

The Helen Carswell Chair in Community Engaged Research in the Arts

Final Report - 2022

Programming Youth Media Arts via Sight, Sound and Storytelling Modules

Sharon Hayashi, Barbara Evans, Jamie Whitecrow

What is this research about?

Researchers collaborating with Community Music Schools of Toronto-Jane Finch experimented with creating online visual, sound, and storytelling workshops to introduce youth participants to the higher education and career possibilities of media arts creation, and to encourage participants to value and translate their life experiences into creative practices by making tools and resources both available and accessible in a supportive student-centred learning environment.

What you need to know:

Early exposure to cinema and media arts curriculum addresses a major skills gap between students from Ontario's more specialized arts high schools and programs and students without access to specialized arts curriculum supporting a more equitable, inclusive university admissions process.

What did the researchers do?

To introduce diverse students to the educational and career possibilities of media arts practices (visual and sonic technologies for creative experimentation), we developed and held a series of five online workshops for two courses at the Community Music Schools of Toronto-Jane Finch. Working within the parameters of CMST's online learning space and guidelines, the workshops built upon the students' pre-existing musical and sound knowledge. The focus was on media arts skills that enable students to both learn how to simultaneously leverage the musical skills they were already developing and to encourage students to bring in and value their everyday life experiences.

Workshops included sessions with BIPOC artists/educators who shared their work and life trajectories to expose students to concrete career and educational possibilities. The guest visits were geared towards helping students find their own unique perspective as artists based on their life experiences, and to learn how to express this perspective in music, sound, and video. These sessions which are now available online include creating sound design for animation, using found sound as notes in musique concrete, playing with archives of sound and music, and non-traditional ways of communication between image makers and music composers.

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After completing the workshop series, students and their families were invited to tour the facilities in the Department of Cinema and Media Arts at York University and to see their workshops creations on one of the large screens in the department. Pizza was served before the screening and parking and transit passes were offered to all the attendees. Students who came on the tour indicated their likely intention to apply to York University, including to the Department of Cinema and Media Arts.

What did the researchers find?

Modifications to planned workshops were necessary to cater to the specific needs of CMST students and the structure of the courses. The drop-in session format of CMST courses necessitated a more intimate and casual learning atmosphere than previous high school workshops given by the researchers. We moved away from more intensive and serial workshop models to focus on creating a more open learning environment and developed individual learning paths for each student. This student-centred approach enabled students to learn by making at a pace that allowed each student to experiment in a supportive group environment. Students felt challenged and inspired to create media. The most challenging aspect of the workshops was teaching editing basics online to students using different devices. Students both connecting to zoom and attempting to edit on a phone were invited to create using mobile phone editing apps. Students indicated that they would have preferred to learn some of the filmmaking skills in person and to have two more sessions in order to have more time during class to create, without missing any of the inspiring guest artist visits. The workshops encouraged students to create visuals for original song compositions allowing them to focus on creating in their area of preference.

How can you use this research?

Creating open learning environments for students in both formal and informal settings is encouraged. The findings for this research have been circulated both through websites as well as through online sessions with directors and faculty of community schools in North America. The research process and artist talks for this project are available online at our researcher website: tokyomapping.com/media-arts. Three of the featured BIPOC artist talks are also available online on the CMST website and CMST youtube channel. A CMST post about the workshops can also be found on their website:

communitymusic.org/post/music-creation-meets-video-production

About the researchers

Jamie Whitecrow is a self-taught artist and filmmaker from Seine River First Nation, Treaty #3, based out of Toronto, Ontario. Her practice includes writing, visual art, music, filmmaking, and

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performance. She has an educational background in philosophy and Indigenous community development, and is completing her MFA in Film Production at York University.

Sharon Hayashi is Associate Professor in the Department of Cinema and Media Arts at York University. Hayashi's research focuses on the intersection of care, community and media in Japan and North America, working with local knowledge to envision social futures. Visualizing and archiving the spatial practices and networks of care and mutual aid of artistic and social collectives, recent projects experiment with participatory, sensory, socially engaged, and interdisciplinary approaches.

Barbara Evans is an Associate Professor in the Department of Cinema and Media Arts, where she teaches documentary film and filmmaking. She has worked extensively as a film director, producer, writer, researcher and editor. She is currently producing a documentary, *Queen Bees: Collaborating with the Hive*, and completing a book on early women documentary filmmakers.

Keywords

Cinema and Media Arts, youth workshops, music, music students, film, digital media, video, audio, storytelling, creative modules, equitable and inclusive recruitment and admissions

About the Helen Carswell Chair

[The Helen Carswell Chair in Community-Engaged Research in the Arts](#) is a partnership between York University's [School of Arts, Media, Performance and Design](#) and [Community Music Schools of Toronto](#). This partnership is dedicated to community cultural development in the underserved neighbourhoods of Toronto. We facilitate and conduct rigorous academic research which explores the benefits of community music programs and the links between music and learning. The goal of our work is to significantly benefit children from high-risk neighbourhoods and to fortify community music programs globally through publications and knowledge mobilization. We especially seek to engage and help drive new knowledge and practice to community-based groups serving children in the Jane and Finch community.