

Reflecting on Vancouver's Current Youth Media Funding Trends in the Context of Neoliberalism

by

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Abstract

Youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver provide diverse opportunities for youth. However, my thesis argues that neoliberalism and discourses about the information society and creative industries have shaped youth media funding since the 1990s. Through interviewing youth media representatives in Vancouver, my findings indicate that these funding trends create a number of challenges for youth media organizations and programs. Organizations face precarious funding, have to rely on unpaid labour, and are confronting competitive funding environments that can impact how organizations collaborate. In addition, funding is becoming increasingly narrow and focused on individual skills development, which stands in contrast to the diverse work associated with youth media organizations and programs. Given the challenges that organizations face within current funding trends, I conclude that there is a need for sustainable government funding models for youth media programs in Vancouver.

Keywords: youth media programs; neoliberalism; information society; creative industries; government funding; Vancouver

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List of Acronyms

BC	British Columbia
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CCA	The Canada Council for the Arts
ED	Executive Director
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
NFB	National Film Board of Canada
YDME	Youth Digital Media Ecologies Project

Chapter 1.

Introduction

My thesis interest stemmed from my involvement as a research assistant with the Youth Digital Media Ecologies (YDME) project. This four-year research project (2011-2015) mapped the youth media production scenes in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal in an effort to highlight key characteristics and goals of these organizations (YDME, 2013a). As a research assistant, I helped to collect quantitative data through structured interviews with Vancouver-based organizations, and assisted in compiling and analyzing the data. The interview questions aimed to map organization histories, funding, primary objectives, primary media, and target demographics (Poyntz, 2013). During the interviews, key organizational characteristics emerged, with a major finding being that youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver provide a diversity of opportunities and spaces for young people to interact. Youth media programming in Vancouver varies from critical media literacy, skills development, political advocacy, youth voice, creative expression, youth violence prevention, youth-run programs, and more. These diverse organizations and programs provide a plurality of spaces where different ideas, practices, and opinions can come together (Poyntz, 2013). As Poyntz (2013) discusses, youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver contribute to an “alternative media scene, where different styles and media address, minority or ignored behaviours, and diverse life worlds are coming into view, and often in ways that collide with dominant or mainstream notions of politics and culture in Canada” (Poyntz, 2013, p. 98).

In addition to examining the work of these organizations, the YDME project highlighted challenges these organizations face due to current funding trends. These challenges were raised publicly during the YDME forum, a meeting to which youth media representatives were invited to provide their thoughts on the project’s findings. The

meeting led to helpful conversations about issues relating to the future of organizations. More specifically, organizations emphasized that funding has become increasingly scarce and has as a result affected their ability to conduct their work. Participants suggested that scarce funding is driving youth media organizations to compete for funds, to the detriment of the sector as a whole. Given these challenges, I became interested in further examining what tensions and challenges these organizations contend with in the face of changing trends in funding opportunities.

A second question I sought to address was: Could collaboration solve or even alleviate some of the challenges faced by the organizations, especially in the context of competitive funding environments? I was particularly interested in how online platforms contribute to opportunities for organizations to collaborate and share resources with one another in response to scarce funding. Knowing that resources already available to organizations included meeting spaces, venues, and equipment, I was interested in the potential role of collaboration and sharing in helping to compensate for funding shortfalls.

Not surprisingly, during my preliminary research on youth media funding trends, I learned that funding issues were more complex than I had initially assumed. Youth media organizations have unique histories, with different funding structures and goals. This complex situation can be associated with the specific political contexts in which organizations were established. My initial question regarding collaboration – something I return to later in my thesis – was an important starting point for examining youth media funding. I realized the significance of understanding the root problems around funding and how funding challenges and best practices can vary among organizations. Whereas particular funding structures and funder requirements might work for one organization, they do not work for all organizations because of the diversity of programs in Vancouver. Understanding the politics of funding and the social contexts shaping youth media organizations helps us to analyze the challenges and limitations confronting such organizations and programs. This thesis therefore examines youth media funding structures and considers how government priorities in particular historical periods have impacted organizations. In the process, I address key disconnects that exist between youth media organizations and their diverse programs and government mandates and agendas.

Communication scholars Marc Raboy (1990) and Zoe Druick (2007) help provide an important framework to consider the politics of funding in relation to cultural policy research, as well as challenges that arise between funders and fund recipients. While these authors do not discuss youth media funding specifically, I was able to incorporate a similar framework into my examination of the social and political contexts involved with youth media funding in Vancouver. This framework helps to analyze the tensions and challenges youth media organizations face as funding trends change. Raboy (1990) and Druick (2007) both take a political economy and historical approach in studying communication policies and practices in Canada. They showcase how the politics of funding has shaped cultural policy and community media programming in Canada. Their work also demonstrates disconnects between government policies and government-funded organizations/projects.

Marc Raboy (1990) demonstrates the politics of cultural policy funding in his book *Missed Opportunities: The Story of Canada's Broadcasting Politics*, in which he provides an overview of Canadian broadcasting policy from 1927 to 1988. In Raboy's (1990) analysis, he demonstrates how in the history of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), shifting political interests and goals have influenced the direction of Canadian broadcasting policy. Within this analysis, he discusses the missed opportunities within public broadcasting. In particular, Raboy (1990) presents instances where public models and practices of alternative, community-driven, participatory, and democratic media have existed within the CBC. However, dominant political priorities and private interests have tended to override these alternative models. An example of this is the CBC's radio program the *Citizens' Forums*, which ran from 1943 to 1952 (Kozolanka, Mazepa, & Skinner, 2012; Raboy, 1990). While this CBC program promoted ideals of public debate and education, as well as other participatory, public-centred principles, specific programming content was often discontinued when it encountered government concerns about the coverage of controversial topics on the national broadcaster.

Furthermore, Raboy (1990, 2006) showcases how, in the history of the CBC, shifts in political priorities towards privatization have shaped public media across the country. With these shifts, the quality of broadcasting has become increasingly tied to economic growth and the CBC's ability to generate revenue rather than provide

opportunities for broadcasting democratic and participatory media dealing with critical issues. This shift began to emerge in the 1980s, as the federal government increasingly shifted the emphasis from public broadcasting to enabling private broadcasting within the communications sector. This change in attitude was implemented through policy and regulatory actions that encouraged the privatization and deregulation of the media and culture sectors in Canada (Raboy, 1990). This change of policy is characteristic of neoliberal forms of governance that came to prominence in the 1970s (Harvey, 2005). At root, neoliberalism “privileges markets as the primary means of organising society” (Mansell, 2011, p. 2). Later in Chapter 2, I indicate how neoliberalism has impacted the kinds and role of youth media funding.

Zoe Druick’s (2007) book *Projecting Canada: Government Policy and Documentary Film at the National Film Board* provides a history of the National Film Board (NFB) in Canada, from 1939 to 2004. Druick (2007) also demonstrates the connection between the government agendas from the 1940s to the 1990s and the effect this has had on the production and distribution of NFB films. In particular, she examines important instances where government-led public intervention was influenced by government priorities around citizenship learning. Druick (2007) draws on Foucault’s work on governmentality to understand this relationship.

Governmentality refers to the way government policy is developed around population/state management to encourage a particular type of citizen (i.e., citizenship learning). For example, in the 1960s, NFB programming was associated with narratives around community and participatory media through the Challenge for Change (CFC) program. The CFC program was “based on the argument that participation in media projects could empower disenfranchised groups and that media representation might effectively bring about improved political representation” (Druick, 2007, p. 127). Although the CFC program promoted the optimistic image of being democratic, community-driven, and empowering to the participants, the actual execution of the project did not always follow these ideals. Instead, they were aligned with state interests around modernizing all Canadians, leading to disconnects between government agendas and the actual interests of those involved in the program.

For instance, one of CFC's projects on Fogo Island, Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) was an experiment where film would be used for the purpose of community decision-making (Druick, 2007). Due to the collapse of the fishing industry on Fogo Island, the island's economy was in steady decline by the 1960s, with 60 percent of the Islanders receiving government welfare (Druick, 2007). The CFC's work on Fogo Island included optimistic narratives around participatory media, the objective of which was to incorporate new media "to create confidence in people's ability to articulate and communicate their problems, in the belief that an aware community can best shape its own future" (Low, 1968). Although the program had a laudatory ambition, its results on Fogo Island were not so positive. In fact, Druick explains that the CFC program was implemented in order to solve the problems of the Islanders in a particular way. Those strategies and actions implemented through the program were linked to the political priorities of the federal state, and in this way were a form of governance (Druick, 2010). In the case of Fogo Island, government priorities were to resolve the welfare issue and to modernize all Canadians (Druick, 2010). Consequently, the Fogo Island films communicated the state's perspectives on modernization and critiqued how a majority of Islanders were dependent on welfare. In this, the disconnects between the interests of the participants and the actual execution of the CFC program are noticeable. The lessons learned from the CFC Fogo Island project are instructive for analyzing how contemporary funding practices interact with the work done by youth media production organizations in Vancouver.

Druick's (2007) and Raboy's (1990) work points to questions we need to ask about the relationship between contemporary and historic policies and practices and the youth media production community in Vancouver. Raboy (1990) reminds us that where community and alternative media is concerned within the CBC, there is a long history of missed opportunities. Druick's (2007) work showcases how government-funded community media can be linked to forms of population management to encourage a particularly limited form of citizenship learning. In other words, due to state interests, there are discrepancies between optimistic narratives around the democratic potentials of participatory and community media and the actual execution of programming. Druick's (2007) and Raboy's (1990) work is important, as it can also provide key points of interest when considering how public policy and government initiatives have

influenced youth media programming and funding trends in Vancouver. This includes the political contexts in which youth media organizations are situated and the way these contexts influence the direction of youth media programming. Other questions that emerge include: What disconnects exist between current funding environments and the work done by youth media organizations and programs? Furthermore, what opportunities are missed because of this? These considerations helped inform my study's interview questions and also fed into my documentary research and the analysis of my research results. The central question guiding my research is:

- What tensions and challenges do youth media organizations and programs face as funding trends have changed during the 1990s and 2000s?

To trace shifting funding trends, I begin Chapter 2 by providing an overview of youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver, and describe the diverse opportunities they provide. I then set up my framework by addressing the social and political contexts involved with youth media funding. This includes an overview of neoliberal concepts specific to youth media funding. Linking neoliberalism to a tradition of critical policy studies, neoliberalism can refer “to a particular institutional expression of new public management theory, involving an increased reliance on non-governmental agents and the private sector, a shift from a controlling to an enabling state (with a lighter regulatory touch), and finally, the devolution of centralized responsibilities and increased involvement of multiple levels of government” (Marontate & Murray, 2010, p. 327). Drawing on this definition, I discuss how this new public management theory can impact youth media funding trends. In addition to addressing funding contexts shaping youth media production communities, I respond to optimistic narratives about the information society and creative industries, where new technology is often thought to promote democratic participation, skills development, job training, and self-expression. These ideas provide additional insight into the sociological contexts surrounding youth media initiatives. I then provide a brief history of youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver to further examine how neoliberalism and discourses about the information society and creative industries inform policy and impact youth media initiatives. Following this overview and history, I discuss my research methodology,

which includes a multi-method approach to understand the funding context impacting community based youth media organizations in Vancouver.

In Chapter 3 I incorporate my theoretical framework and history and present and analyze key themes arising from my interviews. I begin by mapping current youth media funding structures that arose from the interviews. I indicate the shifts in funding identified by interviewees and link these to the effects of neoliberalism within this sector, and political focuses associated with the information society and creative industries. I showcase that Vancouver's youth media scene is comprised of organizations that depend on complex and highly differentiated funding structures. After providing an overview of current funding structures and how they relate to changing political contexts, this chapter discusses key tensions that arose in the context of the current funding environment and youth media funding structures. Even though interviewees showcased diverse funding structures among youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver, I outline common tensions arising across all organizations, as well as disconnects between funder priorities and the delivery of youth media programs.

In Chapter 4, I conclude by highlighting gaps between youth media organizations and programs and dominant narratives associated with the information society, creative industries, and neoliberal funding trends. I emphasise that there is a lot of important work done among the youth media sector that is increasingly excluded from funder requirements, and discuss the missed opportunities that can result from this. I argue that more critical consideration is needed among policy makers and funders around the different implications resulting from the way funding is set up. In particular, funding should be focused on the diverse opportunities and spaces provided by youth media programming. This includes considerations on the spaces of plurality, critical thought and discussion that the youth media scene currently provides in Vancouver, and how to best support the sustainability of these programs. Related to the need for critical consideration on funding structures, and based on interview findings, I also outline key recommendations around youth media funding. This chapter also addresses limitations to my research and proposes areas for further research.

Chapter 2. Theory and Methodology

2.1. Introduction

In different ways, Druick (2007) and Raboy (1990) showcase how patterns of state interests influence the direction of communication and cultural practices in Canada, and how these have shifted as policy foci have changed over time. In the course of these shifts, conflicting political priorities have undermined the democratic potential of public media. Specific to youth media funding structures, we will consider what government priorities exist within current political contexts and how these impact youth media funding trends. This in turn will help to address my key thesis question: What tensions and challenges do youth media organizations and programs face as funding trends change?

I begin this chapter by providing an overview of youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver, and the range of opportunities they provide. After providing this overview, I consider the political and sociological contexts involved with youth media funding in Vancouver. Neoliberalism is central (although not exclusive) in my analysis of youth media funding practices. In addition, I suggest how discourses about the information society and creative industries have affected the way neoliberalism has shaped youth media funding. I outline the optimistic narratives associated with these political contexts, and identify disconnects between this rhetoric and the actual outcomes of these policy foci. Following this discussion, I provide a brief history of youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver to provide additional contexts to understanding youth media funding trends. This history showcases the politics of funding, and how varying youth media histories can lead to different funding structures across organizations. After outlining this history, I review my multi-method research approach to help further address my central research question. The research in this thesis is limited to Vancouver and consists of 11 semi-formal, qualitative interviews conducted with individual representatives from youth media organizations across Metro Vancouver. I have supplemented my interview data with data available on the Youth Digital Media Ecologies website and other documentary research.

2.2. The Plurality of Spaces Generated by Youth Media Organizations and Programs in Vancouver

As identified in chapter 1, youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver provide a range of opportunities for youth. As Poyntz (2013) outlines, not only are there a high number of youth media groups in Vancouver (44), but the “presence of such groups across a range of sectors and communities is striking” (p. 97). In addition to this variety, the sectors often intersect within youth media organizations and programs themselves. They include issues pertaining to health and risk prevention, recently immigrated and aboriginal youth, LGBT communities, social justice and social exclusion, youth-run initiatives, youth violence prevention, critical media literacy, and creative expression (see Poyntz, 2013, p.98 for further details). This diversity is significant to my thesis for two major reasons: First, funding trends and challenges can vary depending on the type of youth media program/organization. For instance, an organization that integrates youth media programming with social services might receive different funding to an organization that focuses on career development in the arts. It is important to take these programming differences into account when considering funding trends and the particular funding structures that impact organizations. I discuss this further throughout this chapter.

Second, the range of opportunities provided by the youth media sector adds to the diversity and plurality of spaces provided by Vancouver’s youth media scene. As Poyntz (2013) discusses, the diversity of youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver promotes opportunities for public spaces and forums to thrive. In particular, youth media programs/organizations in Vancouver constitute a youth media scene that provides spaces of plurality (Poyntz, 2013). Within this plurality, different ideas, practices, and opinions can meet so that they can debate with, discuss with, and learn from one another. For instance, an essential aspect of critical youth media literacy is the work of empowering young people through meaningful and critical participation in present day media environments (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2011). As Hoechsmann and Poyntz (2011) state, meaningful and critical participation in present day media environments allow youth to understand how meaning is produced in media cultures and to address how “. . . economic, political, and cultural forces work through the media to

shape the exercise of social power in society” (p. 72). They use an example of how government deregulation of media industries in the 1980s helped create conditions for global media conglomerates, including Disney, Time Warner, and Viacom, to dominate and influence youth culture. The result was that “brands have become more prevalent, influential, and common features across kids’ experiences (p. 30). Critical youth media literacy programs enable young people to become aware of practices of power in the media and to reflect on how and why critical practices operate in their everyday lives.

