in the positive development of group membership and possible selves. “Finding the Chemistry” examines the effects of group membership and group identity among the VFC participants. Specifically, it explores three aspects of social capital that are developed through the program: in-group protection, positive group association, and positive peer pressure. The analysis of possible selves comes in the fifth chapter, “Creating Characters.” This chapter highlights the stories of three participants and examines how their participation in the program helped them to develop in terms of possible selves. The “Behind the Scenes” chapter highlights the ideas that informed the program, examining the main pedagogical beliefs of the program. It also provides suggestions for educators as they work to engage their students. Finally, “Curtain Call” provides some concrete suggestions for creating pedagogy that gives students opportunities to develop similar kinds of social capital and to explore possible selves.

Premier Night: Seeing it All Come Together

On the night of July 5, 2009 I could barely sleep, and it was more than the hot, humid night air that prevented me from sleeping. It was the night before the launch of the 2009 Voices for

Change Summer Institute. After two years of brainstorming, coordinating, and planning, it was time for me to actually start my project. I could hardly believe it was actually going to happen. The next morning I would be off to Chester as an instructor, working with ten teenagers, using thousands of dollars of equipment, and all the while hoping that it work out well. After a bit of tossing and turning, I realized there was nothing more I could do at that point, and I drifted off to dream about my long-time dream of VFC.

Top Box Office Hits: A Review of the Literature



The group pauses for a picture in early August.

Key Terms to Remember

- ***social identity***: a sense of self that is created and reinforced by interactions with others
- ***group identity***: sense of self that is created and reinforced by participation in and interactions with a particular collection of people
- ***possible selves***: ideas of self in the future, which can be positive or negative
- ***salient others***: people who are important enough to influence one's plans and decisions in life

Five Stars: Ranking Literature

After a long, hot day of filming, I came home and realized something incredible. I had used the drive home to reflect, ignoring the radio to think about how I was working with the participants, what could be better, and what was working well now. Through reflection, I came to see that my pedagogy for the VFC Summer Institute, what I was doing and teaching every day, was strongly informed by the previous work and reading I had done in preparation to teach. Without consciously planning my actions and decisions with the teens, the literature about social identity, possible selves, community formation, and participatory learning had influenced my approach to the program. These works had clearly influenced me, ranking highly in terms of importance to my philosophy of teaching. As such, in my opinion, they are the five star hits in educational literature.

Top Box Office Hits: Key Themes Within the Literature

In looking at media production as a tool for developing possible selves and group identity among high school students, there are several key fields of information that must be examined and analyzed. First, a basic understanding of social identities, group identity, and group membership are

required to understand the importance of interactions, particularly in an adolescent world.

Additionally, knowledge of possible selves and salient others will help to provide insight into future identities and influential groups or people. Furthermore, building connections between these areas while recognizing the developmental and social needs of adolescents will highlight the importance of positive group association, opportunities to create possible selves, and supportive salient others.

Finally, an examination of the theoretical frames and existing research in each field illustrates the need for further research that specifically connects media production with the development of possible selves and group identity.

Social Identities

It is important to first understand the concept of social identities and the roles they may play in an educational context. There are several main characteristics that help to define social identities. For one, they are the product of an individual and his or her interactions with other members of society. Identities are not simply created by the individual; rather they are a combination of individual decisions and group interactions. Specifically, people choose to associate or identify with particular groups, often based on a common living area, interest, race, or other shared characteristic. This identification with specific cohorts of people carries along with it certain expectations that accompany group membership. Given the expectations for groups and their importance in forming identities, it is clear that groups play especially important roles in understanding social identities (R. Jenkins, 1996). Furthermore, individuals' social identities come into play in any instructional context. For example, the instructor plays a powerful role in the development of these social identities and also has the difficult challenge of handling the many social identities presented by the learners. It is exactly these interactions between individuals and groups that create and maintain social identities.

One key characteristic of social identity is that it is both personal and collaborative. As described by Richard Jenkins (1996), "Social identity is our understanding of who we are and of who

other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understandings of themselves and of others (which includes us)" (p. 5). This further reiterates that social identity is clearly made of both identification and social interaction. The identity aspect is something that individuals must create and present, but the social aspect is equally important because other people must also affirm identities through social interactions. In short, social identity is made up of many complex interactions between people. It requires an individual to hold and present a specific identity, but also needs other people to support and enhance that presented self (Jenkins, 1996). Again, social identities are created and maintained in this interaction between presented individual ideas of self and external responses to those ideas.

Group membership and outside expectations are two of the main ways that other people influence social identities. Roz Ivanic (1998) explains how discourse communities can form an aspect of someone's identity, saying, "a person's identity is constructed by their membership of, [and] their identification with, the values and practices of one or more communities" (p. 83). A connection with the ideas and principles of a group creates part of a social identity because the individual is presenting a self, which is then supported by the other group members. Jenkins (1996) reiterates, "It is not enough to assert an identity. That identity must also be validated (or not) by those with whom we have dealings"(p. 21). A presented self will only truly become a part of an identity when it is reaffirmed through interactions. This desire for outside validation illustrates the important role that outside expectations and pressures can have in shaping one's social identity. It is likely that people will conform, in some part, to the expectations of others in order to have an identity that is validated and supported. The affirmation from a group or other people helps a presented self to become an integrated part of someone's identity, and this idea has important consequences when examining instruction in particular.

Teachers and role models are key players in the creation and development of young peoples' personalities and identities due to their time spent with the youth, their position of power, and their job of sharing knowledge and understanding with students. There is tremendous power in the role models for young people because their opinions and validations mean a lot to the youth. This influence is especially far-reaching because young people will listen to their role models, making the role models' affirmations or rejections of any presented selves particularly influential. For example, in a quoted interview from Eve Gregory and Ann Williams (2000), this impact of a teacher is vividly illustrated in Gregory's (E) conversation with Raymond, the interviewee (R), who explains how his teachers influenced his identity:

R: Like when they used to say, 'Bob, read out page one, Harry, read out page two. We won't ask Raymond, he's thick.' And they said that, you know.

E: They said it in the class?

R: Oh yes. I do remember that. Yes, they said it. And then I went around and said, 'They won't ask me to read, I'm thick.' And I liked it. They gave me this label and I accepted it.

(Raymond, Linda's brother, born in 1947) (p. 2)

Raymond's experience shows the importance of outside validation in the creation of social identity. Since his teachers gave him a label, and he accepted it, he came to identify as "thick." It is likely that Raymond continued to act "thick," thereby displaying a stupid or dense academic identity, which his teachers continued to reaffirm. This recurrent display and confirmation of his "thick" identity illustrates the important role that instructors can have in the development of social identities. It is also important to note that since teachers are the instructors, helping students to learn and master new information, their power and influence is in part because of their social identities as teachers. In identifying and being identified as an educator or authority figure, there are certain expectations that instructors must meet. There are also socially accepted guidelines for students' interactions with their teachers, and both of these aspects of an instructor's identity further contribute to the teacher's powerful role in developing the social identities of his or her students.

However, the social identities of students also play a large role in determining classroom interactions. The teacher must work to manage the myriad identities that come from social exchanges outside of the classroom. Socially constructed identities such as racial identification and gender affect the interactions in an instructional context. As Patrick Finn (1999) points out:

Categories we are born into such as gender, class, and ethnicity determine to a large measure the secondary discourses to which we will be exposed, and our ability to acquire the secondary discourses to which we are exposed is determined to some extent by the degree to which the secondary discourse is similar to our primary discourse. (p. 109)

In this Finn gives several important ideas. First, categories like gender, social class, and ethnicity become parts of people's identities, and those identities influence the kind of information and interactions that people have access to during their lives. In this case, Finn talks about discourse, saying that certain aspects of identity influence people's access to different forms and modes of communication. Furthermore, he notes that an individual's ability to adopt new modes of communication depends, in part, on the similarities between the new form and the individual's primary form. This explains the ease with which some people can adapt to the discourse and requirements of school, while others reject or fumble with the mixture of their outside social identities and school expectations.

These differences in communication play particularly important roles in school and within the dominant discourse of white America. For example, Thomas Newkirk (2002) made an important observation of how students' social identities surrounding race and gender affect their relationship to school. He explains that he "was struck by the tightrope that the African American boys had to walk, maintaining their identities as tough defiant males and *at the same time* cooperating with a white teacher" (p. 39). The social expectations for these students as young, black men influenced their relationships with Newkirk as the teacher and their relationships with school in general. At a broader level, the extent to which school-based success fits in with students' outside social identities directly

relates to their views and relationships with school. Thus, some students may have one identity that demands success, but another that cautions them against doing well in an academic setting. At the same time, other students may bring in identities that completely conflict with the mode of instruction, causing problems for both the student and the class in general. In dealing with all of these many, and often conflicting social identities, instructors face a difficult challenge as they work to help students understand new concepts and ideas.

With this understanding of social identities as products of individual presentations and societal confirmations, it is clear that these ideas of self play large roles in educational experiences. Furthermore, social identities and group membership seem to be especially important in the development of a positive identity that connects with and values the current educational process. While some identities encourage compliance with the expectations of schooling, others house expectations that oppose the requirements of success in school. Although these different identities present distinct problems in an educational context, it is clear that these presented and affirmed selves play key roles in people's identities and their lives.

Group Identity

As described earlier, group membership and identity create important parts of social identities. The groups and categories of society with which people identify influence their lives in myriad ways. Group identity can stem from actual group membership or perceived group membership and labeling by society. That is to say that external ideas about group membership play an important role in forming group identity. In addition, actual group membership can provide some benefits in terms of social capital as it interacts with an individual's worldview, methods of communication, and available resources. Furthermore, during adolescence teens are in the process of finding new groups with which they can associate. This discovery of new groups can produce new identities, conflict with previous groups or previous group identities, and provide new

opportunities for an individual. Given that groups have such an essential role in identity formation and decision-making, a more detailed examination of the effects of group membership is necessary, particularly among adolescents. In particular, it is important to understand the relationship between group expectations and individual decisions as well as the benefits of group membership for adolescents.

Since group membership is closely linked to social identity, it is clear that many group identities come from outside expectations, which may be founded on real or perceived group membership. There are parts of one's identity that are ascribed or essentially determined by society. Dorothy Holland, Debra Skinner, William Lachiocotte Jr., and Carole Cain (1998) refer to these parts of identity as "cultural identities," describing them as "identities that form in relation to major structural features of society: ethnicity, gender, race, nationality, and sexual orientation" (p. 7). These aspects of identity are the ones that revolve around membership to a racial group, gender, or other sort of societal category.

It is important to note that some of these parts of identity are not only based on group membership, but often on perceived group membership. For example, although a black woman may not feel accepted as a part of a black community, it is likely that she still identifies as black because it is a category to which she has been assigned. Others perceive her to be a member of the black community, and therefore she is likely to carry that label and identity with her. Similarly, sexual orientation categories can be ascribed or assigned to an individual without any outside knowledge of group membership. For some people, an individual can appear to be gay, fitting the stereotypes and outside expectations of a group member in the gay community. However, the individual may not be part of the community to which others have assigned him. Nonetheless, he will still confront stereotyping based on his perceived group membership, and these kinds of outside expectations affect interactions throughout society. Furthermore, he will often face the decision of correcting

others or allowing their perceptions to remain uncorrected, indicating that his own identity, the social situation, and the interaction with others all play into a decision-making process. These examples show how group membership, real or perceived, can affect identity, interaction, and decision-making.

Identities help to determine people's behaviors. Since identities influence decision-making, they also affect people's general demeanor because demeanor is determined in part by decisions. Again, Holland et al (1998) explain, "Behavior is mediated by senses of self or what we call identities" (p. 8). The identities that people hold shape their interactions and behaviors, mainly through existing expectations for that identity. For example, if someone identifies as a good student, he is likely to participate in class, do his work, and study. In this way, external expectations for a particular identity can mediate behavior, encouraging the student to raise his hand and continue participating in class. It is true that some of these behaviors and decisions are likely personal, that is to say, something the individual feels especially prone to do regardless of others' expectations. However, it is also likely that these behaviors are the results of outside expectations and the influence of group membership. Again, for example, although the student may agree that he does well because he wants to do so, his behaviors and actions will reaffirm his identity as a good student in the eyes of his teachers and classmates. This continuing cycle of reinforcing expectations and behaviors reiterates the importance of group membership in identity because group expectations can influence a person's identities and behaviors.

In addition to this connection between identities and behaviors, group membership can also carry several benefits as it influences individual members' worldviews, methods of communication, and available resources. As described earlier, certain groups have specific discourse communities associated with them. These discourse communities influence people's modes of communication and affect their ability to communicate easily and effectively with others. In addition, group

membership can affect a person's worldview, or the way in which someone thinks about society. For example, membership in a non-dominant group will affect people's worldview in determining how they interpret daily interactions, political decisions, and many other parts of life. More specifically, identifying with the Latino community in the United States is likely to affect an individual's opinions about immigration, her thoughts about what is important politically, and her interpretation of her own interactions with white Americans. Furthermore, group membership can affect availability of resources. Since community membership provides many important connections and sources of support, there are certain kinds of social capital that group membership brings. All of these aspects of group membership play important roles in determining people's lives and futures because of what the group provides them, how they view the world, and how they interact with others. These benefits of group membership, the resources and communication skills, are important to understand because they can serve as motivating factors for individuals to join or stay in a group.

Finally, this understanding of the connection between group membership and identity is especially important during adolescence when peer pressure seems to be the strongest. Adolescents are at a key point in their identity development because they are entering a phase when their group orientation shifts from family to peer group. Rather than focusing on membership within their immediate family, most teenagers are transitioning to rely on their friends and peers. In light of this, it is necessary to examine group identity and membership among teens since their group memberships are growing and changing. Given that group membership and expectations can drastically affect behavior, it is clear that young adolescents must deal with new expectations for changing identities. These shifting group identities play big roles in adolescent development as they can set up future identities and expectations, reject past identities, and open up new opportunities. With new groups, there are new resources available like networks, support groups, and other forms of social capital. As adolescents work to find their new groups, an understanding of the benefits

associated with group membership is also necessary. Again, with a strong connection between group membership, external expectations, and social identity, it is clear that knowledge of group identity is essential in understanding youth development and the ways in which educational contexts can support teens in their positive development.

There is a strong connection between group membership and social identities because groups can serve as avenues to find affirmation and support for one's identities. In addition to influencing identities, groups also have an effect on people's worldviews and interpretations. Groups can influence opinions, change methods of communication or discourse, and provide new pieces of social capital to their members. These characteristics of group membership are especially important during adolescence as teens transition into new groups. Moving away from family group orientation to peer group orientation brings along new sets of expectations and social benefits, both of which can have essential roles in determining a youth's future. With this understanding of the importance of group identity, it is also necessary to examine the role of the individual in managing and interpreting group membership, which can come into play through the individual's own ideas of self.

Possible Selves

In order to examine the effects of media production on possible selves, it is necessary to first come to a clear understanding of the existing research on possible selves and their place in an educational context. As described by Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius (1986) possible selves are the representations people create of themselves in the future. Possible selves are people's ideas of who they want to be, who they fear they might become, and who they realistically think they will become. These ideas of self are further influenced by current self-concepts or identities, social situations, and salient, or important, others. Furthermore, these possible selves are especially important for adolescents, and they are closely tied to the social identities that teens carry with them.

The ideas that people have of themselves in the future are built upon self-concepts that already exist. As Markus and Nurius (1986) explain that possible selves are based on people's representations of themselves in the present and past (p. 954). For example, an individual can have a possible self of an artist, which is built upon an existing background of producing art or doodles. These possible selves are a part of the working self-concept, and they affect how an individual views a given situation (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 957). Particular situations evoke certain possible selves in individuals. For example, doing well on a written assignment could spark a student to see himself or herself as a writer in the future. The reverse is also true: doing poorly on a writing assignment could cause a student to abandon, or scale back, dreams of becoming a writer (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 962). These ideas of future professions, personal characteristics, and skills all come together to form a set of possible selves for an individual. The possible selves are further influenced, encouraged, and limited by an individual's current self-perception, the social context, and the affirmations or rejections of these possible selves by important outsiders called salient others. Again, like with social identity, possible selves require key outsiders to give feedback on a presented self before the possible self can become a true, integrated part of an individual's future plans.

In addition, social contexts and interactions with other people have a range of effects on possible selves. For one, simply telling people that they will not be able to realize a possible self is unlikely to discourage their pursuit of that possible self. For example, if a student wished to be an artist, that student would be undeterred by a critique of their artistic ability (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 964). Thus, it is not necessarily discouragement that will deter the development of a possible self; indeed, the possible self is likely to remain strong through this kind of negativity. However, social interactions in the context of detailed comparison can greatly affect an individual's possible selves. As Markus and Nurius (1986) note, "Many of these possible selves are the direct result of previous social comparisons in which the individual's own thoughts, feelings,

characteristics, and behaviors have been contrasted to those of salient others” (p. 964). It is these comparisons with “salient others” that can influence an individual’s possible selves. Although the importance of salient others will be discussed later, it is important to note that comparing a possible self to someone else can affect the development of possible selves. This kind of comparison between people and important others can lead to very different effects, causing some to give up on the possible self and others to work harder to achieve it. In short, during social interactions people’s possible selves can be affirmed or discouraged as they are compared with the abilities and talents of others. In these various social situations and interactions, people’s possible selves can be encouraged and altered.

Furthermore, possible selves are especially important in adolescence. Although people have ideas of their future selves at all ages, it has been shown that adolescents, in particular, frequently think about their possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 957). More specifically, a study mentioned by Markus and Nurius (1986) concluded that 12-year-olds daydream about themselves and images of themselves in the future. They also indicate that those daydreams can easily transform into possible selves for adolescents (p. 957). Indeed, when working with young people, the possible selves and ideas for the future are frequent discussion topics or distracting fantasies. As such, the interactions surrounding possible selves can have especially strong effects for adolescents because they interpret the comparison, affirmation, or rejection of a possible self immediately.

Additionally, possible selves are important in educational contexts because they influence individual motivation and desire in learning. Markus and Nurius (1986) explain, “Possible selves give specific cognitive form to our desires for mastery, power, or affiliation, and to our diffuse fears of failure and incompetence” (p. 960). In essence, the hopes and plans that individuals have for their futures help to motivate them to master concepts and skills in the present since they recognize that their possible selves require those sources of expertise. For example, if someone wants to be a

writer, it is likely that he or she will want to master the writing process, dedicating time and effort to writing, revising, and editing. With this direct connection between learning and future goals, it is clear that educational contexts must serve as opportunities for students to develop their own possible selves so that the learners can find something to motivate them to apply and engage themselves for their futures.

Finally, there are also strong connections between people's possible selves and social identities. Social identities can help to inform the possible selves of individuals. Since possible selves are based on the current and past ideas of self and personal identifications, people's social identities are especially important in forming their plans for the future. For example, a social identity as an African American may encourage or limit certain possible selves. In addition, the affirmation and discouragement that inform possible selves also help to establish social identities. Again, by promoting certain social identities, which need outside confirmation, plans for the future can be supported or discouraged. With such strong connections between possible selves and social identities, it is clear that both concepts are especially important in learning contexts since these concepts of self inform how individuals think about themselves and how they approach their work.

Salient Others

As described earlier, key outsiders can have drastic effects on group membership, social identity, and possible selves. These salient others are the individuals who have a certain amount of importance in someone's life, the people who serve as role models, advisors, and sources of support or discouragement. In the field of social identities, salient others are the people who affirm, alter, or suggest one's social identities. Similarly, for group membership, there are key members of the group who influence other members, acting as salient others for the peers they meet. Finally, in possible selves, it is comparisons with salient others that can encourage or discourage the pursuit of a future

possible self. In light of this, the discussion about salient other is of extreme importance for this project and for understanding how best to work with adolescents in general.

First, recall that social identity is both individual and collaborative. It requires that an identity be presented and then confirmed and reaffirmed by external sources. These external sources can be parents, friends, fellow group members, the media at large, teachers, or any number of outsiders who essentially tell an individual, “Yes, you belong to this category,” or “No, why would you think you should be in this category?” As described earlier, teachers and instructors can play an especially important role as a salient other because of their power and influence over young people. The earlier example of how Raymond’s teachers effectively gave him an identity of being a “thick” student illustrates the power of teachers to create, affirm, and maintain social identities of their students. By confirming or discouraging presented social identities, salient others play an important role in determining how individuals see themselves, what they think they are capable of doing, and where they think they belong.

In addition, salient others help to determine group memberships and identities of individuals. Salient others can be the teammates, coaches, teachers, friends, parents, and peers who both categorize others and then reaffirm those categorizations. Whether the salient others know or assume an individual’s group membership, salient others then place a group identity upon an individual during their interactions. That is to say that salient others label groups and as a result label individuals as members of particular groups. Again, the reality of group membership can be true or perceived, but the salient others determine the external group identification or classification of individuals. A clear example would be high school students labeling their peers into different social groups or cliques. Although some of the group identifications may be based off of actual group membership, others are classified into particular groups based on assumptions of membership

because of clothing style, race, ethnicity, or academic attitude. In these ways, salient others help to decide the group identities of individuals.

Finally, as noted previously, salient others play an incredibly important role in the development of possible selves. They can serve as sources of comparison, encouragement, or opposition. As people to be compared to, salient others can spark drive and determination to achieve a possible self or set off a trend of discouraging lack of effort as someone gives up on a possible self. In addition, salient others can encourage possible selves by providing opportunities to explore and develop new possible selves or affirming actions taken towards developing a possible self. At the same time, salient others are important advisors who can discourage people from pursuing a possible self by saying that it is not the right fit for the person or that the person should try to focus his or her energies on something else, prioritizing their possible selves. Again, teachers, role models, and peers can all be salient others who affect possible selves through their interactions, suggestions, affirmations, and oppositions to individuals' decisions and actions.

Through their interactions with individuals, salient others can drastically affect the social identities, group membership, and possible selves of other people. In affirming, confirming, and supporting someone's identity, membership, and potential plans, salient others play an important role in determining the future of an individual. However, salient others can also deter improvement and limit motivation of others, depending on the individual's current self-concept, the comparison draw between the two people, and the overall social context. Nonetheless, it is clear that salient others like instructors, role models, friends, and family are key factors in determining the future development of an individual.

Audience Appeal: Meeting Adolescent Needs

In examining this literature within the context of my research site, a summer program for high school students, it especially important to think about the ways in which an instructional

experience can effectively work to meet the needs of adolescents. As mentioned before, social identities, group membership, and possible selves all play particularly crucial roles in the development of adolescents. Recognizing importance of these ideas in the growth of young people makes a pedagogy directed specifically towards teenagers even more critical. Based on educational research, there are several key techniques to successfully teach and work with youth, which strongly influenced my pedagogy for the VFC program. For one, it is important to utilize Lev Vygotsky's concept of a zone of proximal development, which is essentially an individual's point of supported growth. Additionally, quality instruction should utilize students' interests while giving them an appropriate balance of support and responsibility. Finally, it is critical that the learning environment meets the developmental and social needs of the adolescents and encourages them to make mistakes and learn from those lessons.

Deep instruction for adolescents should effectively utilize Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD). Simply put, the ZPD is "the level of potential development" that an individual can reach with outside support (p. 86). For example, if Sally wants to be a writer, but she excels in science, the instructor is utilizing the ZPD by supporting her to write more extensively in science and giving her the tools and encouragement to get to that point. Furthermore, this idea is combined with the development of the zone of free movement (ZFM) and zone of promoted action (ZPA), as described by Joan Valsiner (1984). She describes the ZFM as the actions that individuals could potentially perform on their own, which includes some of the actions that are currently in the ZPD. For example, Sally will eventually be able to write scientifically without the support of her instructor, making it an action that is within her ZFM. In addition, the ZPA includes everything that a learner is encouraged to do. By utilizing these concepts that give students support, encouragement, and resources to establish themselves and their own actions, instruction effectively works with adolescents who need both guidance and personal responsibility for their growth.

In light of this, teaching must give an appropriate amount of scaffolding and ownership to the learners in order to generate productive disposition. On the one hand, students need a certain amount of scaffolding or support to help them engage with their learning. As Jeremy Kilpatrick, Jane Swafford, and Bradford Findell (2002) explain, “The use of scaffolding is another factor that helps to maintain student engagement at a high level” (p. 336). They note that teachers’ subtle questioning and planned pauses to allow students to make connections are important elements of scaffolding that allow for learners to build their own productive disposition. In addition, Ann L. Brown and Joseph C. Campione (1994) detail the importance of “guided discovery,” which is essentially when teachers give students an appropriate amount of scaffolding. They note that it “is difficult to orchestrate. It takes sensitive clinical judgment to know when to intervene and when to leave well enough alone” (p. 230). Thus, although it is difficult to always determine the appropriate amount of scaffolding for each student, good instruction must work to give each learner the support and challenges that he or she needs. Pushing some students to work independently while encouraging others to trust each other is one of the many challenges of finding the right amount of scaffolding, but it is crucial to do this in order to have all students develop their own investment and engagement in learning.

