

“In movies, someone always has to play the bad guy”: Mediatized Subjectivities and Youth Media Production

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Abstract

This article draws on a short ethnography from a media education class in a suburban Canadian high school (School X). I connect understanding of mediatization with subjectivities to analyze participants' video topic and genre preferences. I conclude with a call for media educators to challenge hierarchies that determine who is “given” a voice and who has influence within media education classes and projects.

Fish and media

Just as water constitutes an a priori condition for the fish, so do media for humans. Like Kant's understanding of the “always-already” existing categories of time and space that are constitutive of experience, media today can be said to structure our awareness of time, shape our attentions and emotions, and provide us with the means for forming and expressing thought itself. Media, in slightly different terms, become epistemology: the grounds for knowledge and knowing itself.

(Friesen and Hug 2009: 5)

The epistemological primacy of media and the process of construction and reconstruction of mediatized subjectivities are central to the analysis of data presented in this article. Hjarvard (2008) states that mediatization is a

double-sided process of high modernity in which the media on the one hand emerge as an independent institution with a logic of its own that other social institutions have to accommodate to. On the other hand, media simultaneously become an integrated part of other institutions like politics, work, family, and religion as more and more of these institutional activities are performed through both interactive and mass media. (105)

To take schooling as an example, policy makers' views of education and “good” policy are shaped by mass media and how they think media will interpret their policies to voters. However, who influences who and how is complex. Government is influenced by but also influences coverage of education by providing quick stories for busy reporters. Similarly youth come to their work in media production with previous mediatized

understanding of what a “good” education is and how a “normal” young person should behave. Media in turn interpret the desires of youth to market to them, but this does not mean youth are dupes or that all interpret media in the same way. Instead, as I will show in this article youth like adults are submerged in media that are constitutive of different subjectivities.

In this article I connect understanding of mediatization with subjectivities and use the term “mediatized subjectivities” to ground my analysis of how participant youths articulate and position their media voices in relation to their self-perceptions.

Ortner (2005) defines subjectivity:

By subjectivity I will mean the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear, and so forth that animate acting subjects. But I always mean as well the cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought and so on. (31)

By looking at subjectivities we can look at how, within social, cultural and political structures, participants are positioned, resist positioning, and position others. The concept of mediatized subjectivities is a framework for understanding how participants come to their understandings about “good”, “funny” or “effective” video.

Buckingham and Sefton-Green (2003) argue that through their engagement with popular culture children and youth are “learning how to behave, what to want and to feel, and how to respond.” They further argue that pedagogy is therefore a debate about the “production of subjectivities” or “forms of consciousness” (393). For example, how do youth who identify or are identified as Chinese-Canadians walk the cultural context in which anyone that is not white and of Anglophone origin is not seen as an “authentic” Canadian?

Observing and talking with youth engaged in media production offers a rich opportunity to examine how “popular culture texts position young people to assume subjectivities that are heavily informed by the ideologies and discourses of popular/corporate culture” (Savage 2008: 51). The process of youth media production can seem contradictory. In one video there may be elements that challenge sexist and racist popular culture narratives whereas at other points the same video uses racist and sexist tropes. Of course, this is similar to popular culture itself which can be oppressive while at other times provide a gap for a counter-narrative.

Jenkins (1997) argues that video production by youth can be reactionary and imitative of oppression in the larger society. Fleetwood (2005) has demonstrated youth can often reproduce problematic constructions of sexuality, race and gender in a manner that is unproblematized and can reaffirm their privileged or marginalized status. Still others such as Goodman (2005) have looked at the possibilities for collective video work in uncovering oppression, presenting alternative representations and politically intervening to create more equitable communities.

At School X video production took place within a specific context that played a part in the participants' story and genre choices. These choices are made within this glocalized context—participants share in generally American cultural products but they do so within global/local cultural contexts. These contexts differed for the participants. They were all within the same culture and lived in the same geographical community but they also came with different national identities, cultural, religious and economic backgrounds that influenced how they took up popular culture or what they were permitted to take up while remaining “authentic.”