In addition to raising critical awareness among young people, youth media programs also seem to provide their audiences with opportunities to produce media and develop alternative media spaces. As Poyntz (2013) notes, “The range of media produced by local youth media groups continues to foster a rich space of diverse discourses, stories and images that together are contributing to the worldliness of the youth media scene” (p. 103). Poyntz (2013) provides an overview of how organizations in Vancouver contribute to an alternative media scene. Examples range from political advocacy groups that mobilize supporters around democratic issues, such as Internet freedom, to groups that circulate films made by young people on issues and topics that are not often addressed in the mainstream media. In this way, youth media organizations importantly foster an alternative media scene.

While youth media organizations and programs do provide a range of opportunities for young people, the current funding environment in Canada nevertheless directly influences what sort of work they are able to do. As I will argue, the current political context has affected both how organizations are funded as well as what types of programs are funded. Most importantly, governments have introduced new public management principles that favour privatization and deregulation, in ways that have altered how non-profit organizations are supported in Canada (Boucher, 2015; Marontate & Murray, 2010). Not only has this policy reconfiguration led to unsustainable funding environments, it has also placed controls on the content of programming. In the case of youth media programming, for instance, funding for new initiatives is increasingly tied to skills development and support for projects that aim to help youth compete in job markets. These initiatives are linked to optimistic discourses associated with the information society and creative industries and have been especially influential since the

late 1990s and early 2000s. With their narrow focus, however, these funding priorities can clash with youth media organizations' existing work and limit their programming diversity. In what follows, I clarify and address the challenges that have resulted from these tensions. I present this as part of a larger discussion of my theoretical framework and interview results.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

2.3.1. Neoliberalism

Throughout my thesis I draw on critical analysis of neoliberalism in order to situate my investigation of the funding systems impacting youth media organizations in Vancouver. Adopting a critical perspective on neoliberalism provides a framework to consider youth media funding trends because it ties together economics and cultural policy. David Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as a theory of political economic practices that came to prominence in the 1970s. It proposes that “human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market, and free trade” (p. 2). Neoliberalism moves away from government intervention, and instead promotes private enterprise and entrepreneurialism “as keys to innovation and wealth creation” (Harvey, 2005, p. 65). Under neoliberalism, the state’s role is to preserve individual freedom by providing the institutional structures for this to occur. This includes providing access to the market and the tools for individuals to participate in it, free from the shackles of government welfare.

A defining characteristic of neoliberalism is that it promotes personal freedom/individualism and the “free” market as substitutes for state-supported policy and activity. It is in this light that David Harvey (2005) discusses the proliferation of non-governmental and grassroots organizations whose work is based on mobilizing communities outside the state apparatus in order to accomplish tasks historically associated with the work of the state and state institutions. Neoliberal ideology holds that privatization, deregulation, increased competition, and state withdrawal from service delivery all “...eliminate bureaucratic red tape, increase efficiency and productivity,

improve quality, and reduce costs, both directly to the consumer through cheaper commodities and services and indirectly through reduction of the tax burden” (Harvey, 2005, p. 65). Neoliberalism’s insistence that economic growth should occur primarily through market-centred activity has pervaded public policy to the point that they have impacted funder relationships between the government and non-profit organizations (Boucher, 2015).

In Canada, one of the effects of neoliberal policies was the reduction of the welfare state. In particular, privatization and deregulation in the 1980s became key government priorities, leading to reduced support for publicly funded services such as social service programs (Raboy, 1990). Historically, non-profit organizations were involved in “the delivery of social, health, educational economic, cultural, research, financial and advocacy services to their communities” (Boucher, p. 33). Governments provided key financial support to the voluntary sector and the delivery of these services, including core funding (Elson, 2007). With the emergence of neoliberalism and the shrinking of the welfare state, however, federal and provincial governments reduced funding to organizations and increased non-profit organization accountability requirements (Boucher, 2015). These characteristics are associated with new public management principles, involving an increased reliance on the private sector and other sources of non-governmental support, the devolution of centralized responsibilities, and the increased involvement of the provincial and municipal governments (Marontate & Murray, 2010).

As part of the process of decreased social welfare and increased accountability, the federal government has “increasingly off-loaded the provision of social services to community organizations through a project-funding regime” (Gibson, O’Donnell, & Rideout, 2007, p.411). Through project-based funding, government placed additional fiscal pressure on non-profit organizations (Gibson, O’Donnell, & Rideout, 2007). Prior to the rise of neoliberalism within public policy, governments provided core funding to organizations (Gibson et al., 2007; Boucher, 2015). Such funding regimes provided support for projects, as well as the everyday administrative and operational costs of an organization. In contrast, project-based funding is often time-limited, has strict measurable outcomes, and only covers the specific program costs. Project-based

funding “is [thus] not intended to ensure or support the sustainability of an organization” (Boucher, 2015, p. 57). These drastic adjustments in funding have led organizations to rely increasingly on non-governmental sources of funding, where they charge fees for their services, emphasize fundraising activities, and depend on the private sector for their operational income (Boucher; 2015; Gibson, O’Donnell, & Rideout, 2007; Marontate & Murray, 2010). Evans and Shields (2000) in fact argue that non-profit organizations themselves are facing increased pressure to turn to market-based models to fund their work. The next chapter, Chapter 3, discusses the limitations to these market-based models and the way they constrain the work youth media organizations and programs are able to do.

Something that has exacerbated the funding shortages within the youth media sector has been the devolution of social and cultural policy making from the federal to the provincial and municipal levels of government (Marontate & Murray, 2011). As Marontate and Murray (2010) describe, the devolution of federal responsibilities to provinces in the cultural field occurred in two movements. The 1984 economic strategy for culture and communication, which was negotiated between the Canadian federal government and the Province of Manitoba, represented the first of these movements (Marontate & Murray, 2010). The policy, which bound together cultural and economic objectives, included a subsidiary agreement between Canada’s federal government and Manitoba’s provincial one. This agreement focused on “communication and cultural enterprises, which became a model for federal/provincial agreements in the cultural sector elsewhere” (Jeannotte, 2010, p. 310). The second movement occurred in the mid-1990s, at a time when the devolution of federal programs (such as unemployment insurance and human resources training) “expanded provincial policy choices by removing conditions that had formerly been attached to federal funds transferred to the provinces for social policy purposes” (McBride & McNutt, 2007, as cited in Marontate & Murray, 2010, p. 328). Coupled with fiscal downloading, the federal government reduced the payments and resources to the provinces to meet social policy obligations (Hall & Reed, 1998). Consequently, the provincial governments reduced “their grants and transfers to local governments, social agencies and individuals” (Hall & Reed, 1998, p. 2), which has in turn added to the fiscal pressures downloaded to non-profit organizations.

Amidst these developments, it is important to note that the implementation of neoliberal policies, including the devolution of responsibility to provinces, happened unevenly and in ways that differed depending on the priorities of specific provinces and municipalities (Marontate & Murray, 2010). In the case of British Columbia (BC), for instance, per capita federal spending on culture is among the lowest in Canada (Beale & Murray, 2011; Marontate & Murray, 2010). On the other hand, municipal expenditure on culture in BC is among the highest of all Canadian provinces (Beale & Murray, 2011; Marontate & Murray, 2010). As an example of BC municipal investment in the cultural sector, 35 municipalities had by 2015 joined the non-profit organization Creative City Network of Canada, which ties cultural policy to economic development (CCNC, 2015; Marontate & Murray, 2010). The organization is comprised of “municipalities, arts organizations and individuals working to support cultural development in their communities” (CCNC, 2015, para 1). The diversity of municipal and provincial cultural spending practices in the country is of significance to this research, as the experiences of youth media organizations and programs interviewed in Vancouver will likely be different to the experience of groups in other jurisdictions. In addition to this caveat, I note that the development and impact of neoliberalism in BC has also been impacted by discourses about the information society and creative industries. These discourses have impacted the direction of youth media funding trends in BC.

2.3.2. The Information Society and Creative Industries

The information society and creative industries help contextualize government priorities in the 1990s and 2000s. These concepts have shaped youth media funding and are linked to optimistic narratives associated with the economic potential of new technologies and creative work. The information society and creative industries have influenced youth media programming as funders have become increasingly concentrated on how creativity can be linked with skills development so that youth can participate in the workplace. This sort of preoccupation ties in with neoliberal ideas that specifically emphasise the economic gains associated with creativity; it associates creativity with skills that young people might be able to use to enter and participate in labour markets. Despite optimistic claims associated with the economic usefulness of the information society and creative industries, however, the implementation of policies

championing these ideals have not always led to promised outcomes. In addition, the explicit focus on skills development can exclude other important work being done by youth media organizations and programs that do not fall within these priorities.

The term “information society” emerged in the 1970s to address the ways information and communication technologies (ICTs) were coming to play an increasingly important role in society. Discourses about the information society were associated with claims about the way ICTs could foster “more dynamic economies, renewed democracy, and new forms of sociability” (George, 2010, p. 556). Information society discourse shifts the emphasises from an economy “driven by resource extraction and industrial manufacturing to one driven by the circulation and application of knowledge” (Barney, 2004, p. 58). Thus knowledge and information, which are enhanced by ICTs, become economic resources and commodities. In the information society, ICTs have several effects on the economy including: an increased demand for highly skilled labours/knowledge workers, a restructuring of work and employment in response to the “imperatives/possibilities of information technology”, and a focus on continued skills education and training (Barney, 2004, pp. 59 - 60).

Governments around the world, including Canada’s, have adopted these optimistic narratives and they, in turn, have come to affect the funding of youth media organizations (Barney, 2004). Since the 1990s, for instance, the Canadian government has focused on the development of the information society, claiming that it is central to enhancing “employment, economic prosperity, national dialogue, and democratic participation” (Crow & Longford, 2000, p. 218). In this way, Canadian participation in the information society has been a key narrative associated with nation building. The following statement, taken from the final report of the Government of Canada’s Highway Advisory Council (IHAC), illustrates this well:

As the 21st century dawns, Canada and the world are making a profound transition that reaches into every aspect of human life. A new knowledge society is replacing the industrial society that prevailed in the developed world during most of the 19th and 20th centuries. This transformation is fundamental, and our success in making this transition will determine our success as a nation and as individuals in the 21st century. It will determine whether we as a people can

achieve those economic, social and cultural goals that make us Canadian.
(Information Highway Advisory Council, 1997, p. 123, as cited in Fraser, 2007, p. 210)

Linked to the optimism associated with the information society, digital technology and media education emerged as key to democratic participation, and became central concerns among policy makers focused on national economic and cultural issues in the 1990s (Goldfarb, 2002; Poyntz, 2013). This included providing young people with the skills they need to enter the new knowledge- and information-driven society. As Goldfarb (2002) remarks, “networked computers, by the century’s end, had become a ubiquitous feature of the image of the good life of middle- and upper-class American families” (p. 9). In like fashion, the Canadian government became increasingly focused on the notion that training in digital video and multiple literacies were essential in preparing young people for life in the new information economy (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012; Poyntz, 2013). Combined with this, by focusing on youth “voice” through skills development, digital technology has been positioned as a resource to “help young people – and particularly marginalized or otherwise silenced youth – to ‘find their voice’ through a process of skills development that enables seemingly unproblematic and unfettered democratic access” (Poyntz, 2013, p. 93). In considering this optimism associated with “youth voice,” however, it is important to be critical of these claims around new technology in the information society. As Poyntz (2013) notes, under neoliberal influences, a focus on youth voice has tended to privilege “individualism, self-reliance, and self-management” (p. 93) as key goals in digital literacy training, as opposed to support for democratic participation. As result of this, youth media work focused on the promotion of youth voice risks aligning with the status quo rather than promoting more ambitious and democratic aims. In this manner, optimistic claims associated with the information society can have less significant outcomes than might be expected. Poyntz (2013) observes, for instance, that the focus on individual skills development may not work to support the development of “a public culture”; instead, it may encourage the reintegration of “young people into the largely privatized conditions of labour market participation” (Poyntz, 2013, p. 97). The paradoxes associated with funding for youth voice may in fact parallel larger contradictions in the way youth funding has been implemented to serve the interest of young people. Ultimately, although

optimistic discourses associated with participatory digital media may help to justify the expansion of media training, it is important to contextualize these developments. In this regard, the impact of information society discourse on youth media programming is of notable interest.

The optimism associated with the information society is also evident in the discourse of the “creative industries,” which emerged in the late 1990s. The two discourses are interlinked, as the term *creative industries* is connected with the advent of the information society (Garnham, 2005). The rise of the creative industries further enhances dominant narratives associated with skills development and the significance of participating in the new knowledge economy/information society. In particular, the discourse around the creative industries connects culture to economics, including job creation and employment. Creative industries are associated with “autonomous, flexible, creative labour, as the primary activity in an economy based on symbol production, and as the core site of innovation in the knowledge economy” (Druick, 2012, p. 133). The creative industries also emphasize symbolic/immaterial goods and services, and focus on creativity, knowledge, and innovation (Garnham, 2005; Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008). Finally, creative industries are linked to general assumptions about a “more flexible, multiskilled and mobile labour force” (Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008, p. 4). Overarchingly, the creative industries, like the information society, are associated with the economic possibilities associated with new media and technology production.

Richard Florida’s (2012) concept of the creative class and the creative city model are perhaps the most popular iterations of the creative industries thesis. Florida’s (2012) work suggests that creative and highly skilled citizens drive the economic success of a city. Florida (2012) argues that the creative city is based on attracting highly skilled, educated workers – including those in engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music, and entertainment – to urban communities. This in turn fosters economic development through the development of “new ideas, new technology, and new creative industries” (Florida, 2012, p. 8). It also includes a broader group of creative professionals in “business and finance, law, health care, and related fields” (p. 8). Florida (2012) notes that all members of the creative class share a common ethos that values “creativity, individuality, difference, and merit” (p. 9). He argues that the most

powerful economic and social shifts of our everyday life are the rise of the creative economy and the creative class. It is important to note, however, that Florida's model has been critiqued for a host of reasons, including its focus on "economic indicators and quantitative measures [that] are concomitantly divorced from other ways of imagining non-market value for creativity and culture" (Druick, 2012, p. 143). This problem is especially relevant in thinking about youth media work, where funders increasingly prioritize the economic potential of culture and creativity over and above other aims, including the relationship of such work to democracy.

In addition, despite the hopes that creative technology industries would improve employment opportunities, evidence suggest that precarious labour conditions dominate this sector (Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008). These conditions include low pay, excessively heavy workloads, a dearth of full-time work, overwork, high performance expectations without sufficient training and support, and a lack of job security and benefits (Canadian Human Resources Council [CHRC], 2002, as cited in Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008, p. 31). As Gollmitzer & Murray (2008) note, even though extensive attention has been given to the economic potentials of the new creative economy in both academic and policy circles, there are "no creative labour policies aside from support for entrepreneurship" (p. 20). McBride and McNutt (2007) observe of BC that the province's focus on the new information economy has been limited to a concern to ensure "optimal conditions for capital, while ignoring the state role in citizen's well-being and economic security" (p. 189). Much of the creative city focus is thus limited to economic concerns rather than a greater attention to the social welfare of the community. Florida's work detailing the promise of the creative industries and a creative class of workers has remained influential among policy makers, but this promise has not always been borne out in practice.