Furthermore, instruction needs to balance this scaffolding with student responsibility. Mark Springer (2006) notes that one of the essential tenets of middle level education is that “successful learning is directly tied to the students’ senses of self-investment and self-discipline, their commitment, and their willingness to accept responsibility” (p. 6). He notes the significance of taking on responsibility as a learner, which enhances the investment and discipline that accompanies productive disposition. Although Springer describes this as especially important in middle schools, the learners’ ownership and responsibility for what they are learning are central parts of deep learning at any level. As Jacquelynne S. Eccles, Carol Midgley, Allan Wigfield, Christy Miller

Buchanan, David Reuman, Constance Flanagan, and Douglas MacIver (1993) note, “teachers should provide the optimal level of structure for children’s current levels of maturity while providing a sufficiently challenging environment to pull the children along a developmental path toward higher levels of cognitive and social maturity” (p. 92). It is important to balance the amount of personal accountability and the level of scaffolding that the students experience. This balance between personal responsibility and outside support helps adolescents to learn how to work as adults, figuring out when to ask for help, how to work together, and what they can do on their own. Learning all of these skills and being given the opportunity to make decisions and take control of their situations is especially important for adolescents since they are at a stage where they must learn to establish their own independence.

In addition, instruction must cater to the interests of the learners. Kilpatrick et al. (2002) suggest “emphasizing topics [students] find interesting and tasks they find enjoyable” in order to fully utilize their intrinsic motivation for learning. Thus, by providing students with the opportunities to pursue their interests in learning, instructors capitalize on the students’ motivations and help the learners to continue developing a productive disposition. Furthermore, the work of Carol Sansone and Jessi L. Smith (2000) illustrates “the importance of interest in maintaining motivation and suggest[s] that it is an important and overlooked dimension of self-regulation” (p. 365). Again, it is clear that interest in the content and process of learning is a key part of maintaining motivation among learners. Finally, one particular example of the power of following students’ interests is in the Soundings classroom, an eighth-grade class that utilizes an integrated curriculum, which builds on the students’ curiosity questions and interests. As Springer (2006), founder and teacher of Soundings, explained, the program “proved to us how incredibly capable and dedicated young adolescents are when empowered to follow their strongest learning interests” (p. 6). By allowing students to follow their interests, the Soundings program effectively uses students’ interests

to have them develop as learners. A combination of motivation and engagement that comes from the opportunity to follow interests, this helps students become more invested and involved in their learning, recognizing the value of their work and being truly interested in what they do.

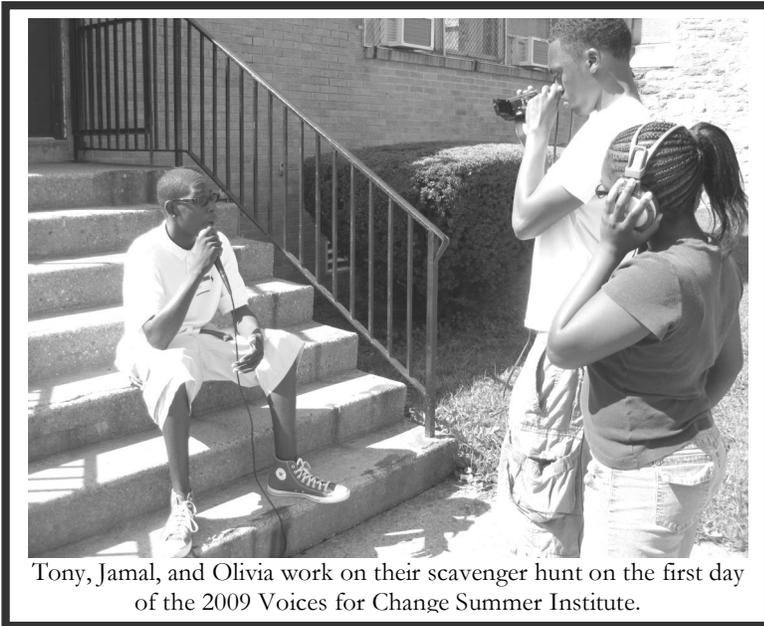
Finally, the community in which the learning takes place must meet the needs of the students, be based on the tenet that making mistakes is part of a learning process, and be a resource for students as they work through their learning processes. As described earlier, “it is the fit between the developmental needs of the adolescent and the educational environment that is important” (Eccles et al., 1994, p. 92). Providing a learning environment that caters to the developmental needs of the students is a key part of good instruction since it allows the students to feel both comfortable and adequately challenged in their learning processes. Furthermore, the learning environment should be a place where students are able to make mistakes and propose new ideas without worrying about being judged poorly. Springer (2006) explains that he and his co-teacher “want to demonstrate from the start that it is okay to express ideas without fear of ridicule” (p. 33). Evidently, in Soundings, as in any instructional situation, learners must be able to express their ideas, make mistakes, try new approaches to investigation, and learn from that process. This is necessary to allow students to test out possible selves, engage with material in new ways, and invest themselves in their education. Finally, the learning community must serve as a resource for learners. The community should be a group to look to for support, shared knowledge, and encouragement. As students come to utilize other community members as resources and bases of knowledge, they collectively help develop the scaffolding of learning for the community as well as supporting the continued growth of their individual learning processes. With the establishment of such a community and all of the support and positive environmental aspects that accompany it, adolescents will be more motivated and engaged with their learning and better able to handle themselves independently.

All of these ideas and concepts played an important role in determining the pedagogical approach to the VFC Summer Institute. One of the main goals of the program was to set a space in which students could learn from each other, work on or with their interests, and take on responsibility for the project as a whole. Participants worked as a group to complete their project, figuring out how to work together to achieve a goal. This involved assigning roles, determining strengths of the group, and in some ways affirming possible selves of their peers. At the same time, the work capitalized on student interest. All of the students who applied to the program showed an interest in film, acting, media, or communications. The opportunity to participate in a program about their interests, work with peers who shared those interests, and create a film based on their own lives all helped the students to apply knowledge to something that intrigued them. The chance to work with people of similar interests also established a new kind of group membership for the participants, helping some to foster a new group identity. Finally, I worked to push the students in their ZPD, giving them the freedom to make some mistakes while filming and editing, but also providing them with enough guidance and support to make the end product possible. The students took responsibility for scriptwriting, filming, directing, and editing the movie, and their sense of ownership over the project helped to reinforce their group membership and possible selves.

Lasting Images: Influential Works

After that first reflective drive home, others soon followed. Not only did I recognize how my previous research and reading had prepared me for the summer, I further realized how ingrained the ideas had become over the summer. My beliefs in supporting students, giving them voice, sharing responsibility, and building off interests had become a part of me. I did not have to consciously think about the motivation behind my teaching techniques because it was ingrained within me and came out in my general approach to teaching. My theory of instruction, although always evolving, was a reality, and it was exciting to see.

Cast & Crew: Getting to Know Voices for Change



Tony, Jamal, and Olivia work on their scavenger hunt on the first day of the 2009 Voices for Change Summer Institute.

The Preview: Rated G

I walked up the steps to the Unity Center, mentally checking that I had everything and trying to figure out how it would all work out. Ashley was already there, sitting on a chair outside of our room waiting for the program to start. I gave my best “Good Morning” and quickly rushed

to find a key to open the new home of the Chester Voices for Change Summer Institute, my project that was finally happening.

With the window air conditioners blasting, I moved the desks into a circle as the teens slowly entered the room. Most had their iPods playing as they came in and they patiently put up with my small talk about the Fourth of July as we waited for everyone to arrive. Tony, Jamal, and Madison started talking about mutual friends while Michelle and Faith sat together chatting away as old friends do. Sean came in all dolled up in his “church clothes,” clearly trying to set a good impression but also slightly embarrassed once he saw his peers in shorts and t-shirts. Everyone was there except for Deon, who I was not expecting since he missed his two pre-program interviews. On my cue we did introductions, everyone maintaining respectful quiet, trying to feel each other out in the first 15 minutes of the program. Yet this quiet did not last long as the teens started working on their first assignment: a video scavenger hunt. Their quiet respectfulness would soon evolve into a living,

working group of adolescent producers, filling the room with directions, laughter, and an understanding that they must work together to complete their project.

Plot Synopsis: Program Description

In order to fully understand the research findings explained later, it is important to first examine the research site. Thus, this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the program I developed, its goals, and the activities in the program. Furthermore, it introduces the main characters involved in the research, focusing on both the teen participants and the core volunteers and community partners. With this context in mind, it is much easier to understand the findings and the ways in which the program helped the teens to develop and change.

On July 6, 2009 the first-ever Voices for Change (VFC) Summer Institute started in Chester, Pennsylvania. A six-week summer program for teenagers in the city of Chester, the program provided participants with the opportunity to share their own stories with a broader community audience through media production projects. With a focus on film, the Summer Institute trained ten adolescents to be youth media producers, providing them with daily instruction, project-based experience, and local internships with media and communications organizations. Over the six weeks the teens worked together to fully produce a 45-minute film entitled *Through Our Eyes*, which they wrote, acted in, filmed, directed, and edited. Participants were also each given a program stipend of \$500 upon completion of the program. This ensured that all teens would be able to participate, regardless of whether or not they needed a summer job. With support from the Chester Police Activities League (PAL), the Swarthmore College Lang Opportunity Scholarship program, and Team Making A Change (MAC), the VFC Summer Institute worked to provide a positive summer enrichment program for teens while also creating a core group of youth media producers in the city.

Mission & Goals

The VFC program was started based on a firm belief that positive youth development creates future leaders, supporting young people to become advocates for change by engaging them in youth media production. The hope was that participants would gain confidence in their own voices as they shared their stories and see themselves as role models and young leaders who can and will create change throughout their lives. With this in mind, the program established the following mission statement:

Chester Voices for Change empowers young people in Chester, PA to become community change agents through engagement in media literacy and production. By enabling these youth to tell the stories of their community, the program allows participants to effectively utilize the tools of mass media to report on the history and events of their neighborhoods, sharing the narratives that are often ignored or unheard by the larger society. Through increased community involvement, critical analysis of mass media, and collaboration to create media projects, the Chester Voices for Change program gives youth the experience and training needed to create positive change in their community. (Chester Voices for Change, 2009)

By engaging young people with media to create representations of their own histories, VFC wanted to empower participants with both the ability to share their experiences and the tools to be leaders and advocates in their neighborhoods.

In support of this mission, the program further established four main goals. The first was to work with youth participants to use media production to investigate community issues and explore possible solutions to those issues. Second, VFC would try to expand and deepen the understanding of Chester among participants and a broader audience as their work is shared with the Chester community and other teens in the country. Third, VFC would work to engage the Chester community in a conversation about creating positive change in their neighborhoods. Finally, it will help teens to critically examine mass media in order to better understand how the media impacts Chester as a community and as individuals (Chester Voices for Change, 2009). With these goals and

the overall mission, VFC worked to engage and motivate young leaders in Chester through film production, hoping that establishing a small group of change agents would lead to wider change.

Activities & Events

In order to meet the established goals, the VFC program created a project-based summer enrichment program for Chester teens. The 2009 Summer Institute ran Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., from July 6 until August 14. Most of the programming time was dedicated to instruction and experience in filmmaking. With support and guidance from college student volunteers, the participants first learned the basics of film production and then worked their way through the process of creating a film. Time was spent brainstorming, writing scripts, rehearsing, filming, and editing. In addition to these project-based experiences, the participants learned about radio show hosting and DJ-ing. They also initiated and worked on a campaign for positive youth opportunities in the city of Chester and worked at local internships. The hope was that through this variety of experiences and neighborhood connections, the participants would grow as individuals and as part of a larger Chester community.

The first week of the program relied heavily upon direct instruction by me and the other college volunteers, but before long the teens were working on their film *Through Our Eyes*. Direct instruction ranged from how to use the equipment to identification of different kinds of scenes and editing techniques. The students listened patiently, and they also engaged in a conversation about media literacy as they analyzed a 50 Cent music video for both its messages and editing techniques. Then they figured out what kinds of messages they wanted to send in their media. In the first week, the participants were also able to gain some hands on experience using the equipment and editing software. In groups of three or four they worked on a video scavenger hunt about their neighborhood, taking them through the process of filming, script writing, editing, and producing.

With that small project complete, the second week shifted to script writing and rehearsing, which was done in either small groups or as a whole group. Groups were assigned a scene to write together, and then the actors would rehearse it for the entire group. Feedback was given about acting, the script, and ways to “make it more real,” and the students listened to each other, taking in criticism and working to become their characters. A mixture of rehearsing, writing, and playing improvisation and other acting games filled up most of the instructional time in the second and third weeks of the program. A few lessons about journalism were also included to break up the acting sessions. Students learned about interviewing techniques, periodical versus narrative writing styles, and perspective and bias in reporting.

By the end of third week the participants were bored with rehearsing and writing; they wanted to film. Before we could start filming, the teens had to do a run-through of the entire script for Keith, a community partner and program assistant. Keith showed support and encouragement as he pushed the teens to “be more real” when they were acting and really get into character. On Friday, July 17, 2009, the third Friday of the program, we took a field trip to Philadelphia. Under the supervision of Thomas, Liz, and myself the ten teens visited four media organizations in Philadelphia. Stopping at Media Mobilizing Project and Scribe Video Center, the students were able to see more local, community-based organizations before heading to WHYY, the public broadcasting station in Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia Inquirer. It was long day with lots of walking and public transportation, but the teens enjoyed themselves. Their eyes yearned with excitement as they saw the equipment at WHYY, and Faith’s dreams of being a journalist were reaffirmed during our visit to the Philadelphia Inquirer. After a dinner break, the filming finally started when participants met at a party hosted by Chester PAL to record the introduction party scene they had planned.

The second half of the program was a whirlwind spent working on *Through Our Eyes*. Participants acted, filmed, and directed, getting almost all of the filming done in one week. They identified various locations throughout Chester to film scenes and did their best to stick to the filming schedule I developed. As the filming week went on, the filming process became much more efficient. Actors were able to control their laughter to some extent, students took on their responsibilities as directors, setting up shots, making sure the microphones were out of camera shots, and working with each other to get the scenes done. From there it was on to editing. Two weeks of importing and editing in small groups. The students took turns, watched each other's scenes, gave feedback, found music, and fully edited their scenes.

In the end, the full version of the film and the DVD took a fair amount of my own energy. I put all the scenes together into one project file and edited some of the transitions, and Mike of Swarthmore College's Language Resource Center helped to burn all 50 copies of the DVDs. We had a final celebration with the families of the program participants on August 18, 2009. The students were given their awards and program stipends, they handed out thank you awards to their internship hosts, and everyone was finally able to watch *Through Our Eyes*, which had only a couple of editing errors. The teens, their families, and the community members at the final celebration seemed to enjoy themselves and the film, making a good end to a summer of hard work.

Throughout the summer, however, students had also been spending time with Keith, the program assistant and community partner. Keith is the founder of Team MAC and worked closely with Chester PAL. He also has a background in radio and DJ-ing, so he volunteered one afternoon each week to work with the teens. They started with radio hosting, practicing their radio voices and having question and answer sessions with local radio hosts. Teens also had the chance to try DJ-ing when Keith brought in his own equipment. As the summer moved on, Keith and Chester PAL supported the teens as they worked on what became known as the Helping Youth Positively Excel

(H.Y.P.E.) Campaign. The VFC participants raised money by selling candy and asking for donations from businesses. This money was used to purchase t-shirts that served as walking teen resource guides at a summer concert event featuring musical artist Mario. One of the teens with an interest in graphic design, Tony, designed the t-shirts, which were worn by all the participants and about 100 other at the concert hosted by Chester PAL. At the end of the program, the teens hoped they would be able to continue Team H.Y.P.E. as a way to establish more positive resources, programs, and opportunities for adolescents in the city of Chester.

Furthermore, participants spent every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon at their internships, working for local organizations for six hours each week. The teens went in pairs to five different intern hosts: Bright Ideas & Signs, the Chester Spirit, the Chester Spotlight, MAC Association, and NAZCA Communications. Although the Bright Ideas & Signs internship only started in late July due to complications, all of the participants learned something from their intern hosts. Bright Ideas & Signs gave Tony and Jamal experience in graphic design and printing. Chris and Faith worked and wrote for the Chester Spirit, a local weekly newspaper, while Madison and Olivia spent time working on a teen pull out section of the Chester Spotlight. Michelle and Angel learned about the ins and outs of event planning and communications as they worked with Keith at the MAC Association, the business side of Team MAC. Finally, Sean and Ashley learned about web design and made their own commercials while working for NAZCA, a local media production business. Each internship presented different problems and opportunities, but they all gave their interns a valuable experience, and several participants voiced the hope that they would stay in contact with their intern hosts after the program ended.

Community Partners & Support

The VFC Summer Institute would not have been possible without support from a number of organizations within Chester and Swarthmore. There were three main supports and partners of

the program: Chester PAL, the Lang Opportunity Scholarship program, and Team MAC. Chester PAL and Team MAC worked together closely before VFC started, and each one helped extensively with general program assistance. They helped recruit participants, provided program transportation, acquired program space at the Unity Center in Chester, connected VFC with the intern hosts, and gave support and space for the final celebration. Both Chester PAL and Team MAC made the daily activities of the program possible and helped to fund some of the students' stipends and the costs for the final celebration. The Lang Opportunity Scholarship program also provided funding and support of the Summer Institute. With support and guidance before the program started, I was able to meet with leaders in Chester, establish connections, and develop a solid program plan. In addition, the Lang Opportunity Scholarship provided funding for VFC's film equipment, the students' stipends, the Philadelphia field trip, and other general program costs. Without the support of these three organizations, the Institute would not have been possible.

Numerous community organizations also helped to make the VFC program become a reality. As mentioned earlier, the intern hosts, Bright Signs & Ideas, the Chester Spirit, the Chester Spotlight, MAC Association, and NACA Communications, were extremely generous in taking on two adolescent interns for six weeks, providing the teens with valuable experience as well as mentoring. In addition, the Unity Center graciously provided space to the program at no cost, and the Language Resource Center at Swarthmore College also donated editing space and equipment to the program. All of these organizations made the 2009 Summer Institute possible and played an important role in shaping and developing the start of this new program.

Director's Bio: My Connection to the Program

Voices for Change is my brainchild, designed to give Chester teens an outlet for their stories while also teaching me how to create a project for social change. Having received the Lang Opportunity Scholarship as a sophomore at Swarthmore, I spent all of 2008 and 2009 preparing for

the program. I worked on establishing relationships in Chester, meeting with local leaders to get advice and feedback about my plans for a youth media production program. I spent the summer of 2008 interning with several organizations in Philadelphia and Chester to gain experience in film production, program organization, and grant writing. VFC has been the focus of numerous academic pieces during my time at Swarthmore as I tried to figure out what pedagogical frames I wanted to use throughout the program and how it would fit in with the larger context of youth media in the 21st century. Even during my semester in Madrid, Spain in the spring of 2009, I spent time writing grant proposals and designing the program. I also was the program director for the Summer Institute, organizing, planning, and running the daily activities with the teens. In short, VFC was the result of much of my time and energy, and I have a very strong connection to the program, which is why it is important for me to describe my role in the program.

My Program Role

As the program director I was in charge of all the long-term and day-to-day planning for the VFC Summer Institute. I spent the month of June 2009 preparing for the program. I bought equipment, searched for participants and volunteers, organized the field trip to Philadelphia, outlined the curriculum and activities for the program, and met with intern hosts. Once the program started, most of my time outside of the program was dedicated to lesson planning and figuring out how to keep the group on track in order to finish the film on time. Each day I would work with the teens, at times helping students with some of their internship work if their hosts could not meet with them, and then I would come home and plan out the activities for the next day.

Since I had invested so much in the program, it was impossible for me to simply be a participant observer in my research. I could not simply participate in activities and constantly observe and note the different interactions because I played a central role in the program. I became attached to the students, and their ideas, opinions, and struggles influenced my evaluation of the

program. My role as a teacher, mentor, and boss to the teens mixed with a sort of friendship that was established throughout the summer. As a result I used participatory action research, which has a slightly different focus than participant observation. Greg Dimitriadis (2008) described participatory action research (PAR) as “research conducted ‘with’ as opposed to ‘on’ youth, around the issues that they find most important in their lives” (p. vii). In essence, PAR provides participants with the opportunity to examine themselves and their lives through the lens of a researcher, working not only to observe and report, but also to find targeted solutions to a specific problem that they face. Although I did not activate the VFC participants as researchers in this project, my own research and observations of the teens, the program, and myself worked to inform my pedagogy for the program. I focused on the issue of identifying and examining the effects of participation in VFC on the adolescents’ ideas of self. My observations and reflections of everyone involved in the program helped me to find the ways in which VFC encouraged or discouraged certain ideas of self among the participants. This research on my program and my role in it helped me to identify important aspects of pedagogy with the goal of fostering positive identities and possible selves, which is an important understanding for me to have as an educator. Using PAR allowed me to examine VFC and myself while I was deeply involved in the program, and it pushed me to think about the participants and what I could do to help them learn and grow during the program.

Setting the Scene: Life in Chester, Pennsylvania

The city of Chester is the oldest city in the state of Pennsylvania, with a rich heritage of industrial success. In the later part of the twentieth century, however, the community suffered from a major economic decline. When the city’s largest companies, the shipyards, closed in the 1980s, the unemployment rate soared. In addition to the departure of the shipyards, aircraft engine factories, slaughterhouses, textile mills, and Ford Motor Company also left the area in a relatively short

amount of time (Cynthia Jetter, Fact Sheet, March 2008). This left the city of Chester with very few job opportunities or resources that might attract business from the greater Philadelphia region.

Today Chester is still suffering of the effects of this economic deterioration. In 2000, with an unemployment rate of the city more than three times as large as the national rate, 17% versus 5% respectively, and $\frac{1}{3}$ of all adults unemployed, the city was in desperate needs of jobs. Although several new venues have provided some employment opportunities since then, it is likely that the 2010 Census will reveal even higher rates in Chester as they reflect the national decline in employment. Furthermore, the area is impoverished. According to the 2000 Census, the median household income in Chester was \$25,703, or roughly half of the \$50,092 median household income for the entirety of Delaware County. Additionally, about 25% of the Chester community lived below the poverty level, as compared to 7.8% for the county and 9.2% for the nation (2000 Census).

The schools in Chester reflect the life of poverty in the city. The small percentage of students in the Chester-Upland school district with scores labeled as “advanced” on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment Test is startling. In eighth grade only 2.4% of students were “advanced” in math and only 10.6% reached that highest level in reading in 2007. This is compared to the statewide scores of 40.3% in math and 45.7% in reading. Even more unsettling are the scores in eleventh grade. Chester-Upland has 0.0% of its students “advanced” in math and only 0.9% were “advanced” in reading. Statewide scores also dropped to 24.2% in math and 28.9% in reading (PA Dept. of Education website), but the fact that less than 1% of Chester-Upland high school juniors reach the highest state ranking in either math or reading is alarming.

In addition, it is not just that Chester-Upland students are not reaching the highest level of “advanced” on the tests. Again, in 2007, in eighth grade 85% of the students were below proficient in math and 65% were below proficient in reading. For comparison, only 32% of eighth graders across the state were failing in math and 25% for reading. By junior year, 97% of Chester-Upland

students were failing in math and 90.1% were below proficient in reading. In contrast, the figures for scores below proficient in math and reading statewide were 46% and 35% respectively (PA Dept. of Education website). The Chester-Upland school district is not a place to prepare students for college since it cannot even adequately prepare students for the state tests.

With such a troubling situation a method for uplifting the young people of Chester is desperately needed. As of 2004, the Chester-Upland school district was \$14 million in debt, so looking to the district for extensive support and help at this time is not likely to be depended on for help and support. Yet, with almost 30% of the population being 18 years and under (2000 Census), a failing school district, constant concerns about violence, and few opportunities for personal economic development, the young people in Chester need community organizations to help them grow into constructive citizens. They need positive role models and support systems. With the resources, encouragement, and technical skills they need to make positive decisions, these youth can productively collaborate as valued community members, working to overcome today's challenges to create a better future for Chester.