The project task for the participants was to think about media representations of their school and/or untold stories that they wanted to tell about students, staff and community members who were part of School X. As I will show, the way a group of 4 male participants interpreted the videos—their own and that of other participants—shows a sharp awareness of the role of media in structuring adult and youth understanding of self and other. It also shows a strong sense of being individuals with their own way of humorously recombining media montage alongside original “interviews” with peers and politicians. This article will look at the decisions the participants made in this process and connect it to mediatized subjectivities. In the last part of the article I will examine how media education might use discussion of mediatized subjectivities to explore who gets to say what and to what effect? How might some youth in the process of being constructed as being given a voice through media production get reinscribed as lucky helpees? Conversely, how might other youth with more economic and social capital be positioned through video production classes as learning to take their rightful place as citizens with influence? To explore these issues I developed the following questions to focus my analysis for this article:

1. How are mediatized subjectivities understood by four white male participants in a youth media production project?
2. How are mediatized subjectivities constructed and constrained based on categories such as gender and race?
3. How might media education be a place to explore notions of voice versus influence?

The study

A central objective of this research is a semiotic analysis of videos produced by the participants. The category of youth however useful is also simplistic. Through looking at the different decisions participants made around techniques, frames and genre in their video we can see youth as occupying many positions and their video production decisions as proxies for mediatized subjectivities, which I will detail in this article.

14 ethnically diverse 14-18 year-olds (5 girls and 9 boys) studying at School X participated in the present study. They created six videos about issues that they felt were misrepresented by media, such as youth violence or media effects. At the beginning of the course there were 8 girls. One girl was expelled from the school. She still helped her video partner with her video, but she was not allowed in the school so did not formally maintain her involvement. Another girl became ill and had to quit and one girl was in her senior year and determined the project would cut too much into her time to study for final exams.

The video production lasted over 40 hours. Some participants met outside of this time to work on their videos and made email contact with my assistant or me if they wished to discuss ideas or if they had technical questions. Most of the hours were during school time but we also met over 2 Saturdays. Many of the participants received high school course credit and all received an honorarium for their participation. The honorarium was meant to allow participants the ability to take a Saturday off work to participate in the project.

I recruited participants through a school counselor who I had worked with in the first phase of a three-phased funded research project. She spoke to a media arts teacher who also recruited participants for Phase II of this project. Some of the participants were successful academically

and engaged in their school. Other participants were close to expulsion and others spoke of struggling with school, work and family responsibilities. Socio-economic status also varied with some participants speaking quite openly about living in poverty and others from middle-class backgrounds. Some saw themselves as very politically active (primarily the white boys) and others said they did not have interest in political issues.

The reader will note interesting names such as “Patio Furniture.” Participants created their own pseudonyms.

Data collection and analysis

Data consists of interviews before and after the course, flip charts from group activities, field-notes, and the actual videos. In the baseline interviews I focused on why participants decided to enroll in the project, their experience creating media, their thoughts about the media they engaged with, their thoughts about how their family and peers engaged with media and what they hoped to get out of the project.

I chose to have a research assistant conduct post-interviews. I thought participants might feel freer to be critical of the project. Overall this worked well although two participants did not show up for the interview and after a couple more attempts we gave up on interviewing them.

Whose school is this?

School X had received some bad press coverage for an incident involving a weapon several years before the study took place. I started the project at School X by asking the participants how they themselves and others perceived their school. Within minutes it was clear there were different assumptions and emotions about media representations of the school. The group of participants who were predominately white and male talked about the school being a place that was inclusive. One of the young women, who subsequently withdrew from the project to devote more time to studying, wanted to boast the representation of School X for the sake of her younger sibling. She was worried that if the school had a bad reputation it would lessen her sibling’s career and post-secondary options. Two white participants, who were involved in the

student council, were clear they wanted to create videos that portrayed the school in a positive light and seemed agitated with an Aboriginal student who emphatically stated racism did exist in the school.