BC has been a major proponent of the creative industries/creative city approach, defining "culture primarily in economic and instrumental terms" (Beale & Murray, 2011, p. 15). This includes government-led initiatives identifying cultural tourism as a revenue generator and public good, with particular focus on megaprojects. Examples of the latter include the Expo 86 World's Fair, BC's film industry, and the 2010 Olympics (Beale & Murray, 2011). The linking between culture and economics has been especially apparent

since 2001, when Gordon Campbell, leader of the provincial Liberal party at the time, “promised ‘A New Era’ for the province” (McBride & McNutt, 2007, p. 187). This era has aligned with neoliberal trends towards privatization, as it has focused on creating a market that “nurtures the information economy, provides a competitive environment for investment, promotes the spirit of entrepreneurship and provides a large contingent of flexible workers” (McBride & McNutt, 2007, p. 188). More recently, Premier Christy Clark has initiated creative city strategies, emphasizing the role of the arts and culture in contributing to BC’s economy (BC Government News, 2016). On the BC government’s Creative Economy website, for instance, it highlights how BC’s creative and cultural sector “drives productivity, contributes to entrepreneurship, and encourages the emergence of new ideas and technologies across all industries” (BC Government, n.d., para. 2). It also discusses BC’s “strong creative advantage” (para. 5), with its film, television, and digital media industry, and high concentration of artists and creative workers. In the case of youth media, in 2013 the BC government launched the BC Creative Futures strategy. This strategy was to “build British Columbia’s creative economy by enhancing youth engagement in the arts and preparing young people for future studies at institutions for careers in the creative sector” (Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, 2013, p. 13). BC has thus implemented policy discourses towards the creative industries; however, as discussed, the actual implementation of these policies does not always match the optimistic rhetoric associated with employment opportunities.

To this point, I have outlined key characteristics of neoliberalism, the information society and creative industries in relation to youth media funding. In the next section, I provide a brief history of youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver to further examine how government priorities inform policy and impact youth media initiatives.

2.4. The History of Youth Media Organizations in Vancouver

The development of youth media organizations in Vancouver in the 1990s and 2000s offers an interesting context to examine how neoliberalism and discourses about

the information society and creative industries inform policy and impact youth media projects. This history also provides an important context to examine the diverse histories of youth media organizations and programs and the range of funding structures that have impacted their development. From the 1990s and early 2000s onward, there was a surge of youth media organizations in Vancouver. This development can be linked to the optimism associated with new technology and discourses associated with the information society and creative industries. For instance, of the 32 organizations that existed in Vancouver in 2013, 42 percent of such groups were founded in the 1990s, and 55 percent in the 2000s (YDME, 2013b; Poyntz, 2013). As digital media became more accessible through various forms of portable and digital media (i.e., smartphones, YouTube, digital cameras, etc.), youth media programming became increasingly intertwined with different social and cultural initiatives (Poyntz, 2013). It is important to note, however, that even though the information society and creative industries were dominant political discourses throughout the 1990s and 2000s, youth media organizations and programs encompass a range of organizational structures and provide a range of opportunities, as described earlier in this chapter. In particular, organizations have different histories and goals, and serve different populations, while including staff with varied professional backgrounds (Poyntz, 2013; Interviews¹).

One important distinction among youth media organizations in Vancouver are the varied funding structures of older cultural organizations that continue to receive federal funding, and newer organizations that receive provincial/municipal funding and/or non-governmental support. Some of these older cultural organizations have ongoing, core federal funder relationships that can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s, and now provide youth media programming, and/or spaces for this programming to occur. On the other hand, there are organizations whose funding structures more clearly align with the tenets of neoliberalism, including a push towards entrepreneurialism and support from the private sector instead of the government. The propensity of project-based funding² among newer organizations is also linked with the logics of neoliberalism. This history from the 1960s/1970s onwards is helpful in considering distinct funding structures and

¹ This theme came up during my interviews, which will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

² This theme came up during my interviews, which will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

programming among Vancouver's youth media scene, which will be expanded on in Chapter 3.

The emergence of key cultural institutions in Vancouver is linked to political shifts in the late 1960s and 1970s from high arts³ to government focus on democratization and citizen participation. These policy shifts emerged in response to identity politics and emerging social movements that would reshape politics on the left in Canada from the 1960s onward (Druick, 2007). Druick (2007) sums this up, stating that "Quebec politics, First Nations politics, women's politics, student politics, and new immigration policies brought about a new array of social policies through which the state increased its governmental reach, administering and representing citizens with renewed vigour" (p. 127). With these shifts, government focused on participation in media projects, where it was hoped that new forms of "media representation might effectively bring about improved political representation" (Druick, 2007, p. 127). This extended to youth media projects and optimistic narratives about the use of portable media (in this case, film cameras) to empower marginalized groups through countering and deconstructing mainstream media to improve social and political life (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2016; Poyntz, 2013). In response to these shifts, federally funded cultural institutions began to respond to these political priorities in their programming. This was reflected in key cultural institutions in Canada, including the NFB's Challenge for Change program, as discussed in Chapter 1, and the Canada Council for the Arts' priorities towards "bringing the arts to the people" (CCA, 2007, para. 5).

In response to these policy shifts, the CCA expanded its funding focus to include grants to individual artists and artist-run centres, alternative theatres, contemporary

³ When the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA) was first established, its major funding priorities included promoting high arts. This focus was linked with recommendations from the 1949 Royal Massey Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, a two-year study and final report. In response to Cold War politics and the threat of mass culture influences from the United States, the Massey Commission promoted high culture and its role in cultivating responsible, critically minded citizens (Druick, 2006, 2007). It also marked an important shift towards culture on a national and international scale, which "established the rationale for many of the national cultural institutions that would play key roles in the subsequent half century: the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), the National Film Board (NFB), the Canada Council...." (Druick, 2006, p. 178).

dance companies, arts magazines, new music groups and small classical music ensembles (CCA, 2007). Community arts initiatives and programs established through this newly available funding from the CCA have played an important role in supporting the rise of youth media programs in the 1990s. For instance, Intermedia, a Vancouver-based artist-run centre, emerged in response to these policy shifts and played an important role in shaping the alternative arts and film scenes in Vancouver from the late 1960s onward (Poyntz, 2008).

Founded in 1967, Intermedia was the first media arts organization to receive community arts funding (\$40,000 Canadian dollars) from the CCA (Wozny, 2009). Intermedia worked to foster a meeting place for the mixing of artists with the broader community (scientists, engineers, educators, etc.), to provoke forms of experimentation in multi-media production and the exploration of alternative communication processes. To achieve this, the society provided public access to a workshop facility, performance space, and equipment (Fairbairn, 1991). Intermedia eventually dissolved in 1972, but not before shaping the development of various media-related organizations that would influence the alternative arts and film scenes in Vancouver (Poyntz, 2008). These included Video Inn, Pacific Cinémathèque, Western Front, Satellite Video Exchange, and the Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution West (now Moving Images Distribution) (Poyntz, 2008). Some of these older cultural institutions continue to receive federal funding, and now incorporate youth media programming in their work. One example is the Pacific Cinémathèque, which has provided ongoing youth media programming since the mid-1990s and is an instance of how older media organizations in the city have contributed to Vancouver's youth media scene.

If CCA community arts funding in the late 1960s influenced the development of youth media organizations, funding and policy environments would change in the 1990s. By the 1990s and 2000s, funder priorities shifted towards neoliberal discourses associated with privatization and deregulation. These neoliberal policy discourses, combined with the information society and creative industries, have tended to emphasize individual skills development and preparation for labour market participation as central components of support for the non-profit sector (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2016; Poyntz, 2013). Consequently, funders shifted priorities from focusing on broader community

issues to personal politics and individual experiences, such as skills development (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2016).

In addition, and associated with the devolution of centralized responsibility, many youth media organizations and programs emerging in the 1990s and 2000s received most of their support from provincial and municipal funding, as well as other non-governmental sources of support.⁴ Nonetheless, the federal government continued to fund key cultural institutions and youth media programming in Vancouver. It is important to note, however, that federal funding objectives also shifted towards a focus on individual skills development. For instance, the CCA 1998/1999 annual report outlines goals to “train better students, cultivate artistic vocations, and create larger, better informed art audiences among future generations of Canadian citizens” (CCA, 1999, p. 6). This language in the annual report ties in with the role the Canada Council for the Arts has in encouraging ideals typically linked to the information society and creative industries, with language associated with training better students and cultivating artistic vocations. The federal Skills Link program is another example of the continued role of the federal government in the context of skills development and training. This program connects neoliberal discourses specific to economic success with youth skills development. Skills Link is largely funded by Service Canada, and provides funding for employers and organizations to offer eligible activities to youth facing barriers to employment (Service Canada, 2016). Since youth media programming can link with skills development, there are youth media organizations that receive funding for Skills Link program (MacIver, 2010).

Even though the federal government has continued to play a role in youth media programming, funding trends have moved away from core funding and support for basic administrative costs. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this can result in challenges for older cultural institutions that have received ongoing core, federal funding. This is significant to consider, as these organizations continue to promote spaces for participatory media, and contribute to Vancouver’s youth media scene.

⁴ This theme came up during my interviews and will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

Nico Carpentier (2013) provides an important overview of the significance of older cultural institutions, as well as newer organizations, and the importance of not privileging one organizational structure over the other. This is important in considering the increase of neoliberal funding models, rather than core, ongoing government funding. In Carpentier's (2013) article, he discusses three overlapping stages of democratization in the media sphere. The first is the rise of community and alternative media; the second is the popularization of a minimal, structured form of participation within the mainstream media sphere (such as through genres like the talk show); and the third coincides with the rise of the Internet and new media. The first stage of democratization includes older community media organizations that have formal structures and provide opportunities for participatory media. These organizations provide "organizational shelter (and often a material space) for these (maximalist) participatory practices" (Carpentier, 2013, p. 76). An example of the first stage of democratization in relation to youth media organizations is older and ongoing organizations that provide physical spaces and resources to help youth develop and engage with participatory media. An example discussed above is the Pacific Cinémathèque. In the third and most recent stage of democratization, however, there is a new interest in democratization associated with the rise of the Internet and new media. This encompasses a community of online users who organize around shared interests rather than through formal organizational structures. Dominant narratives around the information society fit within the optimism around the third stage of democratization, including the democratic opportunities associated with the Internet and new media, including employment, economic prosperity, national dialogue, and democratic participation (Crow & Longford, 2000). Online campaign-based organizations in Vancouver, such as OpenMedia.ca and Leadnow, are examples of projects that align with Carpentier's third stage of democratization through the media. Carpentier (2013) argues that new media theories tend to celebrate the democratic opportunities offered by online participation and the third wave of democratization. He notes further, however, that such celebrations can disregard the useful organizational structures that helped to foster media democratization during the 1960s and 1970s. He argues that we need not privilege one type of participatory media practice over the other, remarking, for instance, that practices associated with contemporary online media can enable new forms of participation. Yet as he observes,

the sometimes wonderful outcomes of the earlier stages of democratization are still very present in the media landscapes, and their experiences, discourses, and practices should remain part of how the democratization of the media sphere in the contemporary era is addressed, organized, evaluated. (Carpentier, 2013, p. 79)

With this in mind, it is important to consider how neoliberal-funding trends that depart from core funding can negatively impact the sustainability of older cultural organizations. This includes whether these organizations are able to receive the funding required to cover their basic organizational costs, including but not limited to physical space, equipment/technology, and core staffing.

The brief history and theoretical framework I have provided here will be important in the next chapter, Chapter 3, in which I discuss the current youth media funding environment identified during my interviews. In particular, the chapter will consider how political priorities linked with neoliberalism, the information society, and creative industries have influenced youth media funding in Vancouver and the tensions and challenges that have arisen from this. While my research focus is limited to Vancouver and interviews with representatives from youth media organizations in that city, I supplement these interviews with references to relevant policy documents and other documents/resources identified by interviewees in their answers to my questions. I used the latter material to provide additional context for my analysis in Chapters 2 and 3. In the next section, I describe my research methodology by outlining the stages involved with my documentary research. This is followed by an overview of my interview process and the method used in the description and analysis of my interviews.

2.5. Methodology: Documentary Research

2.5.1. The Youth Digital Media Ecologies Project and Study Population

I drew on the Youth Digital Media Ecologies website (YDME, 2013a) during the planning, execution, and analysis of my research project. The project showcased the

diverse opportunities and spaces provided by youth media organizations in Vancouver, as well as the diverse funding structures represented by government funding, individual donors, corporate donations, fee for service, and foundations (YDME, 2013c). The project also identified limitations around youth media funding, including scarcity of funds and competitive funding. This work centrally informs my project, including my study population.

The population for this study is comprised of youth media organizations in Vancouver who participated in the YDME project; the YDME project website was used as a main sampling frame in selecting which organizations to approach for interviews. I chose Vancouver for my research and use interviews to complement the broader provincial and municipal policy frames to which I drew attention earlier in this chapter. The YDME project was a helpful resource in mapping out youth media organizations in Vancouver, providing a general overview of the characteristics of these organizations and helping me narrow down interview possibilities.

The YDME site presents details of 44 community-based education organizations and programs based in Vancouver, broken down into various categories that give an overview of the organization/program, contact information, year established, budget, size of the organization, and other background information. Prior to selecting which organizations would be contacted, I undertook documentary research online to see what information was already available. This included the YDME website and other online resources, including youth media organization websites, the Canada Revenue Service website, and funder websites that provide details on funding recipients (e.g., the CCA). This assessment was done to see if interviews would be necessary, or if I could find all relevant information online. In this assessment, it became clear that relying solely on online information has its limitations. For instance, online information can vary in detail depending on the organization and what information their protocols require them to make available online. When organizations made financial information (such as financial statements) available to the public, there were nonetheless limitations to what was provided. A good example of this is that there were no consistent systems in reporting on, assessing, and evaluating financial statements. Lastly, I realized that relying solely on online documents would not provide the depth of knowledge required to answer my

research questions. This is especially the case given that youth media organizations have unique histories and relationships with their funders.

While there were limitations with available information online, this web scan and information from the YDME website helped me define my study population. Both the web scans and the YDME project demonstrated there are various categories of youth media organizations and programs, including non-profits, registered charities, and private companies. In addition, the youth media organizations and programs have diverse missions, budget sizes, activities, and years of operation; they also serve a variety of youth groups (Poyntz, 2013; YDMEe, 2013). These different organizational types affect funding models and where and how organizations receive their funding. For example, through my documentary research, I learned that to maintain charity status in Canada, certain parameters must be followed: organizations cannot, for instance, undertake political activities as their main purpose (CRA, 2013). As such, organizations that focus primarily on political advocacy – such as online advocacy groups, for example – would not fit within the parameters of a Registered Charity. This is significant, as the classification of an organization will inevitably influence the types of funding available to it, of which there are many: support from individual or corporate donors and donations from foundations and other groups that require a charitable tax receipt are just some examples (CRA, 2015). In addition, organizations may serve a particular demographic in order to achieve their program outcomes. For instance, MacIver's (2010) research on a youth media employment program noted that facilitators "chose to select candidates from a less risky demographic of youth in order to achieve the employment-related outcomes because they could be confident that the youth would be able to achieve employment upon graduation" (p. 92). Similar challenges specific to inflexible and strict measurement outcomes were also apparent during my interviews, which will be discussed in the next chapter, Chapter 3.