The Chester community also knows that it has stories to tell. When I met with youth in Chester, they were more than willing to share their memories and narratives, all too comfortable talking about the gangs, bullying, and violence that permeate their lives. Yet, the teens also told me how they wanted to share those stories with a broader audience, voicing not only these memories, but also their fears, concerns, problems, and solutions. The youth of Chester know they have messages to share, and they are more than ready to tell those stories. Chester's teens also recognize that they need a medium to share those stories. They know that television, film, radio, music, and the media that surrounds those modes of communication are a key way to connect with people their age. These teens see the power that film and radio have over today's society and want to use it to tell their stories. Furthermore, they recognize that the mainstream media ignores or inadequately

represents their stories. One young person said, “Only the negative stuff gets attention,” when talking about Chester. Between their narratives, their existing knowledge of the holes in mass media, and their understanding of the impact of film and radio, these teens know that they need a way to share their stories through powerful mediums.

Cast & Crew: Profiles of the People Who Made VFC Possible

Before describing the details and intricacies of each participant’s development and the changes in the VFC program as a whole, it is important to know and understand who is who for this story. Each participant played a vital role in the Summer Institute, influencing his or her peers and contributing to, or at times hindering, the production of *Through Our Eyes*. The volunteers who came to help with the program were also incredibly important as they worked with the teens, gave advice, solved problems, and supported the program. Although each individual is presented separately, this group, the cast and crew, worked together for the sake of the production, a true team of individuals.

Angel, participant

Angel’s black bangs and straight hair easily framed her smiling face. Her stylish shorts, fashionable t-shirts, and trendy sandals reflected both her style and her athletic ability as short basketball player. Angel was clearly smart and hard working, but there were times when her 15-year-old immaturity shone through, especially when she interacted with her peers. Known for always laughing, Angel knew how to have fun and keep the group smiling, while still being able to get down to work when it was necessary. Although she joined the program one day late, coming in as an alternate, she joined the group without any issues and contributed greatly throughout the summer. She got along with almost everyone, except for when she got annoyed with Olivia, the youngest member of the program. Angel and Sean became especially close, apparently almost dating towards the end of the program, and Angel also maintained her friendship with her older sister Faith and old family friend Michelle. She was always ready to laugh and able to buckle down for a deadline.

Anthony (a.k.a. Tony), participant

Anthony's black square glasses were a stark contrast to the bright white teeth that flashed with his frequent smiles and the shining crystal earrings that graced both of his ears. At 15, Tony was almost always laughing, at his own jokes or anything random, and his thin frame was clearly that of a runner. He had run track for a while and was starting his first cross country season at the end of the summer. Tony thrived off of attention, especially any attention from the girls in the program, and even though his flirting techniques did not work with them, Tony was still able to turn on the charm with adults. He knew how to throw out compliments and niceties to get on the good side of important adults. He worked hard at things that interested him but was not as dedicated to other activities. Although Tony was not always involved and hard working throughout the program, the summer seemed to help him gain experience and find new, helpful role models in his community.

Ashley, participant

Ashley looked much older than her 14-year-old self. Her long, dark braids were often pulled back into a ponytail, and her tall, confident body presented someone who looked to be at least two years older. Her flip-flops continued her comfortable style of jeans or shorts and styled t-shirts. Yet, most distinctively, Ashley's face was expressive, easily showing her excitement, boredom, and exasperation. As confident as Ashley seemed at the start of the summer, by the end of the program, she seemed to be more mature and even more self-confident. She built strong connections with the other students in the program, but she also found mentors at her internship and began to recognize her role as a leader in both her family and her community.

Chris, participant

Chris' thin body was clearly that of a runner, tall and slender, making it easier to run for miles on end. His goatee helped him to look like the 17-year-old high school senior he was, and his socks and sandals combination was frequent. His jeans and v-neck t-shirts from stores like

Aeropostale and American Eagle hinted at his background at his private, college-prep school, while his colorful backpack never left his side. Chris was quick to smile and his comments were always soaked with sarcasm, which strained his relationships with some of the other students. For Chris, the summer was an opportunity for experiences. He did what was expected of him, got his work done, and participated, but did not seem invested in the project. He interned with a local newspaper, had an article published, and learned how to use film equipment, but Chris seemed to leave the program without much beyond the technical tools and experiences he gained.

Faith, participant

Faith's big hoop earrings always complimented her outfit, working coordinating colors with whatever cute shirt or dress framed her thin body. Her big, brown eyes and rare smile often gave off the sense that she was a bored 16 year-old, but she was a hard-working leader throughout the summer. For Faith, the summer helped her to learn more about a career in journalism, but it also taught her about working with other people and having fun. For the eldest sister of four younger siblings, including Angel, the program seemed to help Faith move forward in her own goals while learning how to relax. Starting out as a clear leader, always focused and determined to get her work done, Faith was visibly more comfortable mixing work and pleasure by the end of the summer.

Jamal, participant

Jamal's tall body was covered in his own favorite t-shirts, jeans, shorts, and the occasional hooded sweatshirt. He was clearly the oldest student, with his slight facial hair surrounding the smile that he flashed frequently as one of the group's clowns. His iPod was always within reach, if not in his ears, and his musical talents of making and mixing beats was known throughout the group. As the only high school graduate in the program, Jamal was more developed in his thought processes than many of the other students. He had already thought about community change and issues with the music industry, but by the end of the summer, he still seemed to get something from the

program. For Jamal, his internships were an important part of his experience in the program, helping him to build both relationships and plans for the future. Like many of the other students, he gained a lot from his interactions with others and used those experiences to help him grow up even more.

Madison, participant

Madison's big, white smile came easily, playing off her brown eyes to light up her face. Her hair went from long, light brown braids, to a short face frame, to even shorter, dark red hair by the end of the summer, and her earrings always highlighted her colorful style, even when they were purposely mismatched. Her laugh came about as easily as her smile, and her lighter skinned body exuded a confidence that only 16-year-olds can have. The stepdaughter of the program coordinator, Keith, Madison knew that she had to behave and do well in the program, but also seemed to recognize that she might be able to get away with a few more things than other participants. While she was very hardworking and positive throughout the summer, for Madison, the summer was also very social. She and Ashley got to be very good friends, and Madison seemed to mature and grow in her own confidence as a result of the relationships she formed with her peers.

Michelle, participant

Michelle's short straight hair framed her face and the quiet smile that she often wore. Her styled t-shirts usually matched her tennis shoes, creating a colorful sandwich around her typical jeans. Her tan cloth bag never left her side, while her square-framed glasses only occasionally made an appearance. Michelle was the group's go-to leader. Always responsible, always hard working, and always mature, Michelle was the one to speak to adults outside of the program and lead the rest of the group by example. Although she came in as a mature young woman, she grew up even more through the summer as she learned how to work with other people and become more of a leader when she dealt with peers who were more immature or irresponsible. Michelle's level of maturity, responsibility, and dedication earned her one of the awards similar to a Most Valuable Player award.

Olivia, participant

Olivia carried herself proudly, smiling easily and appearing several years older than her 12-year-old self. Styled t-shirts or tank tops, capri jeans, and flip flops made up her signature outfit this summer, with her hair styles ranging from braided ponytails to short natural crimped hair to bangs with a long straight ponytail. She was the one “exception” to the 14-18 age requirement for the summer portion of VFC. A rising seventh grader, Olivia’s maturity and obvious desire to create positive change in her community shone during her interview, convincing myself and the program coordinator that she would be able to handle the rigors of the Summer Institute. As she told me about how she wanted to work on issues like homelessness and health care, I was too impressed by her to even begin thinking about what issues might arise as a seventh grader tried to work with a group of high school students, the youngest of whom was a rising sophomore.

Sean, participant

Sean was the stereotype of the “popular” boy in the group. A 16-year-old football player with a sly but clean smile, he got attention from the girls, got along with the boys, and was respected by the instructors. His jeans, white t-shirts, and stylish sneakers combined with his studded star earring and goatee to compliment his quiet confidence and slight swagger. Throughout the summer, Sean was one of the few students who worked hard, acted responsibly, and cooperated on a consistent basis. He was the go-to guy for acting advice, and he was able to direct the group while maintaining his friendships and working on the project. Yet Sean was not all business, he was still able to laugh and have fun, dancing during downtime and talking with everyone at lunch. His popularity stayed high throughout the summer, one of very few people to truly get along with everyone, but his humble personality still took over as he received a the second Most Valuable Player at the final celebration.

Keith, program coordinator

Keith was like a teddy bear with an intimidation factor hidden up his sleeve. Tall, strong, African American, and in his late 30s, Keith's face was quick to smile, but it was clear that the same face could turn stern and determined if anyone crossed the line. His mixture of jeans and styled shirts communicated his comfort and security with the group and the community, while his black SUV showed his authority. I met Keith in the spring of 2008 during a grant-writing workshop and we immediately recognized our mutual goals of youth empowerment through media production. I served as Keith's part-time intern in the summer of 2008, working on planning for VFC and writing grants as I got to know him and other leaders in Chester. Invested in the program, Keith was incredibly supportive of my efforts, but also ready to provide criticism and step in as a black male authority figure when needed. Keith is also Madison's stepfather and had worked with some of the teens before their involvement in VFC.

Thomas, volunteer

Twenty years old, white, and a blonde soccer player, Thomas volunteered with the program every day except for the last week of the program. His shorts and t-shirts made him look close in age to the participants, but his authority with the group and presence in the room quickly separated him. My significant other of almost four years at the time, Thomas knew the ins and outs of the program having listened to and supported me as I worked through the process of establishing the program. In addition, Thomas is a math and education major at Moravian College, hoping to be a high school math teacher. His experience working with teens was helpful as he worked to explain ideas, keep participants on track, and deal with teenage drama.

Other Volunteers

I was also fortunate enough to have several other Swarthmore College students volunteer with VFC throughout the summer. Liz was reserved, only speaking with the participants or

volunteers when necessary. With experience in filmmaking and hopes of working with youth media programs, Liz was a great resource of knowledge and information. She volunteered on Mondays and Fridays throughout the summer and led a lesson on media literacy during the first week. Eric and Simon volunteered sporadically. Simon's extensive background in film and Eric's less developed film background and ability to learn quickly helped to guide the teens through the process of filming and editing. They were both eager to engage with the teens, and the participants loved when they came to VFC. Finally, Rob came in every Friday afternoon once he was done at his engineering internship in Philadelphia. Rob's enthusiasm and ability to connect with the participants made him a favorite of the teens. These volunteers helped to make the program work, and since social identities are important in all interactions, it is important to note that most of the volunteers were not African American, like the students with whom we worked. Liz was biracial, of both African American and white backgrounds, but the male volunteers were not African American. Again, although it is important to note the different social identities within the group, I stress the importance of all of these people who all contributed to the story of the first VFC Summer Institute.

The Teaser: Still Rated G

After that first day, I was exhausted. My nervous adrenaline had died out, and I was happy that the first day had gone without any huge problems. Yes, the discussion about media literacy was too long; yes, the teens seemed bored at points; and yes, one kid did not show up, but Angel would join us the next day, completing the group of ten, and the program would improve. I knew that with a cast and crew like I had the program would only get better. The different personalities might be difficult to handle at points, but I was excited to see my brainchild of a project in action. I knew I was in for a ride, but I had no idea how much the group would come together and change each other in six short weeks.

Finding the Chemistry: The Effects of Group Identity and Membership



Madison takes a turn holding Ashley's younger brother at our final celebration.

Key Terms to Remember

- ***group identity***: sense of self that is created and reinforced by participation in and interactions with a particular collection of people
- ***group association***: being known as a member of a group that is known throughout a community
- ***social capital***: personal assets that come in the form of societal symbols like social networks or mastery of different discourses
- ***in-group***: an exclusive collection of individuals who share an identity or interest

Cast Chemistry: Seeds of Friendship

After the traditional icebreakers and name games, the first day of the VFC Summer Institute quickly moved to allow the participants to use the equipment for themselves. With some basic instruction on how to use the microphones, cameras, and tripods, the students were trying things out and videotaping each other. The first project was a small group activity called 30 Second Stories in which each group member had to tell a 30 second story on camera. The groups of three would take turns: one person would be on camera, one on sound duty, and the third telling a story for the camera. Groups counted off, and Ashley, Madison, and Sean were off to work together. Laughter filled the hallway almost immediately as they started filming, Madison's contagiously loud laugh spilling through the doorway. Ashley's decision to talk about Michael Jackson's recent death and her dramatic telling of his importance to our society was accentuated by her own fake tears. This rendition of Ashley's Michael Jackson story sent Madison into a fit of laughter, and the camera shook from her giggles through the next take of the scene. As Sean's silent laughter bobbed the microphone in and out of the scene, I had a feeling this was the start of something good, a nice,

strong chemistry between group members who were able to make each other laugh from the first moment they met.

On and Off the Set: The Importance of the Group

The work of the VFC Summer Institute is naturally set up to encourage group formation and identity. Very little work was done individually, with most activities involving at least three people, if not more. The style of the program set it up for a sense of in-group identity to form within the group, encouraging the participants to see themselves as a cohesive unit, one that stands out within their own community. In light of all of this emphasis on group work, it is particularly important to examine the role of group identity and membership among the VFC participants.

In general, the program as a whole was able to become a group, one that was identified in the community as a group of “good kids.” However, there was a core group within the program of individuals who were all roughly the same age and shared similar friends or interests. Although some participants did not easily fit in to this core group, all of the teens still identified with the group and seemed to gain something out of being part of the group. As for the core group, membership appeared to translate into friendships during and outside of the program. Indeed, membership in the VFC group generally provided participants with new opportunities to develop social capital in the forms of in-group protection, positive group association, and positive peer pressure. However, it also caused some individuals who were not in the core group to feel left out, creating some issues for both the individuals and the group to overcome.

Creating Chemistry: Group Formation in VFC

In order to effectively analyze the group dynamics with the VFC Summer Institute, it is first important to understand how the groups were created and how they evolved within the program. As mentioned before, VFC was set up to encourage and foster group work. The process of group formation and maintenance started, in part, from this goal and idea of the program itself. It was

further influenced by previous relationships between participants. Then, throughout the summer, the group evolved as new relationships emerged. Nonetheless, it is important to both note and explore the self-selecting nature of the group involved, given that participants had to apply and be accepted to the program.

Program Supports for Group Formation

The activities and pedagogy that created the VFC Summer Institute inherently encouraged participants to group themselves. From the very beginning, VFC participants were working in groups on small video projects. They had to learn to work through group differences, identify strengths of the group, assign jobs, and work together to complete their assignments. From small projects to get a handle on equipment to script writing to rehearsing, filming, and editing, everything happened in a group format. The activities were oriented towards working with different groups of people, sometimes with random groups and other times with assigned groups to allow participants to work with new people or focus on a particular scene of the film.

More importantly, there were ways for the youth to take responsibility for the groupings. First, the teens unanimously decided to create one final project as an entire group, rather than splitting into two groups as I had originally suggested. This decision was made at the end of the first week of the program, showing that the group had already reached some level of trust and comfort with one another and that they wanted to work together. The structure of the program worked to support and encourage this kind of group initiative, focusing on engaging all the teens and providing them all with opportunities to lead. By assigning each student two scenes to direct and giving them responsibility for organizing and setting up the rest of the group for that particular scene, the participants were able to see and understand how they could work as both part of a group and a leader of a group. These opportunities to lead the group allowed for students to better understand how to work with one another and how to behave and lead for the group to work efficiently. Even

though some students took on leadership roles easily and others failed to effectively lead their group, the numerous opportunities for group work appeared to play a role in the unanimous feeling that they were all a part of the process. This became clear when the students all eagerly pulled their seats to the front of the room at the final celebration, waiting and hushing the crowd as they sat together to watch their entire film for the first time (Field Notes, 18 August 2009). That moment showed that they had all put something into the project; they were one group that had successfully accomplished a goal, and it was something of which they were extremely proud.

There was one other major piece of the VFC program that worked to encourage group formation: group discussions. From the start of the program, the teens experienced group discussions as well as activities. On the first day of the Summer Institute, we had a long discussion about media literacy as the teens analyzed the “P.I.M.P” music video from 50 Cent (Field Notes, 6 July 2009). This discussion set the stage for students to understand that this was a place where the entire group would listen to their thoughts and opinions. At the end of the first week, we had another group discussion, but this one focused on a program reflection. I asked the students for honest feedback about the first week, looking for suggestions for the future as well as strengths from our time together, and they were honest (Field Notes, 10 July 2009). The discussion helped me to improve in the weeks to follow, and also showed the teens that they would be listened to in the program.

These kinds of discussions at the start of the program would help later on as issues built up within the group. We had one group conversation in which Olivia wanted to speak to the group about feeling rejected and disrespected by the rest of the group, which went over fairly well as the older participants listened and some started to change their attitudes and actions as a result. In addition, about halfway through the program, on a hot day of filming, we had an incident in which Chris and Jamal verbally attacked each other, almost leading to a physical confrontation, which Sean

and Tony maturely broke up. Afterwards, Keith, my African American program coordinator, led another group discussion. During that conversation people laid a lot out on the table. Keith touched on racial stereotypes and the role of the group in the Chester community. People shared their issues with other participants, which had built up as people either became too cocky or too lazy to hold up their portion of the group project. Finally, Olivia also shared some of her personal hopes for the program, saying that she looked up to both Sean and Tony like older brothers and that Keith was truly a role model for her (Field Notes, 29 July 2009). These kinds of group conversations helped to reaffirm the sense of group membership held by the teens since their shared experiences and knowledge of one another linked them together.

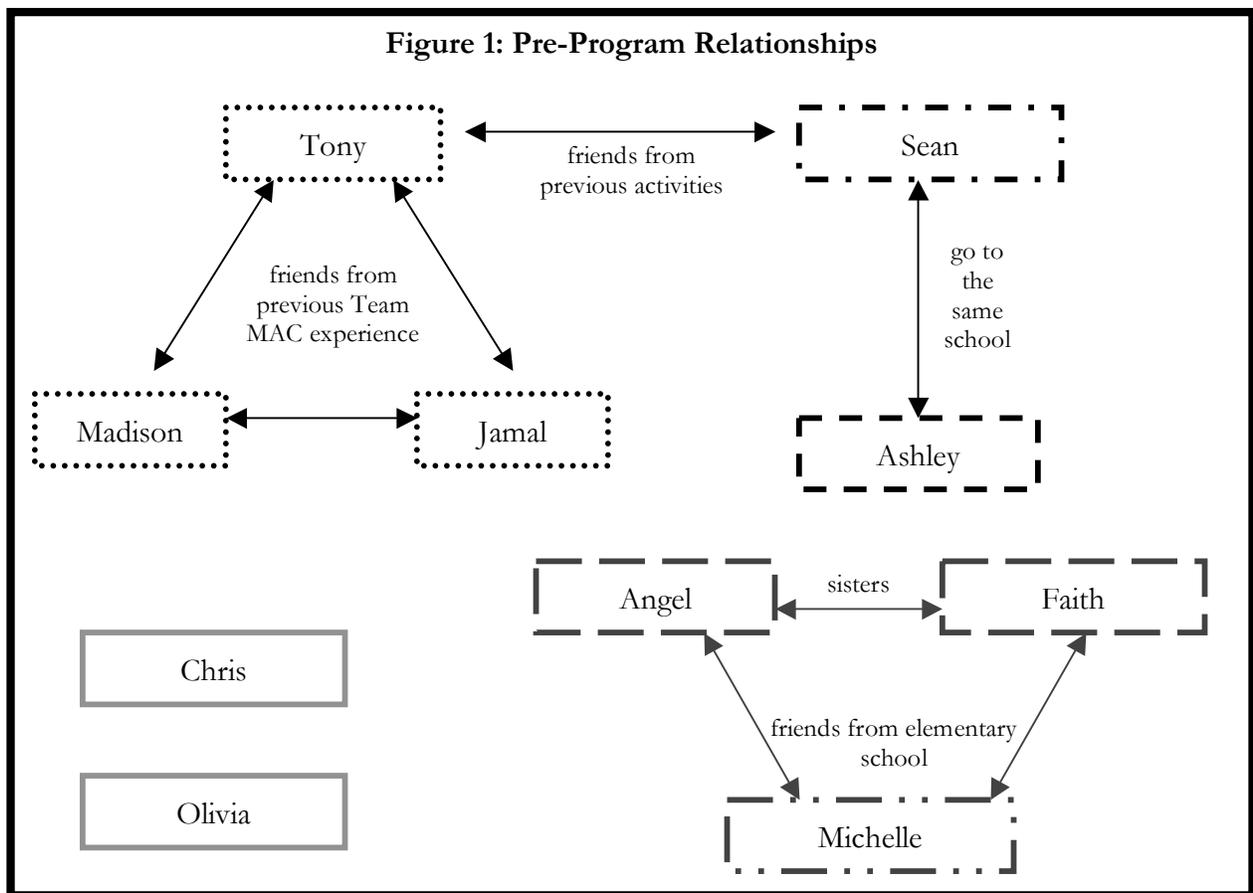
By consciously deciding that the program would involve extensive group work, steps were taken to ensure that participants felt as if they were part of community. From the basic projects, group assignments, and icebreakers to the honest group discussions held throughout the summer, the VFC program was designed to foster a sense of group identity among its participants. The participants knew they had to work together for the project to be a success, and they put effort into accomplishing that goal. The activities and discussions during the program linked participants together, establishing a sense of group membership and identity between them all.

Old and New Relationships

The existing and changing relationships within the group influenced the program-provided opportunities for group development over the summer. On the one hand, prior friendships gave some group members a sense of security on the first day because they knew they already had a close friend in the group. On the other hand, some individuals were new to the group, and they came in facing some pre-established bonds between certain group members. Nonetheless, over the course of the summer in which these ten teens spent seven hours a day together for six weeks, new relationships also developed. The new friendships did not seem to inhibit or alter previous

relationships. Instead they were new ways for all of the participants to interact as they all developed new friendships. These interactions and relationships also played an important role in the formation of general group membership and core group membership within the program.

First, it is important to examine the pre-existing relationships within the program because they influenced the first interactions in the group. At the start, there were several sets of pre-established connections between the students, and two of the students were not connected to anyone in the program. These pre-program relationships and connections are illustrated in Figure 1.



As seen in Figure 1, Tony, Madison, and Jamal had been involved in Team MAC activities before and already knew each other as a result of those experiences. Since the VFC program was sponsored in part by Team Making A Change (MAC), it was not surprising that several of the participants already knew each other. In addition, Tony knew Sean from other activities or mutual friends. Sean,

in turn, attends the same high school as Ashley. Although they recognized each other, they were not good friends before the program started. Faith and Angel are sisters. Faith is the oldest and Angel is the second oldest of their five siblings. The two of them had gone to elementary school with Michelle, before going their separate ways for the rest of their education. Finally, Chris and Olivia had no existing relationships when they started the program.

The pre-program relationships were clearly illustrated during the first few days of the program (Field Notes, 6 July 2009), and they had some clear effects on the group. First, as soon as Tony walked in the room, he made it clear that he already knew people. He and Jamal arrived together, having walked together from their homes, which were about six blocks apart. When Madison arrived, Tony got up to welcome her and give her a hug, and she sat down to join Tony and Jamal in front of the air-conditioning. With Sean, Tony excitedly slapped hands, and the two boys quickly started laughing about something that Tony said. Similarly, when Michelle and Faith arrived on the first day, they pulled their desks together, talking rapidly about mutual friends and their families. This relationship helped Angel when she joined the program next day, filling a spot for a student who never showed up for the program. Indeed, on her first day, Angel was able to come in and join her sister and close family friend, easing her late addition to the group, and it would soon be forgotten that Angel had missed that first day with the group. On the other hand, some of the participants were left out at the beginning. Although Ashley went to the same school as Sean, they were in different class years and were not friends before the program. Ashley, Chris, and Olivia were left essentially alone for the first day of the program because they did not have any of the strong, pre-existing relationships that their peers had with other group members.

Although the pre-program relationships played an important role in the first few days of the program, new relationships quickly formed among the group members. With all the group work and opportunities for interaction, Chris soon became friends with Sean. Chris was also friendly with the

other two boys and spent time befriending and flirting with Faith, Angel, and Michelle (Field Notes, 10 July 2009). Although Ashley remained relatively quiet and reserved for the first week, by the end of the second week, she, Madison, and Jamal had formed a new sort of group, sharing stories and iPods throughout their breaks (Field Notes, 17 July 2009). Tony, Sean, Chris, Michelle, Faith, and Angel became a new group, laughing and playfully yelling at each other during lunch (Field Notes, 17 July 2009). In addition, by the middle of the summer, it was clear that Sean and Angel had a special relationship as rumors flew about boyfriend-girlfriend status (Field Notes, 24 July 2009). Although they each explained that they were never “official” during the post-program interviews, it was clear throughout the summer that the two were, at the very least, close friends.