A group of four participants of Asian descent sat together and joked about racism, but one of these participants focused on how he made fun of new Chinese kids who couldn't speak English. He himself had only been in Canada for a couple of years. They spoke of white students "telling them to go home" but they stated they did not see this as racism. In a later interview a young Chinese male who was the most dominant member in the group stated emphatically that "teenagers are lazy" and that "it's dumb to try and change things"

The participants chose their small groups for creating the videos. Three video mentors in their early twenties assisted participants in the production and editing process. A professional storyteller assisted with developing the visual storytelling abilities of participants. The group of boys I will focus my discussion on saw themselves as being very conversant in video and storytelling and resisted much assistance from the adults who were part of the project. The other groups worked closely with their video mentors and the other three adults involved in the project. The participants were shown examples of videos by youth that used a video poem, a rant, drama and documentary genres. They were told they could choose what they wanted to do. Some of the videos they were shown used humour and others were more serious and documentary in nature. The topic parameter was to include something to do with School X, youth and media.

The videos

A central component of my analysis is how participants deploy categories "minorities" and "Natives" and the normal "boy" or "girl" in their videos and discussion of other participants' videos. What is important is that these categories are employed to denote otherness from what is constructed as the dominant white majority. In fact, the term "visible minority" in the context of the community in which School X is located is not based on percentage of people of European heritage versus not. Many people have parents with multiple origins and may "look" white but identify as Asian-Canadian. I use the category "racialized minorities" to denote that these youth are constructed as being

foreigners, regardless of whether their families have been in Canada longer than fellow students who appear white. Despite the thousands of cultures and backgrounds a “visible minority” might come from, the term is used as a unifier in the dominant narrative of Canadian multiculturalism. The racialization of students happens within peer groups but it is important to remember it is also endemic in the school curriculum that represents Europeans as discovering Canada. The mediatization of indigeneity in the school curriculum and popular culture construct indigenous peoples as homogenous and troubled and troublesome. Finally, debates around the crisis of boys or the moral panic around girls and sexuality revolve around normalized and schooled ways of being a girl versus a boy. It is with these problematics in mind that I point to the social construction of the participant’s topics and membership composition.

In total the participants produced 6 short videos. The five groups (one group produced two videos) separated largely based on friendship networks, gender and ethnicity. Four white boys produced a spoof on media representation of youth, which I am calling *Media Spoof*. The second group consisted of two girls, one identified as aboriginal and the other as white and working class. They produced two videos, one was about racism and reclaiming indigenous culture and the other was about depression. The third group, consisting of four participants, two girls and two boys all of whom were racialized minorities, produced a film about exclusion. The fourth group was a white boy and a white girl who produced a video rant in opposition to a curriculum change and the final group was two white boys who created a video on negative representations of skateboarding.

Some of the participants did not want to share their videos publicly so I am not using the titles of their videos. I will focus on *Media Spoof* and observations, discussion and interviews with the four creators of this video—Oxpig, Megatron, Patio Furniture and Tim. I also look at their understandings of the video productions of the other participants.

I chose to focus on these four participants because they themselves and the other participants saw them as skilled video producers. They were also older than some of the other participants and seemed to have high status in the class. Finally, in interviews, other participants often seemed to see *Media Spoof* as an example of a “good” video and referred to it most often.

Who gets to say what and how do they get to say it?

Example #1—Subjectivities and the irony of mediatized politics

Part of *Media Spoof* is a critique of adult perceptions of youth. Patio Furniture had clear views about issues around adult censorship of youth video and the creative potential of youth. He is critical of the notion that youth cannot be trusted to know what is best for them but adults can.

Patio Furniture: I think that's not true because like Hollywood is run by adults so. [laughter] It's like, I mean, in fact it would be the reverse that you'd get a lot of the same stuff if you got adult supervision type of thing as opposed to something totally different, maybe strange, but maybe really totally different.