Given these distinct characteristics of youth media organizations and programs, I selected a range of different types of organizations to interview, including non-profits, registered charities, and private companies. I also selected organizations with varying goals, demographics, histories, and budget sizes (>\$500,000 to >\$100,000). This expanded the scope of organizations interviewed for my study and offered different

examples of funding situations and challenges that youth media organizations might face. More information regarding the interviewees selected will be discussed in the interview section (Section 2.6).

2.5.2. Post-interview documentary research

Once I completed the interviews, I examined policy documents and other types of documents/resources which interviewees noted as being significant. I had originally set out to analyze government cultural policy documents from the 1990s to the present. However, it became clear early in my research process that this form of supply-side analysis was beyond the scope of my study, given the diverse range of public policies and funding resources related to youth media organizations. This was especially the case given the broad paradigms associated with cultural policy and the fact that youth media funding can fall outside of cultural policy – in social and educational policy, for instance. The problems and challenges I found in gathering relevant policy and funding data for the youth media sector paralleled the related problems in visual art and cultural policy research. Murray (2005) discusses colliding policy paradigms competing in the cultural field, which makes it difficult to clearly designate the boundaries of the cultural policy sector. Similarly, Bellavance, Blais, and Dicaire-Théoret (2011) outline important limitations in cultural policy research, including the fact that the visual arts are often discussed as part of broad cultural sectors or other sectors such as education; research and information on the visual arts sector are therefore uneven across Canada (Bellavance et al., 2011). A further challenge is that public policy research on youth media organizations and programs can vary across different sectors, as well as across federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government. Given the complex nature of cultural policy and youth media funding sources, my interviews helped guide me to relevant public policy documents and other helpful resources related to the topic. Examples that arose during the interviews include the City of Vancouver’s direct social services grant program, City of Vancouver’s Get Out Program, the Vantage Point workshops, and the BC Community Gaming Grant. I used these resources to supplement the findings in my interview research.

In examining public policy documents, I considered the challenges in directly linking policy documents and political agendas. As Marontate and Murray (2010) describe, there are methodological challenges in interpreting cultural policy documents: “Government records and archives tend to focus on legislation and administrative infrastructures, with sketchy documentation about relationships between political agendas, public debates, administrative units, programs, and policy, or even basic information about historical divisions of responsibilities” (Marontate & Murray, 2010, p. 338). By remaining aware of these challenges, however, I was able to use policy documents to help inform and add to the discussion and analysis of interview data.

2.6. Methodology: Interviews with representatives of youth media initiatives

The following sections provide an overview of the organizations included in my study, the general design of my interview questions, and the methods used in the description and analysis of my findings.

2.6.1. Selection of Organizations

When selecting which organizations to contact, I made my choices with the aim of representing a range of categories of organizations (e.g., registered charity, private company, non-profit organization), as well as budget sizes, year established, and other unique youth media characteristics. This would help further my analysis in examining the differences and similarities among organizations, and how funding trends and associated tensions/challenges can vary depending on organizational characteristics.

In addition, when selecting organizations to interview, I chose organizations that had participated in the Youth Digital Media Ecologies project. This allowed me to refer to quantitative data already available on the YDME project website. Since my research questions related to issues that arose from the YDME project, I was interested in including these organizations in my study so that I could extend existing knowledge on these issues.

The characteristics of the organizations I contacted included:

- Older youth media organizations and programs (established before the year 2000)
- Newer youth media organizations and programs (established after 2000)
- Youth media programs that are part of larger institutions, including educational institutions and/or larger established community arts organizations.
- Youth media organizations and programs with different budget sizes (>\$500,000 to >\$100,000)
- Youth media organizations with varying goals (e.g., critical media literacy, the de-schooling movement, creating expression, political advocacy, youth violence prevention, youth voice, etc.).
- Not-for-profits (both registered charity and non-registered charity), formal education not-for-profits, and for-profit organizations.

2.6.2. Selection of Representatives or Key Informants of the organizations

In my selection of representatives, I contacted executive directors (EDs) and/or program managers of selected youth media organizations and programs in Metro Vancouver. I chose to interview EDs or program managers because of my interest in funding issues and the history of each organization. I contacted potential participants by e-mail and by phone. When doing so, I used the contact list from the YDME project, which included the names of EDs and/or program managers from youth media organizations, the organizations' addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses. In total, I contacted 20 organizations from the YDME list.

Several considerations contributed to how I posed my requests to organizations that they participate in my study. One such was that organizations might be reluctant to put aside 45-60 minutes of their time for an interview, either because of the possibly sensitive nature of research on current funding models, or because of their busy schedules. To try and encourage their participation, I explained the relevance of my research topic and its importance to the current and future work of youth media

organizations and programs. My email invitations therefore referred to the YDME forum, issues that participants expressed at the forum, and how my study would relate to those issues. I also included a note on confidentiality: if requested, the interviewee's identity and/or the name of their organization would be anonymized in my final report. In fact, as my research progressed, I decided to keep all interviews confidential because of the sensitive nature of the discussions, even though not every interviewee requested anonymity.

Because my senior supervisor, Dr. Stuart Poyntz, has an extensive background of working with youth media organizations through his previous career as Education Director at Pacific Cinémathèque, his connections with the youth media sector proved useful when contacting organizations. My own familiarity with youth media organizations – through my work as a research assistant for the YDME project in 2012/2013 and my previous volunteer experience at youth media organizations – also helped in soliciting research participants.

2.6.3. Interview Methods and Questions

Over the course of my study, I conducted semi-formal qualitative interviews with EDs and/or program managers from 10 youth media organizations and programs. I interviewed two representatives from one organization, leaving me with 11 key informant interviews in total. Of these 11 key informants, four were founders of their respective youth media programs/organizations, while the rest were either EDs, program managers/directors, and/or program leads. Each of the interviews lasted 45-60 minutes; as noted, most participants requested that their identities remain anonymous. Youth media organizations and programs interviewed included those that work in critical media literacy, youth violence prevention, youth voice, the de-schooling movement, creative expression, youth violence prevention, political advocacy work, and youth-run media programming. I also interviewed both smaller organizations, and youth media programs that are part of larger cultural institutions. The budgets of participating organizations ranged from >\$49,999 sizes ranged to over >\$250,000.

While establishing my interview questions and preparing for the interview process, I incorporated aspects of Ann Swidler's (2001) interview methods. I found the following excerpt, contained in *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters*, to be particularly useful when preparing my interviews:

Rather than assuming, as many surveys do, that people have a "true" idea or opinion about an issue, which the survey tries to tap, I was interested in the entire range of ideas, understandings, and even inarticulate assumptions people might bring to bear on a problem. (Swidler, 2001, p. 221)

This excerpt provided important insight in encouraging interview participants to express a range of ideas during the interviews. This was an important consideration for my research, as those interviewed had different histories and backgrounds with youth media organizations and thus had different perspectives to offer. For example, one interviewee's program was entirely volunteer-run. Consequently, their experiences, perspectives, and topics of discussion differed considerably from established organizations with ongoing funding and full-time staff.

Following Swidler's (2001) advice, I avoided asking leading questions during interviews and opted where possible to allow interviewees to move the discussion in directions they deemed appropriate. Swidler (2001) presents her rationale for this approach, stating that while she always covered the basic questions in interviews, she often pursued topics of interest to interviewees. She did this by posing open-ended questions, so that she could probe interviewees' answers and follow up on particular issues. In like fashion, when constructing my interviews, I often referred to Swidler's (2001) list of interview questions to see how she organized and structured the interviews, and what type of probe questions she developed. This enabled me to formulate dynamic and in-depth interviews which would allow emerging themes, information, and policy references noted in interviews to be explored further as required. I also tried to organize my questions in chronological order so as to transition easily from one question and topic to the next. I therefore began my interviews by asking interviewees about their own history and involvement with their youth media organizations; I followed these up with questions about the history of the organizations themselves.

During the interviews, participants were asked about the following topics:

- Their personal background/history and those of their organizations.
- Staffing and volunteering at their organization.
- Funding processes and requirements for youth media organizations.
- Opportunities and challenges in the industry; best practices and further areas of support.
- Collaboration.
- Next steps and conclusion.

Below I provide details on each set of questions and the rationale for including them in the interview schedule.

Personal Background/History and those of their Organizations

I began my interviews with general questions about the interviewee's professional relationship with the organization (i.e., as the founder, ED, or program manager), their history of involvement in youth media programs, and their professional background. These questions helped to provide a sense of the professional backgrounds of those involved in youth media work. This was important, considering that youth media organizations are involved in many different types work (e.g., education initiatives, social services, work relating to the arts, job training, etc.). The information garnered from these questions added to what to date has been limited research on the backgrounds of those who work in the sector. Whereas the social service sector might include frontline support workers with degrees in social work or counselling, the professional and educational backgrounds of youth media representatives can vary. In addition, the diverse set of professional backgrounds (e.g., education and experience) could be another factor in the diverse practices, goals, approaches, and histories around youth media programming. For example, professionals with a background in media education might be more focused on critical media literacy; professionals with a background in the arts may be more focused on the artistic elements of youth media programming; on the other hand, those with a social service background might be more involved with the social services side of youth media organizations.

After asking about the interviewee's background in youth media work, I asked about the history of the organization's youth media work. This included how the organization came to do youth media work, and their goals. I also noted the changes that have occurred in the youth media sector over time, and inquired about participants' perceptions of the implications these developments. The purpose of these questions was to explore different contexts shaping the diverse histories of youth media organizations and to gain further understanding of changing political trends impacting their work. It is important to note that many of the participants did not have a full history of their organizations and programs. Consequently, in my analysis and discussion of the interviews, I was not always able to clarify why specific youth media organizations were founded.

Following my questions on the history of youth media work, I asked about the organization's funding histories. Here, I asked questions about key funding sources and how funding streams had changed overtime? I was interested in exploring how both financial support and other types of support (i.e., in-kind donations, volunteering, etc.) had changed. After clarifying the type of funding received, I inquired about which types of support had been most and least important, and whether there have been any significant changes in funding. I also made inquiries about shifts in recent major funding sources. Through these questions, I hoped to gain an understanding of how funding trends have shifted and get a sense of the associated benefits and challenges associated with these trends.

Staffing and Volunteering at their Organization

Following my early questions on personal and organizational histories, I asked participants about the human resources involved in youth media programming (volunteer work, paid work, and internships). I also inquired about any challenges around staffing, including problems in raising funds to hire staff. Through these questions, I hoped to develop a sense of the staffing and volunteers required to run youth media programs, and what challenges organizations faced in meeting these needs.

Funding Processes and Requirements for Youth Media Organizations

Relating to my discussion in Chapter 1 on changing government funding priorities and cultural policy shifts, my next set of questions related to funding processes and requirements. I asked about the different funder requirements and whether/how funding applications impact the type of work youth media organizations do. I was particularly interested in whether funder requirements/priorities have changed over time and, if so, how they have changed. It is important to note that during interviews I clarified who in the organization worked on funding applications, as this could influence the type of responses provided. Relating to funding processes and requirements, I then asked about opportunities and challenges/obstacles regarding youth media financial support in Vancouver. This set of questions aimed to establish the opportunities and challenges youth media face within current funding trends.

Another set of questions involved best practices and areas of further support. Specifically, I asked participants which financial models they thought worked best (e.g., fee-for-service, government funding, private donors, sponsorships, etc.), and what other types of support structures would benefit the work youth media organizations do. Other support structures could include professional development, opportunities for collaboration, networking events, and sharing best practices. Within these questions, I was interested not only in understanding what worked best for the participants' organizations, but also how this might vary depending on different organizational goals and structures.

Collaboration

My interviews also included a set of questions around collaboration. This included: Reasons for organizations collaborating or not collaborating with other organizations; whether they saw value in collaborating; what issues encourage/discourage collaboration; how frequently organizations collaborate; and how collaboration with other organizations changed over time. I then asked whether youth media organizations would like to see more collaboration with other organizations and, if so, what types of collaboration they would prefer. This set of questions around collaboration was specifically derived from the youth media forum, where participants expressed that current funding trends can lead to competitive funding environments.

This led me to investigate how funding trends might encourage/discourage collaboration. That being said, I had clear assumptions before asking these questions that current funding models discourage collaboration; I also assumed that collaboration would be an area for which organizations would like to have more support.

Next Steps and Conclusion

To conclude my interviews, I asked whether interviewees had any recommendations on what could further support the work their organization does. In addition, I asked whether they had any additional comments. This set of questions would help summarize and/or further discuss key issues that were brought up, and allowed participants to add any comments that I might have missed in my questions.

2.6.4. Methods Used in Description and Analysis

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. After each interview, I recorded field notes that summarized key points from the interviews, and any reflections on what was discussed. When describing and analyzing my results, I referred to both the transcriptions and my field notes. I analyzed the data using loose coding to identify themes, as well as to identify differences that arose between organizations.

As mentioned previously, I have anonymized the identities of each participant and organization involved in this research. In doing so, however, I encountered certain challenges to preserving confidentiality when writing my description and analysis. As outlined by Laura Clawson (2009), when maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, it is important to consider the degree of anonymity needed in order to make the interview subjects feel comfortable. That is, the need to protect participants must be weighed up against how anonymization might disrupt the researcher's ability to portray and analyze the interviews accurately. With respect to my own project, maintaining this balance proved to be a challenge: The Vancouver-based youth media organizations and programs in this study have unique characteristics. For instance, there might be an organization in Vancouver that uniquely combined youth sports with media production. In that case I had to be careful when discussing the organization since the program's unique characteristics could be identifiable, even without disclosing the organization's

name. Another challenge was how to discuss the various organizations and findings in a clear and organized manner without disclosing organizational names. To address these concerns over confidentiality and clarity, I will present my analysis based on themes that became apparent during the interviews, and discuss organizations and programs using various organizational characteristics (e.g., size, organizational goals, date founded). These approaches will help ensure confidentiality, while also establishing a clear and organized structure when presenting research findings and the analysis.

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a theoretical framework of neoliberalism in considering changing youth media funding trends amid altering political contexts. It also discussed how ideals of neoliberalism can extend to other dominant narratives around the information society and creative industries. With respect to applying this theoretical framework to the analysis of findings, this chapter outlined the limitations to using neoliberalism as a sole framework and the complex nature of cultural policy research. It also described my research methodology. In the following chapter, Chapter 3, I will incorporate concepts associated with neoliberalism, the information society, and the creative industries to present and discuss key themes arising from the interviews. I will also incorporate data available on the YDME website and documentary research that was conducted based on interview findings.

Chapter 3. Youth Media Funding Trends and Challenges

3.1. Introduction

Across the history of communication policies and practices in Canada, media and communication technologies have been linked to questions of democracy. As demonstrated in Raboy (1990) and Druick's (2007) work, however, in government policy and administration there have been missed opportunities related to the democratic uses of public media due to conflicting political priorities. My research highlights similar missed opportunities in relation to the funding relationships that have shaped youth media organizations in Vancouver since the 1990s. While discourses related to the information society and creative industries, as well as associated forms of optimism around new media, have filtered through government policy, the direct impact of current funding environments in British Columbia (BC) has left organizations unstable and often unrecognized by governments for the work that they do. This was a common theme in the interviews. Interviewees also expressed concern that funding has become increasingly project-based, focuses on addressing trend-based issues (e.g., bullying) and new and innovative projects, and increasingly emphasizes self-sustainability (i.e., finding diverse sources of funding). The result is an environment that forces organizations to compete with each other for limited resources while producing a host of other challenges outlined below.