However, in the midst of this, Olivia continued to be left out. Significantly younger than the rest of the group, she tried to join in the conversations, talking about going to parties and going out with friends, but her attempts to join were rejected by the older participants. They often laughed at her or questioned her authority on matters like parties (Field Notes, 10 July 2009). This kind of rejection was a struggle for Olivia throughout the summer, which caused tension among the group as a whole. During the second week, Olivia latched on to the individuals who had been kind to her in the first week, trying to stick close to Madison, Ashley, and Sean, but this turned some people, like Madison, off, causing them to be annoyed with Olivia as well (Field Notes, 17 July 2009). Throughout the summer, Olivia continued to ask for my support, wanting me to talk to the rest of the group about respecting her and working with her or looking for my friendship during lunches (Field Notes, 24 July 2009). This rejection from the group was a struggle for Olivia, and it illustrated one of the issues she had to overcome as a result of being outside the core group.

All of the relationships, new and old, shifted throughout the summer, but there was a sense of clear group membership by being a part of the program. Through working together, fundraising for a shared cause, and spending every day together for a summer, the teens did come to identify

with the group. This came through in comments about being a group of positive youth in the city (Field Notes, 29 July 2009 & 6 August 2009). In addition, many of the post-program interviews indicated that some group members wanted to stay together and spent time talking, text messaging, or hanging out even after the program had ended. The combination of new and old relationships helped to forge this new group identity, along with the many opportunities for structured group involvement in the daily activities of the program.

Self-Selection

Before moving forward in the discussion of group membership and identity among program participants, it is important to note the self-selecting nature of the group, which likely contributed to the nature of the group formation. There were several main factors that likely affected the student participation in and dedication to the VFC program, which relate back to self-selection. First, students had to apply to and be accepted into the program. The application process involved a written application as well as an interview, both of which asked students to think about their reasons for joining the program as well as what they hoped to gain from the program. The fact that the participants applied, were interviewed, and were selected indicates that they were more likely to be invested in the program. In addition, all the students had to participate in another pre-program interview after being selected as part of the research portion of the program. One young man who was selected for the program, but was dropped after the first day failed to attend his pre-program research interview and also failed to show up on the first day of the program. This further illustrates that by investing time in the program before it started, the students were demonstrating their dedication to the program, which probably made them more likely to participate in the group interactions over the summer.

In addition, the students who participated all had strong mentors in their life who encouraged them to apply to and participate in the program. For most students, their parents served

as a motivating factor because parents drove them to interviews, helped with applications, and dedicated time to family orientation meetings. However, not all participants had parents as their role models. Jamal, for example, looked up to Keith as a mentor, and Keith's involvement in the program and encouragement to continue working in the program helped Jamal to apply and engage with the program. These salient others likely played an important role in the group formation because they encouraged the participants to try new things, work through problems, and remain an active member of the group.

Furthermore, the facts that most participants had supportive homes and had applied to the program indicate another factor of their self-selection. Most of the participants were good students, often well behaved and all clearly intelligent. Several of them were proficient in multiple discourses, easily able to switch from the discourse appropriate for a black community to that of the white majority in society. These kinds of pre-existing social capital, which the students brought in, further helped with group formation because many of the students shared similar backgrounds and were ready to engage with those who shared their ideas and experiences. Having a group made up of strong students who wanted to succeed facilitated organic group formation because the individuals were open and ready to be friends.

Finally, in hopes of allowing all potential adolescents to join the program, students were given a stipend upon full completion of the program. With good attendance and participation in the Summer Institute, each teen was given a stipend of \$500 at the end of the summer. Although most students acknowledged that the program was of value to them without the stipend, many did see the money as a motivating factor for their good behavior and participation. All of these factors combined to create self-selecting group in the program. The participants had motivation to participate and engage with each other because they had gone through a process to get to that point, were supported by salient others, and were getting paid for it. These factors are important because

they likely influenced the participation of many students and motivated the participants to engage with the material and with one another.

Hollywood Connections: Effects of Group Membership

Although not all of the participants were a part of the core group within the program itself, they all became known as active members of a group of talented, positive youth in the Chester community. Their membership in this group provided all participants with opportunities to develop new forms of social capital. By establishing themselves as a group, there was a distinct element of in-group identification amongst members and the wider community. For one, the in-group identification led to a sort of in-group protection in which participants were ready and willing to defend their fellow group members. In addition, participants changed and developed through positive group association because they came to understand their role within the community. Positive peer pressure within the group also pushed participants to grow as their fellow peers influenced them through comparison to salient others and through direct comments about behavior and work ethic. Finally, for some participants, their group membership was not as strong, which caused some feelings of rejection. Specifically, in the case of Olivia, she lost confidence over the summer and had to grow as an individual because she was not accepted as part of the core group within the program.

In-Group Protection

Over the course of the Summer Institute, the participants developed relationships, which evolved into a sense of in-group identity. They recognized themselves as members of this program and that was something that united them. This feeling was created and maintained, in part, by actions of the program coordinators. Both Keith and I stressed the important role the students played in their community, telling them they were the best, serving as representatives of their neighborhoods and dedicating themselves to be positive role models for others. As a result, the

teens built up this sense of group identity as the VFC kids, which separated them from their friends who were not involved in the program. In creating this group identity, a type of in-group protection also developed because students were willing to defend and look after their fellow group members.

One of the most vivid examples of this new form of social capital, in-group protection, occurred during our field trip to Philadelphia. At the end of our long day in the city, we were walking through downtown to catch the train when Sean's protection for his group mates kicked in. During the walk to Suburban Station, three teenage boys ended up following our group for about two blocks and talking to the girls. The Philadelphia boys said things like, "You're the most beautiful thing to ever walk past that McDonalds," because they left a McDonalds that we passed on the way in order to talk to the girls. The girls were teenagers, clearly somewhat flattered and liking the attention, but also shocked by the terrible attempts at pick-up lines and the persistence of the boys. On the other hand, the boys in the program got a bit angrier as it was happening. Jamal and Tony started walking faster, saying that the Philly boys must be crazy to keep following. Conversely, Sean walked with the girls for a while, and he then walked with me for a bit as well. As we walked together, he told me that if any of the Philly boys had laid one finger on any of the girls in the program, he would have gone off in anger (Field Notes, 24 July 2009). Sean had a strong sense of need to protect the girls in the program, and he was ready and willing to do so.

This is a vivid example of the in-group protection that evolved throughout the summer. Sean made several decisions that indicated his desire and need to protect the girls in the group. First, he stayed and walked with girls for a period of time, indicating that he wanted to be in the immediate area in case anything happened to the girls. Second, he moved to walk with me. This was just after one of the boys had started to say something to me, and it showed that Sean felt a need to protect me as well. Finally, in our conversation, Sean shared that he was ready to "go off" if any of the Philadelphia boys tried to do anything inappropriate. This showed his desire to protect in several

ways. For one, he was expressing his willingness to protect. Yet, in addition, he was sharing those thoughts and concerns with an authority figure. Since I was the person in charge, Sean recognized that I was someone to tell about his thoughts, which further indicated his desire to protect because he wanted to be sure that he would have the appropriate kinds of support from an authority if he were to take action. All in all, Sean's actions and decisions showed that he was adhering to the standard of in-group protection that had been established within the group because he was ready to protect his fellow group mates against an external threat.

Although few other examples were as vivid as Sean's actions in Philadelphia, the group did show signs of providing and understanding this new form of social capital they had developed amongst themselves. Also during our field trip to Philadelphia and throughout the filming process, participants demonstrated this protection. Girls would link arms as they walked throughout the city of Philadelphia and the neighborhoods of Chester. There was also a common sense of verbal support and protection throughout the process. The teens would jump in to support each other or elaborate on ideas when presenting ideas and information to a group like the other media organizations we met in Philadelphia. These actions demonstrated both a sense of protection from the group as well as the bonds of friendship that had sparked over the summer. In all of the group's interactions, it was clear that the members served as new sources of social capital because of the support and protection they offered to their fellow members, providing new friends and peers who would defend the individuals and his or her actions.

Positive Group Association

As mentioned before, the VFC group began to establish itself within the community. Keith set up several opportunities for the group to work at citywide events, helping to set the group up as a collection of positive youth working for change in the city. By arranging meetings between the participants and several local community leaders, Keith introduced the group to key leaders as a set

of potential role models for other teens in the area. In addition, Keith helped the participants to organize a fundraising event to help promote positive activities for Chester youth. The fundraising opportunity forced the VFC participants to work together as they established themselves as a group working for positive change in the city. They purchased t-shirts to serve as “walking resource guides” for teens, and everyone wore them to a citywide concert in August, which further established the group as a cohesive and positive unit. These different experiences established the VFC participants as a group that was positively associated with new opportunities for youth in the city of Chester.

Although not all of the participants fully accepted their role as young leaders in the city, Michelle was deeply affected by the positive group association. In one particular incident, Michelle came to understand that she was representing a group and she changed her behavior as a result. The incident happened at the citywide teen party, which was also our first filming event. Michelle later explained what happened to the rest of the group during a discussion about the party and what could have improved. She said that Keith had pulled her aside and asked her not to dance so provocatively at a party that was run by the City of Chester. Michelle said that she had not thought she was doing anything wrong; she was simply dancing with a boy at the party. However, she told the group that after Keith talked to her, she actually stopped to think about the messages she was sending and the image she was presenting. After she thought about it all, she decided to stop dancing like that because she felt that it was not the way for her to present herself as a young leader in the community (Field Notes, 31 July 2009).

Again, this particular incident is one clear illustration of how the positive group association can affect the teens’ decisions. Once Michelle recognized that she was representing more than just a teenager having fun, she made a change in her actions. By understanding that she was connected to a group of young, positive leaders in the community, Michelle came to see that her group association

had to be maintained in a positive manner. She had something to prove to the community, part of which was showing that teens could have fun without dancing inappropriately. By changing her actions, Michelle showed both personal growth and one of the typical effects of this kind of positive group association: behaving according to the outside expectations for a role. Adults, like Keith, who are salient others and mentors, expected Michelle to represent a good, positive youth leader, and she was willing to change to meet those expectations.

For Michelle and other participants this positive group association was helpful. In many cases, like Michelle's, their association with VFC and leaders like Keith forced them to make more mature decisions and represent their ideas in a professional manner. After the confrontation between Jamal and Chris, Keith came in to lead a discussion about the incident. During the discussion, Keith mentioned his disappointment in the group, saying that he expected better from them because they were supposed to represent the good kids in Chester. The group responded well to this mention of the positive group association. They put all their concerns about the group out, sharing worries about the film, disappointment in their peers, appreciation for good decisions, and hopes for the future of their work together (Field Notes, 29 July 2009). This, in turn, helped the group to recognize their role in the community, and some members started to see that their decisions affect both themselves and their communities because of their position as a role model. The group's general understanding of their positive association and the consequences of it helped most members to mature and step up as leaders in the community.

Positive Peer Pressure

In addition to this positive group association, the other group members also exerted immediate pressure on the other participants to behave well and make good decisions. Since the teens understood that they needed each other in order for their project to succeed, and they also all experienced the positive group association, they knew what was needed from one another.

Furthermore, they had built up trust between one another through their in-group identity and protection, and that trust allowed them to be honest with one another, calling each other out if they were not on task and telling one another when they needed to fix something. This combination of trust, project deadlines, and dreams of success fueled the positive peer pressure within the group, which reinforced the group members' roles as salient others in shaping each other's behaviors.

One clear example of the positive peer pressure came from Ashley when the group was editing the film at Swarthmore in early August. People came back from lunch, and lots of participants were yelling and arguing about something. Ashley had come back earlier, wanting to continue editing her scene, and she sat with her headphones on, clicking away as the rowdy group entered the room. At one point, Ashley sarcastically yelled to the group, "Come on guys! We're supposed to be voices for change! Why are we always arguing?!" Her comment made herself and the rest of the group laugh and relax, ending the previous argument with her sarcasm, but it still showed that something had clicked for Ashley. Even though she said it sarcastically, she did know that the group members should be role models, figuring out ways to work things out. The group settled down to editing and got back on track after laughing with Ashley, but it was a clear instance in which positive peer pressure helped the group to refocus and be productive.

Throughout the summer, different individuals would step up to exert some positive peer pressure on the group. Faith, Michelle, and Sean would work to focus their peers during filming, or they would be the ones to start setting up cameras and microphones, leading by example. Jamal and Angel took turns breaking up tension with laughter and jokes, reminding their peers that they were there to have fun, too. This helped to ease tension and reorient the group, allowing them to see that good role models and leaders are able to relax and have fun while still being productive. Olivia also played an important role as she forced her peers to think about how they were treating her.

Throughout her discussions and interactions with the group, Olivia made everyone else think about

how they showed respect and what they could do to improve relationships within the group.

Although it was a different kind of peer pressure, Olivia's demands to be treated with respect and as an equal team member helped the group to recognize ways in which they would improve as leaders.

All of the participants helped the group by exerting positive peer pressure at one point or another, and these instances helped the members to learn and grow as leaders.

Effects on Non-Core Group Members

Although there were many positive effects of the group identity and membership among the VFC participants, some members were not completely accepted by the core group within the program, and that rejection had different effects on different people. Jamal and Olivia were the two students not directly involved in the core group of the program, which may have been because they were the two extremes in ages, so they did not fit easily with the in-group in terms of age. Jamal, the oldest in VFC, had finished high school, was preparing for his first semester of college, and seemed ready to be on his own. For him, not being in the core group gave him time to listen to his music, and he was also still friendly with Tony, Sean, Angel, Madison, and Ashley. For Jamal, not always being involved in the activities of the core group was no big deal; it simply meant that he could go on to his own activity. Olivia, on the other hand, was the youngest, and she desperately wanted to be part of the group and did a lot to try to be accepted. Although she tried to present an in-group identity and be a part of the older crew, that identity was never affirmed by her salient others. The peers in the group rejected her identity, causing her to become part of the out-group. In Olivia's case, her rejection from the group left her isolated and lacking confidence. It was an effect that she had to work through over the course of the summer, but it ultimately seemed to help her grow as a young woman.

In her post-program interview, Olivia expressed a lot of feelings of isolation and self-doubt, but also explained how she learned from them. She said, "I had to exclude myself so I wasn't

annoying,” at the beginning of the program (Olivia, Post-Program Interview, 19 August 2009). This comment showed her loneliness and recognition of how other students saw her as the tag-along little sister who tried to fit in with them. Several of Olivia’s post-program interview comments as well as her behavior throughout the summer indicated that she felt alone and left out of the group. For example, throughout my field notes I note how Olivia tried to engage with other students in the first week, but seemed more frustrated and angry in the second week. Then she moved through phases of being friendly with the instructors and me or being quiet and withdrawn from everyone in the program. In addition, in her post-program interview, Olivia said, the other students “judged age before personality,” and that if she could start the program over again, she would have kept her age a secret. Furthermore, she said, “People had doubted me before, but I lost confidence...[and I] gained it back by learning from it” (Olivia, Post-Program Interview, 19 August 2009). She acknowledged that she felt alone, which affected her own confidence level. However, she also said that she learned from the experience and that she is using it to help her in the future when she works with other people. She said that she was more confident at the end of the program because she was treated badly and now knew how to overcome it. The effects of not being a core group member changed Olivia’s personality. At the start of the summer she was a confident, outspoken 12-year-old, but throughout the program she became more quiet and withdrawn. Nonetheless, by the time of the final celebration, she seemed to be moving back towards her old confident self.

Olivia’s reaction to her non-core group status may not be typical. As noted before, Jamal responded to his non-core group status in a very different way because of his different social identities, relationships, and the overall context of his situation. Nonetheless, in Olivia’s case, it is clear that there are some negative consequences of forming a tight-knit group when not everyone is a part of that group. Her feelings of loneliness and rejection negatively affected her own self-confidence and her participation in the group as she became more withdrawn. Although Olivia was

able to overcome these feelings and regain her confidence, this situation may not always result in such positive outcomes. Without strong parent support or salient others, a child that is left out and rejected may completely shut down and lose all confidence. Nonetheless, Olivia's case shows hope that feeling of rejection can be overcome with the help of positive, helpful salient others who listen and support the individuals.

Although they are important to note, the effects of non-core group membership require further research. The cases of Olivia and Jamal may not be typical and are likely highly dependent upon the individual's social identities and salient others. Nonetheless, at the very least, the effects of grouping within the program are necessary to note because the within-group factions play a key role in the development of young people. The crucial aspects of group membership are not simply found in the perceptions of that the community holds about the VFC participants as a group nor the familial sense of protection offered within the group. These factors are important, but the relationships and dynamics within the group are also principal features of group membership, and they must be investigated further in order to understand group identity more fully.

Where Are They Now? : Future Research

Group membership and group identity play important roles in the lives of adolescents as they look to find new peer groups with which to associate and join. Within the context of the VFC Summer Institute, a group identity did emerge because of program activities and support as well as the shared interests and goals of the individuals involved. Although pre-program relationships were important to many students at the start of the program, new relationships developed and helped to foster the new sense of group identity among the participants. Many of the participants reaped positive gains in social capital as a result of their membership in the VFC group. With a new sense of in-group protection, students developed new support systems. In addition, their positive group association and positive peer pressure helped participants to make good decisions and grow as

young leaders of their communities. However, the within-group dynamics left some students out of the main group, and those feelings of rejection and isolation negatively affected individual self-esteem and group interaction.

As mentioned before, further research is still needed on this topic. The negative effects of in-group discrimination must be examined in more detail in order to fully understand how rejection can affect individuals. In addition, more research is needed to look at the lasting effects of the program. Although the in-group protection, positive group association, and positive peer pressure were strong and important influences during the program, the connections may have faded out as the daily interactions provided by the program stopped. In their post-program interviews about a week after the end of the program, several students mentioned that they still talk to other participants and try to hang out on together on the weekends. However, more research is needed to figure out how those relationships changed once students went back to their separate schools and did not have the program activities to unite them any longer. In short, future research must examine the lasting effects of one summer's group membership and work to understand the reach of the connections that developed over the course of six weeks.

Cast Chemistry: Bloopers

The bloopers in the film tell it all. They show the cast's chemistry at its high points. With Jamal wearing one of my coats that was much too small for him, Sean, Olivia, and Jamal dancing in the editing room, and other ridiculous moments of laughter, the group membership within the program could not be more vividly illustrated than in the bloopers of the film. The same laughter of Ashley and Madison that filled the hallways on the first day of the program frequently erupted during the bloopers and credits of the film. The two of them worked together in selecting bloopers, laughing as they remembered the days of their freak-outs, boogie checks, and scenes in the

bathroom. It is in the bloopers that the group membership and cast chemistry will be forever captured, lasting memories of the summer of 2009.

Creating Characters: Possible Selves in Voices for Change



Sean and Tony set up a camera on one of the final days of filming.

Key Terms to Remember

- *possible selves*: ideas of self in the future, which can be positive or negative
- *salient others*: people who are important enough to influence one's plans and decisions in life
- *the VFC internship program*: a portion of the VFC Summer Institute where participants spent two afternoons a week working with a local business or organization
 - internships were in journalism, media, communications, or graphic design
 - participants were placed with intern hosts based on their interests as described in their application interview and they went in pairs to their internships

Learning from the Oscar Winners: Internship Excitement

After the first day of internships, we took some time to talk about the experiences of each pair of interns. I spent time reassuring the students that their internships would get more interesting once the basic introductions were covered and they could start taking on more responsibilities. Tony and Jamal sat quietly because two days before the start of the internships, their intern host had to back out because of schedule changes. They spent time “working” for Keith along with Keith’s two planned interns, Michelle and Angel, but they had not really done anything on their first day as interns. The start of the intern program was slow, and I was nervous to see how it all turned out.

As the summer moved on, however, the internships needed less and less attention because the students got more accustomed to working for their hosts. Chris and Faith both flashed proud smiles when their first articles were published in a local newspaper, while Ashley and Sean laughed about the fake commercials they had made the day before. Angel and Michelle were working away, organizing the group’s Helping Youth Positively Excel (H.Y.P.E.) campaign and assisting Keith with

the promotion of events for the city. The only two internships that were having real trouble were the one for Madison and Olivia and the one for Jamal and Tony. Madison and Olivia were also working for a newspaper, but their internship was much less structured and their experiences suffered as a result. Jamal and Tony were still waiting for something to turn up. Keith did not have enough work for four interns, so they ended up doing odd jobs for the program or Keith, depending on the day.

A couple weeks into the program, the internships for Jamal and Tony were found. First, a graphic designer had come in to talk to Madison and Olivia, which immediately sparked Tony's interest because he was in the process of starting his own graphic design company. When the graphic designer kindly agreed to come in and talk with Tony and Jamal more the following week, both boys looked forward to and enjoyed the experience. However, the graphic designer could not commit to six hours a week, so he continued talking with Tony as a mentor outside of the program, but did not continue as an intern host. Fortunately, Tony and Jamal's original intern host was able to pick them up for the last half of the program. They were able to learn more about graphic design, and they even designed and printed some of their own products. Both Tony and Jamal's eyes would light up at any chance to talk about their internship and show off their work. It was exciting for them, and it was exciting to see their internship finally work out.

Creating Characters for Real Life: The Need for Possible Selves in Adolescence

Possible selves play a vital role in adolescence, providing teens with opportunities to think about their futures, develop positive identities, and focus their immediate energies. Not only do the possible selves give youth something to dream about, but they also force adolescents to think about what they must do to reach those dreams, which helps the teens to concentrate in the present. These major facets of possible selves illustrate how important they are during the developmental phase of adolescence when teens are in the process of finding new groups and identities. Possible selves can provide some motivation for teens to associate with others who have similar goals or to avoid peers

who could deter them from their dreams. In light of this, it is important to study possible selves during adolescence.

Examining possible selves in the context of a youth media production summer program is particularly valuable for several reasons. For one, as a youth media production program, it allows teens to practice new roles, giving them opportunities to test out more possible selves. As students go through the production process, they must all try roles of writers, actors, directors, sound crewmembers, recorders, and editors. The opportunities provided to teens to actually try out these new roles allow the youth to see themselves in those roles as an adult, deciding whether those possible selves fit with their other dreams and values. In addition, since this was a summer program, the teens were given more freedom and responsibilities than they would usually receive in traditional schools. By giving the participants ownership over the project and letting them help determine the schedule of the day, the teens had more opportunities to dream and talk freely about themselves. Students were able to give each other feedback, saying things like, “Yo, that joint was hot,” as they applauded a well-edited scene. With this in mind, it is clear that for many participants, the VFC program supported exploration and development of possible selves through project experiences, the internship program, and opportunities for outside exploration of possible selves.

By providing opportunities for teens to observe possible selves, practice possible selves, and imagine possible selves, VFC allowed the participants to move through complete development of possible selves. However, there were three main pathways that this development took within the program. First, there was the development of completely new possible selves, as illustrated in a case study about Ashley’s move behind the camera. Second, teens can revise previous possible selves, as seen when Tony combined his existing plans for the future with a possible self developed during the program. Finally, Faith’s development of a possible self as a journalist shows how teens can reaffirm their existing possible selves when given the chances to observe, practice, and imagine those selves.

Moving Behind the Camera: Ashley's New Possible Selves

At the start of the summer, Ashley was an interesting mixture of self-confidence and quiet aloofness. During her pre-program interviews she was very confident, easily able to articulate her plans for the future and her dreams of going to Cornell University. Yet once the program started, she shifted to being withdrawn and quiet during activities. For the first two weeks of the program, Ashley spent her time text messaging friends outside of the program. She rarely participated, and it seemed that she was clearly only in the program to please her mother who had signed her up. She even admitted that her mother had written her application for her (Field Notes, 17 July 2009). This reserved, aloof Ashley quickly changed once the program started to include acting, filming, and directing. As she became more involved and invested in the project and the people around her, Ashley's confidence began to show through again. By the end of the summer, she recognized her strengths and skills in editing film, and had effectively developed some new possible selves.

In her pre-program interview and survey, Ashley detailed her plans for the future. She would graduate from high school and then move on to Cornell University. She said, "I want to graduate from Cornell University, and I want to major in Law and minor in Communications." Furthermore, she noted that Cornell is in New York, so after college she hoped to move to the city and work on a law-related radio show. Finally, she said, "And from there, I just like, I don't have all the details yet, but from there it was just, I kinda want to like, be on television, kinda like *The View*." It was clear that Ashley had some vivid possible selves as she joined the program. She knew where she wanted to go to college, setting up her possible selves as both a college student and a law student. Furthermore, Ashley's possible selves stressed being on camera, as she mentioned both *The View* and the Oprah show during her interview. The mention of these shows indicated that Ashley wanted to be a confident and well-known woman because both shows host powerful women in front of the

camera. Ashley said she liked acting, could fake cry, and she was clearly ready and focused on being a performer, either as a lawyer, a radio host, or a television program host.