Media Spoof starts with the producers resisting positioning of youth and their school. They show images of the war in Iraq with one of the boys acting as a news anchor. It continues with another of the young men interviewing young people with loaded questions about whether they use drugs. The story goes on to parental concern about media violence and back to images of war in Iraq. The absurdity of adults focusing on youth playing violent video games rather than actual adult created violence is thought provoking and amusing. From this point the film moves on to camp humour that positions others such as homeless people, prostitutes and a politician who does not speak fluent English as objects of comic relief. The movie moves on to one of the producers/actor vomiting and another producer/actor with wig acting like a ditsy girl who is hit by a male. All the acts are in reference to various current popular culture shows. Still here there are multiple ways of interpreting. The producers spoke of making fun of stereotypical representations as well as using stereotypes to make people laugh.

The participants' explanation of the video varied. Oxpig explained the use of humour to critique media representations of youth and School X in particular.

Oxpig: you get the message a little bit easier than some other, like some other films where you're just kind of being drilled over and over with facts and some other boring person talking... because I think it's funny, if people do decide to use it in the classroom I think teachers might have a better response to it.

Patio Furniture: I think they'll [the audience] recognize that...we sort of did some satire on the media and stuff but more than anything it's us being stupid. [laughter]

Tim: I think like Megatron said, I'm pretty sure it's not going to change one's perspective so you'll be like, wow, the media is like, like it really can do that. But, it's kind of, you know, it still has that idea and it's funny.

Media Spoof at times seems to be a satirical political critique of adult, particularly journalistic perceptions of youth but at other times familiar sexist and racist tropes are used. They critique the stereotypes of young video-gamers and violence for example, but make use of sexist cultural narratives about "skeazy prostitutes" and corrupt foreign politicians with accents all within the same video.

Media Spoof makes fun of popular culture by repeating many of the same techniques and tropes in some places and challenging them through irony in other places. Irony plays an important role in the articulation of their mediatized subjectivities. To make fun of the absurdity of "serious" news that focuses on youth video-gamers rather than the mass destruction in Iraq requires an insider status. It requires knowing how media taps into adult fears of youth, and dominant notions of newsworthiness. Within this they are knowledgeable about adult hysteria over youth and lack of attention to real war and death. They have sophisticated knowledge of common stereotypes, metaphors and tropes used to describe youth, and war. This knowledge gives them the right to laugh about uncritical viewers. By making fun of people who are unduly influenced by media representations of youth and war the *Media Spoof* producers show that they understand the uncritical insider but they are not one. In the example I give above the producers show their status as outsiders to the process of creating mainstream news but insiders in mainstream forms of media critique, such as the *Daily Show* or *Colbert*. They also position themselves as insiders to "youth culture" through frequent reference to popular television shows aimed at teenagers. The insider/outsider stance also allows the producers to engage in what might be otherwise censored or criticized by adults and peers as sexist and racist.

Example #2—Pop culture subjectivity and blending in

The *Media Spoof* producers were sure all youth would understand the references they made to popular culture in their video, but Ooot-ang-chalk, a newcomer to Canada, felt he was missing many of the references in the video.

Interviewer: Do you think you're affected by media?

Ooot-ang-chalk: Not as much as I would like to be...

Interviewer: Why do you want to be more affected by media?

Ooot-ang-chalk: Well, blend in I guess. I don't know.

Ooot-ang-chalk lives within a globalized and localized media environment. He brings with him his interpretations of American media, but he disrupts notions of a homogeneous youth culture. Understanding pop culture is not merely knowing and regurgitating popular culture references but having the ability to combine and recombine these references in the process of articulating mediatized subjectivities. Pop culture may be ridiculed and criticized. Many of the participants spoke in the interviews of their concern that media had a negative effect on younger siblings. Some admitted it affected them but usually referred to others as being more affected. However, those without knowledge of pop culture and contextual interpretations of it, such as Ooot-ang-Chalk are outsiders rather than being self-reflexive insider/outsideers.