To demonstrate the disconnects between the current funding environment and the work that youth media organizations do, this chapter will use interview material to map the current youth media funding context. I demonstrate that youth media funding trends have been reconfigured at policy levels as a consequence of neoliberalism. This is demonstrated in increased downloading of social services and associated project-based funding. Even though neoliberalism has influenced funding trends, youth media funding structures did not always strictly fit within these characteristics. Instead, Vancouver's youth media scene is comprised of organizations with diverse funding structures. Some organizations continue to receive government funding as a consequence of older funding relationships and government's continued focus on the

arts and culture, as well as social services. These organizations retain a mix of government and non-governmental sources of funding. Other organizations, on the other hand, have moved away from government support and have found alternative funding models, including market-based initiatives. Commonly connected to new forms of organizational entrepreneurialism, these organizations often stand distinct from the majority of groups in the youth media sector. Drawing on the data collected during the course of the project, this chapter will explain key challenges that youth media organizations face in response to funding trends, and the impact this can have on the diverse work that youth media organizations do. Even though youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver have varied funding structures, common tensions existed across all organizations. In what follows, key themes that will be discussed include precarious funding models, an increased reliance on unpaid labour, and structural tensions between organizations. After discussing these challenges, I outline funding recommendations suggested by interviewees during my research.

3.2. Current Funding Environment

3.2.1. Increase in Project-Based Funding and Narrow Programming

Current funding trends have impacted the type of funding that youth media organizations and programs receive. A central theme throughout the interviews was that funders are increasingly moving away from core, operational funding, focusing instead on project funding. This was the case for both government and non-governmental sources of funding. One smaller youth media organization discussed the predominance of project funding versus core funding:

It's predominantly project funding. Very few people do core funding. In fact, a lot of applications will specifically say that they don't fund core projects, or don't fund staff time, or some don't fund travel. . . . (Interview 3)

In addition to project-based funding, participants suggested that funders are increasingly focused on new programming, as opposed to long-term and ongoing programming. The short-term nature of project-based funding allows for funders to

quickly shift fund priorities. An interviewee from an older cultural institution described this shift:

I state, with many underlines on it that a lot of organizations that used to fund for core funding, operations, and support your ongoing operations now have changed their mandate so that they only fund new projects. (Interview 11)

The same interviewee added the following:

Core funding . . . and not coming up with new projects is something that is very positive. Whenever it's possible, and it's very rarely happening, if anything, the tide is swaying the other direction. (Interview 11)

In other words, youth media funding is shifting from core funding to project-based funding, with a focus on new projects, in a way that reflects the neoliberal funding characteristics described in Chapter 2. Consequently, project-based funding excludes important administrative costs that contribute to the running of an organization, such as core staffing, while discouraging ongoing programming. Since project-based funding does not cover the operational costs required to run an organization, this leads to unsustainable funding situations. As will be discussed throughout this chapter, this puts pressure on organizations to diversify their funding base, often in ways that move non-profit groups toward market-based funding relationships.

The unsustainable nature of this project-based approach to funding has further ramifications, the most evident of which is the creation of a highly competitive funding environment. One interviewee at a long-term arts education institution described this shift:

It's much more competitive. And I think that's one of the trends I've noticed . . . there are more people applying for the same amount of grants, and in some cases for less grants, than were previously available. (Interview 4)

The interviewee's comment resonates with Gibson et al.'s (2007) finding that scarce funding leads to competitive funding environments: "Because project-funding is not sustained, directors find themselves constantly applying for more funding in a climate of steep competition among organizations for limited funding" (p. 432). As will be

discussed later in this chapter, this competitive funding environment undermines the kinds of collaboration with like-minded groups that can enable more efficient and sustainable projects.

Another characteristic of project-based funding raised during interviews was the increased control placed on the content of the funded projects, an issue which was addressed in Chapter 2. Many participants made this observation by describing the pressure from funders to cover specific issues, noting that these can change based on emerging interest trends. In this vein, one interviewee remarked that changing funding priorities were based on “the flavour of the month” (Interview 2). The same interviewee provided an example of one of their main corporate funders shifting focus towards technical training and dropout prevention among youth, which resulted in a loss of funding for the youth media organization in question. Another interviewee described this shift towards issue-based programming and a focus on employment in the following terms:

Funders are becoming more narrow in their funding requirements, so for example, a funder who used to look at sort of social services for youth more broadly might say, we’re only looking now at bullying, or only looking at programs for new immigrant youth, so it becomes very narrow. A new wave that is happening, that we’re seeing a lot more is employment based. (Interview 3)

What is noteworthy in these quotes is that interviewees referred to new waves of funding priorities around technical training and employment-based programming, issues that align with discourses linked to the information society and creative industries and encourage youth to enter the labour market as creative workers.

Another representative from an organization pointed out how funding priorities have shifted to become oriented around “hot button” issues generated from “what’s happening right now in media” (Interview 4). As another interviewee described, “Before bullying . . . it was gangs . . . before that . . . it was self-esteem” (Interview 2). In this sense, funder priorities can become reactionary, responding to mainstream issues and trends. These trends are often issue-based and focused on individual skills development.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the impact of neoliberalism on funding priorities has been to focus programs and grants on the development of individual experience, as opposed to work that may foster broader social and community issues (Blum-Ross & Linvingston, 2016). Poyntz (2013) notes a similar dynamic in his discussion of youth voice and the promotion of youth expression through media creation. While encouraging young people to tell their own stories can be a positive contribution to young people's lives, such priorities can unintentionally restrict how youth express themselves. Issues-based funding that focuses entirely on promoting youth voice can in fact become "a subtle form of regulation, one that does not enable youth democratisation as much as it regulates youth agency to fit with the status quo" (Poyntz, 2013, p. 94). Consequently, a focus on individual expression can contradict the diverse work youth media programs do, rather than provide opportunities for different ideas, practices and opinions to come together. As a consequence, when funding priorities target narrow issues around bullying, skills development, and self-esteem, among others, this can inadvertently undermine other important work that youth media organizations and programs do.

To this point, I have demonstrated interviewees' concerns about the effects that project-based funding can have on their organizations' activities. While these concerns were widely prevalent among interviewees, it is also important to note that a number of participants identified funding structures, programming, and activities that do not fit strictly within the tenets of neoliberalism. This finding reflects the YDME project's assertion that Vancouver's youth media scene encompasses various types of funding. Several interviewees in my project represented organizations that received a mix of government and non-government sources of funding; other participants represented organizations that had moved away from government sources of support altogether. As I discuss these findings in the sections that follow, I note the importance of differentiating these funding structures. By doing so, I am able to analyze more precisely the various challenges that youth media organizations and programs face within a neoliberal funding environment.

3.3. Organizational Funding Models

3.3.1. Mix of government and non-governmental sources of funding

Continued Federal Support

In the course of my interviews, it became evident that a small number of participating organizations⁵ continue to receive federal government support, despite neoliberal shifts towards the downloading of social services. These programs and organizations were older and often part of larger cultural or educational institutions in Vancouver that incorporate youth media programming into their work. One long-established cultural institution in Vancouver founded in the 1970s discussed the significance of core funding to the running of their organization, at least part of which they received from federal sources:

Having core funding is what allows [our organization] to function. . . . Canada Council, BC Arts Council, City of Vancouver, some of the gaming grants that we get, etcetera. Those things are crucial, because if we didn't have them . . . it would be a giant struggle (Interview 11).

Similarly, a long-established arts education institution that provides youth media programming also discussed the significance of their federal funding; they described the CCA as a major contributor to their annual organizational funding (Interview 4). As discussed in Chapter 2, key cultural institutions emerged in Vancouver in the 1970s and 1980s in response to political priorities that emphasized the democratization of the arts. Some of these older cultural institutions that continue to receive federal funding now incorporate youth media programming into their work. As such, these programs are partly funded by federal support.

Organizations with established federal funding and long-term funder affiliations, such as those mentioned above, undeniably benefit from the stability of these

⁵ 3 out of 10 organizations interviewed identified that they receive core federal funding.

relationships. However, even these organizations are currently feeling the effects of neoliberal funding policy. One interviewee from an older youth media organization explained how federal funding has provided key long-term operational support to keep the cultural institution running. At the same time, they also noted that other sources of funding are needed to run new programming at the organization, including the group's youth media programs:

We apply for different grants from . . . different agencies, everything from Vancouver Foundation, and now I'm filling one out for First West Foundation, which is something run by Envision Financial . . . (Interview 11)

The same participant discussed their organization's other significant sources of funding, including fees for service, the BC Arts Council, and BC Gaming Grants. In addition, they provided insight into their organization's plans to expand their fundraising initiatives, with the help of board members. The interviewee explained that diversifying funding was especially important, since many funders that have provided ongoing core funding in the past have changed their mandate so that they now only fund new projects.

The need to diversify funding sources was not limited to this well-established organization alone. An interviewee from a second established cultural institution noted that funds received from BC Gaming funds, corporate sponsors, and foundations were vital for running their youth media program. Besides these sources of income, however, the organization also sought funding from individual donors. Hence, even though certain organizations do receive ongoing, core funding, they nevertheless still face pressures to diversify their funding sources to maintain the stability of their organization and run their youth media programs. In this sense, they are hybrid groups: they have some access to older funding models but are also forced to adapt their work to the new funding constraints characteristic to contemporary neoliberal funding environments.

Provincial and Municipal Funding

While there were a small number of organizations that have long-term relationships with federal funding, there were a larger number of organizations that

receive significant funding at the provincial and/or municipal level⁶. These funding trends are characteristic of the new public management regime, which includes the downloading of social services from the federal to the provincial and municipal levels. The City of Vancouver and BC Gaming were noted as the most common sources of provincial and municipal support among organizations. For instance, one organization that concentrates on arts-based violence prevention and incorporates social services with youth media programming into their work mentioned they have received ongoing core funding from the City of Vancouver's community social services grant. They described the important long-term relationship they have had with the city in helping them build and sustain their programming each year:

The City of Vancouver has been a huge support and has really watched us through the entire process, and has also given us guidance sometimes, asking us the important questions about why you are using this tool and not that tool? You used to use this, and now you are using this? And really holding us to our outcomes, and holding us to our metrics a little bit more, which is really good. (Interview 3)

Even though the organization mentioned above received this long-term core funding, they also discussed the importance of diversifying funding sources. This was especially important to the interviewee, as they felt it would help their organization remain sustainable in case they lost an important source of funding. As a result, they explained that they apply for one grant each week:

There are organizations that have three funders; if you lose one of them that's a third of your budget gone, then what do you do? You close your doors or you have to downsize by a third. For us . . . some years we have [had] 40 funders, so if we lose one, depending on who the funder is, it could be one fortieth of our budget, or it could be more like ten percent of our budget, depending on how much they give. (Interview 3)

⁶ 5 out of 10 organizations interviewed receive significant funding from the provincial and/or municipal government (2 of which also receive federal funding).

The pressure to diversify funding was a significant point of discussion for interviewees from organizations that receive municipal and provincial funding, as many of them experienced sudden government cuts at the provincial and municipal levels because of changing political priorities. For instance, a small organization that relies on BC Gaming every year as part of their programming explained the major and sudden cuts to BC Gaming across the arts and cultural sector in 2009/2010. They described the impact that this had on their programming:

One [funding source] that was really key was Gaming, until they cut it. First they cut a hundred percent, and then they slowly returned to the previous level of funding. So that was a really hard thing at that time. They cut it out completely in 2010 with the Olympics We were supposed to start in September, and they told us like September 1st that there was no funding. (Interview 5)

While this particular organization was still able to provide the programming despite the cuts, they had to re-adjust their work significantly, including by shortening the programming time and raising the participant fee:

We charged more per kid, we got very few classes, but we just did it. We felt strongly . . . it was worth keeping, because it's a very popular program . . . so luckily we survived. (Interview 5)

In BC, these cuts to the Gaming grants coincided with the “global financial crisis and loss of provincial revenues” in 2008 (Beale & Murray, 2011, p. 14). In this context, arts funding dropped in BC from \$19.5 million to 2.25 million in 2008-2009 (Murray & Beale, 2011). This led to substantial cuts in BC Gaming funding and grants from the BC Arts Council (Low, 2015; Murray & Beale, 2011). While funding cuts were made to the BC Arts Council in 2010, the provincial government did initiate the new Arts Legacy Fund, which channelled funding to groups focused on meeting “the needs of Spirit Festivals to be held as a tribute to the 2010 Winter Olympics” (Low, 2015, p. 54). The Arts Legacy Fund is an example of funding that was influenced by neoliberal principles, as these projects were short-term and one-off, as opposed to long-term projects (Low, 2012). In addition, the funding provided to groups was specifically contributed to the Olympics, rather than sustaining the work that arts groups were already doing. This focus on the Olympics adds to the general priority BC places on mega projects and

events, with its focus on the economic indicators of creativity and culture (Murray & Beale, 2011), something that was discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

The major cuts to the BC Arts Council and BC Gaming described above demonstrate how changing political priorities influence the type of funding provided to youth media organizations and can lead to volatile funding situations for these groups. Indeed, the BC government is particularly known for its volatile funding trends for and putting pressure on organizations to find alternative sources of funding: Beale and Murray (2011) discuss this in detail:

BC governments have placed a high value on cultural entrepreneurship and self determination, a trend also reinforced by the high levels of cultural spending by its residents and volunteer support. Such self-reliance is the child of necessity, given the volatility of political flavour as seen in the merciless 2009 budget cuts. (p. 15)

This pressure to achieve self-sustainability is well reflected in two government initiatives to which participants referred in interviews. These were the BC Partnerships for Social Impact and Vantage Point workshops. The first of these, the BC Partnerships for Social Impact, is an initiative with which the Province of BC is involved and one that encourages approaches that aim to build social enterprises through adaptation of a business model. Through this business model, profits are re-invested in the business and/or the community to achieve, sustain, and further the organizations' social or environmental purposes (Hubcap, n.d.). These government initiatives encourage organizations to become self-sufficient by relying on the private sector and adopting entrepreneurial approaches to better support their programs and initiatives. Noticeably, they are in line with BC's focus on self-sustainability, rather than providing sustained financial support.

The second municipal-level initiative that promoted self-sustainability was the Vantage Point workshops. In this initiative, the City of Vancouver provides bursaries for organizations to attend workshops focused on the topic of building a sustainable not-for-profit organization. This includes strategies to recruit volunteers with professional skills as a way to develop organizational capacity and stretch resources. This is outlined in

the Vantage Points book, *The Abundant not-for-profit: How talent (not money) will transform your organization*, authored by Gerty and Kelly (2013):

The abundant not-for-profit finds ways to focus on what is available: talented people. The abundant not-for-profit examines all the resources around the organization, and attracts people with skills and talent. This is a different strategy to effectively deliver your mission: you can engage people with professional skills. You can pay these people differently. You do not have to pay them with money. (p. 30)

This emphasis on stretching resources and relying on unpaid labour aligns with neoliberal principles that place more responsibility on organizations to fill gaps in funding, rather than receiving additional government funding to adequately staff organizations.

The trend towards funding linked to self-sustainability has had effects beyond the pressures of sourcing additional funds, and the instability that accompanies that process. To wit, unstable employment conditions are a new and ongoing feature of contemporary funding environments for youth media arts groups. This was apparent in a participant's account of the funding experience of a youth-run media program. This organization was first established as part of the City of Vancouver's Get Out Program,⁷ a pilot program that ran from 2004-2006, where youth-serving or community-based organizations received grants to develop, implement, and engage youth in sport, recreation, arts, or cultural activities. Since this program ended in 2006, the youth-run media program lost this source of support, and now relies entirely on volunteer labour. As the participant discussed, their organization first received funding due to the City of Vancouver's priorities on youth engagement:

⁷ Get Out! was jointly managed by the Park Board, the Social Planning Department, and the Office of Cultural Affairs: "The program assisted youth and youth-serving or community based organizations through grants (between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per project) to develop, implement, and engage youth in sport, recreation, arts, or cultural activities" (United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), 2010, p. 9).