As mentioned earlier, Ashley's attitude and involvement in the program changed over the summer, which may have been in part due to her engagement of possible selves in the program activities. She came out of her shell during the program once acting started in earnest. Once she had a character to be and was able to give input and advice to her peers, Ashley was much more engaged. She did not spend as much time text messaging people outside of the program, and her friendship with Madison and Jamal began to develop (Field Notes, 24 July 2009). Part of Ashley's newfound engagement may have been that moving into actual production of the film project was generally more exciting and interesting for all of the participants. However, in Ashley's case it likely also helped that she was able to engage with one of her possible selves. The acting and filming gave her new opportunities to engage the possible selves of being an actress or generally being involved in television. Since she hoped to be like Oprah Winfrey or the women on *The View*, the more active parts of the program were immediately applicable to helping her achieve those dreams, which may have further supported her commitment to the program and its activities.

Towards the end of the program, Ashley's dedication grew even stronger when she recognized her interest and skills in editing. She had been very involved throughout the filming process, getting equipment set up for the group and taking on responsibility for the scenes she directed. Ashley was interested and engaged, demanding that her peers focus and get their scenes done in an efficient manner. Then, the program shifted to editing, something which Ashley had not been particularly engaged with at the start of the program. However, this time around, Ashley became one of the queens of editing. She and Michelle worked tirelessly on their group's scenes, often leaving Tony and Olivia out of the process. Ashley loved editing, and it showed. Her emotions came through as she burst out in anger when the computer malfunctioned and shouted in

excitement when she and Michelle completed their first scene. Ashley's dedication to the editing process was evident when she asked if she could come to Swarthmore over the weekend to help me edit the final piece (Field Notes, 14 August 2009). She wanted the final product to meet her standards of excellence, and she was ready to put in extra time to make that happen. For Ashley, the summer had given her experience with a new field, editing, and it was clear that she enjoyed it.

By the end of the summer, Ashley had created some new possible selves that moved her behind the camera. In her post-program interview, Ashley said her plans for the future were basically still the same, but that she enjoyed editing a lot more. She explained that editing is "a lot of work, but it's worth it" (Ashley, Post-Program Interview, 17 August 2009). She also said that she found herself "paying attention to editing in [television] shows," explaining that she noticed how scenes of her favorite shows were composed and thought about new techniques that she could try out in her own editing (Ashley, Post-Program Interview, 17 August 2009). These comments from Ashley point to a development of new possible selves for her. As she noted, her plans had remained the same with the exception of learning that she likes the editing process. By identifying her interest and skills in the editing process and thinking about it outside of the program, Ashley had developed a new possible self as an editor. She enjoyed the film production process and was able to edit easily, both of which helped that possible self to develop. Instead of simply wanting to be an actress in front of the camera, Ashley's new possible self helped her to see her strengths behind the scenes: directing, editing, and producing films.

In Ashley's case, several program experiences helped her new possible self to develop. First, the opportunities to take on different roles in the program helped to engage Ashley in the development of new possible selves. In this she was able to both observe and practice these possible selves. By trying out directing, filming, and editing, Ashley experienced new parts of the production process, and she came to understand that she enjoyed those behind the scenes parts just as much as

acting. At the age of 14, Ashley had the chance to try out these new roles, and that experimenting revealed her own unfound strengths and skills. By testing out new roles in the program, Ashley was able to create a new possible self that involved her being behind the camera, rather than just in front of it. In addition, her group served as salient others, helping this possible self as an editor to develop. When Ashley finished editing a scene, she was eager to show it to the rest of the group, and for her to do that, the scene had to be almost perfect, so the scene always impressed her peers. They would exclaim, “That joint was tight,” and jump up as they saw themselves on screen under Ashley’s skill as an editor. This affirmation likely played a key role in affirming Ashley’s possible self of an editor. In essence, she was presenting a new self, a potential editor, to a group of salient others, the rest of the participants. When they affirmed that her presented self made sense or that it was successful, Ashley’s possible future self as an editor was able to develop more fully, allowing and encouraging her to imagine that possible self as a reality. In this way, the program’s experiences in new roles and the opportunities to present new possible selves to salient others helped Ashley develop a new set of possible selves that brought her behind the camera.

Designing and Promoting a Future: Tony’s Revised Possible Self

Tony was the group comedian. He thrived on attention and loved making people laugh. He worked so hard at making others laugh and setting up his role as the comedian that when he wanted to be taken seriously as a director, most of the group would just ignore him. His comedic role had been so ingrained in the first two weeks of the program that he was unable to break away in order to be taken seriously (Field Notes, 31 July 2009). However, Tony was very serious about his graphic designing. He mentioned his interest in graphic design in his application and pre-program interviews, and throughout the summer he became more invested in starting his own design company when his internship began and gave him more experience. In addition, Tony was respected by the group for designing the H.Y.P.E. campaign t-shirts, and once the group started editing, Tony

decided to bring in his own computer to work on his graphic design business while his group took turns editing. After the program, it was clear that Tony's experiences in the internship portion of the program had helped him to develop his possible self in a more complete way, expanding his idea of what it meant to be a graphic designer and entrepreneur.

From the start, Tony made it clear that he was interested in being a graphic designer. Having worked with Keith before in other Team MAC programs, Keith told me that there would be no question that Tony would want to work for the graphic design intern host. Tony reaffirmed that in his application interview. Then, in his pre-program interview, Tony explained that he wanted to be a graphic designer, a music producer, and an entrepreneur in the future. He said that he had seen someone using Photoshop, and it seemed very interesting to him, so he was able to get Photoshop for his own computer and learn how to use it. He was interested in graphic design because of all the things he could do with Photoshop, he wanted to be a music producer because of his interest in music, and he had seen entrepreneurs in Chester and thought they seemed to both be nice and gain a lot of experience from having their own businesses (Tony, Pre-Program Interview, 1 July 2009). At the start of the summer, Tony had a grand plan of being a graphic designer and entrepreneur who was also able to serve as a music producer. With these three possible selves, Tony was already working towards the first two by learning the tools and techniques of graphic design and talking with local business owners. His possible selves were strong and clear in his own mind, and he was ready to work towards those dreams.

Over the summer, Tony was seen as a source of comic relief in the program, someone who was not to be taken seriously. By the second week, Tony's repetition of joke suggestions had caused everyone to sigh when he volunteered an idea, and his good friend Jamal even started to tell Tony repeatedly, "Think before you talk" (Field Notes, 17 July 2009). Although Tony did make good suggestions from time to time, they were glossed over or not considered because he had been

established as a goof ball and the group did not respect his ideas as serious contributions. Tony continued this trend of goofiness in program activities, unable to break away from his established role in the group. When filming, Tony would take time to laugh fully before refocusing his energies, unlike some of his peers who laughed and then quickly moved on to the next activity. When the group began editing the film, Tony took opportunities to play YouTube videos and pretend to sing like Mariah Carey, again making his peers laugh and re-establishing himself as a comedian (Field Notes, 7 August 2009). Throughout his actions and decisions about the group project, Tony was always seen as the group comedian.

However, Tony was exceptionally serious when it came to his graphic design work. In his own work in starting a business, his work at his internship, and his work for the H.Y.P.E. campaign, Tony was always serious. As part of the H.Y.P.E. campaign for the group, Tony designed the t-shirts that served as walking resource guides for teens in the city. He put effort into designing the front of the t-shirts, asking for input from his peers, and then revising the design to incorporate new ideas. In addition, while the rest of the group was editing the film, Tony took to bringing in his own computer so that he could work on his graphic design business. He had met with a professional graphic designer who did work with one of the intern hosts, and was assisting with professional work. Tony was excited and motivated to design things, and he helped to come up with a new logo for the program. Finally, in his internship, Tony was also engaged as he designed and printed his own work. His dedication to graphic design was clear through all of these actions, and they helped to reaffirm his possible self as a graphic designer.

By the end of the summer, Tony had strengthened and revised his possible self as a graphic designer. In his post-program interview, he described how he still wanted to be a graphic designer with his own business, but he also recognized that he wanted to have his own computer and printer. He said he wanted to “cut out the middle man,” which would save him money as an entrepreneur

(Tony, Post-Program Interview, 19 August 2009). Tony had also added a new part to his future plans. Not only did he want to be a graphic designer and entrepreneur, now he also had plans to hire local neighborhood kids by developing a mentor program in his business. He explained that the program would start with unpaid training, just getting the kids to learn and understand the programs and process of his business. Then, once the kids were good and had mastered some of the skills, Tony would hire them for his company (Tony, Post-Program Interview, 19 August 2009). This new part of his plan seemed to indicate that his intern experience had a strong influence, not only in showing him about managing a business, but in helping him to understand the importance of role models in adolescence. Not only did he recognize the importance of it, but he was also already starting to think about how best to incorporate this idea into his overall plan and pre-existing possible selves. Now, Tony had added something to his possible self: being a mentor to neighborhood kids.

For Tony, his experience in the program reaffirmed his possible selves and pushed him to expand his plans for the future to include being a mentor to young people in the area. He had changed from simply knowing what he wanted to do, to knowing what he wanted to do and who he wanted to be in a community. This change was influenced mainly by his experiences in his internship and with mentors in the community. Tony was fortunate enough to have an internship for three weeks that allowed him to see the graphic design process from the idea to the final product, and he also had a chance to meet with a local graphic designer who took Tony under his wing to learn about the field of graphic design. Both of these experiences likely helped Tony to realize the importance of mentors in his own life. The two men he worked with in graphic design had given him new opportunities, and Tony recognized how much he enjoyed and learned from those experiences. Those moments in the internship portion of the VFC Summer Institute seemed to really help Tony think more consciously about what he wanted his future role to be in his

community, and he was able to revise his possible selves and plans for the future to accommodate being a mentor for local teens. By observing his internship hosts and experiencing mentorship, Tony recognized the importance of being a mentor to teens in the future, and he was able to successfully imagine a possible self that allowed him to both design and mentor.

Extra! Extra! Read All About It! : Faith's Reaffirmed Possible Self

Faith was a consistent leader for the group throughout the summer. The eldest of five children, she knew that she had to be responsible and take care of business, which she did every day of the program. For Faith, however, the VFC Summer Institute was also about working hard for her future. She came in knowing that she wanted to be a journalist, and she knew that this program would be a helpful way for her to gain experience in reaching that dream. During the summer, Faith grew as a person but also learned a lot more about her possible self as a journalist, and she reaffirmed her plans to make that dream a reality. Through the internship program, Faith was able to work for a local newspaper, which gave her a real possibility to try out her possible self. In addition, on our field trip to Philadelphia, one of the stops of the day was at the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and Faith seemed to enjoy that opportunity to imagine herself as a journalist, working for a company like the *Inquirer*. Through both the internship program and other opportunities for external validation, Faith's possible self of a journalist became even stronger over the course of the summer.

As mentioned earlier, Faith came into the program knowing that she wanted to be a journalist as an adult. In her pre-program survey and interview she said she wanted to work for a magazine. She explained her motivation for being a journalist:

Well, I like to write and I enjoy journaling ... I also enjoy, like how I see journalists, and I read the magazines, and I see the articles, and I want to be able to do that one day: write the article, have people know me for writing it. And, I also want to travel the world, and I know journalists get to do both." (Faith, Pre-Program Interview, 2 July 2009).

Again, Faith clearly knew what she liked: journaling, writing, reading, traveling; and she had thought of a possible self that would easily allow her to do all of those things that she enjoys. It was logical, responsible, and exactly what Faith needed. As the responsible eldest sibling, Faith also already had plans for what she would do in order to make her possible self a true profession. She planned to take a journalism class at her high school in the 2009-2010 school year, find internships with various newspapers to gain experience, and attend college to study journalism (Faith, Pre-Program Interview, 2 July 2009). Her possible self as a journalist was well established, and she was already taking steps to make it a reality.

Throughout the summer, Faith continued to develop this possible self through her internship at a local newspaper. She and Chris worked diligently at the paper, each one having at least one piece published in the paper before the end of the summer. Although they both complained about some of the more boring tasks they were sent to do at the start of the internship, Faith always did her best to keep it positive and in perspective (Field Notes, 17 July 2009). Faith's proudest moment from her internship was when she had a full two-page spread in the newspaper. She had truly worked as a journalist, and was able to see the final product of her work. It was something that helped her gain confidence, and that reaffirmed her possible self because she saw that she could function as a journalist. In her post-program interview, Faith acknowledged the importance of her internship, saying that it helped her see journalism as a career path. She said she had learned a lot from the internship and knew that she wanted to go to journalism school for college to help her become a journalist (Faith, Post-Program Interview, 17 August 2010). Faith's parents also noted, "The program has clearly enhanced [Faith's] skills and capacity for journalism" (Parent/Guardian Survey, 18 August 2009). From all accounts, it seemed that internship experience had clearly played an important role in reaffirming Faith's possible self as a journalist.

In addition, the stop at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* during the field trip also likely played a part in confirming Faith's plans to be a journalist. The *Inquirer* provided our group with our last tour of the day, allowing the teens to walk around their building, seeing everything from the editors' suite to the reporting room. The group was also able to observe the daily editors' meeting in which the editors planned the outline and top news stories for the next day's paper. At our last stop of the day, most of the group was tired and many participants began to nod off during the observation of the editors' meeting. However, Faith was alert during the meeting and she was the only student to ask a question on the tour of the building (Field Notes, 24 July 2009). She was clearly interested in the site and spent time looking around at the reporters. Although she did not mention the importance of this stop in the strengthening of her plans to be a journalist, it is likely that this part of the field trip did play into her possible self. By walking around the *Inquirer* building and seeing reporters and journalists working first hand, Faith had the opportunity to concretely imagine herself working in a similar situation. Being able to picture herself as a journalist was probably another important part of reaffirming her hopes and desires to reach that possible self.

Faith's summer was a time in which she confirmed and reinvigorated her possible self as a journalist. Through her observations at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and her experiences in her internship, she was able to effectively see herself as a reporter and gain practice writing and reporting. All of these chances to observe, practice, and imagine gave Faith opportunities to think about and form ideas and plans for reaching her possible self. After coming in with a general interest in writing and plans for being a journalist, Faith was able to experience and practice her possible self. While practicing and presenting her possible self, Faith had salient others reaffirm it as a likely and positive future. She presented herself as a journalist to her intern hosts, her peers, and her community, and that self was confirmed and supported on all fronts. These external sources of affirmation and

possibilities for exploration helped Faith to see herself as a journalist and reinforce her possible self and plans for the future.

Dress Rehearsal: Future Research

For all the students involved in the program, the chances to try out new roles and work in different areas allowed them to test out new possible selves. The program supported Ashley to discover a new set of skills and interests as she tried directing and editing the film. Those experiences further allowed her to establish a new possible self as someone who could work behind the camera. As a result of these opportunities, she was able to develop a new possible self as an editor. Similarly, Tony was also able to expand his possible selves to include serving as a mentor for youth in the area. His internship experiences helped him to recognize the importance of mentors in his own life, and they allowed him to develop a possible self that combined his plans for a job with his new goals of being a mentor. Finally, Faith was a participant who gained experience and new sources of support in reaffirming her plans to be a journalist. Through doing her own reporting and observing the lives of real reporters, her possible self was confirmed and reinvigorated. These three case studies illustrate three different ways in which the VFC program supported the growth and development of possible selves among participants. Through program activities, internship experiences, and new opportunities to explore and be confirmed, the participants were able to test out new possible selves and build upon existing plans for the future.

Although these case studies provide several examples of how VFC was able to support the development of possible selves among participants, more research is still needed in this area. First, the VFC participants as a group may be somewhat more likely to develop possible selves than most adolescents. Given that the students came in with strong senses of self and ideas for the future, and that most of them had strong parental influences or other mentors in their life, they were all on track to be seriously thinking about their futures. Since they were expected to be thinking about their

futures because their salient others told them to, the VFC participants may have been able to create new possible selves more easily. In light of this, one focus of future research must be to examine the development of possible selves in similar settings, but with different students. It is important to understand the role that the individual plays in creating these possible selves, while also examining the ways in which a program can support growth of positive selves through its activities.

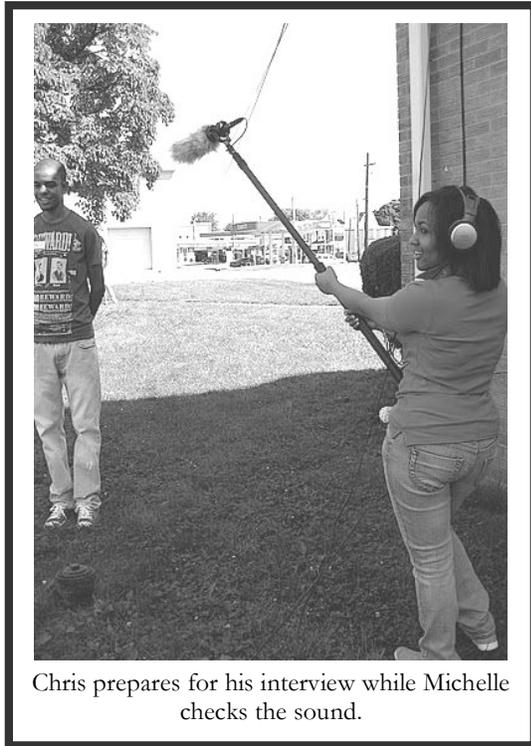
Additionally, future research must look at the factors that play into possible self development and the lasting effects of such programs. First, it is necessary to identify the specific activities and influences in the growth of possible selves. Although many parallels can be drawn between program activities, internship experiences, and the development of possible selves in these case studies, future research is needed to clarify and confirm these claims. One way to do this would be to ask students to think about exactly why and how they came to consider new ideas or plans for the future, directly tracing their mental processes to demonstrate what effectively supports this kind of growth. Finally, there are also lingering questions on the lasting effects of such a program. It is important to examine how the possible selves developed in the VFC program will continue to influence the students' lives or why they fall apart. Without the activities, internships, or interactions with mentors, the question remains if students will find new ways to develop their possible selves or if their plans for the future will break down without the opportunities to continue experimenting and affirming their possible selves.

And the Award Goes to... : The Final Celebration

At our final celebration, an entire room was able to witness the excitement that I had seen in the eyes of many participants as they talked about their internships. Each pair of interns was asked to come up to the microphone to say thank you to their intern host and present an award of appreciation to their host. Jamal and Teddy were some of the liveliest presenters. Playing off of their roles as comedians in the program, they came up to the microphone and began by giving a "Shout

Out” to each of their hosts. They went on to explain how great it was for them to print their own products and how much they had learned in the process. Although Tony and Jamal said that they wished they had more time to spend with their hosts, I think few people recognize the powerful role that those hosts played in Tony’s development, helping him to seriously consider his future as both a businessman and a community member.

Behind the Scenes: Pedagogy that Works



Chris prepares for his interview while Michelle checks the sound.

Actor Input: Lessons Learned

At the end of the first week of VFC, I asked for student feedback on the program. I told them to be brutally honest, and they definitely were truthful about their feelings and thoughts. Faith was one of the key leaders in that first week, and she stepped up to take on the more critical side of the discussion. She told me more than just, “It got boring at times,” which is what most of the other kids had said. Faith said that I gave them too much freedom, they were “just kids,” and they needed more structure. The other teens agreed,

and that was one of the most important pedagogical lessons that the VFC participants taught me that summer. With reflection, I was able to figure out how and why the program worked and what it needs to improve to meet the needs of adolescent participants.

Doing the Background Work: Informative Ideas

Although I had come in with some plans and general ideas about working with teens, the VFC participants gave me concrete feedback, which changed my plans to better fit their needs. My time with VFC as both a director and a researcher gave me a chance to examine a youth media production program, which highlighted several main ideas. The teens and their experiences and feedback showed me exactly how teen development happens in youth film production programs, and they further helped me redefine my techniques and plans for teaching. Specifically, my work with VFC highlighted the importance of three main pedagogical techniques: learning by doing,

forming communities of support, and allowing for student input and responsibility in the classroom. All of these can easily and effectively take place within the context of a media production program like VFC.

Learning by Doing

One of the reasons that students were able to develop and grow within the VFC program was because of the project-based nature of the program. By producing a film, something tangible in which they could see their results and something could be show to their friends, the participants could be more engaged in the program. Their level of engagement helped them to grow, and this aspect of learning by doing is an important pedagogical aspect that supported development. Michael Smith and Jeffrey Wilhelm (2002) suggest that learning is especially meaningful when it “takes place in a real context” and “will be immediately applied in that real context” (p. 19). This means that it is important to learn something applicable to real life and, furthermore, educators should work to ensure that students see the impact and results of their work in “that real context.” In VFC, the students were able to make something for their community and that process allowed them to be more invested in the work, further engaging them in the program and allowing them to gain the benefits of full program participation.

In addition, the Foxfire Fund and Educators for Social Responsibility stress that student work be shared with people other than the teacher. One of the core principles of the Foxfire group is that “there is an audience beyond the teacher for learner work” (Foxfire Approach, 2007). This idea also comes through in work from What Kids Can Do, an organization that promotes active engagement from young people (2007):

The chance to make their writing and voices public—in print, online, on the radio, on stage— ... can exert an irresistible pull on young people. Publication is the surest route to inspire young writers, creating a powerful sense of ownership. (p. 3)

With this idea of sharing work from students with a broader audience, the class work may gain more importance because it is being seen and judged by others. Additionally, sharing work with others makes schoolwork more real, and that “real context,” as described earlier, is important for students to engage and motivate their work.

Thus by engaging young people in the process of creating something real for a real audience, VFC was able to effectively motivate and encourage students to work on the project. This project-based learning or learning by doing is one key aspect of the VFC pedagogy for several reasons. As previously described, learning by doing allowed students to be more focused and connected to the program because they are able to explain why they are doing their work. This, then, helped them to get the most individual development from the program that they could. In addition, the physical production of a product reinforced the group work of the program, further encouraging the community development and group membership benefits of participation. Finally, the project-based work allowed students to place themselves within their community, helping them to think of solutions to problems and giving them practice at dealing with the issues in their neighborhoods. With all of these benefits of having a real product, the VFC program and youth media production more generally, provided good methods for engaging young people in their work.

Communities of Commitment

Another key part of the VFC pedagogy was creating what Jacqueline Ancess (2003) calls “communities of commitment” because they create the kind of supportive environment in which positive change and development can start. Ancess (2003) describes these communities as ones in which relationships are “a source of social capital” and there is a need for both intimacy and trust between all levels of participation in schools (p. 60). Although she places these in the context of school, all youth programs should maintain a similar focus on building relationships because they are a source of social capital for the young people involved. Programs become “communities of

commitment” when they encourage and support positive, healthy student-educator relationships and push both sides to feel responsible for learning, creating a more invested and positive learning environment. In VFC, as previously illustrated, the student-to-student relationships provided a strong source of social capital as their group membership solidified. In establishing the program as community of commitment, VFC used the relationships between participants and mentors to help guide and drive the production of the film.

In these communities of commitment, Ancess (2003) explains that educators must “[persist] in their demands for quality performance, coupling them with the support students need to attain it” (p. 72). This means that students need both high expectations and the support to meet those expectations. In addition, since teachers and students are building off of established relationships, those demands and expectations from teachers are important and meaningful to students because the teachers have established themselves as salient others for the teens through their relationships. High expectations from salient others give the students more motivation for doing the work along with supportive resources to go to throughout the process. In the VFC program, students were in a community of commitment. Their fellow participants, the college mentors, and the community leaders were all committed to the program and to the success of the teens involved. In establishing this kind of community, students were both more likely to thrive in the project and better able to access the social capital that accompanied their group membership.

Student Input and Responsibility

Giving students opportunities to have input on the topics and take responsibility for their learning are important ways for teens to engage with material and develop as young adults. The idea of student interest in a topic is one key way to motivate and engage young people. If teens are interested in what they are learning, they will be more likely to take part in the process and want to learn from it. Thus, developing interests by gathering student input is especially important. Giving

students responsibility with appropriate levels of scaffolding or support is also essential for youth engagement. A sufficient amount of support is necessary in order to help teens develop the confidence that they can effectively work independently. Allowing teens to work and take on responsibility is also necessary for youth to truly develop into young adults. This combination of student input and responsibility occurred in the VFC Summer Institute, and it helped many of the teens to become young, responsible, engaged individuals.

