Negotiated, contested and political: the disruptive Third Spaces of youth media production

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## Sample

39 young people aged 14–25 years who attended a media production project run in libraries in a city in the United Kingdom

## Implications For Educators About

School innovation

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Stepping up awareness and empowerment

# Abstract

Traditionally media production with young people has been characterized
by an aspiration to ‘give voice’ or ‘empower youth’, but this core value is
under threat. Recently, the rationale for undertaking youth media
production has shifted to focus on enabling young people to acquire
digital and entrepreneurial skills that serve the needs of rapidly changing
creative industry / gig economy. In this paper, we challenge this rationale
by sharing qualitative data from a young people’s media production
project run in libraries in a city in the United Kingdom where participants
were invited to create video games/stories. We adopt Potter and
McDougall’s notion of Third Spaces as negotiated, contested and political
to enable us to identify the ways in which pedagogical choices of setting,
software and style of facilitation combined to support young people’s
critical and creative engagement with digital media and society. We re
frame notions of third spaces, seeing less a bridge between linguistic and
cultural domains, arguing instead that Third Spaces are productively
disruptive. We conclude by proposing a new set of pedagogical principles
for critical reflection in the development and funding of digital media
production with young people.

# Outcome

"Whilst digital media production does not inherently disrupt power relations or ensure young
people’s experiences are valued, it has the potential to. In determining pedagogical approaches
that make this more likely McDougall and Potter’s (2019) notion of Third Spaces as contested, negotiated
and political provides a useful framework for understanding the different ways the broader
context provides opportunities for productive disruptions. In this project, the disruptions resulted
from a library environment where it was possible for the activity to disrupt the usual day to routines
and activities. The choice of software, Twine, provided new ways to think about creating stories
which heightened awareness of the reader and of narrative structure but also of online spaces
which are not monetised. The facilitation disrupted the young people’s experiences of school
where their stories are predominantly created in writing, individually and where there is always a
‘starter’ which limits choice. The simple act of enabling the young people to select their own ideas
for stories was perhaps the most productively disruptive aspect of the project because it encouraged
them to take ideas from one form and create them in another which proved to be useful in terms of
critical distancing and reflection. What is more, the ability to write themselves into fictional texts and
popular genres played an important role in disrupting and appropriating those very texts, for their
own uses." (Parry et al., 2020: 419).