The City of Vancouver gave that program a grant [the Get Out Program grant] . . . [because] they wanted to have youth not just sit at home, they wanted them to be more involved in the community, and that's how it started out. (Interview 6)

Despite the Get Out! Project's success and recommendations from municipal staff that it continue, the program ended in 2006 (City of Vancouver 2006; UCLG, 2010). Consequently, once the grant discontinued, the organization had to find other ways to sustain their youth media program. With replacement funds hard to find, however, the youth-run program has only been sustained by coming to rely entirely on volunteer labour to sustain operations. These fiscal pressures, which organizations frequently face, are reflected in the unsustainable funding characteristics of project-based, short-term funding. Since project-based funding is short-term and does not cover additional organizational costs, more fiscal responsibility is offloaded onto the organizations, meaning they must find alternative sources of support (Boucher, 2015).

3.3.2. Organizations Moving away from Government Funding

With the continued pressure towards self-sustainability, a small number of youth media organizations and programs have adopted funding strategies that mostly or entirely avoid government funding support. In my interviews, it became clear that major avenues of non-governmental sources of support include the private sector, fee-for-service, fundraising initiatives (including campaign-based organizations), and corporate sponsorships. It is important to note that these funding initiatives can be difficult for organizations to develop and may not provide the kind of long-term sustainability organizations depend on for their survival. Nonetheless such initiatives have become an increasingly common part of the youth media sector and reflect the imprint of neoliberalism and the power of market-based logics in this sector.

Private Sector, Corporate Sponsorships, and Fundraising

Funding strategies that move away from government funding were present among a long-running youth arts education institution in Vancouver. This organization only receives 6 percent of government support, and instead relies primarily on the support of corporations, foundations, fee-for-service model, and fundraising revenues.

They discussed the benefits of not relying on government funding, including the precarious nature of government funds:

It's probably not a bad thing that we have minimal government funding. . . . I think sometimes as well if you're an organization that's solely dependent on government funding, that you really are in a much riskier position because changes in governments and changes in policies can happen rather quickly, and then you can be in a bit of a precarious situation. . . . (Interview 7)

Instead, the interviewee noted that they have had particularly strong and long-term relationships with the corporate sector and foundations, and are able to receive funder commitments of up to three years. They also fundraise a year in advance, which allows them to plan and program ahead every year. While this funding model was successful for this organization, it is noteworthy that they have a separate philanthropy department to support such funding initiatives, which includes eight full-time staff who work on their special events and fundraising initiatives (interview 7).

Of course, most organizations interviewed indicated that they did not have the budget to hire staff to focus specifically on fundraising. This is especially the case in an increasingly project-based funding environment, where staffing is typically dedicated to program delivery rather than fundraising and infrastructure building. The latter foci were noted by one interviewee from a smaller organization who commented that they have little time to fundraise and work on marketing across the community:

I think when folks are deciding who they're going to donate to, they're tending to go for the larger organizations, brand recognition, things that they see. A lot of small organizations, we don't spend any money on advertising, we don't spend any money on public awareness, partially because we just couldn't. . . . So folks don't necessarily know what the smaller organizations are doing. . . . (Interview 3)

Youth media programs/organizations like the one above, which have small budgets, are common in Vancouver. In the YDME project, 52 percent of youth media programs in Vancouver appeared to have a budget of less than \$99,000, while 84 percent had an annual budget under \$250,000 (YDME, 2013d). As Poyntz (2013) notes, most youth

media groups spend most of their time on program delivery, rather than administration, fundraising, and program development.

Corporate sponsorship may also be attractive to some youth media arts organizations. However, here again, this funding strategy tends to favour the kinds of highly developed and professionalized groups that are rare in this sector. For example, one of the large arts education institutions already referred to earlier in this chapter described one of their successful partnerships with a major video game company. This partnership included a scholarship for youth to participate in an animation program led by an instructor from the video game company. The program was fully funded by the company and at the end of the term, students were invited to present their animation projects at the video game studio (Interview 7). This program provides opportunities for youth with an interest in media arts to consider the video game industry as a future career possibility, clearly linking with the program's focus on skills development. This, in turn, was beneficial to the video game company as a means to recruit future employees in the industry. This form of corporate sponsorship was also apparent in the work of a smaller organization that focuses on civic engagement. They noted the benefits of receiving funds from corporate sponsorships:

The idea that they [the corporate sponsor] wanted to be sort of associated with an up and coming young project talking about civic and political engagement was a value to them to be associated with. . . . (Interview 8)

At the same time, these forms of corporate partnerships are highly selective, focusing on particular types of youth media programming that meet certain requirements. As such, even though corporate partnership may work for some organizations, it does not necessarily fit within the goals of all youth organizations and programs. For instance, an organization with a long history of providing critical media literacy explained that they have been less successful with corporate sponsors. This is because their programming does not often fit with the goals of the funder. As one interviewee noted, "We have been less successful with corporate sponsors because it's often tied to marketing, and kids aren't really their market" (Interview 5).

As Poyntz (2013) and the YDME (2013) project demonstrated, Vancouver's youth media scene serves diverse youth populations and addresses topics that are often distinct from mainstream conceptualizations of culture and politics. For instance, a youth media organization may serve a small subset of youth and provide important critical media literacy programming. In this scenario, this specialized youth media programming may experience more difficulty in receiving private sponsorships than other larger organizations. This is because private sponsors may favour opportunities that will receive high visibility, such as major festivals that garner widespread media attention and large audiences. Alternatively, as discussed above, corporations may favour programs that directly benefit them, such as recruitment strategies. In this situation, organizations serving a subset of clients, and/or focus on issues that are not as popular and/or well-known, will be less likely to benefit from significant corporate sponsorship deals. These scenarios demonstrate how in a neoliberal funding environment, in which there is a push towards receiving support from the private sector and sponsorships, funding patterns can lead to favouritism towards a particular type of organization.

Online Campaign-Based Organizations

Another non-governmental funding structure that arose during an interview was online campaign based organizations. An organization that focuses on civic engagement explained that instead of receiving government support to tackle specific issues, these organizations rely mainly on individual donations to respond to "pressing democratic issues [that need] to be addressed" (Interview 8). This organization has often worked with these online campaigns based organizations, and has also run their own online campaigns. Hence it is an important funding model to recognize. These organizations work outside of the realm of government support, and instead mobilize online communities to put pressure on government to tackle particular political issues. This links back to Harvey's (2005) discussion that grassroots and non-governmental organizations have proliferated under neoliberalism, where the focus is built around oppositional politics and social transformation. The interviewee used LeadNow as an example when describing the significance and funding model of campaign based organizations:

I think as our democracy gets more and more eroded at the federal level, more and more people are looking to LeadNow to have a counterweight to that, and therefore LeadNow grows, because more people, they're getting more people donating to them, they're getting more people coming out to their events, their issues are gaining more relevancy as the political landscape shifts to a more conservative,⁸ neoliberal agenda. (Interview 8)

While these organizations have demonstrated successful fundraising through their campaign-based model and large database networks, this model does not apply for all organizational types and programs. For instance, one smaller organization that provides programming to youth who face multiple barriers discussed that smaller organizations that provide frontline support/social services are often "stopping something from happening before it gets to the crisis level" (Interview 3). However, this type of work is not always noticeable on a large scale, meaning that individuals often donate to larger, well-known organizations. The result is that activities/programs that are not framed around a major political issue, and/or programming targeted towards a subset of teenagers/participants, can have more difficulties mobilizing large amounts of public support and funds. Boucher (2015) made a similar observation regarding the difficulties that women's organizations face in fundraising and gaining private funds: ". . . because women's organizations often focus their work on marginalized populations and issues, experiment with alternative structures and lack the capacity to fundraise in any significant way, they are less likely to successfully attract prestigious private funding" (Boucher, 2015, p. 39). This example illustrates how organizations with a specific set of programming and/or structure can have more success with non-governmental funding models, such as fundraising, than other organizations.

Further to the points outlined above, campaign-based organizations rely on the technical requirements and knowledge required to build and/or manage large online database networks for much of their work. Youth media organizations and programs focused on program delivery at a smaller level, however, might not have these same

⁸ The interview was held when the Conservative government, under Stephen Harper's leadership, was in power.

technical abilities, knowledge, or staffing to support these requirements. For instance, one larger, older organization explained that their staffing has grown quite a bit, “mostly in the technical and the marketing areas” (Interview 2). However, similar to the discussion around fundraising, smaller organizations might not have this same capacity and resources to accomplish these activities. This challenge is outlined by Gibson et al. (2007): organizations participating in the study which had insufficient operational revenues had “many urgent spending priorities other than information and communication technologies (ICTs), and this has led to a situation where all three [organizations] have inadequate capacity to use computers and the Internet” (p. 426). This included difficulties with staff training in the use of technology, and having the funds to maintain the computer hardware, software, and networks (Gibson et al., 2007).

Fee-for-Service Model

The final funding model, the fee-for-service model, was mentioned by an interviewee from an organization that primarily funded their operations using these methods. The interviewee described the organization’s situation in the following terms:

Seventy-five percent of our funding last year came from fee-for-service. So people who already raised funds . . . and then brought us in to run it [the program] (Interview 9)

Most of this organization’s funding therefore emanates from community partners that have already received the program funding required. With this funding structure, their youth media projects varied depending on the funding they received, and they delivered mostly short-term youth media programming. The participant discussed the flexible nature of their organization’s programming, which allows them to meet different funder requirements:

I think the nice thing about our work is that we fit into lots of different funding streams [I]f a funder has a specific thing, issue that they want to see projects happen on, then we can develop a film program around that. (Interview 9)

The interviewee in question also mentioned how the flexibility of their programming allowed them to be mobile, including going to rural communities where youth media programs might not be as present:

Most of our programs are mobile. We do a fair amount of work in the lower mainland, but we also do a lot of work in remote communities . . . where schools don't necessarily offer high end video production programming, there's not a lot of arts or even youth programming in these communities, so it's really more of a special thing and need, and communities are willing to fundraise to make that happen (interview 9).

Additionally, they discussed how their fee-for-service model allows them to avoid the administrative burdens associated with funding applications and reporting:

I don't know if we would still be doing this if we were just relying on grants. The amount of time, which you know, time is money that goes into writing the grants . . . and reporting of the grants . . . you know you're passionate about engaging youth to make issue-based films and produce and distribute media that presents the visions for positive change by young people, then you spend so much of your time doing the back end administrative work of grant writing . . . (Interview 9)

While there were advantages of this funding structure to that particular organization, it might not work for all organizations. This includes organizations that already have established and ongoing programming, as it would require a constant shift of the type of programming being provided. As one organization with long-term youth programming explained, there is value to their organization in having the ongoing resources to develop and improve the same program every year, rather than having to consistently reinvent themselves. The interviewee discussed that long-term programming allows them to "really learn from it [the program] . . . to respond to what happens in the first year, and fine tune it . . ." (Interview 4). We can see from this example that within Vancouver, while some organizations and programs have moved towards the privatization of funding and self-sustainability, this funding structure does not fit with the diverse work that all youth media programs/organizations do in Vancouver.

3.4. Tensions Among Organizations

Even though interviewees discussed diverse funding structures among youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver, common tensions did arise across all organizations. These can be broken down into three broad themes, including: 1) Precarious funding models; 2) An increased reliance on unpaid labour; and 3) Structural tensions arising between organizations, including competitive funding. Within these themes, there were significant similarities and differences across organizations, often tying back to diverse funding structures.

3.4.1. Precarious Funding Structures

As outlined in previous sections, several of the organizations interviewed received predominantly project-based and short-term funding, while there were also those that received core funding, from the federal government, for example. While these organizations had different structures, the push towards project-based funding and away from core funding has led to precarious funding situations across youth media organizations in Vancouver. Since the types of challenges faced by organizations varied, the following subsections outlines and describes them in detail.

Low Resources for Staffing

First, organizations that receive funding on a project basis expressed difficulties in not having funds for operational and administrative costs. An interviewee discussed that since their funding is completely project-based, they have to find ways to stretch their resources to cover operational and administrative costs at their organization, including by not offering full-time employment: “We stretch all of our project funding to be able to do operating stuff” (Interview 9). The interviewee explained that the organization has to provide more short-term contracts and part-time opportunities than before, and also has to rely on volunteerism. Consequently, their staff is often having to work more than one job in order to sustain project activities, and the interviewee acknowledged the challenges in doing so.

The problem of inadequate operating funds for staffing was common among organizations, particularly among those that receive primarily or entirely project-based funding. Consequences of inadequate staffing that were brought up include instability within the organization and staff burnout due to individuals being overworked and, inevitably, underpaid. As one interview from a small, project-based organization noted, “underpaid and overworked is always the reality” (Interview 8). Another interviewee from a small, project-based organization noted, “For stability, the organization needs three people permanently. At least two. You need operational funding for that” (Interview 9). According to many interviewees, their organizations were not receiving this funding.

The lack of full-time staffing within the youth media sector is also demonstrated in the YDME project, where only 7 percent of organizations have more than six full-time staff, and 22 percent of organizations do not have any full-time staff (YDME, 2013d). An interviewee explained that organizations should be dedicated to providing adequate staff, so that the number of staff reflects program needs and the number of participants, instead of running an operation on a “skeleton staff” (Interview 4). As urgent as these operational requirements may be, however, the interview data demonstrated that the ideal staffing situation can be difficult to achieve with project-based funding. Instead, many smaller youth media organizations and programs with limited staffing discussed their reliance on volunteerism to address a shortage of staffing funds, which itself raises additional tensions – these will be discussed at a later point in this chapter.

Adapting to Shifting Funder Priorities and Strict Measurement Outcomes

Organizations that receive core funding also face precarious funding situations. While these organizations have operational funding to hire full-time, permanent staff, they face different challenges to organizations with short-term funding. Organizations that have received ongoing core funding now have to adapt to increasingly project-based funding. Interviewees argued that the consequences of project-based funding include the fact that organizations are constantly forced to invent new programs and projects. As one interviewee noted:

Some people will say it encourages innovation, and I kind of disagree with that because you’re innovating for the grant, and not innovating because what you

need. I think every organization has done that . . . you see a grant that is close, and think, How can you tweak what you do to fit that? (Interview 3).

As this interview excerpt indicates, a focus on creating new projects can take away from the core mandates and goals of the organization. This created additional challenges for organizations, as they face increased pressure to react to funding priorities, rather than respond to the needs of the community. An interviewee described these challenges, explaining that there was often a fine line between applying for project funding with narrow activities and outcomes involved, and not compromising the quality and focus of their work:

I think the wariness of crafting a program, or shaping a program specifically for a funding opportunity, is that you don't want to compromise the quality or the content solely for the money. And I think that's always, in the heart of, are we offering something relevant, is it impactful, is it meaningful, are teens and youth looking for this . . . we want to make sure that those things are in balance. (Interview 4)

In response to shifting funder focuses towards project-based funding, interviewees discussed the need to be creative in their grant writing to align with funder requirements. One interviewee from an older cultural institution explained that they are able to frame their grant applications to meet funder requirements, while still remaining committed to their mandate and goals:

If you guys [funders] need us to frame it as dropout prevention now that's what we'll do. If you need us to frame it as teaching kids skills to make sure they're not exploited, fine we can frame it like that. . . . [I]f they need us to frame it so that we hit all their buzzwords, we do. (Interview 2)

However, another older organization that receives core funding argued that this creative process of trying to explain to a funder how they are introducing something new can be very time consuming:

I think a creative grant writer can make that work, but it's never fun because wouldn't it be great instead to just have the opportunity to have the organization

funded and be able to pursue your mandate freely It mainly ends up being that you just spend a lot of time explaining to someone else some new thing that looks like something new, that is kind of similar to what you've already been doing anyway. So, you kind of have to play the game. . . . (Interview 11)

Therefore, even though there are youth media programs that receive core funding, they are also facing pressures towards shifting funding requirements focused on new and short-term programming. In addition, these organizations are facing pressure to find ways to fit their ongoing programming and mandate to the narrow funder requirements. This is not only time consuming for staff members, but they also have to find ways to apply for funding without compromising the quality and mandate of the work.