Example # 3—Subjectivities and mediatized othering

In movies, someone always has to play the bad guy or there's some girl that just has to play like a loose character and unintentionally they might make her blond. But they might make the bad guy black. And they might find that offensive only because they're minorities. (Tim)

In this example it is clear that racism or sexism is not seen as the problem but instead the problem is how the objects of racism and sexism negatively interpret these representations. It is seen as natural and essential for the historical tropes to be performed for media to be

effective. The historical embeddings of representations is masked by the currency and timeliness to media products, whether news, youth production or soaps. However, the producers of *Media Spoof* provide different explanations for the use of stereotypes, particularly in the choices made for their video:

Oxpig: Um. Like, again, it's hard to answer some of these because it's like, I don't know, I find myself just like most of the stuff bounces off me. But like when you see some other people the stereotypes just kind of, instead of bouncing off they seem to kind of submerge into them and make them themselves. So it's kind of bad, but in some ways it's kind of good. I mean if you use stereotypes in a movie... it's easier for the audience to identify with the character immediately.

Here both Tim and Oxpig are demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of mainstream media and of the process of othering. They explain the process by which someone interprets media as individual and psychological; therefore minorities might find it offensive not because it is but "only because they're minorities". Furthermore, if a minority or girl replicates a stereotype she/he is demonstrating a lack of ability to have stuff "bounce off them". Again it is an individual's issue of choice or personality rather than the political, social and economic structuring elements that construct one's subjectivities and allows and constrains their ability to resist. Through this process creating alternative frames for the effective movie is based on insider knowledge of the normalized othering frames.

Example # 4—Subjectivities and Mediatized Essentializing

Bob the Builder's (BB's) aim in producing her video was to show the pain of racism that she experienced in life, but also her sense of place in an Aboriginal drumming group. In talking about their opinion of BB's video Megatron and Tim state:

Megatron: I think the video was certainly a challenge to the stereotype.

Tim: But to your point, I mean like, the idea that these kids are calling this girl alcoholic and, she's like, I want to dance [laughter].

Megatron: Yeah.

Tim: Like she didn't make a point. She could have turned it over and had some positive attitude about how great Natives are and how spiritual they are.

In a second example Megatron illustrates how minority status is used by those with power to project equality and respect for Aboriginal peoples.

Megatron: Actually, I heard, this is kind of one of the teams Chicago Redskins... people who are not Native had complained that it was offensive to Natives. When they actually asked Native Americans they said, no we're happy. You know, we're a little bit proud of that.

In these examples we see the power of how two non-aboriginal young males come to the same understanding of indigeneity that is dominant in what are often represented as positive representations of indigenous people. These interpretations provide the subject positions of Indian warrior or spiritual healer. Neither subject position is a challenge to racialization but instead naturalizes it. BB's video is challenging to the illusion of diversity as synonym for social justice. Her video is about her emerging understanding of spirituality through drumming but it is also about how her emerging understanding helps her to resist how she is categorized as troubled and troublesome at school and in popular culture.

Example #5—Subjectivities and mediatized racism

In the dialogue below we see Megatron, Patio Furniture and Tim thinking through what is racist versus being politically correct or minorities taking things too seriously.

Megatron: I really don't agree with anything politically correct or anything... if someone wants to preach like Nazi philosophy... on their video. If you can make a valid point, a valid argument then...

Patio Furniture: Fine. It doesn't mean we have to agree with it...

Tim: If there are some people of a certain race or something that would dig to like you know to analyze it to see if you're making fun of certain people, [then] they've got to watch it more open-mindedly.

Here again we see concern over racism dismissed as an issue of individuals being overly sensitive rather than a justified reaction to

systematic oppression. The result of this Patio Furniture believes is that he is excluded from some forms of humour because of what he sees as reverse racism.