One of the main techniques of instruction that will help generate student engagement is building a learning experience that caters to the interests of the learners. The work of Carol Sansone and Jessi L. Smith (2000) illustrates “the importance of interest in maintaining motivation and suggest[s] that it is an important and overlooked dimension of self-regulation” (p. 365). This demonstrates that interest in the content and process of learning is a key part of maintaining motivation among learners. The power of following students’ interests is illustrated in the Soundings classroom. As Mark Springer (2006), founder and teacher of Soundings, explained, the program “proved to us how incredibly capable and dedicated young adolescents are when empowered to follow their strongest learning interests” (p. 6). By allowing students to follow their interests, the Soundings program effectively uses students’ interests to motivate and engage the class. This combination of inspiration and involvement comes in part from the relevance of and connection to the material. In VFC, like in Soundings, the bulk of the material has to do with the students’ interest and experiences, and using those ideas as sources for the program.

Along with this use of students’ interests, instruction must give an appropriate amount of scaffolding and ownership to the learners to fully engage them as learners and young adults. On the one hand, students need a certain amount of scaffolding or support to help them engage with their learning and get to productive disposition. As Jeremy Kilpatrick, Jane Swafford, and Bradford Findell (2002) explain, “The use of scaffolding is another factor that helps to maintain student

engagement at a high level” (p. 336). They note that teachers’ subtle questioning and planned pauses to allow students to make connections are important elements of scaffolding that allow for learners to build their own productive disposition. In addition, Ann L. Brown and Joseph C. Campione (1994) detail the importance of “guided discovery,” which is essentially when teachers give students an appropriate amount of scaffolding. They note that it “is difficult to orchestrate. It takes sensitive clinical judgment to know when to intervene and when to leave well enough alone” (p. 230). Thus, although it is difficult to determine the adequate amount of scaffolding for each student, good instruction must work to give each learner the support and challenges that he or she needs. Pushing some students to work independently while encouraging others to trust each other is one of the many challenges of finding the right amount of scaffolding, but it is crucial to do this in order to have all students develop their own investment and engagement in learning.

Furthermore, instruction needs to balance this scaffolding with student responsibility, giving the learners enough control over their learning to maintain and develop their interests and ideas. Springer (2006) notes that one of the essential tenets of middle level education is that “successful learning is directly tied to the students’ senses of self-investment and self-discipline, their commitment, and their willingness to accept responsibility” (p. 6). In this, Springer notes the significance of taking on responsibility as a learner, which enhances the investment and discipline in the topic and project. Although Springer describes this as especially important in middle schools, the learners’ ownership and responsibility for what they are learning are central parts of deep learning at any level. As Jacquelynne S. Eccles, Carol Midgley, Allan Wigfield, Christy Miller Buchanan, David Reuman, Constance Flanagan, and Douglas MacIver (1993) note, “teachers should provide the optimal level of structure for children’s current levels of maturity while providing a sufficiently challenging environment to pull the children along a developmental path toward higher levels of cognitive and social maturity” (p. 92). It is important to balance the amount of personal

accountability and the level of scaffolding that the students experience. Giving students the appropriate level of responsibility for their own learning allows them to invest themselves in their education, working to understand their abilities and find the meaning of learning for themselves.

In the VFC Summer Institute, participants did all of this through their work in media production. As they worked both individually and in groups, they created *Through Our Eyes*. Throughout the production of this piece they came to see themselves as both efficient and effective since they had to meet deadlines and they were also able to physically hold on to their final piece, the DVD. By allowing students to see and touch their own work, they were more likely to see their work as worthwhile and useful and to have a stronger belief in their own abilities, thereby increasing their own level of interest and engagement. Since the participants developed the topics and stories they covered in the project, they saw the importance of their input and how it came to be part of what they learned. The VFC Summer Institute encouraged participants to delve deeper into their interests, further developing their engagement in the project. Finally, with instructors to help support and guide students in their production processes, participants had an adequate amount of scaffolding, but they were also encouraged to take on responsibility once they had the skills, techniques, and motivation to do so. All of these things allowed for teens to provide the program with input and feedback, while still taking on responsibility for their project, appropriately entitled, *Through Our Eyes* (emphasis added).

A Media Production Context

All of these aspects of good pedagogy are especially easy to include in a media production program like Chester VFC. As already described, the VFC program was able to effectively use all of these techniques throughout the summer, helping teens to become involved and motivated. Specifically, when working on media production, there is a clear element of project-based learning that occurs in the group. Although VFC focused on film production, the production of radio pieces,

theater plays, websites, newspapers, or any other project to be shared with a wider audience will serve the same purpose. These opportunities for kids to learn by doing allow them to engage with others and hold each other accountable, forcing them to mature and develop while also preparing them to work with their community as they focus on both a real product and a real audience. In addition, by placing emphasis on group work and developing a strong sense of community in the program, VFC was able to create a community of commitment in which fellow participants and other mentors served as salient others for the teens.

In all youth production programs, this kind of focus on relationships stems easily from the group work involved in the production because people rely on one another and must trust each other to do good work. Finally, by using teens' experiences as the source of the stories and topics for the film and giving them both necessary guidance and freedom, VFC was able to help the teens grow as young adults. Again, most media production programs do similar things in developing their projects and supporting teens to take on responsibility as they become more familiar with the technology and process of producing. Thus, media production is a clear way for youth programs to incorporate these pedagogical techniques that support youth development. However, that is not to say that all it is the only avenue for these techniques. Indeed, all kinds of youth programming should work to incorporate these tools as they push adolescents to grow and learn.

Directing Tips: Five Ways to Start Doing It Yourself

Throughout this process of my own learning by doing when I taught these teens in VFC, I have developed several key ideas about working with youth. Specifically, I have come up with five concrete suggestions for educators who are working with teens. These tips will hopefully help educators to engage students and create communities and environments in which group membership and possible self development can occur, similarly to what happened in Chester VFC. In addition, I hope that these suggestions provide tangible ideas for educators to start on the process

of transforming their techniques and approaches immediately. Incorporating these ideas as a part of pedagogy is an important and necessary way that educators can work to effectively help teens develop and grow as individuals.

The first suggestion is to **value students**. Although it sounds simple, valuing students as people, their ideas, and their experiences is a necessary part of any pedagogy. By showing students that they want to hear about student experiences, listen to student ideas, and get to know students as people, educators are modeling the kind of caring community in which youth development can truly occur. Taking the initiative to ask students about something in their lives and engage with them about real issues demonstrates caring and support for the students as people. Whether it is asking about a test in school, the recent dance performance, or talking with students about their friends or family, doing something to show that educators value their students can go a long way. Not only does this show students that they care, but it will set up the expectation that it is a learning environment in which everyone cares, which makes it a safe and positive place in which growth is both supported and encouraged.

Second, **give students responsibility with support**. Teens will respond positively to situations in which they are given control and responsibility. Adolescents want some freedom, and they want to prove to themselves that they can do something on their own. Giving students responsibility over their learning, their projects, and their interactions is one way to help them do this. However, it is extremely important to remember that giving responsibility requires support and scaffolding from the educator. Adolescents still need guidance, and they will need more of this at the beginning. Figuring out a way to guide and support students in a more direct way at the start of the process, while scaling back educator involvement over time will help teens to take on this responsibility for their own learning. One concrete way to do this is to assign tasks for group work, giving each student a responsibility for the day. As time goes on, however, teachers should allow

students to set up their own schedules and manage themselves, taking on their responsibility. However, teachers must remember to remind students to work and stay focused. Teens will still get distracted, and they will need kind reminders from adults to get to work, stay on task, and meet deadlines. With this sort of tapering of responsibility, educators will be able to effectively help their students learn to act as young adults.

A third tip is to **get hands-on**. The physical production of a final product is something more than a test or discussion that helps to engage, motivate, and encourage students. Being able to see the efforts of their labor and being held accountable for a product plays into the idea of possible selves. Students working on a hands-on project will have visions in their heads of what the final product should look like, which in turn gives them an idea of what to strive for as they work. This imagination can prompt new possible selves in the process of trying new things or working on old skills. Teachers can try to assign some kind of project to help get hands-on in their classrooms. Again, this needs to start with specific instructions and ideas or examples, but then allow kids to try out new things and come up with their own plans for projects. Giving them a project that involves more than just reading, writing, or solving typical problems and providing deadlines, roles, and specific measures for the grading of the project is one thing that teachers can do to start engaging young people in their educations.

Fourth, **use student experiences**. This means more than simply valuing the experiences of students; instead teachers must use their students' stories as a source of class material, giving those experiences a place in learning. The work and lessons will make more sense if students can connect it to their own lives. Simply put, students will get more in to it, and they'll get more out of it, if their experiences are reflected in the work. Educators should push students to connect topics to their own lives, give them opportunities to voice their opinions on issues, and allow the students' lives to play an important role in the curriculum. One easy way to do this is by giving an example of how the

subject material affects life outside of the classroom. Educators should try to share and connect their own experiences with the material and bring in their own stories as a way to model for students and encourage those kinds of contributions to learning in the classroom. By actively using the experiences of students, teachers are not only making it easier for teens to learn, they are also demonstrating the importance of student stories. That sense of value helps students to feel comfortable and then develop their possible selves and truly grow as individuals.

Finally, one last tip is **do not be afraid of technology**. Although the newest technologies of our world are constantly changing, educators must learn to use them in the curriculum. For one, this will help youth gain marketable skills for their own futures that will undoubtedly use those new gadgets. However, more importantly, it is another way to engage the teens. By using technology that adolescents use and/or consume every day, teachers are both valuing part of the youth culture and engaging them with their own experiences. Encouraging students to make a Facebook profile for an important leader or idea in the material is one possible technique. Using current songs and music videos can serve as a starting point for students to think about their media, but going one step further and having teens produce media in response will engage students at a deeper level. In addition, giving students an opportunity for an online discussion or chat may elicit thoughtful responses from typically quiet students. In short, technology is a great tool for engaging youth, so educators must not be afraid to use it.

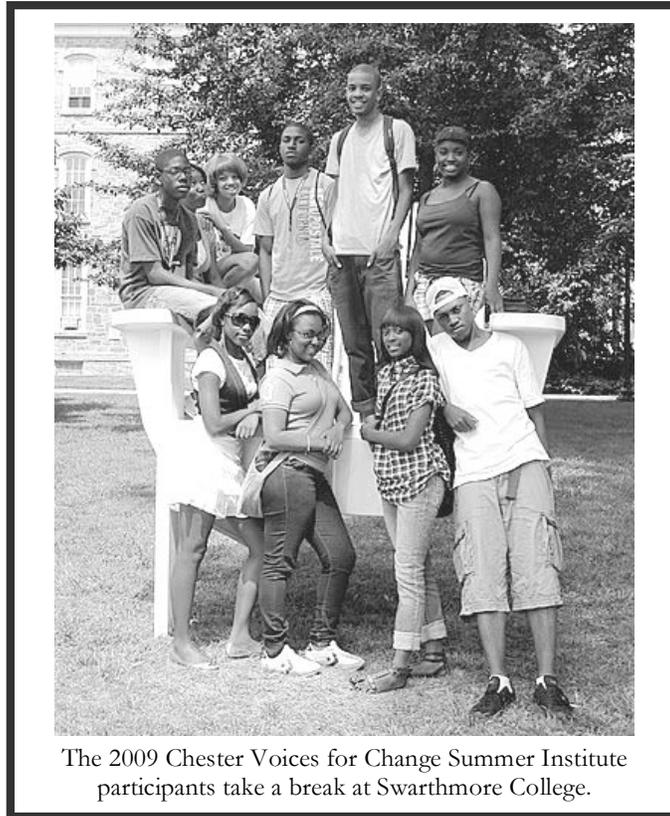
Although there are important steps that educators can take to help empower and engage young people in learning, it is important to remember that adolescents still need support and scaffolding to do this work. Students need assigned roles, tasks, deadlines, models, requirements, examples, and basic instruction to make these possible techniques realities. Thus, it is essential for educators to remember that they still serve a crucial role in youth development. By supporting teens and giving them the instruction, support, and guidance needed to take on responsibility for learning,

while still knowing when to let go or back off, educators play key parts of encouraging positive youth development.

Taking on Roles: Students in Action

After that first discussion where Faith told me that I needed to give the participants more support and less outright freedom, I adjusted my instruction style. I made more decisions without student input, but as the project got going, they needed me less and less. Sean took the lead at points, starting to set up cameras, check sound, and get his peers on task. At other times, Michelle, Faith, or Ashley stepped up, directing the group and leading by example. Although I reminded them of what the group had to get done and how much time there was to do it, many of the students ended up taking on the responsibility for the production of their film. Somehow the teens had transitioned from wanting and needing my direction in the first week to taking on responsibility for their own project and the final product of *Through Our Eyes*. Furthermore, a lot of that transition came in part from VFC's project-based, student-centered, hands-on, group-focused, and supportive pedagogical orientation.

Curtain Call: Lessons and Suggestions



Now Available on DVD: The Final Celebration

The day of the final celebration was chaos for me. I didn't eat lunch because I was running around trying to burn DVDs, print out DVD inserts, conduct post-program interviews, get participant stipends, and pick up awards for the evening. I was fortunate enough to have the support of many other people as I was running around doing all of this, but needless to say, I was a bit stressed when I finally arrived at Chester City Hall for our final celebration. Fortunately, everything turned out wonderfully. The teens and their families were all very appreciative and excited to see the film. There were only a few minor glitches at the final celebration, but overall it was amazing. I got home, exhausted, and sat in awe that it was actually over.

Last Time On... : Review of the Findings

The Chester Voices for Change Summer Institute provided me with an opportunity to explore the youth development aspects of a youth media production program. Not only did the teens learn the basics of film production and media literacy, they also grew as young adults. There were two main ways in which I saw the VFC participants develop over the summer. By creating a community of commitment in the group and encouraging teens to identify with and develop group membership, the participants gained a new source of social capital. Their membership, in a group known as the “VFC kids,” provided them with in-group protection, positive group association, and positive peer pressure. They had effectively created a group in which they could be themselves and help each other stay on the right track in life. In addition, teens were able to grow as individuals, developing their possible selves. Most teens took one of three tracks in terms of possible self development. Some developed new possible selves while others revised or reaffirmed their prior possible selves. By giving teens a chance to build off of their experiences, practice new skills, and work together for a common goal, VFC effectively worked to produce a film made by teens and encourage positive youth development.

Motivation is Key: Why This Pedagogy Works

The reasons that VFC was able to reach these teens are grounded in the pedagogy behind the program. Creating a project-based and student-centered program helped to create a community of commitment, which pushed teens to grow and mature. In giving teens the tools to make a film and providing them with appropriate scaffolding, VFC was able to engage students in learning by doing, which keeps them involved and motivated. Furthermore, the relationships within the program allowed teens to serve as salient others for one another while still listening to the instructors and community partners as salient others. There were multiple sources of new salient others who encouraged teens to stay positive helped a lot of the group and individual development.

Finally, in using students' stories and experiences while encouraging them to take control of the project, VFC gave the teens a space in which they were valued as people. They felt that they had something to contribute, and they thought they could make a difference. That mentality effectively helped them to develop and mature into young adults and role models in their community.

Encore! : A Need for Future Research

Although this work provides a good starting point for research on youth media production, there is still much more that can be done in order to demonstrate the strength and power of these kinds of programs for working with youth. An examination of the lasting effects of such programs, the relationships between participants and instructors, and the community involvement with the teens are just some of the many areas that deserve more research. The ten VFC participants I worked with in 2009 showed me how much there is to learn from today's youth, and I trust that future researchers will gain just as much from working with young people. Ashley, Michelle, Madison, Olivia, Faith, Angel, Jamal, Chris, Sean, and Tony all have important stories to share with the world, and they are on the path towards making a difference in their communities by doing just that: sharing stories and working with others to create positive change.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Pre-Program Interview

1. What do you want to be when you grow up? Why? How are you going to get there?
2. What role do you see yourself taking on during this program? Will you be a leader? The group comedian? The organizer?
3. What do you think your internship will be like? What do you hope to gain from it?
4. When thinking about your community (Chester, high school, family, etc.), what role do you see yourself in? How does your role change based on who you're with/what you're doing? Why?
5. What do you want your role to be in your community? If it's different than the reality, why is it different and why do you want to change it?
6. How do you think your community sees you? How do your peers see you? How does your family see you? Friends? Teachers? Other community members?
7. Does what other people think of you or how they see you influence you/your decisions? How or why not?

Post-Program Interview

1. Have your future plans changed since we last talked? How? Why or why not?
2. What role did you end up taking in this program? What did you do? Did you like the role? What would you have changed if you could start this program over again, thinking in terms of your role in the group?
3. How did your internship turn out? What did you gain? What could have been better?
4. What role(s) do you have in your community?
5. What role(s) do you want to have in your community?
6. How do other people see you?
7. Does what other people think of you or how they see you influence you/your decisions? How or why not?
8. How do you think you've changed since the start of the program? What influenced those changes? Think about: self confidence, leadership, communication skills, future plans, community knowledge, desire to create positive change, responsibility, awareness of news/community issues.

Appendix B: Pre-Program Interview Transcriptions

Interview 1: Chris, July 1, 2009

ESPN analyst & well-recognized in the field of communications...

Um, I guess, when I saw that I thought you just meant by what occupation you want to have, and that's always been like a dream of mine. Like, um, Steven A. Smith has always been a, I guess, role model for me, so I kinda like, I don't want to be like him, just like the way that he is and how well established he is and everything.

Why was he your role model?

Um, just because, I mean, obviously all the guys that do that know what they're talking about, but it just seems like him, more than anybody like knew exactly what he's talking about and he never let anybody change his mind, and he always was, he a lot of times changed other people's minds, he always spoke his opinion and just, he was just passionate about what he did, so I dunno, I just always liked that about him. And mainly just like, he speaks his mind whether it be good, it's never bad, but just, he speaks his mind, he doesn't let anybody change his mind and convince him others.

Do you speak your mind?

I think I do, but since I'm not, I don't have a job or anything like that, it's not always a good thing. And I don't always have like a chance to speak my mind, I mean, cuz, well only with him because he can speak his mind because if someone asks him a question about anything in the league or whatever, he can give his opinion on something, but with me, I don't really do anything where it's like an opinion thing, like school, it's not your opinion; you learn stuff and then you use it, so. I do speak my mind, but just not as much I guess.

How will you get to be an NBA analyst?

I just, like I said on there, I just gotta take everything I learn from this and other, I recently did news studies program with this kid at KYW, and I just gotta take everything that I learn from that, and work hard at school, of course, and just, take everything I learn and try to use it in a positive way. And stay focused, and if that's something I want to do, I gotta work hard for it.

Focus on program...What role will you take on during the program? leader, etc?

Um, well, I feel like, well, I'm friendly, I could say that. And, I'm not necessarily, I could say I'm a leader, but then again, not really cuz a lot of times it might seem like your bossy, and I'm not really bossy or anything. Like, I'll voice my opinion, but I'll never try to really take control of a situation, even though sometimes you should, but a lot of times I just try to let everybody do their fair share, and I feel like the main organizer cuz if there's a certain thing that we gotta do, I want to make sure that it's done right and done as well as we can do it, so, just make sure that everybody's on the right track, including me, and make sure I'm doing my part so that whatever we have to do is done right away.

What do you think your internship will be like?

I think it will be, I don't want to say fun, but I just think it'll be good cuz, like I said, there's not a lot of programs or anything like that, so once you, once I see, when something like this comes along, I just gotta take everything I learn from it and use it in the right way. I think it'll be, um, I think I'll learn a lot from it.

so it's a building point for the future?

Yes, well, yes, because I'm learning from people who are already doing this type of thing, so if they, they obviously know what it takes to get where they are, so anything they tell you, you gotta take it and use it.

Community role? How does it change based on who you're with?

Um, well, as far as just being in Chester, um I think that I can, I don't know if I am, but I don't know if kids look up to me or not, but I think I could be a role model because I'm not involved in like any, just bad stuff. Like, I'm never in trouble and like out on the street doing things I'm not supposed to be doing, so, and um, then in my family, like my little cousins can look up to me because I'm respectful to, well, I don't want to say I'm just like an angel or anything, of course there's times where like I'm not always the best, but for the most part I'm respectful, and just to adults in general, I'm respectful, so I think that younger people could look up to somebody like me. Um, and as far as school, um, I think that, again I don't want to say I'm a leader, but I think that um, I'm a, I'm good in school, too. I don't get in a lot of trouble, and like people, um, I guess since I'm friendly, you could say that I'm a leader, but like a lot of people, I don't want to say they look up to me because they're people my age, but yeah, I'm just like a positive person, and most people could, like nobody could really say that they don't like me, or I don't see any reason why anybody wouldn't like me. And then once again, I'm respectful to all my teachers, and, so.

How does community see you?

Um, I think cuz my neighbors and even my parents friends, they always talk about how nice I am and polite and respectful and everything. Um, my friends, I don't really, I mean, of course, there's a difference between how I act towards my friends and I act towards adults, I guess, I just know when to act a certain way and when not to, so when I'm around adults or anything like that, I know that, you know, you're supposed to act a different way than when you're around your friends cuz they're not your friends.

First impression?

Like I said, I'm friendly, so they would think that, they would of course think that I'm not gonna come up to somebody and meet somebody new being mean to them or something like that, so of course they're gonna think that I'm nice and, even if it's an adult, like I said, they're going think I'm polite, and that I'm friendly and everything so.

Outside view of Chester and its residents?

Um, well, I can just go based off my school. Everybody thinks it's just a terrible place. When I say I'm from Chester, they say, "Oh do you get shot at every day?" and oh, I have a cousin that goes to my school that's from here too, and the same thing to him, and they think that he's like the best thing ever because he plays basketball, and they think that everybody from Chester plays basketball, so like, there's something wrong with me cuz I don't, cuz I'm not like a superstar or antyhign. And they just think that it's a bad place in general, and they might not say it, but you can tell that they don't think that I should be there, just because somebody from Chester shouldn't be going to a school like mine. And they just think that, I guess they're kinda surprised the way I act because, even him, even my cousin, they're surprised at the way we act cuz we're not like what they expect everybody from Chester to be, rude and loud and all that stuff, so.

More school details?

Malvern Prep. It's a college prep school, and it's outside of West Chester. It's a Catholic school, all boys. It's a small school, it's like 500 people there.

Others' views of you affect you?

Um, yes, only because I try to make the right decisions, so that I'm not looked upon in a negative way, especially with school, once again, I try to make sure I'm doing the right thing so they can't say, "Oh, he's from Chester, so of course he's acting like that. We expect him to act like that." And even, when I'm at home or in my community or whatever, outside, I make the right decisions just because there's always consequences, especially you do something out in the street somewhere, there's always going to be a bigger consequence, so I try to always make the right decisions.

Pressure to be good example of Chester?

Of course, me myself, I want to be successful and, but I think that, I don't want to say it's pressure, but I do make sure to act a certain way to try to show them that everybody from, just people from Chester in general aren't bad people, aren't dumb, so I try to show them that their impression of people from Chester is wrong, their impression of black people period, I don't want to sound racist or anything, but just their impression of black people period, to seem like we don't belong at school like that, or I don't want to seem like, that we're dumb or something like that. I try to show that, you know, I can be respectful, I can be smart, and I can fit in there, just like anybody else, and be successful there, graduate.

Interview 2: Sean , July 1, 2009

billionaire who gives lots of money, write novels, have a good family...How will you make that happen? What do you want to do?

Um, I want to do, go to school for journalism, and I want to write for newspapers but also put out books as an author, so try to get into a good college, all the way through college, get my master's degree, and hopefully I can take myself from there.

What kind of novels?

All types cuz, um, I like to read, a lot of scientific books, well, not scientific, but um, science fiction books, like Harry Potter and stuff like that, so I think I'd write some type of books like that and I would write books for like kids, maybe how it is like growing up without a father and all types of books.

What do you like about reading and writing?

Um, I just love them. Reading, I just love a good book, cuz if you can catch my attention, I pretty much don't have any, um, any preferred books to read. Like writing, I like because I get to express my feelings a lot, so anytime I'm feeling some type of feelings, I just write them down. I just write a story about maybe how my day went or how my life is going, stuff like that.

Role in the program? leader, organizer, comedian

I can definitely see myself doing all three. Um, it depends on the situation, like, I can organize cuz, I mean, my mom she's ... so. Um, the comedian, um, I don't know, it depends on the type of person you are, some people say I'm funny, but I dunno. Um, and the leader, yeah, I can take my leadership roles at times.

Internship?

I think it's gonna be pretty fun. I want to get more experience. I need it, not just acting, writing, but like graphic design. I've always wanted to do that, but I never really knew how or had anybody to teach me or anything like that, so I just always wanted to get into that, and produce, always look at videos like "Oh, how they do that differently," so now I get the chance to actually do those.

Role in community? Changes?

I see myself as always being the "good kid," I guess...I don't follow people. I usually do my own thing regardless of what people say about me, so um, if it's bad and I know it, I'm not gonna get into it, regardless of what you said...