Interviewees also explained that there are strict program measurement outcomes set by funders, which add pressure for organizations to adhere to narrow funder requirements. They also explained that program outcomes are not always consistently and easily measured. One interviewee discussed that program measurement outcomes are based on quantitative results, which can be misleading regarding the amount of work organizations do and the impact they have. They provided the example of an organization that hosts a fair with 200 participants. This high attendance could be well captured through quantitative-based outcomes. However, an organization with fewer participants, but that provides extensive one-on-one time with each participant, might have a difficult time showcasing their work strictly through the number of participants. That being said, they also discussed that they were starting to see funders incorporate qualitative outcomes, including testimonials: "I think a person's story can tell you a lot more than just a fact that they attended every day" (interview 3). This theme on the significance of qualitative outcomes was also raised by a representative from an organization that provides long-term programming for youth:

When you're talking about changing a person, it's very difficult to have hard outcomes. In terms of how many attend the festival, how many people go to workshops, all of that kind of thing. We have been trying to do a lot from the testimonials from the youth and their parents. (Interview 2)

Despite their efforts to highlight the substance, rather than the quantity, of their results, the organization also explained the difficulties in measuring outcomes, as the impact of the program might not be immediately apparent. For instance, one interviewee explained that they are now employed at the same youth media program as they participated in when they were in high school. They described the direct benefits that the youth media program had on them, including their university education and career in the arts:

I'm only discovering, now that I'm establishing my professional career, that the panels that I was on 10, 15 years ago, are actually really directly related to the direction I've gone today. (Interview 1)

While the youth media program contributed to their education and career decisions, it was not possible to capture and measure these outcomes immediately after the program. As they expressed it, "You don't necessarily see [the results] the following year, or the year after. You see it five, seven, 10 years later" (Interview 1).

The complex nature of capturing outcomes of youth media programs is recognised within academic literature on funding and youth media programming. Gidley and Slater (2007), for example, describe this well in their report *Beyond the Numbers Game*:

Participatory media must be seen as a process – starting with the “hook” that media offers, going through the intensity of media production, to the buzz of seeing a finished product. This process can be uneven – like participants’ own lives, it does not follow a set, linear pathway – but it almost always requires duration, a long-term investment. Similarly, an emphasis solely on measurable outcomes, whether in terms of hard skills or employability, would miss the point of the impact of the work on people’s lives, including the development of their personal and creative skills, their civic engagement, and the stories they can tell through media. (Gidley & Slater, 2007, p. 42)

Similar to this discussion on the shortcomings of strict measurable outcomes, Maclver’s (2010) Master’s research indicates limitations of strict funder outcomes of a youth media program in Vancouver funded by Service Canada. Maclver (2010)

indicates that strict funder outcomes for participants to enter/re-enter the job market disregarded other projects or concerns that arose during the course of the program. Maclver's study reveals how the complex nature, value, and amount of effort and time involved in youth media programming might not always fit with and be captured by the reporting criteria of funders. A further challenge, as noted by interviewees, is the actual process of reporting back to funders: funders often present organizations with different official forms to complete, many of which require different breakdowns of the details of each activity. One interviewee described their experience of how this makes the reporting process especially time consuming and difficult to capture the full picture of their organization's programming (Interview 5).

In summary, project-based organizations face precarious funding situations, mainly because they do not have the operational funds to hire full-time, permanent staff. Even organizations that still receive core/operational funding face difficulties in having to adapt to an increasingly project-based funding environment, in which they find themselves negotiating how to apply for funding, while also maintaining their core mandates. Further, funders often require strict measurement outcomes, which are not easily and consistently measured; they also do not often capture the entire story and benefits of youth media programs.

3.4.2. Reliance on Unpaid Labour

Another challenge that organizations face is a reliance on unpaid labour to run programs. During my interviews with participants, it became clear that volunteers and interns play an important role for youth media organizations and programs, especially with those that have little funding for staffing. In fact, an overwhelming seven of the 10 participating organizations discussed their reliance on volunteers to run youth media programs. Two of these were mostly or completely volunteer run: One interviewee stated that “[m]ost of us volunteer our time there, even me . . . for my director role I don't really pay myself that much” (Interview 10); another participant explained that their youth media program is “all volunteer run, and we have like a great team of young, energetic adults” (Interview 6).

As with other challenges participants mentioned in their interviews, recent academic studies corroborate how volunteers play a key role in ongoing youth media programming. Gollmitzer and Murray (2008), for instance, discuss themes of volunteerism, stating that the cultural sector is particularly known for its extensive use of volunteers. They note that volunteers in the arts, heritage, and cultural sector donate on average more of their time than other sectors. While volunteerism is an important resource for youth media organizations and programs interviewed, it was also discussed that a heavy reliance on volunteerism and internships can instill critical forms of instabilities within an organization. This includes impacting the quality and consistency of youth programming, and de-professionalizing the sector.

The first issue interviewees commonly raised was that relying on unpaid interns and volunteerism can result in inconsistent programming. One interviewee from a small organization discussed the difficulties in relying on volunteers to be constantly available to execute successful and consistent programming (Interview 3). They explained that volunteers eventually need to make an income, with the result that they often have to unexpectedly reduce their volunteer commitments and/or move on completely to paid job opportunities. Since volunteers often have to quit unexpectedly, they described that the “volunteer position will suffer because of that” (Interview 3). As another interviewee stated, “If you are constantly expecting teens and youth programs to run on volunteers, it devalues the program . . . you’re not able to be consistent with it” (Interview 4). Interviewees who expressed this concern emphasized the importance of hiring professional staff who could provide consistent programming.

Interviews also discussed a second issue related to problems of inconsistent programming, namely that relying on volunteers can de-professionalize and devalue the work that youth media workers do. Through my interviews, it was clear that the youth media sector in Vancouver consists of staff and volunteers with a range of professional backgrounds. Educational backgrounds among those interviewed included the Arts, Anthropology, Business, Communications, Film Production, and Theatre. Interviewees also had varied work experience, including in the social service sector, professional arts, marketing, critical media literacy work, and political advocacy. It can be argued that the range of professional backgrounds and experiences in the sector contribute to the

diverse opportunities and practices provided by Vancouver's youth media scene. As the Cultural Human Resources Council (CHRC) (2002) notes, however, if the cultural sector is expected to rely on interns or volunteers to do work that should be going to paid workers, this not only "decrease[s] employment opportunities for cultural workers, but it leads to an undervaluing of those jobs and a dilution of the professionalism attached to them" (CHRC, 2002; as cited in Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008, p. 23).

Significantly, interviewees described that volunteer and/or unpaid intern opportunities are often framed as opportunities for skills development. This is because a lot of the volunteer work being done consists of actually running youth media programs. One volunteer-run program described that they recruit students and/or recent graduate students through their university networks (Simon Fraser University and British Columbia Institute of Technology, for example), as well as by placing volunteer opportunities on job posting sites. During the application process, the organization asks for a six-month volunteer commitment. The interviewee revealed that in order to retain volunteers, the organization will usually discuss the opportunities that volunteering for their program brings to applicants, including building transferrable skills and for career development:

We are basically masters of multitasking, where our social media coordinator, for example, she's not just our social media coordinator, she's also our board operator, she's also our graphic design, she also knows how to do marketing and news. . . . (Interview 6)

Volunteerism within this youth media program was therefore often treated as career and skills development opportunities. This theme of career development also came up within another organization that has a heavy base of volunteers and interns. Specifically, this small, project-based organization described the family and community feeling within their organization that helps to retain staff, volunteers, and interns, as well as the skills development and work experience that their volunteers and interns gain:

We're really good friends . . . we're not able to offer everyone full-time work. . . . But I think mainly this is because we've really invested in our people . . . we really invested in them with time and energy, and built them up with skills that are valuable for them. (Interview 9)

The interviewee described how one of their volunteers, for instance, began with little experience, but through their volunteer work received the necessary training and experience needed to eventually lead programs, make professional videos for clients, and become an ED of a small non-profit.

Sophie Hope and Joanna Figiel (2015) describe how “[i]nterning is one of the strategies employed by students and graduates to speculate on their asset portfolio” (p. 361). Engaging in unpaid labour is therefore a tactic used as much by volunteers as not-for profit organizations to reach their goals. However, there are important limitations to consider around unpaid labour and internships. In addition to interns taking on roles that should go to paid staff, as mentioned earlier, other limitations include: the absence of intern access to labour protections and benefits, including health and safety protections; a poor record of internships leading to paid jobs; and the class inequality associated with unpaid internships (Cohen, de Peuter, & Brophy, 2015). Even for organizations that are aware of these limitations, however, they increasingly have to rely on volunteers and/or interns within the current funding environment. One example includes the major and sudden cuts to BC Gaming across the arts and cultural sector in 2009, as discussed earlier. A report published by the Vancouver Foundation (2010) in response to funding cuts in BC in 2009 indicated that 35 percent of non-profits and charities that rely on volunteers reported an increased in their volunteer pool, suggesting that organizations are using more volunteers to assist them. In addition, when asking organizations what strategies they have used or plan to use in the future as they work towards their organization’s goals, 49 percent of the respondents expressed that they would rely more on volunteers.

In addition to funder-based pressure for youth media organizations to turn to volunteers for help, one interviewee from a smaller organization discussed another aspect of this growing reliance on volunteers. The interviewee claimed that the public (i.e., community members) also often expects grassroots organizations to be volunteer-run: “there’s this expectation that you’re [the organization] doing the service for the community so therefore you should be volunteering your time” (Interview 3). This same point was highlighted in the Canadian Council on Social Development’s report, *Funding Matters*, in which it was outlined that “nonprofit and voluntary organizations continue to

be viewed as largely ‘voluntary,’ that is, primarily reliant on volunteer labour and contributions of members” (Scott, 2003, p. 54). While the non-profit and voluntary sector has expanded considerably in Canada, ranging from involvement in social and health services to arts and recreation, there is still an assumption that these should be largely volunteer run (Scott, 2003). Further, as discussed earlier, government funding also places pressure on organizations to stretch their resources, including by relying on volunteerism, despite clear limitations that accompany unpaid labour.

3.4.3. Structural Tensions

One important shortcoming of my research was that before interviewing representatives from organizations, I had assumed that organizations would want more support and opportunity for collaboration. However, what I discovered during the interviews was that while having opportunities to collaborate is important, organizations were already doing this. All organizations collaborate in various capacities, and saw value in collaborating. Even though organizations already collaborated, they discussed how current funding environments are discouraging collaboration.

Some of the reasons interviewees gave for why their organizations value collaboration included the necessity to collaborate to find alternative ways to stretch resources. This included sharing space, resources, ideas, and training opportunities with organizations that do similar types of work. One interviewee from an arts education institution described the benefits of collaboration for youth media pedagogy:

[The] real value out of collaboration is that the content goes deeper. That it enriches what you’re actually able to offer the teen and youth group. . . . I think something that’s really important to consider for teen and youth pedagogy especially in media is that it doesn’t happen alone, it’s really rare that you have successful projects occurring with one contributing . . . that never happens.

(Interview 4)

Similarly, another interviewee from a smaller organization discussed the significance of sharing resources and programming through collaboration. They used the Surrey District School Board as an example, where they explained that they “partner

with schools to offer programs within their schools, so the schools will offer space, the schools will offer equipment. . . .” (Interview 3). The same interviewee also brought up a partnership with another non-profit organization that specializes in and provides leadership training for their staff.

Interviewees also suggested that collaborating with other organizations provides participants with broader perspectives, and with a larger network, such as connecting youth with other youth organizations and/or people working in industry, such as the video game industry. For instance, an interviewee from a large cultural organization discussed the importance of collaboration in order to help build a network for youth, to get involved and have easier access to other community organizations (Interview 1). This was also the case for a small youth media program that has an office space in a community resource centre for youth. The community centre provides a range of social services, including counselling, health, and employment services. By engaging with the community centre, the organization enables youth participants to have access to other important resources within their operating space – youth could access services at both organizations. One interviewee summed up the situation, saying that “[w]e support youth in their [the community centre] space; they support youth in our space” (Interview 3). Even though organizations wanted to collaborate and often did collaborate, one key theme that emerged in interviews was that the way funding is set up does not often encourage collaboration. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the unsustainable nature of project-based funding can lead to competitive funding environments. Because of the competitive nature of funding, one smaller, fee-for-service organization was more hesitant to collaborate, although they did acknowledge the significance of collaborating. They explained that because funding is scarce and budgets are tight, there might be financial risks by connecting with each other, compared to the benefits of building those relationships and working together:

Funding is scarce, and budgets are tight, and there’s no real financial, in fact there might be financial risk by connecting with each other, compared to benefits of building those relationships working together. (Interview 9)

Hence, the interviewee explained that if funders set up more incentives for collaboration, such as funding specifically for organizations to collaborate, then that would encourage collaboration:

It doesn't make sense for everybody to be working their own silos, and there are going to be synergies that happen when people work together, but if the funding isn't asking for it, people aren't going to do it. (Interview 9)

It is important to note that not all organizations interviewed wanted more support for collaboration. This was especially the case for organizations that already incorporated a lot of collaboration and partnership into their work. One interviewee from an older cultural institution cautioned against funders prescribing collaboration, and instead suggested that funders provide core, base funding for organizations to run their programs, as organizations already collaborate:

If you have an ongoing program, you need some stable base funding for that. And that, you know, it's enough for a salary for example, and some money to do something . . . that's a very basic thing that you need. And you need to be able to count on that year after year after year . . . (Interview 11)

In addition to competitive funding environments, there were key structural tensions between organizations that seemed to further discourage collaboration. Some smaller and recently established organizations held the impression that older organizations are stagnant and focused on an old organizational model with constant operational funds. In contrast, established organizations that receive core funding highlighted difficulties in continually having to re-invent themselves. The differences created tensions around the need to “innovate” and create new projects (newer organizations) and the need to build on current programming (older organizations). For instance, one smaller organization explained that it was difficult for similar organizations to “break into” federal operational funding opportunities, as they do not have the language, knowledge, or relationship to link their work to federal government grant requirements (Interview 8). They used applying for a grant to Heritage Canada as an example:

Your artists, independent artists, or small arts organizations on the ground . . . doing the innovative work, have no money, and no support, because they can't even begin to talk to Heritage Canada. . . . they don't have the language, or the know how or the relationships, or any of that stuff to even begin to start to fit into that grant model. (Interview 8)

They further explained that older organizations receive most of the federal funding, leaving little money for newer organizations. Similarly, another smaller, project-based organization highlighted their culture of dynamic change:

We're constantly innovating. . . . what new programs can we offer that we haven't offered in the past, or what programs you know, where can our focus change? So, part of our culture, I stress with all of our staff and facilitators, is constant innovation. (Interview 9).

These interview excerpts go some way to illustrating the perceptions among some of the newer organizations that older organizations were not always innovative, and took up most of the government funding.

On the other hand, the established, older organizations highlighted the significance of building on programs every year, instead of having to constantly respond to changing funder requirements. One interview explained this, stating, "We don't do a lot of reactionary programs. We tend to build things that we know can be something that we can build on and sustain" (Interview 4). In the same vein, another organization that concentrates on critical media literacy described one of their programs that they have delivered since their founding in the 1990s. They alluded to how they have developed the program over the years: "We've fine tuned it, we've improved it, we've partnered with different people" (Interview 5).