Tim: I've never, I've never really heard anything against stereotypes. I guess because I'm a middle-class white male. I'm the most majority I guess.

Patio Furniture: It's weird because I haven't felt any direct racism against me or anything. But I have felt... reverse racism. I'm not allowed to do anything. Anything, anything that could be possibly construed as racist I'm not allowed to do. A friend of mine, he's Asian, or, not Asian. He's Indian and he was Hitler for Halloween. I could not have gotten away with that.

The participants' relationship to gender and race is complex. Tim is acknowledging that he has not experienced being stereotyped; however, Patio Furniture believes he has been impacted by reverse racism. Interestingly, as white boys they felt they could make videos that humorously make use of stereotypes but that they could not do serious videos on racism because they are white.

Example #6—Subjectivities and mediatized sexism: slut versus the intersection of the Playboy bunny and Civil Rights

Media Spoof includes two scenes involving prostitutes. In the first there is the "skeazy prostitute" who sells drugs.

Patio Furniture: [laughs] We hid the prostitute bit from most people until we were kind of done so it was just left in there.

Tim: We have two prostitutes in there. [laughter] Well the one where she comes out of the car with her [Dad].

Patio Furniture: I think it, like after seeing it again and again now, I wouldn't take it out. It's valuable. [laughter] Plus it's hilarious.

Patio Furniture expressed concern some people might be offended because they don't get the pop culture references and so think the video is violent or sexist. The reasons the producers give for including scenes of prostitutes are different. Patio Furniture thinks the video is effective but also hilarious. Tim states prostitutes might be offended but girls

would like it. The scene can be interpreted in many ways. It can be seen as an attempt to challenge notions of girls as ditzy and “loose” or it can be interpreted as a morality play on girls who are “loose”, such as sex trade workers. The issue for the producers is not who gets to decide which girls are moral or not but to challenge adult panic about “loose” girls.

On the other hand, the *Media Spoof* producers reflect on the differences in what girl and boy producers can do. Jennifer, the interviewer, asked the boys what their thoughts were about a video done by two girls in their class about depression. In the video one of the girls has a backpack with the Playboy Bunny on it.

Megatron: You definitely have to be more careful if you’re trying to make a video that’s trying to go against stereotypes like the stuff like that, especially if it’s like girls. Don’t be walking around with a Playboy bunny on your back.

Patio Furniture and Tim agree the Playboy bunny could lead to assumptions about a girl she might not want. In the following quote Oxpig continues to focus on morality but includes a critique of capitalism as the cause.

... personally I think the Playboy bunny is terrible. You see girls wearing it and it’s just so stupid. But it’s like, you could argue it’s the media’s responsibility to, to be socially conscious and to be pushing these good morals, but you never see it because everyone’s so capitalist.

Here Oxpig puts the decision of girls to wear the playboy bunny into the frame of stupidity and morals. What is interesting is that he describes what an effective video is based on the consumption of popular culture, but he sees his consumption as more reflective than that of a girl wearing a shirt with a Playboy Bunny.

Jennifer asked the producer of the video, Billy-Jo Bob, about her decisions to let her actress—Bob-the-Builder—wear the Playboy Bunny.

Billy-Jo Bob (BJB): I mean, it’s a very interesting looking picture [the playboy bunny image]. It’s a work of art. It’s not telling people to go have sex with forty-year-old men when they’re 14.

Interviewer: Do you think media has a responsibility not to offend?

Billy-Jo Bob: Well you know, offending, like, yeah. If blacks hadn't stood up for their rights and offended the white people, they wouldn't have gotten their rights. So maybe we need to offend certain people to get change.