True around family, friends, etc?

Yes

What made you "the good kid"?

I mean, my mom, (laughs). Basically she raised me, "If you do this you get in trouble for it," and stuff like so, I don't like being in trouble with her, so I have ... respect for my mom.

What do you want your role to be in the community?

...Um, when you look at me, you say, "Oh I know him. He grew up 'round my way. He made it, he's giving back," so just that type of person who made it and is giving back, being a positive influence, showing young kids that they can do it, too.

Is it where you are or where you're going?

Yes

How does your community see you?

My teachers probably see me as, probably being pretty successful. My friends, they probably see me as, "Oh, he's always talking about this and that," but they'll see, one day, I'm a dreamer.

First impression?

They'd probably think, "Oh, he's just another one from the hood," something like that by the way I dress, but then once I'd talk to them, I'd change their perspective.

Outsiders' view of Chester?

I've talked to people outside of Chester, and um, in, um Coatesville, my brother, well not my like brother brother, he used to live up there, and we was just hanging out, and he was like, "Where you from?" and I said, "Chester." He was like, "Oh, I hear it's really bad down there, dudes always getting shot," this and that. And I'm like, "Ohhh, it's not that bad once you live there, but looking from the outside, looking from the outside, looking in, it can seem that way.

Others' view of you affect you/your decisions?

Sometimes, it depends. Um, like um, if it's just like, some people just clownin' me or something, like what I'm wearing or something, you know, I don't really pay any mind to it. But, if it's like, if I done something, and maybe somebody who I know has a um, a big um, a big influence on me. So, if my mom says I'm doing something wrong, I know I'm doing something wrong. So, if it's someone around me, who I know has a positive, um, like, someone older around me or something like that, they say if I did something, "You done that wrong," or if everybody around me tells me I'm doing wrong, then I must be do something wrong. So, I'll take some time to myself and figure out if I did it wrong, if I could have done it differently, so.

Who are those influences?

Probably, like people like you, DJ Cory-AK, and stuff like that.

And your mom, right?

Yeah, and my mom (laughs), exactly my mom.

Do you have siblings?

Um, I have a little sister, she's nine years old.

Do you feel like you're a role model for your sister?

Yeah, I think so. I mean, she doesn't show it, but my mom always tells me that me I am, but I don't think so by the ways she acts around me.

Pressure?

Yeah, with my family around me, I do. My mom always talks about me as being this and that, so I kinda have to live up to her image of me.

Interview 3: Anthony, July 1, 2009

music producer, graphic designer & entrepreneur...why?

I want to become a graphic designer because I like Photoshop and everything that you can do with Photoshop. There's a lot you can do with Photoshop, a lot of different things, a lot of stuff like that. I want to become a music producer because I like music, and I want to make music, too, and I want to help people make music, too. I want to become an entrepreneur because I wanna run my own business and have a couple of businesses in the area where my businesses are, too, so it's kinda, kinda like a chain, like a chain of my businesses. Like fast food, like, with McDonalds, I wanna do something like that cuz that seem nice. You got your own business and your own company.

How'd you get interested?

Oh, well, I don't really know how I got interested in Photoshop. I saw somebody using it one day, and they taking, they was taking a picture and putting somebody else in the picture, and I'm like, "That's nice. How you do that?" "Photoshop." And then they gave me the disc, and then I put Photoshop on my computer. And then at first, I didn't know how do none that stuff on there, I just had it. It was just sittin on the computer taking up space. So then finally, I just went on youtube and started typing and stuff about Photoshop, and then I learned things.

And then, a businessman and entrepreneur, there are a lot of businessmen and entrepreneurs and people who own our businesses in the city, and they seem like they're nice people, and like, it seem like you get a lot of experience out of doing something like that. And, it seems like, um, like everybody in your community respects you, and they feel as though you're a good person and they can trust you.

And with music, like I always wanted to know how music was made and like how you make music or something like that, I wanted to do that.

Role in the program?

Kind of a leader, cuz I didn't really come here to like play, not like play, but like, I take this serious. Cuz like, it's something that I like and I ain't gonna play with it, so I'ma kind be, I'ma kinda take a role as a leader.

Usually a leader?

I'm something like a leader. I mean, like, there's a leader, and then there's another leader. I'm kinda like the other leader.

Internship thoughts/goals?

I think it's gonna be real cool because it's, I'm learning something, I'm learning something, and like I'm doing something that I really like to do and I want to do, and like, I feel as though I'm learning a lot more things about the profession that I wanna get in to.

Role in community? How does it change based on who you're with?

I see myself as, um, how do I see myself? (pause) As a person that doesn't get in trouble, and like, I stay, like, I don't in trouble a lot. I'm a cool person, like a calm person, cool, calm, and collected. I don't really like trouble, I don't like it by itself, so I hang around, people who don't like, who like to do the same things I like to do. I feel as though, like, I'm an ambassador or something like that.

An ambassador for what?

Like, being cool, and calm and collected.

Does that change when with friends vs. family?

Nooo, I'm still cool around my family, calm and collected around my family, and I'm still cool, calm, and collected with my friends.

What do you want your role to be in your community? Would you want it to change?

Not really, I don't really wanna change my role. I don't really know why, I just like my role.

What do you like about it?

I mean, like, some people, like, be comin to me with their problems, and I could talk to them, and like give them advice cuz they know I'm a calm person, and I give out advice sometimes. And some people, they can talk to me, they can hang around with me, and I'm like, "Sure, you can hang with me for the day. Come chill with me for the day." (pause) I like that. Like, people feel as though they can come to me, relax with me, chill with me, hang out with me, talk with me. I'm like somebody's big brother. That's what I like.

Are you a role model?

Yeah, like that.

How do others see you?

Um, well, my friends, they see me as a cool person. They can always talk to me, they can always hang with me. My family, they see me as a loving and caring person. And at school, they see me as the goofy person.

Why are you the goofy person at school?

I 'on't know. I get my work done, but I still goof off.

First impression?

They would think of me? *Yeab.* Um, this boy, he a cool person. He talk polite. He holds himself up. He has good character. And I don't get in trouble and stuff like that.

Outsiders views of Chester?

People outside of the city, they gonna say stuff bad about the city cuz they don't, they're gonna say stuff bad about the city because they're from the outside looking in and they're not actually in the community seein what everybody else see. So, like, you're automatically gonna say something bad about something cuz you're not really there. People inside the community, they're gonna say bad things, too, but they're also gonna say good things, too, because you see things progress every day. Like, you see change, positive things happen every day.

You can see that when you're in the community, but when you're outside?

You can still change, but not really cuz you're on the outside lookin in, so you don't know what's going on.

Does what others think of you influence how you see yourself/your decisions?

Really yeah, cuz like, if a younger person sees me, like I don't want a younger person to do, like if a younger person sees me do bad decisions, I don't want them to see "Oh yeah, that's cool, so I can do that, too." I want them to be like, "No, that's not cool," so yeah, like that.

Pressure?

Noo, noo.

This is what you want to do?

Yeah.

Interview 4: Jamal, July 1, 2009

Music related stuff? Producer? Artist?

I want to be on more, like, producing type stuff. *Why?* It's, I'll do both, but I'd like to be on the producing side. And, really, my whole goal is really to put people out, and I don't want to do it all by myself. It's to get somewhere, and then bring people.

How'd you get interested?

Myself, I always liked music pretty much. Like, I always played basketball before music, but I always liked music regardless, like, I always did, so it just came to a point, which one was I gonna do, cuz they both take up a lot of time, if you went to 'em, so I had to pick. So I just picked music cuz that's what I like to do.

How will you get there?

Oh, see, I don't want to make it. I don't want to make it. That's what's crazy about me. I don't want to make it into no game and be rich. If that come, it come, but my goal is really, this is on a lower level business to get my own stuff, and run things. Like a lot people that wanna showcase talent, gotta pay money. And they be the right people that showcase money without the (tunes), so I'm on another level, where I can get the (tunes). But if you was trying to make a move, yaknowwhalmean, it's all about talent. It's really leaving the money at home, type of business. Cuz, that's what people really in this for, the money. And this is like a money, money, money, money situation. And I really don't wanna make it, honestly, I really don't, cuz I don't want to be four times and somebody tellin me what to do with my music, and I don't really wanna be like that.

So, ideal job?

I mean everybody wants to be the boss, right? I guess I could be the boss. But, um, naw, really though, it could really be-Whatchu mean, as far as music? (Pssshh) It proba'ly just, I would rather be

a guy that decide whether it get put it out or not, I'll say that. As far what they're telling you, cuz a lot people need that these days, with the music it's all messed up—pretty much to decide whether this get put out or not. So, basically, I'll run a record label then.

Role in the program?

I really don't know cuz it ain't start yet. (pause) Um, I 'on't really have a answer for that, it ain't start. I don't even know my position. When it start, but I could probably take a guess. I 'on't know, I guess I could say a leader. I guess I'ma just run with the leader. I 'on't really know how it's gonna be yet.

Normal group role?

9 times outta 10. When I work in groups, it's always music, and I'm always the guy to be depended on cuz I do everything, the recording and everything. So I gotta be a leader cuz if not, then nothing else goes on.

Internship (cory or video)?

The video part, I always liked the editing and stuff, so that's gonna be fun off the bat. And with Cory, he's very, he really into music, so that's just gonna be a pleasure right there, off the bat, so.

Community views you...?

(Pssh) I'm definitely not like everybody else, I could tell you that for a fact. (Pssh) What role I'm in? Tryin to be different, tryin to change it. Man, it's crazy out there, for real for real. People brainwashed on dumb stuff, like what they see, what they hear. (Pssh), just with everybody doint, people get so caught up. It just like hits the repeat and everybody's following. That's what it is.

What are they brainwashed with?

(Pssh) Dirty rap, just like, dumb stuff, the rap music that's number one. Then, it's just like, it's getting passed down to generations and generations, and it's just gettin worse and worse and worse. And it's startin at a younger age, just like, a little girl could know a Soulja Boy dance before could write her name or something like that. With Soulja Boy, he talking about a donk, a girl, or something, you like, "How you know that?! And you don't know your name?! And he downin you." But they don't know that, cuz they brainwashed, they think it's just a good song cuz it's a nice beat.

How are you trying to be different?

Like, I learned from experience, trynna make different music, it's always gonna be hard cuz you different, but people gonna respect you. That's one thing about people, the younger people, they not going to deny hot music. They not. Like, even if they don't care what you saying, they just not gonna deny it. And it's like, you just really gotta meet 'em in the middle for 'em to really. Like, it's really a meet in the middle type of situation. Cuz, I know everybody that say, "I don't want to cuss in my rap," and you don't have to do that to really get them to be fully witchu, but they like hearin bangin beats, so you gotta meet 'em in the middle and give 'em a bangin beat, and then you get the good part. So it's like a meet in the middle type a, type a thing. But it's always a hard task. It's not really hard being different, it's hard getting people to follow you. That's hard part. Anybody can be different, but it's consistency basically.

What do you want your role to be?

(Pssh) Basically, just, like, just being different, being the leader. That's about it really. Like, I wanna be the go-to guy, like, if it's like, something like, this is what happens a lot, somebody got a kid, a

son or a daughter. I wanna be like that go-to guy, like, what can they do, like a program or something, I wanna be like that go-to guy. YouknowhaI'msayin, I can have something for 'em to do, so I'd rather be like that type of person. Like, basically to keep 'em from standing on the streets or something, like if they out late at night, I'd rather it be late at night comin from, like, something positive that they workin on, rather than coming from late at night from doing nothing, running the streets. So it's basically get-em-off-the street type of situation.

But that's what it is, a lot of people say there's nothing to do. They really, like, I always thought, when there's a party and the city's trying to give a nice, positive party, or a skating rink, and they wanna fight, youknowhaI'msayin. It's like, it's crazy. It's like, there's nothing to do, but then you gotta look as we throwin that away, as we runnin that away by the way people actin. That's why I said it's real hard to, it's real hard to get people to follow what you do. That's like the hardest part. That's real hard. It's like people hear you today, but they don't hear tomorrow. It's not no consistency in what they doing. It's a one day thing.

How does community see you? Friends? Family?

My friends, they basically on the same (tip) I'm on, so that's definitely not a hard question. Consistency, like, just trynna be different in a positive way, and just tryin get people to follow—OR, not even follow, but just respect, just respect what we do. And the respect not a issue. And my family, they just know I just want respect, that's about it. They always been, just, in the, youknowhaI mean, respect. But that's basically my whole thing, with the peers, as far as my age and just younger peers, it's just respect. Like that's what everybody want, respect. That's the reason you (flow) with somebody. Cuz the guy got (life) sneakers and people say they nice, so people respectin the sneakers. So, that's really why people follow, respect, if you think about it. They want the nicest clothes cuz Jay-Z had it, and everybody said Jay-Z look nice. They respectin him for his clothes, so they wanna follow Jay-Z. So, it's really partially kind of a respect mission, and that's what people want, respect. And if you get, I seen that a lot in action. Like, the craziest bulls, like, it's all on like how you approach somebody, so I think respect, that's really what I'm big on, as far as how other people would see me, respect.

Outsiders view of Chester?

Well, sometimes, I be kinda feelin it in some way cuz when I go outta Chester, I gotta say, "outside of Philly," youknowhaI'msayin, like I go far, depending on how far I go, I gotta say outside-a Philly. And, for real for real, I never knew, some Philly don't even know Chester. *Really?* Yeah, they really don't know Chester, so I be like, Wow.

But um, I can speak for Swarthmore, since that's like kinda outside of Chester, how they Chester. I think everybody sees the good and the bad. Cuz it's like, it's always a good, like, honestly. Then, if something happened today in this Voices for Change, um thing, where a kid, God forbid, died, the news would be here. But, for the first day of the program, would the news be there? Would Action News be there sayin this is a story? So, you gotta look at it like that. They showin the bad, but for the first day of the program, would the news be sayin, this is a positive program in there in Chester, PA? Would they be here to showcase that? So, it's like, they showin the bad. They do show the good sometimes, I can't say that, but they rarely show the good events, like stuff like this. It's not really being promoted on a higher level to where people can say, "Okay, Chester making some noise," so that's the problem right now.

Other people affect you/your decisions?

They don't influence how I think about, they don't really influence like my decisions. Sometimes it can, like see how I change, it depends on what they say. Because I'm never, I never take stuff to the heart, like, I always tell people, everything I say is an option. I can't, with my peers, I can't make them do. They look, I'm the same age as them, I can't make them do anything, so everything I say is really an option to them. So, I mean, Ima tell you what I think is right, and it's your option. So, to me, I feel like, it's not really on me if you was told. And if I was told by somebody else and I did wrong, it's my fault, cuz I was told. I was always given an option, so I look at it as it's an option.

Sometimes, if it's an older person, for example. Let's just say, it might impact me a little bit, depending on, cuz if it's a positive person, and they got positive history with me, it's gonna impact me. Just, you know. Or, I'ma give it some thought. So, I'd say, I definitely give everything people have to say some thought, as long as there's no negativity in the mix. But, most of the time, it really don't affect me if it's negative. It's not going to affect me. And positive, I give it some thought, I'ma always give it some thought, just cuz it's nothing, there's nothin to hurt.

Pressure?

Naw, I really, I really don't feel like it's pressure, like I tell anybody, I ask anybody, "What do they like to do best?" And whatever they like to do best, they can do it in a direction for change. Like you can do anything for change, honestly. You don't have to be a Martin Luther King, like, or like a Barack Obama and be a lawyer to be, like I always told people that. You could be a basketball player and never get rich, but start a basketball league, a positive basketball league. You could like to record stuff, you could do anything and you could take some little kids off the street and show them how to record stuff. You could do anything. So, you really don't have to be a Barack Obama or a Martin Luther King; you could just do it, and get direction, what you like to do. So really, there's not no pressure. It's just consistent. You just gotta be consistent. You gotta really want to do, honestly. You can't want to do it cuz somebody else tell you. You gotta want to do it for yourself. Whereas only, where you gonna slack? If you only gonna be doing it part time, it's not a part-time job because somebody gonna watch you that you'd never expect. Somebody, there's always somebody. Like I never know who watchin me, but it's pro'ly somebody. It's probably like, "He came a long way," or somebody out there, like, so it's really not a part-time job. You gotta continue to grow.

Interview 5: Ashley, July 2, 2009

What did you say for the last question? Where do you want to be in the future?

I said I want to be in college, I want to graduate from Cornell University, and I want to major in Law and minor in Communications. Um, Cornell's in New York, and so, after that I just planned on being, like, on a (law) kind of radio show. And from there, I just like, I don't have all the details yet, but from there it was just, I kinda want to like, be on television, kinda like The View.

And so you think going to Cornell will help get you there?

Yes.

Ideal job?

Hmm, (pause) maybe like, a t.v. show, something like Oprah.

Role in the program?

Um, I would like to be a leader. I think I have some leadership qualities, but then at the same time, I'm human, I would probably get stressed out, too. But I think I would probably stick to the leader role.

Is that what you do in most group situations?

Yeah, take control. I'm very controlling.

Internship?

Um, of course, I would like more experience with others, like plus media, journalism, since that's basically what I want to do with the rest of my life. I'd like to get as much experience as possible.

Community role? How does it change? How do people see you?

Um, I'm pretty loud, outspoken, and outgoing. But chu know, ... that's still just kinda how I am. And of course I like to help people, and I do a lot of things at my church that help people. Like, we throw this shelter block party and things like that.

Do friends see you differently than parents?

No, it's still just the same.

What do you want your role to be?

Yeah, I'd like to do more to be able to help people in my community. Um, you know, I just want people to look to me as a role model.

Do you think you're a role model now?

(Laughs) um, not so much. You know, there's room for improvement.

First impression?

Um, they would probably think I was shy, but you know, I'm not really shy, but that's probably how I come off at first. And, probably just a shy, nice girl. But if you get to know me, I'm really not like that. I mean, I'm nice, but I'm really not shy.

Why do others think you're shy at first?

Because I probably won't really have much to say cuz I won't know you, so I just kinda fade into the background a little bit.

Outsiders views of Chester?

Um, people have really had thoughts about Chester. Like I go to Cardinal O'Hara and a lot people just say, "Oh, it's bad. It's full of ghetto people." And it's not really like that, like, that's what they get from what other people say, like he-say, she-say. Have you ever been to Chester? Have you ever, you know, seen what it's like? It's not really all like that. It's, there's a lot of good things out of Chester, you just gotta find them.

Other people's views influence you/decisions?

Not so much, like I really don't care what other people think. But, if it's like criticism, like if they're giving me, like good criticism, and telling me, "You need to work on this," or, I might take it into consideration or just try to fix that.

Does it matter who gives you that advice?

Um, it really doesn't matter. But if it was like my parents, I probably wouldn't, you know, show that I really care, but you know, I would care later on. I would think about it, like you know, you do need to change this or that. But if it was my friends, I would just be like, "Yeah, you know, you're right. I do need to change that."

Pressure? Or is it your nature?

Um, sometimes I do feel like I'm pressured because, you know, at first I didn't really like to help people. It's like my mom liked it and my mom was the one pushing me, but the more and more I did it, the more and more I enjoyed helping others, and seeing the people smile and stuff like that.

Interview 6: Michelle, July 2, 2009

Winning Oscars, changing the world, having a family, etc. What makes you want to do them?

Well, when I see like, I like helping people anyway. It just makes me feel good to help people, and like, my role models are like, people like Beyonce and people like that, so when I see, like, how she impacts people just by giving back, it makes me want to do that, too, see how I could really change a lot of things, so that's one of the reasons why.

How will you get to all those goals?

To win Oscars, I guess, to work hard at what I want to do, like acting, whatever. I would have to work really hard, and to get to play those different types of roles or Oscar winning roles. And to help people, I guess, it's do all you can do and help startin out with different charities and then maybe startin my own foundations and stuff to just go out and help with the different things that I'm involved in.

What got you interested in helping people?

I guess what got me interested in helping people is cuz my mom does it. And, when, like I see the feedback that she gets, like, she works for the children's youth services. And when she's able to help the parents, like at the time when they be taking their kids away from them, the parents always come back and always thank her, and to see her put a smile on somebody's face, it makes me feel good. And I'm like, well I want to do that same thing for somebody else. To be able to put a smile on somebody's face makes me feel good, too, so that's why I would like to help somebody. And maybe start, like, charities or things like that.

Acting, it started, I think when I was at church, I liked, well we had different like plays and stuff, and I like to act because I get to express myself in a different way. Like that's what I like dancing and all that stuff cuz I can express myself in ways that you can't always express yourself, so that's why I like to act.

Role in the program?

Um, hmm, I hope that I will be a leader because I know that in everything else I do, people are always telling me that I have like that leader(ship) and ability. And I think that would get me far, so I hope that I can still play that leader role in this program, and maybe help others out if it's a time where they do need help.

Internship?

Overall, I think the internship will be fun. I hope to gain more knowledge about the information in the field that I would be going into, and hopefully it'll help me in the future and help me with my career, what I want to do. And overall, I just think it'll be a good opportunity.

Role in community?

Um, in my community, I guess, a role that I have is kind of setting like a positive role, like with some of my friends, the things that they did or the things that they do whatever, I try to just set that positive role, show them a better way. Um, and, it doesn't really change with my friends or just

certain people because I just want to see them better themselves because, like, most of friends around my neighborhood go to Chester School District, and I don't, and they always said, "Well, you have a better chance to get out of Chester," and stuff like that, but I like to just try to help them out, tell them that you also can do that if you just work hard, so.

Same around parents?

Yeah, that's what I think, that it's the same around my parents. That's, I think, where I get it from, so it's the same.

What you want your role to be? Would you want it to change?

No, not really.

Would you describe yourself as a role model for others?

Mm-hmm, I would.

Do you think you're a role model for just people younger than you or for your friends, etc?

Uhh, yeah, I remember one of my friends was telling me that I was, like a role model for her because she said that, like, I was very mature for my age and whatever, and that I had a goals, and I knew what I wanted to do, and that's what she wanted to be able to do and become where she's able to have goals for herself and mature more, and just be more disciplined and focused, so I do think that I am somewhat of a role model for my friends.

How does community see you?

Um, I guess I would say as a leader. They see me as somebody who would make the change, and kinda like (pause), um, is the one who would step out and not go with the crowd.

And that's true across the board (students, teachers, etc?)

Yeah.

First impression?

Well, um, I think they probably would think, at first, cuz like, people tell me when I walk, I have this air about me, but after they got to know me, they would think that I'm really nice, funny, outgoing person, and just a all-around warm person.

Outsiders view of Chester?

Um, well, I guess it depends on, like, if I'm with my friends from school, they'd probably be like, "Oh, I can see where you act like you're from Chester here a little bit," but most of the time people wouldn't believe that I was from Chester because I don't go to Chester school district or I don't, like, hang out with most of the people out in Chester. And, they have a stereotype about children in Chester, so they wouldn't really say that, wouldn't picture me being from Chester.

What is that stereotype of Chester?

Um, I guess a girl who's hard, who's always going to the party, (pause) like everything on her is fake, and it's real ghetto and tacky because when you see things on the news most of the time it's about things that happen at Chester High, and most of the time it's about the fights. So, when they see that, that's just how they automatically stereotype, like, girls from Chester, when they see 'em on the news and stuff.

Does what others think of you affect you/decisions?

Um, sometimes, it depends, like, if it's where, something where I know that I need to change, then, I'll work on it, but if it's something that I know someone just, like, if it's a positive thing that I have that somebody probably wants to have, so like, they'll say something negative about it, I won't really worry about it, but if it's something that I know is negative and maybe I need to change, if somebody'll point it out, then I would work on it.

Does it matter who tells you?

Yeah, if it's like people that I know that I'm not that close with or some people that I really don't get along with, then I know that it's just nothing to pay attention to, but if it's like a best friend or a family member, then I'll pay attention to it because they know me better and that's how I know that I'm changing and I need to go back to the way I was the way before.

Pressure to help? to be different?

Um, I guess it's pressure because, some of the people that I'm surrounded by are, they're not like, kinda always on my level, so it's like thing of, "Oh you just wanna look good," or this, that and the third. But, at the same time, I guess it's not pressure cuz I just know it's something that I really want to do, so if it's something that I love to do, then I just want to do it, and not really pay attention to what other people say.

Interview 7: Olivia, July 2, 2009

Journalist, producer, dancer, or writer...Why are you interested?

Well, a lot of them, you have to go back over and make sure they're perfect before you can actually do it or perform it, so I like to usually do rough drafts and rewrite a lot cuz I love it, so.

What first got you interested in writing?

I don't know, I kinda was doing it since I was little, I guess, the things, I'll say the things that can help me and give me more things to do, like what I can get out of it that would make me draw close to it.

