When adolescent students have the freedom to use digital media to create, communicate and disseminate messages in the context of the classroom, transgression may occur.

Pedagogical theories of participatory culture, art education, and digital and media literacy education provide an interpretive frame to explore transgression in the context of student creative expression.

Using email interviews with four experienced high school media educators, this study examines how educators perceive school situations where behavior or student media work products disrupt or transgress expectations.

Teachers experience student transgression as an essential dimension of the dialectic between creative freedom and creative control. They perceive creative control to be a negotiation between students and teachers on issues of content, format, production and distribution processes. Teachers conceptualize the distinctions between students who (1) use transgression as a form of expressive creativity; (2) reproduce the tropes of mass media and popular culture; (3) simply innovate making mistakes as part of learning; (4) attempt to gain social power and status among their peers; or (5) aim to challenge adult authority as well as school and social norms.

Teacher reflection on the dialectic between creative control and creative freedom may inform the design and implementation of media production learning experiences in the context of the high school classroom.

Creative Expression Reveals the Heart
Writing, art and media teachers experience transgression most intensively because they ask students to reveal their hearts and minds (Duncombe, 2009).

Messy Engagement
Composing with digital video involves a process of messy engagement that can seem chaotic as students struggle through collaborative decision-making about how and what they are creating (Hobbs and Moore, 2013).

Power Dynamics in Formal Learning Spaces
Inversions of gender and social power in student media production activities contribute to transgression in the context of school culture (Sexton, 2007; Burklin, 1994).

What kinds of student transgression have high school video production teachers experienced? How do they interpret it?

Teachers' Reports
Four Types of Transgression
Media Content: aggressive humor, reference humor, bullying, cursing, nudity, depictions of sexual behavior, gang signs, violence, depictions of violence, drug use, immoral values or behavior

Media Formats: explicit lyrics in songs, imitation of conspiracy videos and horror genres, blurring of fiction and non-fiction, copyright infringement

Production Processes: interpersonal conflicts, freedom of movement that creates lack of accountability, inappropriate social interaction with adults, recording in an area without permission, recording people without permission, interrupting or altering flow of school activities by recording

Distribution Issues: disruptive audience behavior while viewing video, displaying or airing inappropriate content, airing content not approved by teacher, making performance or production errors that are visible to the whole school community.

E-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
How have you handled particular situations where students engaged in inappropriate behavior or produced inappropriate video content?
Can you describe a situation that you handled “well”?
Can you describe a situation that you handled “poorly”?
Give examples of inappropriate behavior or student-created media content
Explain why students engaged in this behavior or created this context

Powerful Engagement
Balancing the dialectic between creative freedom and creative control

Creative Freedom
Balancing the dialectic is part of the teaching and learning process

Creative Control
Teachers structure learning experiences using a balance of creative freedom and creative control

Teachers' Interpretations of Student Transgression

1. A Dimension of Creative Freedom
2. Reproducing Mass Media and Popular Culture
3. Novices Making Mistakes
4. Playing to Peer Audiences
5. Challenging Authority, School & Social Norms

Questions for Future Research

• How do students conceptualize various kinds of transgression in media production classrooms?
• How does assignment structure and assessment paradigm shape students' experience of creative freedom and creative control?
• What are the values of teachers who negotiate a balance between creative freedom and creative control? How do media educators learn to navigate this balance?
• How do faculty peers and school administrators understand the dialectics between creative control and creative freedom?

Renee Hobbs
Email: hbbs@uri.edu
Web: www.mediateducationlab.com

ABSTRACT

The Changing Role of the Educator
Students are positioned as self-directed, independent learners who, with appropriate guidance and support from mentors, create media as a natural part of their learning process (Haines and Campbell, 2016).

RESEARCH QUESTION

What kinds of student transgression have high school video production teachers experienced? How do they interpret it?

RESULTS

Teachers Report
Four Types of Transgression
Media Content: aggressive humor, reference humor, bullying, cursing, nudity, depictions of sexual behavior, gang signs, violence, depictions of violence, drug use, immoral values or behavior

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KEY IDEAS

• Teachers structure learning experiences using a balance of creative freedom and creative control

CONTACT

Renee Hobbs
Email: hbbs@uri.edu
Web: www.mediateducationlab.com

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