Scarce funding is the main driver in creating tensions across these different types of organizations, which in turn influences how youth media organizations and programs work together. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is important to acknowledge different organizational models. This includes older organizational models, such as key cultural

institutions that provide ongoing youth media work, as well as the work of newer organizations, such as those that are more project-based, or deliver online services.

With public policy shifts towards project-based funding, there is less support available to cover organizations' operational costs, including costs associated with their formal organizational structures and basic administrative costs. In response to difficulties in accessing core funding, newer organizations are finding alternative structures to run their organizations and programs, such as through online campaigns, and working on a project-by project basis. However, it is still important to acknowledge the important spaces that older community media and youth media programming provide in terms of promoting spaces for participatory media. This is especially so because, as highlighted throughout this chapter, even though there are organizations that have moved away from government support, this might not necessarily be feasible for all organizations and the type of programming that they provide.

Significantly, the CCA has recently announced a new funding module in response to increasing numbers of new arts organizations and the growing interdisciplinary aspects of the arts. The director of the CCA explains that:

The New Funding Model gives us a chance to reach out to the growing sectors of the arts community less well served by our current model – for example, young artists, diverse artists, those working in remote regions. Artists who are disadvantaged from accessing funding – not because of the quality of their work but because they haven't figured out how to navigate our processes and programs. Artists who understand only too well the impact of budget austerity in the arts community since they are its latest victims. (CCA, 2015, para. 38)

From this excerpt we can see that the new funding model is finding ways to open up funding opportunities to the growing sector and newer organizations. The CCA is evidently trying to catch up with current trends within the arts and cultural sector. In the context of varying organizational structures, however, it brings to question if and how the youth media sector will be affected by these changes? This includes whether this new funding module will provide new avenues for youth media organizations within the CCA,

and how it will affect organizations that have been receiving ongoing operational funding from the CCA.

3.5. Key Recommendations from Youth Media Organizations and Programs

In response to funding challenges faced by organizations, one area that I was particularly interested in was key recommendations on what could help support the work that youth media organizations and programs do. A significant finding was that, across the interviews, core funding, multi-year, and repeat funding came up as being essential to the functioning and sustainability of youth media programming. This was no surprise, given the precarious nature of funding and associated challenges such as a lack of resources for staffing. As one interviewee described, “I think that another education piece is educating funders that one-year funding is a lot less bang for their buck than three-year funding...” (Interview 3). The interviewee described that this allowed for organizations to plan ahead, saving the time currently required to apply for multiple grants. In addition to core, multi-year funding, the same interviewee discussed the importance of educating funders on the importance of youth media work, and that the work can fall across various sectors. He asserted, “So funders need to see how media work is valuable. . . . I think that’s an education piece that funders need to see . . . allowing media to be a piece of employment, a piece of health, a piece of whatever. . . (Interview 3).

Even as they hoped for more long-term funding, organizations were also realistically aware that given current funding trends, core and multi-year funding is increasingly difficult to receive. It was therefore interesting to note that some of the interviewees’ recommendations suggested moving away from relying on government support as a way to cope with neoliberal funding trends. For instance, 2 smaller and newer organizations mentioned that they would like to see more policy work on fostering collaboration, where organizations can leverage available resources, such as sharing space/rent, technology, students, etc., among organizations. They discussed that this would help provide younger organizations with the stability and capacity to thrive. Larger, more established institutions, for example, could provide support and the space for smaller organizations that may not have enough funding to operate as a stand-alone

organization. One interviewee described the different roles organizations might take in a collaborative approach:

I think the more mature established organizations, whether those are universities, or older NGOs, or labour unions, or government organizations, need to be the instigators in a lot of ways, or maybe they don't need to instigate, but they need to see themselves as like the anchoring, as taking an anchoring role. (Interview 8)

Similarly, another smaller and newer organization recommended having government funders set up operational funding that provides funding specifically for organizations to work together. Again, however, this support would be focused on collaboration and sharing resources, rather than providing core funding to provide the services. Lastly, organizations discussed that they would like to see more industry partners. Rather than always looking to the public sector, they explained that it would be useful if the private sector took a more active role:

Rather than always looking at the public sector, if we could see more of the private sector step up and sort of embrace an idea of good corporate citizenship. . . . I'd really like to see more of a partnership between media tools [hardware, software, etc.] and then delivery of youth media programs. (Interview 4)

Both this interview excerpt and the previous one fall in with the logic and practices common to neoliberalism, as they encourage organizations to move towards the private sector to support youth media programs. Within the information presented and analyzed in this section, we can see how the structural themes within a neoliberal worldview have become engrained in how organizations feel they should be moving forward to support their continuing work. Even so, as has been mentioned, the key recommendation made interviewees remains that core funding is needed, which should be addressed at the government level.

3.6. Conclusion

My interviews revealed the way neoliberal funding trends impact youth media organizations and programs. Within neoliberal funding environments, the new public management regime has introduced changes to funding trends that profoundly affect non-profit organizations. This includes an increase in project-based funding and narrow, strict measurement outcomes. In addition, associated with optimistic narratives around the information society and creative industries, funding priorities have been increasingly specific to individual skills development, and “hot button” issues with a focus on youth voice. The result has been that youth media work that falls outside of the most prominent and/or popular issues is often unable to gain the funding it needs. According to research participants’ responses to interview questions, even though youth media organizations and programs have diverse funding structures, neoliberal funding trends have posed challenges across youth media organizations and programs. Organizations face precarious funding, have to rely on unpaid labour, and are facing competitive funding environments that can influence how organizations collaborate and work together.

Despite neoliberal funding trends, youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver continue to provide diverse opportunities and programming. The findings presented in this chapter have shown, however, that as organizations in Vancouver continue to conduct their work, they will consistently have to negotiate and respond to difficult and often unsustainable funding trends. This is likely to be challenging, as strategies to respond to funding trends cannot be standardized for all organizations and programs. For instance, as discussed, fee-for-service models or fundraising is not an attainable strategy for all organizations. Given these challenges that organizations face under current funding trends, it is important to consider how this might impact the sustainability and diversity of Vancouver’s youth media sector. In the following chapter, Chapter 4, I explore how funding trends can undermine the plurality of spaces and democratic opportunities associated with youth media organizations and programs, and how this could lead to missed opportunities.

Chapter 4. Missed Opportunities and the Future of Youth Media Programs and Organizations in Vancouver

4.1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, Canadian provincial governments, as well as the federal one, have promoted the growth of the information society and creative industries, and fostered optimism around new media and the democratic opportunities these can bring. Having focused on the state of youth media programming in Vancouver, BC, this thesis has been able to analyze the effects of such official attitudes towards these “buzz” industries. It has argued primarily that there are gaps between the optimistic narratives promoted by government and the type of funding, or lack thereof, that is provided to youth media organizations and programs under the neoliberal funding regime. The result of the discrepancies between official discourse and the actual opportunities available to youth media organizations is that project-based funding can lead to missed opportunities within the youth media sector in Vancouver. By interviewing 10 youth media organizations, drawing on the YDME project findings, and referring to relevant literature in the analysis, this thesis has demonstrated how funding has shifted under the political context of dominant neoliberal approaches to public policy making. The interviews demonstrated that neoliberal funding trends, as well as optimistic narratives associated with the information society and creative industries, have led to a number of challenges for these organizations; these challenges ultimately affect the diversity and sustainability of youth media programming in Vancouver.

I begin this chapter by discussing how current funding trends stand in contrast with the plurality of spaces and democratic opportunities provided by youth media organizations and programs. By linking the discussion to Raboy (1990) and Druick’s (2007) work, I describe what opportunities within Vancouver’s youth media scene could possibly be missed because of current government priorities. Following this, and by keeping my interview results in mind, this chapter provides recommendations and key questions on the future of youth media organizations and programs in Vancouver. It

provides recommendations on how youth media funding can be restructured to better reflect the diverse work that youth media organizations do, and better contribute to the sustainability of the youth media sector. I end this chapter with a discussion of the limitations to my research, and identify areas of future research.

4.2. Missed Opportunities

Youth Media organizations and programs provide opportunities for public spaces and forums to thrive, and in this way contribute to an alternative media scene. However, this thesis has demonstrated that neoliberal funding practices, as well as government focus on the information society and creative industries, have seriously affected how organizations are funded. These funding changes have created a number of challenges for the youth media organizations and programs interviewed. Indeed, participants noted that these changes have affected the kind of work they are able to do.

As argued in this thesis, funding trends can often exclude the different types of programming that youth media organizations provide. Under neoliberal funding, there is more pressure for organizations to diversify to non-governmental sources of funding. However, these funding strategies often exclude much of the work being done across the youth media sector, as they favour a particular type of organization. For instance, corporate sponsorships tend to favour highly developed and professionalized groups, which is not representative of many youth media organizations and programs. Further, increased project-based funding places more control on what projects get funded. Linked with government priorities associated with the information society and creative industries, these focuses often rest on individual skills development. Consequently, many organizations face challenges in adjusting to narrow funder requirements while still attempting to meet their original mandates and goals. This is significant, as these narrow funder focuses stand in contrast with the range of programming currently being provided by the youth media sector.

The current funding environment also results in precarious funding situations, which can impact the sustainability and quality of the youth media sector. In response to scarce funding, organizations have to increasingly rely on volunteers and unpaid interns

to help run youth media programming. However, as raised in my interviews, this can devalue youth media workers and can also decrease the quality and consistency of programming. Scarce funding furthermore creates a competitive environment between youth media organizations and programs. Interviewees suggested that this can undermine important networks between youth media organizations – networks that would ordinarily support the quality and sustainability of projects by sharing resources and programming ideas, and connecting youth to larger networks and broader perspectives. What this reveals is that the current neoliberal funding environment not only favours a particular type of youth media organization and program, but it also leads to precarious funding situations for organizations that subsequently impact the sustainability of the sector.

My research has shown clearly that youth media organizations and programs face a number of challenges within the current funding environment. As discussed in Chapter 1, Druick (2007) and Raboy's (1990) work reveals disconnects between government policies and government-funded organizations/projects. As my thesis has argued, we can see similar disconnects between government policies and the work that youth media organizations and programs do. In particular, current political priorities and associated funding trends disregard the diverse services provided by youth media organizations and programs; they also overlook the resources required to sustain these programs. What this thesis has done is identify and analyze the variety of challenges engendered by a rapidly changing funding regime. It has helped us to understand the different pressures that organizations face in Vancouver and what specific affects these can have on youth media organizations and programs.

4.3. The Restructuring of Youth Media Funding

Given the opportunities that youth media programs provide in Vancouver and the challenges they face within a neoliberal funding environment, key policy measures need to be put in place to ensure organizations are able to continue providing their services. Specifically, all levels of government in Canada need to provide the operational funding required in order to support these programs. As an interviewee mentioned, funders, including the government, need to be educated on the diverse opportunities that youth

media organizations and programs provide, and the significance of core and multi-year funding.

In her dissertation on feminist service organizations operating within a neoliberal funding regime, Boucher (2015) suggests an important recommendation related to government funding. She suggests a blended-approach funding model that incorporates both core and project-based funding: “When combined with core funding, project funding can allow organizations to assess community needs for new programming or services, and can foster innovation” (p. 158). This same approach could also be applied to youth media organizations and programs, where youth media programs can better access core government funding, while also accessing project-based funding for other program needs.

As Murray (2005) outlines, currently there are different policy paradigms competing in the cultural field, and these definitions can often collide within federal government funding priorities. As a result, there is no clear definition on the conceptual approach of cultural participation policy. Murray (2005) concludes by outlining an approach that is able to better define cultural participation in the field of public policy:

A new consortium of practitioners, theorists, and policy-makers is needed to design research and develop the concept of cultural participation as a basic building block of cultural citizenship, an indicator in policy evaluation, and to better connect policy to participation. (p. 50)

This same concept of developing a framework to connect policy with cultural participation can be applied in considering youth media programming. This would require different levels of government to understand the different types of youth media programming, the opportunities that are provided, and the significance of core funding to supporting these organizations. As demonstrated in this thesis, this would not be a simple task, mainly because the types of youth media programs vary across youth media organizations, which makes this sector especially notable. Considering the variety that exists in the sector, policy decisions around funding should involve critical discussions and considerations among youth media practitioners, researchers in the field of cultural policy and youth media production, and policy makers.

4.4. Research Limitations and Areas of Further Research

While this research has provided insight into youth media funding trends and challenges facing organizations in Vancouver, there are important limitations to the research that I will address here. First, it was difficult to make direct links between youth media funding and cultural policy shifts in Canada. I had initially intended to trace the history of youth media funding by referring to cultural policy documents. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, there are a number of limitations in conducting cultural policy research. For instance, it was difficult to find what public policy and funding initiatives related directly to youth media programs, as they are not strictly associated with cultural policy. Due to the limitations inherent to cultural policy research, my documentary research was sporadic, with no set guidelines as to what documents I should refer to. Instead, my research focused on interviews with program informants and, secondarily, addressed relevant government documents and initiatives which were identified by research participants or which I encountered while doing the literature research for this study.

I also note that this research did not include youth media organizations and programs that work mainly with Aboriginal youth. One interviewee suggested that Aboriginal organizations are 1) severely underfunded, 2) operate under inequitable circumstances, and 3) that they may have different perspectives to share regarding youth media funding. I did attempt to contact Aboriginal youth media organizations for interviews, however they were unavailable during the period in which I conducted my interviews. The perspectives and experiences of Aboriginal youth media organizations would have complemented my findings here, as their histories, funding situations, and challenges might have varied from the organizations that did participate in this study.

In terms of further research, it would be valuable to examine how youth media funding trends might vary across different municipalities in Canada. This would provide a broader perspective on youth media funding and the different challenges that exist across a variety of cities and communities. Furthermore, since the implementation of neoliberal policies is applied unevenly depending on government focuses and priorities (Marontate & Murray, 2010), it is important to consider different historical, cultural,

political, economic, and social contexts at a micro-scale, as against applying a singular neoliberal analytical framework. Questions for consideration should include: How are resources allocated across municipalities, and what unique challenges might municipalities have? For example, what do resources for youth media programming look like in smaller communities, and what type of youth media programming is available? While this would require an extensive amount of work, it would reveal the many unique situations faced by youth media organizations in municipalities and provinces across Canada. It would certainly provide perspectives useful to academics, policy makers, and community organizations.

4.5. Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis has highlighted three important points for further consideration. First, it provides a reflection on current youth media funding trends in the context of neoliberalism, the information society, and the creative industries, and presents key challenges and disconnects within organization-funder relationships. These challenges can impact the diverse work that youth media organizations do and also lead to missed opportunities in the plurality of spaces they provide. Second, this thesis outlines ongoing tensions specific to the politics of funding and notes how disconnects between changing political priorities and those of organizations/funder recipients continue to exist. Third, it emphasizes a need for more bottom-up, horizontal approaches to funding, in which funders would need to be more receptive to various community and organizational requirements. It is important to move from a top-down, pre-defined service delivery approach to one that considers the diverse community needs and youth programming requirements. All levels of governments in particular should invest in youth media programming by providing core, base funding so that youth media organizations and programs remain sustainable and can continue providing diverse youth media opportunities. Lastly, there is a need for discussions to be conducted between policy makers, academics, and community-based organizations. These policy meetings should not only address political requirements but also seriously consider the needs of community members. This would include discussions regarding how best to sustain spaces of plurality, critical thought, and dialogue provided by youth

media programs, and would take into account how widely these can vary across organizations and communities.

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