What do you get out of writing?

Well, I get experience, a good experience as a youth and experience to help others.

How do you plan on becoming this writer, dancer, whatever?

Well, following up in school, paying attention, um continue writing, of course. Um, listening, like those kinds of things that can get you far in life.

Describe your ideal job.

Probably, a writing school where you can write things, and then produce them, and then there'll be a part where you can like dance, make your own music, you can write your own songs, and stuff.

In the program, what role will you have?

Probably working in all aspects cuz there might be a certain thing that somebody else can do better than me, and then maybe I can do something that's better than somebody else, so probably working in all aspects would be good because I can be a leader if we have a problem. I can organize if people feel comfortable with me organizing. Um, then I can just be a follower and follow other people that instruct.

Internship, what will it be like? What do you want to get out of it?

Well, I hope it'll be a good experience because I never wrote a paper before and when we asked what we could do, he said we could put our own creativeness into it, and especially, when we're being used over the school year for this, then, honestly, I think it would be a good thing.

What is your role in your community? How does it change?

Well, um, organization, looking at things from different angles. Lot of people they look at something from a certain and angle and then take it from that. Looking at things from a different angle you can see how things would play out and then also taking precautions. So basically having a good plan.

So someone who organizes and provides different points of view?

Mmhmmm.

Does it change based on who you're around?

I'm probably the same around everybody. I don't kinda put a show on for somebody else.

Do you want your role to be different?

Yes, I would. Maybe for them to see as a person with higher education so to speak, higher experience than a regular person from anywhere else would kinda see, so a person that would be writing ... in newspapers at the age as I am, 12, so I guess, um, a good role model.

Do you think you're a role model now?

Um, I'm good model, especially for my brother, he's young, so I hope he would like to do what I like instead of what other people do because a lot of things that other people do isn't the best road to go to.

How do other people see you? Classmates, friends, family, teachers?

Well, my friends, some of them see as a different person from them a lot. A lot of people at school, they usually are a follower after somebody, and that can't always be a good term, so I usually am my own leader. I lead myself, that way I don't need to get in trouble. My family, I'm kinda like a lea-, not a leader, but I follow like the instructions and ... But when it comes to me and my sister and stuff, I kinda have to be the leader or sometimes the follower. And then, my parents, I'm gonna be the follower because I have to listen to them. My teacher, she knows that I'm a leader and a follower in different in aspects. So, I'm just like following when supposed to, like following instructions or keeping up with everybody, but then the other following ..., so following positively so to speak.

First impression?

Hopefully it's a good person, and I would, well, of course when I first meet them, I'll hopefully be meeting them as a positive not the wrong people, so hopefully when I meet this person, it has to be something that is impressive or shows themself as very different from somebody else.

So you think they would think that you were an impressive young woman or what?

I would think an impressive person cuz like, if they see my picture or something, just if they see my picture and it was like under a, above a headline that was "Outstanding" or, they'd be like, "Hey! Weren't you from that paper or whatever?!" And then, I'd be like, "Yes," so they'd probably find me as a role model or a good youth to look up to.

Outside view of Chester?

A lot of people, they think Chester is a bad place to be, but to me, I think Chester, when you really live in some kind of city, it's not any different place from anything else, it's the same place, just has a

different name. Everybody thinks there's just this certain place where all these people get in trouble, when it's not because we are little in the state of Pennsylvania actually, so there's not really too much we can do to make us outstanding Philadelphia or whatever. So, I think that people should really or actually come and stop taking other people's advice. Some people don't even like riding in Chester.

Does other people's view of you affect you/your decisions?

Well, if I know them well, if they try to tell me, like I don't like to really dress, like I don't like to wear too much new stuff, I like to stay with the old, like a casual look, like I would to wear [things] like that, not like the newest thing that's out, and if they try to say, like, "You need to wear new stuff" or whatever. I'd be like, "Well, you know, whatever." But, I'd still be myself, they wouldn't have an impact on me unless I was wearing like something that I'm not supposed to, or doing something I'm not supposed to, but usually I never had too much of that problem.

Is there pressure to always be an impressive person?

I think there's a lot of stuff, it's not always pressure of trying to *be* the person, so a pressure of trying to be somebody else, but not too much pressure of trying to be like, basically it's more trying to be myself, cuz I like to be myself, but other people they kinda want me to at least follow them or follow somebody that I'm not really like, somebody that I don't really like or to be a role model to.

So you're saying there's pressure for you to follow somebody else?

Yes, pressure cuz a lot of people don't want me to be who I am cuz I'm a really laid back you know kinda person, you know. When you have ideas, I have ideas, we put those ideas together and a big idea, a good idea, but a lot people, some people, they don't take me serious cuz I'm so young, so I really don't look up to them as a role model.

Interview 8: Faith, July 2, 2009

Magazine journalist. Why?

Well, I like to write and I enjoy journaling in a person life, and I also enjoy, like how I see journalists, and I read the magazines, and I see the articles, and I want to be able to do that one day, write the article, have people know me for writing it, and I also want to travel the world, and I know journalists get to do both.

What got you interested in journalism and writing?

I used to love reading teen magazines and fashion magazines, magazines in general, and then after reading it, it would be fun to be a part of actually doing it and making it happen.

How do you plan on getting there?

Um, I do very well in my English classes, and next year one of my half-credit classes will actually be a journalism class, so I want to participate in more programs like this one and do internships and go to college, of course in journalism.

What role will you have in the program?

I could be a leader or organizer, but I'm really team oriented, so I just like working with teams in any position...

How do you normally work in groups?

I'm normally the leader.

Internship thoughts?

I think it should be good, and fun, and meaningful. And I hope to learn how to cover a story correctly and then how to go back and write about it in a way that can be produced.

What role do you have in your community? How does it change?

Um, well, I'll just do Chester cuz my parents are pastors, so I'm here all the time. And, I help with the kids all the time in the community and with the church, so I help teach them dance and do arts and crafts and stuff like that. So, I just help them with the kids.

So, if your parents were to describe you, what would they say?

Um, I'm organized, I probably spend too much time studying, but I'm very easy to get along with. I'm a people person.

What would your friends say? Is it the same?

Well, all them would like to probably tell you that I have a good academic ethic, but, um, all my friends come to me for advice, and I handle all my friends all the time, especially when they just need a moment or are stressing over something or something like that.

Why do you think your friends come to you?

I don't know. Cuz, normally, the situations they're going through, I haven't gone through cuz most of my friends are older than me, but I guess I give good advice cuz they keep coming back.

What do you want your role to be?

I think it's fine. I would want to help more kids, and get out and help the community more.

Why do you like helping people so much?

It probably comes from my parents and my family cuz like my cousin has a day care and I go over there and help, and I have a big family, so.

How do you think your teachers and other community members see you?

Probably the same. Smart, outgoing, probably, confident.

First impression?

Probably that I'm easy to talk to.

Outsiders view of Chester?

They probably think that they're ghetto and that the city crazy because I live and go to school in Delaware, and my friends even worry about me when I say I'm going back to Chester. It's like, "I'm from here, I'll be fine."

Why do you think they worry about you?

They just hear all the bad the stuff. I think people don't hear as much good stuff about Chester cuz there's good stuff, too.

Does what other people think of you influence you/your decisions?

Not really, I try to do what's best for me and what's smartest.

How do you decide/know what that is?

If I need to, I can go to somebody and have them help me, but there's always going to be somebody that's not agreeing with what you're doing, and so that means you have to be happy with what you're doing.

Pressure to act a certain way?

I used to, but now I do it cuz I want to.

Oldest in family? (Yes), So is there pressure to do the right thing? Be the role model for younger siblings?

Yeah, at times, I'm the oldest of five, and it's like if I mess up, then, I have to, I try to go back and do it, but it's not for our family, it's not for our parents, it's just for me.

Interview 9: Madison, July 6, 2009

Entrepreneur. Why?

Cuz I got a lot of different businesses that I want to. I want to get a homeless shelter, and it's like a housing program that I want to do, where we hold the homeless for like 6 months or 4-6 months where we teach them how to get a job and teach them how to make income and save it, and they can, you know what I mean, get back on it, get a new job or we could give cooking classes and take 'em to church...but like once or twice a week to get their faith built back up. And I mean, and I want counselors to help to, you know, see what the issue was and see where this problem began so they won't run into that again.

Another vision I have is, I really like the music, ... like with the radio, I really want to look more in that. Um, I like counseling people. I enjoy that. There's a million things I like to do. I like playing the piano and singing, and just in terms of that, and then, creative writing and journalism because I like writing poetry and plays, and I want to direct movies when I get older, my own, my own movies.

How are you going to get there?

Um, college education mostly, connections. Um, and God, having faith, pushing.

What role will you have in the program?

Um, I really interested in the play part, like I'm really interested in writing the script. I want to, um, assign the actors, or I'm not good enough to tell you if you're a good actor or not, I'm just not there yet... So, you know, I'm really interested in writing and seeing other people play out my feelings.

What do you think your internship will be like?

Ok, I don't know I'm a little disappointed cuz it's not with 'The Spirit, which goes out every week and it's something real exciting, like "The Chester Spirit" everybody knows it. It's like, "The Chester Spotlight," nobody knows about that honestly, and it's like, ... But, I mean, you know, I'm grateful for what I got, but it's just a little, like, it's once a month, come on, you know what I mean.

Any specific skills you want to gain?

Um, to learn how to write in different ways. To know the difference between writing plays and poetry and short stories and writing for newspapers, it's more serious, and I can't put how I feel in the newspaper, I just gotta put the facts, so it'll be interesting to learn how to write, just straight forward.

What role in community?

Um, like really, I see the plays that I write and the poetry that I give, the poetry that I write, basically isn't just for me all the time, it's for other teenagers who probably understand what I'm going

through and understand it right off the bat. All my stuff I don't just write for me, I write it for others cuz, you know what I mean, you're not the only one who goes through what you go through. And, plays, just so people get the inspirational message out of it. If it's changing life around or just..., you know what I mean, if it's just something, I just like inspiration stuff where you can get up at the end and say, "Well I was really changed and affected by it." And, you know, even for instance, Michael Jackson dying, it's like, and I'm a Christian, it's like, "Was he saved?" Like, I hope he was saved. I don't want him to go to hell, but it brings up reality, like am I doing everything I need to do because... had the whole world, and he had the whole world, but it was his soul. So, I don't, you know, I want to make sure that what I'm doing is God's purpose and not just gaming the world, cuz I don't want to lose this.

How does your community see you?

Well, they'd say I'm leader, and um, I'm different, even though it hard sometimes to stand out and to be different and to not like everybody, but it really encourages me to keep doing, being who I am and who God told me to be because you know, it's hard, you know, high school, peer pressure, I mean, you know what I mean. But, God is my number one motivation, like I wouldn't be the way I am, I wouldn't make the choices I make if it wasn't for Him. You know, I cut a lot of stuff out because I care too much, you know what I mean, the way He sees me, and I don't know want to hurt, you know what I mean, His feelings out of anybody. So, they see me as a leader, they inspirational. Um, they see me as a lot of things, I'm still looking at myself, trying to find this, and it's just, I'm grateful because they're really helping to become that person.

Is that how everybody, friends, teachers, etc, see you?

Yeah, um, I think most of the time. I mean, every now and then you have fall outs with people and if they don't really know you, it's like, "Uh, she's a nasty girl," you know what I mean, but I mean, you have you're little fall outs, but if you really get to know me, I'm not like that at all, and that's not my first impression, you know. ... You know what I mean, I'm nice person, but, you got your ugly days, and it's like, "Sorry, I wasn't tryna..." you know, "I'm really not like this," so mostly yeah. And then...

Is that how you want people to see you?

I want people to see me as that, but I want people to see as, like at my church they think, like "You're so holy. You don't do nothing wrong." ... But I'm a human being, I make mistakes, you know what I mean, and I don't want, you know what I mean, other teenagers, especially, looking at me like I'm so perfect, especially at my church thinking I'm so perfect, like teenagers, and it's like, "NO." I got issues just like you. I don't want you to look at me where I'm so perfect, where you feel like I can't relate to your situation, or you can't ask me for help cuz I don't know what you're talking about.

Pressure to be perfect?

Yeah, I mean, honestly, yeah. It feels like it sometimes cuz it's like, you're pressured to, it's not even you trying to be something, it's just the way people perceive you already, before you can even, you know what I mean, come off that way. And it's like, well dang, then I really got get to this standard, and people living for God so good, and I gotta get like that. And sometimes, that's how a lot of church people end up straddling the fence and not being true, but they ...and that's how I am. But, I mean, yeah, I've been on the fence before, and sometimes people do, so I mean, I'm not perfect, but and I don't want people to look at me like just so perfect and I don't mistakes, cuz when you hear a

mistake that I made, it's like a big blow, like a big disappointment, like seriously.... It's like I'm a real person, a teenager, really.

First impression?

Nice, great, and outgoing, energetic, funny, um, crazy a little bit, not sarcastic, I can't say sarcastic, but like funny, like sarcastic to people I know, just joking around, like teenagers, but no, not to adults. My mom would slap me, (laughs), but uh, no, not to adults, but teenagers.

Oustiders view of chester?

Um, Chester High. That's the bad city. Ohmygod. That school is horrible. I think they just see Chester High. They don't even know Chester, they just know about the school. And whatchu think?! It's 1000 kids in just one high school! Good kids and troublemaking kids, and really no kid is a troublemaker. They just go do stuff, and go through stuff in their life express it in sometimes dumb ways, you know what I mean, but it's one high school full of kids that don't have the first class life, so they'll do a lot. Somebody was getting shot. You know what I mean, you always have to watch your back. So, I mean, I think they see it for kinda what it is and kinda what it's not.

Others view of you influence you?

Um, other people, I can say, honestly, half and half. Sometimes I worry about what my mom would think, and it's not really about what other people would think, Mr. Cory tell me that all the time. It's really about how I feel about the situation, and really not leaning on what somebody else told me to or how somebody else feels about that. It's up to me, you know what I mean, and I think that's what makes it hard for my mom, when she used me just following everything she saying. Now, I'm older, and I gotta make my own decisions, and if I feel it's best, then Ima do it, but if I don't, I'm just not gonna do it. So, I still go with a little bit of people's opinions...but most of all, I grew out of that and I'm happy.

Interview 10: Angel, July 9, 2009

Successful sports agent or analyst? What made you interested in that?

Um, since I was playing sports for a long time, since I was little, and I always wanted to something involving sports, and like, I'm very interested in writing about that, and communications and promotions and stuff like that, so um, that got me into like sports and doing that kind of thing.

So it combines what you're interested in?

Yeah.

How will you get there? Like programs in school and stuff like that.

Yes, um, I do. I always stay after school for extra help, ... I always stay, even though I might not need to stay, I always stay after school for extra help.

As a woman going into sports? Is it helping you? Hurting you? anything?

It's just equal. I'm like anybody else, boy, girl, whatever the case.

Role in program?

Um, being a student, and learning I can take in, and taking in everything that people teach me. ... either if it's filming or whatever has to be done.

How do you usually work in groups?

I like to write, like write down notes and things like. I'm usually, I can be the leader for an activity, but usually I do the writing part.

Internship?

I think it would be fun, and that I would learn, like I've always wanted to do graphic design, so it would just, make my knowledge for it better.

Anything concrete you want to get out of it?

Um, just how to do things, how to make things, like not so plain, but make it really pretty.

Community role?

My role is basically to be a leader for kids my age and things like that, and to always be positive about the things that I do. And it shouldn't, I know it may change, but it shouldn't change with who I'm around, so.

What do you want your role to be?

Yeah, just to make sure when I'm around, it doesn't matter who I'm around, that I act the same, and always be a leader no matter who I'm around.

How does community see you? Friends, parents, teachers?

Um, they see me as, well, I'm always in everything. I'm a good student. I'm very good in class, so, a good student, on a good path.

Friends are the same way?

Yeah, most of them, I have friends that are not as smart as me, but they, and they're not as brought as well as I am. I have friends like that, but I try to put them in the path to get to where I am.

First impression?

Um, well usually, the way that I, I guess, people see as, sometimes they see as, not stuck up, but like spoiled or like, not haughty, but like, I don't know what it is, like, but I try to like, just be me, no matter where. But I think they seem as, I like to talk and I like to have a lot of friends, so they see as maybe a spoiled black person.

Why do you think they see as spoiled?

Cuz, well, I guess cuz I can it show sometimes, like when I go with my friends and stuff like that, but I guess, people say the way I carry myself. I think I carry myself well, and people don't, like they carry themselves differently than I do, so they see as spoiled or something rather than how I am.

Outside view of Chester?

Um, they probably think it's a bad place to go and bad things happen here, but it's not really that. Like, if they lived, like how we lived here before, and stuff like that, it's the same as anybody, like it's home to some people and it's ok.

How did people in Delaware react when you said you were from Chester?

"Oh it's dirty down there," stuff like that. I never thought of it as dirty, I thought it was, I had my friends down here, I lived there. I basically had, it's different, and then I explained to them, not all of Chester is dirty. Some parts are alright and some parts aren't, so.

Are you a role model?

Yes, um I'm always involved in a lot of activities, and I have two younger sisters, so, and I'm around younger kids at times, so I always make sure that I try to use the right language and just carry myself the right way.

Pressure to behave a certain way?

Yes, because my sister, she's more, we're really alike, but then we're not alike at the same time. Like she's more, like, she's like, she's not smarter than me, but we take different paths sometimes, like I might do the wrong thing, but she says she's always done the right thing, and then like I go off. Not a lot from my parents, but like, "[Faith] does this," duhduhduh. Ok...

Others influence you/ decision?

Not at all. It used to, but not anymore.

What helped you grow?

When I moved to Delaware at first, like, I wanted to be, like when I went to school down here, I was like the cliché popular girl, and down in Delaware, I didn't know nobody, so I just followed everybody else, and I changed the way, not a bad person, but like my personality changed and everything. And then, like my mom told me and my sister told me, and like now I'm happy without having to do anything like that.

Appendix C: Participant Survey Questions

1. Rate how much you **like** the following activities on a scale from 1 to 5 (circle 5 if you like it a lot and 1 if you don't like it at all).

Writing	Radio Hosting/DJing
Interviewing Others	Producing Radio
Acting	Directing Radio
Producing Video	Graphic Design
Directing Video	Advertising/Marketing

2. Rate how much you **know about** the following activities on a scale from 1 to 5 (circle 5 if you know a lot and 1 if you don't know much about it at all).

Writing	Radio Hosting/DJing
Interviewing Others	Producing Radio
Acting	Directing Radio
Producing Video	Graphic Design
Directing Video	Advertising/Marketing

3. Rate how **useful** you think that the following activities are on a scale from 1 to 5 (circle 5 if you think they are useful and 1 if you don't think that they are useful at all).

Writing	Radio Hosting/DJing
Interviewing Others	Producing Radio
Acting	Directing Radio
Producing Video	Graphic Design
Directing Video	Advertising/Marketing

4. Why did you sign up to for in the Chester Voices for Change Summer Institute?

5. Have you participated in a media-related program before (i.e. radio, TV, film, journalism, etc.)?

6. What do you hope to learn or gain from your work with the VFC Summer Institute?

7. What are some of your interests or hobbies? Star the ones you have done for more than a year.

8. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 (circle 5 if you strongly agree and 1 if you strongly disagree).

a. I am a producer.	k. I am confident.
b. I am an artist.	l. I feel that I work well with others.
c. I am a writer.	m. I am a role model.
d. I am an actor.	n. I am a youth media producer.
e. I am a director.	o. I have a positive impact on my community.
f. I am a musician.	p. I am a leader.
g. I am quiet.	q. I can communicate easily with other people.
h. I am outgoing.	r. I am a voice for change.
i. I am passionate.	s. I am responsible.
j. I believe I can have a meaningful impact on the world.	

9. Complete the sentence: "One day, I want to be..."

10. Complete the sentence: "Twenty-five years from now, I think that I will be..."

11. What do you plan to do to help you become what you listed in numbers 9 and/or 10?

Appendix D: Parent/Guardian Post-Program Survey Questions

1. Have you seen any changes (positive or negative) in your child since the start of the Voices for Change Summer Institute? If yes, please describe the changes to the best of your ability.

2. What impact do you think VFC has on its participants overall and the community at large?

3. Was the VFC Summer Institute a valuable experience for your child? YES NO

Why or why not?

4. Please share any other comments, suggestions, or concerns about the program here.

5. Specifically how do you think your child has changed since the start of the program in each of the follow categories? If they have remained the same, please write "same." If there are other specific areas you wish to comment on, please do so on another sheet of paper.

a. Self Confidence

b. Leadership

c. Communication Skills

d. Plans for the Future

e. Knowledge of Community

f. Desire to Create Positive Change

g. Responsibility

h. Awareness of News/Community Issues

i. Personal Motivation

Appendix E:
Informed Consent Forms
PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

June 25, 2009

Dear Chester Voices for Change Participant:

As a senior at Swarthmore I have to report on my own research, and I have decided to investigate the effects of participation in a youth media program. I'm hoping that you will be willing to participate in my research to help me better understand how participation in the Voices for Change program influences you as you become a youth media producer. Your participation in the program will continue as normal whether or not you decide to participate in the research portion, but I would really appreciate your time and responses if you can do the research portion of the program.

If you decide to participate in the research portion of the VFC program this summer, it will mean that you have two relatively short interviews and surveys with me, one before the program begins and one once the program is finished. I may also ask your parents and other adults in the program to answer a survey about the program and how they think it has influenced you. When working with this research, you will remain anonymous and have a pseudonym, fake name, assigned to any of the information that comes with your responses.

There are not any foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this; I'll just be asking you to talk about yourself and the program in an honest and open manner with me. I hope this will help you to think a bit more about yourself and what you want to do in the future. Finally, each of the interviews will likely not take more than 30 minutes or an hour, depending on how much you want to talk.

You can decide, along with your family, whether or not you want to participate in the research. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can choose to withdraw from the research at any time without any change in your participation in the program. Please indicate your response on the attached form and return it to me as soon as possible. You should also feel free to get in touch with me if you have any further questions or concerns about the research.

Questions about this project, which has been approved by the Institutional Research Review Board at Swarthmore College, can be directed to Tania Johnson, IRB administrator, at 610-690-5713. You may also contact my advisor, Professor Diane Anderson, at 610-328-8065 or danders1@swarthmore.edu, or me, and my contact information is included below.

Sincerely,

Joslyn Young, Director & Founder
Chester Voices for Change Summer Institute
Class of 2010, Swarthmore College
joslyny@gmail.com, 734.657.8162 (cell)

Diane Downer Anderson, Ph.D.
Swarthmore College

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMED CONSENT

June 25, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Willing participants in the Chester Voices for Change Summer Institute will serve as the primary source of research for my senior thesis in Education Studies and Sociology & Anthropology at Swarthmore College. The purpose of the project is to investigate the effects of participation in a youth media production program so that I can understand the results of youth working as media producers and share that information with a broader audience. Participation and activities in the program will proceed as normal, however in the course of this project I will audiotape or videotape individual interviews with the participants, with your permission. In addition, I will ask participants and other key people in the project, including you or another family member of the participant, to answer a short survey upon completion of the program.

The interviews will be individual, and I will ask the teens to talk with me about themselves and their experiences in the program. I hope this will help them to think more seriously about their own lives and their plans for the future, and there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this research. The interviews will likely last between 30 minutes and an hour, depending on how much each individual chooses to share.

Although individual children will not be the focus for this study and no children will be identifiable (pseudonyms will be used in writing about this study), I want to inform you and obtain your consent, on behalf of your child, for participation in this study. Also note that the participation of your child is completely voluntary and you or your child may choose to withdraw from the research portion of the program at any time, without any change in participation in the normal VFC summer programming. Please sign the attached form where indicated and return it by June 29, 2009.

Note that there is a place for you to indicate a desire for further discussion of this study; if you supply your phone number, my advisor, Professor Diane Anderson, or I will be happy to call you. Additionally, if you do not want your child to participate, please indicate that. Absolutely no child will be expected to participate in the study without their parents' permission and there will be no consequences for any child who chooses not to participate. Furthermore, although all children will be expected to participate in daily activities of the program, no child's interviews or work will be included whose parents or who themselves express a desire not to participate.

Questions about this project, which has been approved by the Institutional Research Review Board at Swarthmore College, can be directed to Tania Johnson, IRB administrator, at 610-690-5713. You may also contact me, and my contact information is included below, or Professor Diane Anderson at 610-328-8065 or danders1@swarthmore.edu.

Sincerely,

Joslyn Young, Director & Founder
Chester Voices for Change Summer Institute
Class of 2010, Swarthmore College
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Diane Downer Anderson, Ph.D.
Swarthmore College