For BJB there is an intersection of the individual consumer choice to wear the Playboy bunny with civil rights. Significantly BJB also locates her decision within a framework of morals and sexuality. At first, I was surprised that BJB would equate the Playboy Bunny with civil rights but it is important to see BJB's explanation in the context of the commercialization of human rights. For example, in reviewing some pictures of a trip I took to the Apartheid Museum in South Africa I came across a picture I took of a coke machine that had a quote from Nelson Mandela about human rights. I turned on my television last week and saw an ad for Tampax in which a girl from an African village is now joyfully going to school and has a chance at life because she need not skip school during her period - thanks to Tampax she's protected. These examples do not mean that BJB has just blindly imitated popular culture but that she attempts to use it as part of developing her identity as an insider in some circles and an outsider in others.

The construction and constraints of mediatized subjectivities: voice versus influence

During my project, girls and minorities repeatedly told heartfelt stories of marginalization and the effects this has on them. Often participants spoke of the media education process as helping them see how they were represented in media and how they could change representations through their own productions. The projects were therefore successful on this important level, but where I fell short in the design of the project was looking more clearly at the process in more multidimensional ways in which mediatization of subjectivities construct what is sayable, by whom and how. I encouraged participants to explore topics of interest to them, to play with different genres and registers but I did not take into account the process of not just school hierarchy but subjectivities developed through years of media engagement. The study points to the need to look at communication as multi-level.

Media education requires looking at interpersonal relationships and mediatized subjectivities as interconnected. The choices youth make in

membership groupings for the video process, topics and genre are enmeshed in the mediatization of all spaces including schools.

The participants in my study are not naive or narcissistic dupes. They understood the context in which they operated and what they needed to do to maintain a sense of self. Their desire to “fit in” or to rebel against pressure to fit in is not a matter of false consciousness. For the girls and racialized minorities there were real constraints on them. The boys too were constrained in what they could say in the school environment but also in what they thought sayable and not for them. For example they felt they could make fun of racism, but they could not make a serious video about racism because they were not minorities.

The process of “empowerment” and “voice” can result in masking how power relations play a significant role in shaping individuals’ sense of self and collective identity “through acts that distinguish and treat a person as gendered, raced, classed, or other sort of subject” (Holland and Leander 2004: 127). What would a critical media education that encompasses strategies for working towards more equitable schools and communities look like? First, it would analyze and give room to challenge the psychologization of systemic problems. This can result in a mediatized charity model in which “minorities” or “troubled” youth are granted a mediatized catharsis or voice but no influence to change structures of inequity. Second, educators, like students, are constituted and constitutive of media. More focus is needed, particularly in teacher education, to examine how adults come to understand their own mediatized subjectivities and the way this affects how they interact with youth in a media education context.

Media Education can be a playful place for reflecting on identities and media, but if we want to provoke pupils, we need to ask ourselves both to what ends and what means would lead to these ends. Youth are hierarchically structured, as are adults. Similar to the *Media Spoof*, popular media shows simultaneously challenge and maintain hegemonic masculinity and whiteness as a legitimate subjectivity. For example, John Stewart may make fun of overtly patriarchal policies while sending a message that men are the best sources of information by having predominantly white male guests and staff on his show. Men are more often seen as society’s storytellers whether as sources for “real” news, as investigative journalists or as satirists. Media education is an important location to examine who gets to say what and why.

Media is not just one element of many. Our understanding of knowledge and reality, ourselves and others is mediatized. Paradoxically, media engagement is central to entrenching and challenging historically dominant definers of social, economic and political life. As I pointed out in the beginning of this article, mediatization is a dual process (Hjarvard 2008: 105). Media is part of political, economic and social institutions and these institutions are part of media. In popular debates about the dangers of media on the minds of young people, absent is the discussion the *Media Spoof* producers portrayed so clearly - media is not a demonic force that pushes young people to temptation and provides factual and serious accounts of world events to adults. Media is our everyday, therefore, media education ought to be seen as an experience as odd as asking a fish to describe water. It is, however, a process of describing, constructing and reconstructing that is central to challenging systemic injustice and facilitating opportunities for different subjectivities.

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